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Models of Authorship and Text-making in Early China

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Hanmo Zhang

2012
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Models of Authorship and Text-making in Early China

by

Hanmo Zhang

Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor David C. Schaberg, Chair

This dissertation aims to show how the author functioned as the key to classifying, preserving, and interpreting a body of ancient knowledge; the author not only served as a foundation upon which different elements of knowledge were brought together, but also as furnished cues to the interpretation of composite texts and thus created a notional coherence in texts. On a deeper level, the inquiry of early Chinese authorship also sheds light on the ritual, religious, and sociopolitical contexts influencing authorial attributions and on how such attributions are associated with early Chinese intellectual history in general.

I argue in Chapter One that the figure of the Yellow Emperor was forged out of the Eastern Zhou ritual and religious thought that bears the mark of the ancestral veneration of high antiquity while at the same time reflecting the concerns of the changing social realities of the time.

I argue in Chapter Two that the written materials later incorporated into the Lunyu originally served different purposes and were interpreted differently in different 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 because he filled the need for a tangible, quotable authority.

Chapter Three argues that the “Yaölüe,” the last chapter of the extant Huainanzi, was composed after Liu An’s death as the means to impart a cohesive unity to the writings left from Liu An’s Huainan court. It further explores the relationship between the patron-author and the actual writers or compilers.

In Chapter Four I argue that neither of the two documents is autobiographical account written by Sima Qian. Instead, the voice of frustration conveyed in these two sources should be understood as the collective voice of the Han intellectuals.

In Chapter Five I suggest that in the study of early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts we cannot view early catalogues of Buddhist translations as historical records; instead, we need to explore why and under what circumstances those catalogues were compiled. The intention to differentiate “true,” “authentic” translations from apocryphal sutras was one of the most important factors motivating the cataloguing of early translated Buddhist scriptures.
The dissertation of Hanmo Zhang is approved.

Lothar von Falkenhausen

Richard E. Strassberg

Li Min

Jack W. Chen

David C. Schaberg, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012
To my parents and my teachers
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VITA


PUBLICATIONS

Book

Article

Encyclopedia Entries
“Fall of the Eastern Han.”
“Images of Filial Piety in China.”
“Building of the Tomb of Shihuangdi.”
“Aristocratic Warfare in Zhou and Spring and Autumn China.”
“Han Chinese Military Movement to the West.”
“Chinese burials of the Han periods.”

Translation (English to Chinese)

**Fictional Writing**


**PRESENTATIONS**


Introduction

I.1. Subject and Thesis

This dissertation addresses the issue of author and authorship in relation to the formation of early Chinese texts. As seen in the Documents (Shu 書) and the “Greater Preface” ("Daxu" 大序) to the Odes (Shi 詩), the author’s intent began to play a significant role in the hermeneutics of early Chinese literature quite early.¹ As part of the age-old interpretive tradition associated with the author’s intent, interpreting early Chinese writings through the author’s biographical information has remained incredibly influential even to the present day. While leaving the dispute on the author’s intent to the forthcoming discussion, it is necessary to note at the beginning that, rather than applying the author as a hermeneutical device to interpret the text ascribed to him, this dissertation is more interested in the construction of the author himself and in what an author meant to the text, why the text was assigned to him, and how such attribution could influence the interpretation of the text.

The thesis of this dissertation, then, can be simply stated as follows: by investigating five types of authorship in early Chinese literature that have not been thoroughly investigated—the author as cultural hero, as head of a teaching lineage, as patron, as individual writer, and as translator—this dissertation aims to show how the 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 the early Chinese, the author, real or hypothetical, was crucial to the body of

¹ Maoshi zhengyi 1:6; Shangshu zhengyi 3:79.
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 threatened to disintegrate into unconnected fragments. On a deeper level, the inquiry of these five types of authorship also sheds light on the ritual, religious, and sociopolitical contexts influencing authorial attributions and on how such attributions are associated with early Chinese intellectual history. As an historical phenomenon, especially during the Han 漢 dynasty, the connotations associated with authorship not only played a role in legitimizing the Han empire by connecting it to mythicized and politicized narratives, but they also provide 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.

To clarify my thesis, it is worth comparing it with what Mark E. Lewis and Alexander Beecroft have accomplished in their research on the issue of authorship in early Chinese writings. The main 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.”2 To prove this thesis, Lewis examines a considerable number of early Chinese texts by putting them into a neatly structured scheme, clearly outlined by his carefully arranged

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2 Lewis 1999, 4.
My purpose here is not to dispute Lewis’s thesis; rather, I frequently find his statements on author and authorship in early Chinese writings very useful in helping raise questions and frame discussions in this project.

Although not the main focus in Lewis’s work, the authorship of early Chinese texts constitutes a meaningful part of his argument, as seen in his discussions of the function of the author as master like Confucius and the attribution of the “Li sao” (“Encountering sorrows”) to Qu Yuan (ca. 339—278 BCE). In the chapter on “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 from the presence of the disciples who produced the texts. In this sense, the master as the author became the source of authority. Such authority, as Lewis acknowledges throughout his work, 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.” That is to say, 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 reduced to a secondary position in terms of the importance of his writing following the emergence of the essay and dialogical forms of philosophical writing toward the late Warring States period. The shift from

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4 Lewis 1999, 58.
5 Lewis 1999, 73.
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 were attributed now became a symbol marking the deficiency and limitations of his philosophy. Therefore, the appearance of the master as an author of texts from which his disciples are missing, Lewis holds, inevitably leads to the “disappearance” of the master as the fundamental textual authority. And it was at this moment that the authorship in Chinese philosophical writing emerged.

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 “Li sao” began the tradition in which the prominence of Qu Yuan’s authorship dominates the interpretation of the *Chu ci*. Even nowadays many of the 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.” Lewis sees this model not only as the precursor of using writing to express individual virtues in Chinese literature, but also as “a mode of sociability between like-minded individuals” and “a model for the later, author-based

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7 Lewis 1999, 62, 332-36.
8 Lewis 1999, 63, 97.
9 Lewis 1999, 186.
anthology.” 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 the authorship of early Chinese texts to authority and individual voice, Alexander Beecroft sees authorship as the means through which the transformation of literary systems can be traced. Inspired by Sheldon Pollock’s analysis of Sanskrit literature, Beecroft crafts a model of literary transformation involving six phases through which literary texts are circulated, prestige is transmitted, and both the texts and prestige are linked to their corresponding political and cultural power. By examining how verbal art and textual performance were transformed in the first three phases, i.e., the epichoric, the panchoric, and the cosmopolitan, both in early Greece and in early China, Beecroft argues that a series of cultural and political assimilations occurred moving from the local (epichoric) level to the broader cultural and political (panchoric and cosmopolitan) 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. In other words, the epichoricity—which stressed a tradition of performance in the cases of both ancient Greece and China—of the given text was subdued, normalized, and maybe 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

10 Lewis 1999, 193.
11 Beecroft 2010, 282.
12 Beecroft 2010, 5.
13 Beecroft 2010, 284-86.
given literature’s capacity to generate meaning far beyond and long after the creation of its central texts.”

While these works inspire my study, the aspects of authorship that my research emphasizes are different from theirs. As Beecroft mentions, the major concern in his research is the stories of the authors pertaining to textual interpretation; the actual making of texts is excluded from his discussion. What I am interested in, however, includes the actual situations under which early Chinese texts were produced and transmitted as well as how the author functioned in this process. I believe that the formation and transmission of the text, among other aspects, constitute a significant and meaningful part in the study of the development of authorship. To be sure, the theoretical trends since the 1960s have dealt the death knell to the author by defining him as the property of the text and consequently putting him in an empty position. On the other hand, an interpretive framework focusing on the author’s intent emerged fairly early and has exerted tremendous influence on Chinese poetic and narrative hermeneutics. 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 dissertation pays more attention to the material manifestation of the notion of authorship. Recent archaeological discoveries about early Chinese writings have no doubt enriched our understanding of the development of early writings in terms of their form, content, and function. These discoveries link this study of authorship to the actual historical

14 Beecroft 2010, 286.
16 Zhang Longxi 1992, 133—146. I will return to this point later in this introduction.
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.\footnote{Cf. McKenzie 2004.} Our understanding of the expression of authority and individual voice in transmitted literature, therefore, must be connected to the actual conditions behind the forming and re-forming of early texts as well as behind the development of a concept of authorship inseparable from the arrangement of the texts and the alteration of their forms.

In short, the focus on the properties of the author and the noticeable influence of a text’s material form on its literary interpretation characterizes this subject. Two questions run throughout this work: what is the impact of authorship on the interpretation of texts and how are ideas about authorship related, concretely, to the formation and physical transmission of texts in early China? Exploring answers to these questions will lead to a general understanding of what writings meant in early China and how the formation of early Chinese texts differed from contemporary book making.

I.2. What Was a Text in Early China?

Thanks to archaeological discoveries, especially those since the latter half of the 20th century, we can now glimpse the physical forms of Warring States and Early Han texts, or “books,” if we want to discuss these works in their material sense. First of all, most of the excavated early Chinese “books” are written on bamboo or wood slips or silk cloth.\footnote{It is necessary to mention the distinction of 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” means the edition or form of a written work 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}
might have been made and used in the time 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. In many cases, the materials used for writing, among other things, offer telling information about the social status and personal wealth of those who had access to writings. Although the presence of writings in tombs does not in itself 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 the major consumers, if not readers, of the various products of writing. In this respect, Michael Nylan correctly infers that writings found in early tombs functioned, among other burial goods, as items for public display. How to understand the interaction of the patron, the author, the scribe, and the text, not to mention the interpretation of the text, therefore, necessarily requires consideration of this context.

Second, 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. Other titles simply used the names of the given authors, such as the texts

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19 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. For this map, see He Shuangquan 1989, col. pl. 1.


21 Li Ling 1998, 110.
entitled after the names of the masters of teaching lineages, seen in the type of writings known as Masters Literature (zishu 子書). In either case, the titles are the result of later editorial efforts to group and categorize the texts. Their contents, however, could comprise a wide range of materials, at least part of which, I speculate, stemmed from an oral tradition gradually subsumed by writing. As this content that was originally performed and transmitted orally began to coalesce into written form, it turned into our inherited texts that are 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 the author’s intent has to be reconsidered. In other words, if the author turns out to be a set of attributes of the text, as Stephen Owen proposes, the position of the author in its relation to the text, as generally understood, is vacated. This inevitably leads to the nullification of the author’s intent and finally, that of the entire traditional hermeneutics based on the author’s intent. Nevertheless, compilers and editors who actually finalized the written product we now regard as literature filled in this vacated position during the long process in the formation of texts. The identification of the compiler 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 the texts, but the compilers and editors must fill the author’s place, as they were the ones who actually had a role in text making. Even if an author contributed to the process of text making, his intent defined by the historical moment at which a piece of literature was originally conceived becomes unidentifiable by the time the long process of text compiling and editing is complete. In short, in order to gain a meaningful understanding of early

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Chinese authorship, it is necessary to consider fully the position of compilers and editors in traditional hermeneutics, as they may have projected their own intent into their textual amalgams consisting of pieces of texts they selected, categorized, edited, arranged, and rearranged.

Third, archaeological evidence suggests that early Chinese “books” circulated mainly as short units; each manuscript looks more like a short chapter 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. These short writings rarely had titles in their early forms, or, when they were entitled, the titles were usually composed of a few (usually two, as we see in the Analects) characters from the introductory sentence. Brief, anonymous, and without titles, these textual units were somewhat like orphans awaiting 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. 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.

Fourth, 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.24 Such vestiges of the process of textual formation and transmission can be used to identify in a general sense the different traditions

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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 types of teaching traditions at work in the production of a text as well as how compilers reinterpreted certain schools of thinking.

At last, in contrast to the function of most 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. Since the literacy of tomb occupants cannot be attested, we cannot know for certain whether the writings found in their tombs 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 Michael Nylan suggests. Moreover, we ought not to neglect the fact that large-scale production and consumption of texts accompanied the change in religious mentality from the Eastern Zhou period (770—221 BCE) onward. Both the tomb structure and its furnishing began to embrace the 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 world. In this context, the increasing consumption of writings cannot simply be considered a coincidence, and the religious function of early Chinese writing needs to be taken into consideration in dealing with the issue of early Chinese text formation and transmission.


This brief introduction to issues of text formation, formatting, and transmission in early China relies primarily on the belief that “forms affect meaning.” It is reasonable to infer that even in the murky era of oral tradition the meaning of a certain narrative changed when told by different narrators in different places on different occasions. 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.” Human interaction is observable at many points during the long process of text formation as the meanings of 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, rearranged, categorized, and recategorized their collections of written texts; and when transmitted texts were rearranged, reformatted, and supplemented with commentaries, annotations, and corrections. In this process, even errors and interpolations, intentionally or unintentionally introduced into the texts, 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.”

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 early Chinese writings. In this dissertation the meanings in and significance of early Chinese writings are explored through the concept of authorship and its relation to early Chinese text 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. But this dissertation attempts to explore a different dimension of authorship in early Chinese writings. 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 William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley but dramatically deconstructed by Donald McKenzie. As previously discussed, the position of the author in many early Chinese texts 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? Or did they simply not care about it? Was there the concept of authorship in early China? What was an author in early China? If there was a concept of authorship, then how did it function in text making and transmission? To answer these questions, it is necessary to begin with an overview of the author as a concept, especially how it is defined and functions at present.

I.3. What Is an Author?

31 McKenzie 2004, 23.

Taken at face value, the meaning of author seems straightforward despite the controversy surrounding it—considered a divine being by Romanticists, sentenced to death by Roland Barthes, and claimed to have been resurrected by Burke and Irwin.33 Today it conventionally denotes the creator and the owner of a piece of work (or a piece of text as will be the case in this study). The author’s work is both his intellectual and economic property; the author, therefore, receives credit and acclaim and, at the same time, is completely responsible for his product34 Following this understanding of author, authorship naturally turns out to be the set of attributes possessed by an author. In the 1960s Barthes announced “the death of the author,” yet 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 is in contemporary China.

The conventional definition of the author clearly bears the birthmark of literary commodification with its obvious emphasis on ownership and origination.35 For this reason, Barthes, Foucault, and others consider the author as a recent cultural construction inseparable from the commodification of literature.36 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 the exclusive property of the author. What factors led to the formation of this defining feature, and what then, contributes to the idea that the author should be evacuated from his

36 Rose 1993, 1.
position as the creator of the text? These are questions deeply embedded in Western literary
theory, and a closer look at the argument of vacating the author position in modern
hermeneutical theory can help address them, for this argument originated the debate and is at the
heart of the formation of the author.

According to Harold Bloom, the putative emptying-out of the authorial subject, as we see
in the claim of Barthes and others, is linked to the resistance to the transcendental presupposition
regarding the relationship of the author and the text. That is to say, the recent trend of
 evacuating the author from its 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 in the mimetic tradition, the author has already been put in the position of being
completely evacuated. Even though Barthes uses the anti-mimetic rhetoric to legitimate his
declaration of “the death of the author” by proposing an alternative reading in which “only
language acts, ‘performs,’ and not ‘me,’” which successfully avoids the disinterested overtone
of the mimetic objectivity, it does not depart from the inspirational tradition of classical and
medieval theory. According to Medieval theory, the role of originator is not ascribed to the
human author but to the inspiration and authority of divine being or even God. The author is like
the prophet in the act of prophesying, who acts as the “instrumental agent” to serve God, the
“principle agent.” Barthes merely replaces the role of God with that of language, while

37 Bloom 1975, 62.
39 Based on the words of Nicholas of Lyre (c. 1270-1340) quoted by Minnis. See Minnis 1984, 91.
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.” 40 In short, the dichotomous author, i.e., dividing the
author into the role of God and that of prophet, or similarly, into the role of language and that of
“the modern scriptor,” is actually anticipated in the Classical and Medieval traditions. This is
attested by the notion that the inspiration for poetry catches the poet but is inaccessible to him;
this can also be seen in the Biblical exegetical tradition that traces the origin of the text to the
Holy Spirit. Viewed from this perspective, the difference between the radical modern
depersonalization of the author and the Classical and Medieval theories is none other than the
former’s 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 old concept of authorship. The
significant change in the concept of author, suggested by Seán Burke, happened in connection
with the romantic revolution and the eighteenth-century philosophical and aesthetic discourses.

Modern anti-author theory belongs to the romantic tradition and, at the same time, stands against
that same tradition.

As the influence of mimetic theory declined, which first becomes evident in the
Renaissance celebration of Genius, the notion of the 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

40 Barthes 2002, 5-6.

41 Burke 1995, xix.
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.” The emphasis on creative and originating imagination, however, does not exclude inspiration, the term inextricably tied with the divine power and the Medieval tradition. The voice of reconciliation of the authorial subject and the otherness can be heard among romanticists, such as Shelley, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. Even so, the author is no longer the scriptor of the Divine will, but is considered to be imitating the act of creation itself. The author becomes a Creator-God. As Schiller says, “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.”

Transcendent though it may be, the author described by Schiller is at the same time being depersonalized. In other words, the author is identified with the whole work while being totally invisible within the work. The romanticists’ 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. 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 disengaged reason in an era which could no longer see truth as mimaetically grounded or divinely sanctioned.” Here Kant’s “subjective idealism” refers to his

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42 Shelley 1974, 151.
43 Schiller 1988, 156.
44 Abrams 1953, 239-241.
45 Burke 1995, xxii.
claim in the *Critique of Judgment* that all judgments are grounded on subjectivity and thus, the “subjective universality” inevitably appears.46

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 at the same time it celebrates the author as the transcendent genius behind the text. In fact, as the precursors of the modern anti-author theorists, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and others often make their anti-Romanticism statements while presenting themselves as Romanticists of a higher level. New Criticism takes a similar stance by exclusively focusing on the text itself. In this way 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. In fact, 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 reactions against it. First came Friedrich Nietzsche, who challenged Kant’s notion by suggesting a return to the author against the philosophically defined impersonal consciousness. The discourse of authorship, Nietzsche contends, is inalienably personal, but it has been constructed in a self-erasure mode misplacing the author and the reader out of ignorance of the fact that both knowledge and textuality have subjective concerns at their base. Reading the text cannot bypass the author. Nietzsche opens a new path of relocating the

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46 Kant 1952, 50-51.
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 situated activity present not so much as to itself as to culture, ideology, language, difference, influence, biography.\(^4^7\)

Nonetheless, the relocation of the author has yet to be accomplished, even though Nietzsche opened up the postmodern path of approaching authorship a century ago. The reason is simply that contemporary trend of theory pays 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, 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

\(^{4^7}\) Burke 1995, xxvi.
this fundamental category of ‘the-man-and-his-work criticism’ began,” 48 considers authorship a product of the development of the capitalist economy in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 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 to the book market supported by publishers, book-sellers, and, most importantly, a growing number of readers. With success in the flourishing book market came writers’ call for copyright laws to institute their 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 and was intertwined with the Romantic Movement, but the concept of the author was fundamentally economic and statutory in nature and its emergence cannot be solely examined in the late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European philosophical and aesthetic discourse. 49

Stressing the formation of authorship as intertwined with the economic and legal circumstances of the seventeenth-century book market, however, 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. He argues that the concept of author was mentioned 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 the readers, “make money for the bookseller,” and “cross the sea and spread to a distant age the fame of its author.”

Abrams believes Horace’s concept of author 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.”

This survey of the debates on authorship in the Western literary tradition, 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 not extremely complicated, 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 understanding the text. While the Romantics privilege the author’s creativity and imagination with the absolute authority in the interpretation of the text, the poststructuralists aim to free the interpretation of the text from the author’s domination, claiming that the author is dead.

The definition of the author in contemporary China basically transplants the Western legal and economic definition discussed above into its own discourse of modernization, which dates back to the nineteenth century. Although the many contending political ideologies of the past one and a half centuries have led to disputes about the meaning and function of the author,
the legal and economic privileges granted to the author have consistently remained part of the concept. 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 economic shell. In fact, the absolute authorial authority over the text is deeply embedded in traditional Chinese poetics and has to a large extent helped shape modern Chinese understanding of the author and 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.

I.4. What Was an Author 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 τοιχω, emerged fairly early and is not necessarily derived from any concrete meaning suggested by its graphic form. A zuozhe, therefore, is considered the one who creates the text. This interpretation seems to make zuozhe a perfect Chinese translation of auctor, the Latin word for “author,” denoting the “originator,” “founder,” or “creator.” 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 object made with other materials.

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The invention of culture, institutions, and writing is usually associated with semi-legendary figures and those in the remote past who came to be regarded as 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 middle period of early China; and Confucius marks the separation of textual authority from political power in the later period of early China. While this is a useful model for understanding the role writing played in creating authority and for seeing that the sages invented writing, I contend that the literature about the sages does not portray the text 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 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 CE):

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.54

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53 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.

54 *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 15.1:753.
Although Xu Shen traces the origin of writing to Fu Xi, strictly speaking, 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 rather abstract trigrams, therefore, 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 illuminate how the myriad inventions occurred with inspiration from the various hexagrams, which are generated by combining trigrams into pairs. The actual invention of writing as recorded in the preface to the Shuowen jiezi, is ascribed to Cang Jie, the scribe of another semi-legendary sage-king, the Yellow Emperor. The circumstances of the invention of writing as described by Xu Shen clearly associate it with increasing social complexity.

While Cang Jie’s invention of Chinese characters is supposedly derived from the signs made by Fu Xi, the writing system credited to Cang Jie is far more complex than the trigrams. Imitating the patterns, forms, and images of the myriad things, he created the wen graphs; combining the radicals, he made the various zi 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 and silk is referred to as writing; and writing, complying

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55 Zhouyi zhengyi 8:298—302.

56 Shuowen jiezi zhuzhi 15.1:753. The legend regarding Cang Jie’s inventing Chinese characters is also recorded in the Lushi chunqiu lu 呂氏春秋, Huainanzi 淮南子, and Lun Heng 論衡; see Lushi chunqiu jiaoshi 17:1051; Huainanzi jishi 8:571; Lunheng jiaoshi 5:249.
with [what things are]” 著於竹帛謂之書；書者如也。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:

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.

蓋文字者，經藝之本，王政之始；前人所以垂後，後人所以識古。

This statement on the function of graphs and characters, i.e., writing, 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. The public discourse encompasses issues related to forms of governance, cultural affiliations, ritual, history, as well as the transmission and acceptance of shared memory, knowledge, and identity. Authorship in Western Classical and Medieval traditions is also situated in a public discourse; but in the case of early China, authorship is grounded neither on the classical mimetic model nor on the medieval inspirational theory. It deals with a patterned world rather than pure nature; authority originates not from God but from sages. As Confucius says in the Lunyu 論語 (Analects), he “transmits without creating”述而不作. In China, the sages stand between heaven (the transcendental realm) and man (the

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57 Shuowen jiezi zhu 15.1:754.
58 Shuwen jiezi zhu 15.1:763.
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. 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, need not 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 becomes a condition of attribution and its purposes. 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 separation between the author and the writer becomes conceptually necessary in this discussion, especially when we deal with texts attributed to Warring States authors. Generally speaking, 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.  

59 For example, in Han Fei’s *Han Feizi* biography, it says that when the king of Qin used to read some of the writings now incorporated in the *Han Feizi*, he liked them a lot and expressed that he would like to befriend the author of those writings. Li Si then told the king of Qin that it was Han Fei who had written them. See *Shiji* “Laozi Han Fei liezhuan,” 63:2155.
What makes the early Chinese texts unique is 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. In their work, compilers and editors changed the layout of texts and, in doing so, generated new meanings and interpretations of the texts and reshaped people’s understanding of those early writings. Just as the editorial changes influenced the reception of the text 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. In other words, changes in the physical medium, textual format, and contents (including errors and interpolations) reflect both the history of the book and early Chinese intellectual history. And both the history of the book and early Chinese intellectual history can be illuminated through an examination of the roles that the authors (real or hypothetical), writers, compilers, and editors played in the formation and transmission of early Chinese texts.

It also needs to be pointed out that, although the terms “compilers” and “editors” nowadays refers to those who work on texts as a profession, we should not assume that such professions existed in early China. As a matter of fact, I do not exclusively use these terms to refer to ancient textual specialists and officials appointed to the team working on the imperial collection, but instead apply them to anyone who, on any occasion, disassembled, combined, and changed in anyway a text when writing, presenting, or performing it. In this respect, I agree with the way Stephen Owen deals with the formation of early Chinese poetry: we should not consider an early Chinese text a product of a specific moment, rather, it reflects a process of transmission

60 *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1301.
through which it was constantly reproduced and re-formed. Since each remaking led to a specific textual production, either a different form or different interpretation, there is a reason to equate compilers and editors with writers and authors. From this perspective, we may lay aside the concept of the singular author, usually bound with the idea of solitary genius, and try to think about the author as a collective form. As Jack Stillinger suggests, we need to 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.” 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 at hand today. That is to say, the making of early Chinese texts has resulted from a collective effort both in its synchronic and its diachronic senses; the authorship of those texts, correspondingly, ought to be defined as an historical, multi-layered relationship between the author and the text. If the author is defined in any way to have a hand in shaping and reshaping the text, the author must be understood in this plural sense.

I.5. The Author’s Intention and the Bianwei Tradition

But why has the idea of unitary authorship shaped approaches to Chinese text making and the issue of authorship for so long? The answer to this question seems to be found in a basic need of traditional hermeneutics of the Odes. This need is outlined in a debate between Mencius and his interlocutor Xianqiu Meng 咸丘蒙 in the Mengzi 孟子 (ca. 372—289 BCE), when the former

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61 For Owen’s words on the formation of early Chinese poetry, see Owen 2006, 20.

identifies the author’s intention (志) as a determinate factor in the interpretation of an ode. “If, as it is said in the *Odes*, ‘There is no place under heaven that is not within the king’s territory/There is no one within the borders 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 舜 father Gusou 盲叟 (blind old man) was not Shun’s subject after Shun became the king?”

Xianqiu Meng’s question cleverly sets a trap for Mencius. 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:

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.”

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

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63 *Mengzi yizhu* 9.4:198—199; the lines that Xianqiu Meng cites is from the ode “Beishan” 北山; see *Maoshi zhengyi* 13:797.

64 *Mengzi yizhu* 9.4:198—199.
Therefore, 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.\footnote{Mengzi yizhu 9.4:199.}

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，靡有孑遺。信斯言也，是周無遺民也。

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 pointed out, 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 to the poem since they voice the poet’s primary complaint. The second tactic grows out of the first tactic, which equates the poet’s intention with 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) back to the poet’s intention (zhi 志). This privileges the poet’s intention over a literal interpretation, which can actually obstruct the meaning. Mencius illustrates his point with two lines from “Yunhan,” pointing out how it is impossible to take the hyperbolic language of the lines literally as reality obviously contradicts their suggestion.\footnote{Stephen Owen also discusses this passage, see Owen 1992, 24—16.}
Mencius is not alone in equating an ode’s meaning with the poet’s intention; we can also observe this hermeneutic in the “Great Preface to the Odes” (“Shi da xu” 詩大序). One of the most quoted passages says,

Poetry is that to which the intention goes; what is called intention in heart is called poetry when it takes the form of words.67

詩者，志之所之也；在心為志，發言為詩。

A similar idea is also found in the “Shundian” 舜典 chapter of the Documents:

Poetry articulates the intentions, songs intone the articulations.68

詩言志，歌永言。

Whether these two passages underscore a compositional model or a pedagogical purpose is unclear, but I am confident that interpretation is the core issue in 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 having the poet compose a poem to voice his intention. 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 their well-defined meaning. In the Maoshi and other pedagogical traditions, the authority of interpretation automatically derives from the founders of those exegetical traditions, each of whom claimed their orthodox status by

67 Maoshi zhengyi 1:6.
68 Shangshu zhengyi 3:79.
being linked to the scholarly lineage of Confucius, who was supposed to have coded new meaning in the odes through his compiling and editing of them during a time when their originally meaning had collapsed and been abandoned. In this way, Confucius was actually elevated to the author’s position. No matter how different the Qi, Lu, and Mao Shi exegetical traditions might be, as long as they claimed that they were Confucius’ followers, they accepted the meaning intended in the odes by Confucius, and, thus their interpretations of the odes all claim to reflect Confucius’ intention.

For a long time, however, the concept of authorship in the formation and transmission of early Chinese texts seems to have been 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 actually 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 authorship of a text can be figured out, 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’s 梁啟超 (1873—1929 CE), the Weishu tongkao 偽書通考 (Comprehensive Investigation of Forged Writings) by Zhang Xincheng 張心澂 (1887—1973 CE), and Gu Jiegang’s 顧頡剛 (1893—1980 CE) preface and postface to Yao Jiheng’s 姚際恒 (1674—1715 CE) 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.\textsuperscript{69} These works classify texts according to three types of authorship in order to discriminate the authentic from the forgery. The three types 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.\textsuperscript{70} This taxonomy of texts betrays the assumptions about the relationship between authorship and texts 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 assumptions in practice become a gauge for the authenticity of all early Chinese texts, and the authenticity of almost all pre-Qin work was thrown into doubt when filtered through such standards in the early twentieth century.

The limitations of these working assumptions become obvious when applied within the context of pre-Qin text making. As Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 (1884—1955 CE) 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 memorized or taken down by the disciples as class notes, but also consists of what the 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 Jiaxi, 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


\textsuperscript{70} Zheng Liangshu 1986, 12.
presented his work to court to make his name known, or a writer whose contemporaries did not want his name to be forgotten.\textsuperscript{71}

Yu Jiaxi’s observation was made using received texts, but it finds support in recent archaeological finds. Although most of the excavated texts clearly correspond to those larger categories recorded in the “Yi wen zhi” chapter of the \textit{Hanshu} one way or another,\textsuperscript{72} none of them is identified by an author’s name.\textsuperscript{73} These works, ranging from the Warring States to Eastern Han periods, to a large extent represent the nature and form of early Chinese texts. Because of these discoveries, some texts, once regarded as later forgeries by scholars using the author-based \textit{bianwei} methodology, have been proven to be of early origin.\textsuperscript{74} These findings have been so astonishing that a number of leading Chinese scholars now propose to rethink the formation of early Chinese texts and rewrite Chinese intellectual history, which has long been heavily influenced by the “doubting antiquity” and \textit{bianwei} traditions.\textsuperscript{75}

Certainly no movement accomplished more than “doubting antiquity” in freeing thinking from the bonds of canonical scholarship, but the movement’s adoption of \textit{bianwei} methods developed by late Qing scholars such as Cui Shu 崔述 (1740—1816 CE), Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858—1927 CE), and Yao Jiheng fails to provide a valid chronology of transmitted early Chinese texts. Unfortunately, its innovative reconstruction of ancient Chinese history almost exclusively relies upon its flawed chronology. As pointed out above, problems in the chronology

\textsuperscript{71} Yu Jiaxi 1996, 170-178.

\textsuperscript{72} Pian Yuqian and Duan Shu’an 2006, 176-294.

\textsuperscript{73} Li Ling 1988, 109.

\textsuperscript{74} Qiu Xigui takes the \textit{He Guanzi} 鳥冠子 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.

\textsuperscript{75} Li Xueqin 2001, 3-14; 28-33; Xie Weiyang 2007, 3-13; 14-29.
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. Unfortunately, the exclusion of archeological discoveries from the bianwei method kept the working assumptions in place, marrying many of the ideas that “doubting antiquity” scholars sought to prove.

Such author-based bianwei methods, however, still play a major role in projects entangled in the dating of texts and the verification of authenticity. Although some notions about the text as the author’s property are evident in Eastern Han texts, we must bear in mind that a strict correlation between the author and the 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. That is to say, a 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, therefore, is an unsuitable means for dating early Chinese texts. The last chapter of this dissertation offers a detailed case study in this regard by examining the recent effort of early Chinese Buddhist scholars in establishing a chronology for early Chinese translations of Buddhist sutras.

I.6. The Nature of This Study and Chapter Outlines

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76 In the preface to the seventh volume of the *Gushi bian* 古史辨, Gu Jiegang mentions 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 2010.

77 For example, in works by Ban Gu, Yang Xiong, and Wang Chong.

78 Nattier 2008.
Having defined the key terms and methods of this study, we can now return to explain more fully a question raised at the beginning of this introduction: did authorship mean anything to early Chinese who did not usually emphasize the author as the originator of the text? For traditional hermeneutics focusing on the poet’s intention, the author functioned as an interpretive cue to stabilize both the form and the meaning of the text, but was it successful in this regard? It is hoped that this study, by uncovering the concept of early Chinese authorship, will enable us to trace the motives behind the stabilized meanings of early Chinese texts. At the very least, this study will help to improve our understanding of what early Chinese writings were intended to convey.

There is no straightforward answer to whether traditional hermeneutics succeeded or failed in stabilizing the form and meaning of the text. As a linguistic form of communication, a written text is generally intended to be handed down, thereby preserving both its material manifestation and the meaning that it contains. But unlike the immediacy of communication that could be conveyed in speech to the audience through the speaker’s emotional expressions, writing alienates itself by detaching itself from the speech context. Writing allows words to circulate free from the bondage of the voice of the speaker and the context in which they are uttered. Accompanying such freedom, however, is the fluidity of the meaning supposedly deposited into the written words by the author and understood by the “original” reader 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

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writes and the absence of the writer when the reader reads.\footnote{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 texuality developed in Jacques Derrida’s and Roland Barthes’s works. See Derrida 1979; Barthes 1979.} Understanding written words, therefore, does not arise through the words’ mere physical transportation, but, as Gadamer suggests, involves something like translation from one language to another: the autonomy of reading decides 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.”\footnote{Gadamer 2006, 396.} That is to say, we should abandon the notion of some supposed “original” meaning encoded into a text by the author as well as the notion of some supposed “original” reader for whom the meaning was intended. Downplaying the concept of the “original” author is actually rooted in the nature of literary tradition, since, as Gadamer argues, if we define literature as something handed on, “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.”\footnote{Gadamer 2006, 397.}

The negation of the concept of the “original” reader, however, does not imply the loss of meaning; on the contrary, this is how meaning is generated and where meaning is located. In a literary tradition in which “a person who copies and passes on is doing it for his own contemporaries,” 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,
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.”

This passage suggests that not only can a written tradition be understood, but also that, as students working on a written tradition, we also belong to this tradition, “the continuity of memory” shaped by this unique material form—the written words. This dissertation merely studies a small section of “the continuity of memory” of a textual tradition. Since early Chinese authorship is a condition of the attributions made for the purpose of text formation and interpretation, it represents a type of readership following Gadamer’s description. This dissertation, therefore, 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 of the authorship of a handful of early Chinese texts in relation to how those texts were understood in early China. These texts belong to a long textual tradition constantly being interpreted and reinterpreted over time, but the archaeological discovery of many ancient texts has revealed the need to reconsider how this textual tradition has taken for granted stable concepts of author, text, and reader. 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

83 Gadamer 2006, 392.
challenging an age-old hermeneutical tradition that has participated in the shaping of “the continuity of memory” both in the past and the present. Nevertheless, this dissertation aims neither to disapprove early Chinese authorship nor the reading of early Chinese texts envisioned in those early authorial attributions. It, instead, attempts to reveal how an authorial attribution was chosen and under what social and intellectual situations and for what reason an attribution was made. I believe that, even if it is proved that most early Chinese authorial attributions resulted from a misunderstanding, this sort of misunderstanding has contributed to and constituted part of the intellectual history of those texts.

In any case, this project tries to explore the early history of Chinese text making by better understanding the emergence and development of the concept of authorship. The major periods covered in this study, unless mentioned specifically, are often referred to as “early China,” a vague term used mainly for convenience to refer to the Eastern Zhou 東周 (770—221 BCE), the Qin 秦 (221—206 BCE), and the Han 漢 (206 BCE—220 CE) periods. These periods 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 lower elite classes, how texts were collected by local nobles and the imperial library, and how texts could have a range of functions from talisman to imperial governing ideology. The making, dissemination, and use of writings not only began to make Chinese history recognizable and readable, but also made such reading interesting and meaningful.

In addition to the complexity of the process 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. Since its full richness cannot be thoroughly studied and presented in a single project, this dissertation is designed to focus on only
five types of authorship: the author as cultural hero, as the head of a teaching lineage, as patron, as individual writer, and as translator. I illustrate each type by examining an author and a text attributed to him. Each case study, I hope, will offer some potential answers to long-standing questions about the authorship and formation of that specific text; I also hope that each case study may shed light on and provide a guide for understanding similar cases. In the end, I hope that all five case studies will prove helpful in explaining how the concept of the author formed and how the texts should be understood through the author’s relation to early Chinese text formation and translation.

Chapter One discusses the Yellow Emperor as an example of the type of authorship that views the author as 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 tries to answer the following three questions in relation to various intellectual, religious, and political discourses: Why was the Yellow Emperor excluded from the Confucian Classics? Why do the majority of the Yellow Emperor’s writings concern methods, calculation, recipes, and techniques? Why does the Yellow Emperor receive by far and away the most textual attributions of any of the cultural heroes? 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 the Eastern Zhou ritual and religious thought that bears the mark of the ancestral veneration of high antiquity while at the same time 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 Four Classics by the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi sijing 黃帝四經) from the perspective of early Chinese text formation and transmission.
Chapter Two focuses on Confucius (551-479 BCE), the “quotable” author portrayed in the *Lunyu*, to explore the type of author regarded as the head of a teaching lineage. It starts with the ongoing debate in mainland China on Li Ling’s rather provocative 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,”⁸⁴ 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 words. To explain why Confucius has been understood as a sage, this chapter links the sanctification of Confucius to the ideology making in 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 differently in different 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 because he filled the need for a tangible, quotable authority.

Chapter Three is dedicated to the type of author identified as patron, and uses the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 and its owner-author Liu An 劉安 (179—122 BCE) 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, or composed and presented the postface—the “Yaolüe” 要略 (“Summary of the Essentials”) chapter of the *Huainanzi*—to the Han imperial court—even though his precise role in fashioning the text is uncertain. By examining the considerable number of sources documenting Liu An and the *Huainanzi*,—including the *Hanshu* accounts, Gao You’s 高誘 (fl. 205-210 CE) 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 the 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 authorship, as well as the relationship between the patron-author and the actual writers or compilers.

Chapter Four uses Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145/135—86 BCE) to explore the type of author viewed as an individual writer. This chapter starts with an examination of the interpretation of the *Shiji* that places it in an interpretive framework stressing the authorial voice as that which vents the author’s 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 by Sima Qian, were written by Sima Qian. Nevertheless, a careful reading of both accounts reveals 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 and complaints without risk of public exposure by hiding themselves behind a pseudo addresser. This function was closely associated with the more centralized power of the newly established imperial system that diminished an individual’s choice in the civil service in comparison with the Eastern Zhou multi-centered political structure and its looser social control.

Chapter Five examines the author as translator of religious texts by looking at the early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts. It begins with a critique of the methods adopted in Jan Nattier’s recent work on early Chinese Buddhist translation. Nattier’s project aims to offer a clear-cut authoritative chronology for the Buddhist sutras translated into Chinese in the second
and third centuries. Its ambition, however, is considerably compromised by its dating method, which basically consists of using the translator’s biography to date and analyze the sutras. I suggest that the study of early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts must not take the early catalogues of Buddhist translations for granted as unchallengeable historical records of early translated scriptures without first inquiring why and under what circumstances those catalogues were compiled. The clear desire of compilers to differentiate “true,” “authentic” translations from apocryphal sutras was one of the most important factors motivating the cataloguing of translations. This type of action is usually a response to a proliferation of texts and a chaotic situation regarding text making and transmitting, a situation similar to what occurred in the late Western Han imperial library when the court-sponsored rearrangement of the imperial text collection took place. Taking the formation and authorship of the *Sishier zhang jing* 四十二章經 (*Scripture in Forty-two Sections*) as an example, this chapter delineates the complexity of dealing with early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts and suggests that the study of them must consider the culture of early Chinese text making and transmission, especially when dating of texts is involved.
Chapter 1 The Author as Culture Hero: The Yellow Emperor, the Symbolic Author

This chapter deals with the issue of the culture hero, specifically Huangdi 黃帝, or the Yellow Emperor, as author in early Chinese writings. A culture hero by definition is a legendary or mythical inventor of the culture (or of particular cultural creations, such as agriculture, fire, music, or law) of an ethnic or religious group. In a Warring States ritual text, the culture heroes are identified as ancient sage kings who have been commemorated in sacrifice for their devotion to and invention of governance for the good of their people.¹ As the extant early textual records demonstrate, by the late Warring States period (475-221 BCE), the legends associated with the Yellow Emperor and his cultural creations occupied such a significant place in Chinese history that veneration of his cultural inventions continues to influence modern Chinese culture.² 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, an important source documenting, among other things, various cultural inventions as well as their inventors. The inventors of writing were actually Cang Jie 倉頡 and Ju Song 沮頌, allegedly ministers of the Yellow Emperor.³ Indeed, myths related to the Yellow Emperor portray him as a text receiver rather than as a writer.⁴ But this does not prevent two dozen early Chinese texts from being

² Cf. Qi Sihe 1941.
⁴ 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 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.
attributed to him several centuries later in the earliest extant Chinese bibliography, the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 chapter of the *Hanshu* 漢書.

Attributing a text to a culture hero is not unusual, but what is unusual is that the number of texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor vastly outnumbers those attributed to other culture heroes, which is all the more remarkable given that the Yellow Emperor is not classified as one of the Confucian sage kings. For example, Shennong 神農, the Divine Farmer, a sage king who predates the Yellow Emperor according to some accounts, is considered the author of six texts (including one co-authored with the Yellow Emperor). Another Sage king, Fu Xi 伏羲, the inventor of the *bagua* 八卦, the eight trigrams, has only two works ascribed to him if the *Yi* 易, the *Book of Changes*, is included. Attributions to the famous Confucian sage kings Yao 堯, Shun 舜, 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. Yu is considered the author of merely one text, but a note following this text’s entry in the “Yiwenzhi” indicates that this

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5 *Hanshu* “Yiwenzhi,” 30:1730—1731, 1733, 1744, 1759, 1761, 1763, 1765, 1767, 1771, 1776—1779. This statistic does not include the Yellow Emperor’s ministers’ writings, which are usually categorized as “the Yellow Emperor’s writings” (Hudishu 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 1997 (3); Lin Jingmo 2008, 116—118.

6 *Shiji* “Wudi benji,” 3—5.


8 Written as “宓戲” in the “Yiwenzhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*. See *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1779.

9 *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1704, 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, Duke 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.

could have been a false attribution.\(^1\) Although the sage king Ku 禘 outshines the Yellow Emperor as an inventor in the \textit{Shanhaijing} 山海經, the “Yiwenzhi” does not attribute a single text to his name.\(^2\) By comparison, the “Yiwen zhi” credits the Yellow Emperor with twenty-three texts.\(^3\)

Of these texts, however, the editorial notes are careful to point out “false attributions.” “False attributions” are labeled with the Chinese expression \textit{tuo} 托 (or 託) or \textit{yituo} 依托 (or 依託), which I have translated as “false attribution,” but this keyword connotes much more about the nature of the “Yellow Emperor’s writings” than authorship.\(^4\) In a “bianwei” 辨偽 discourse this term is used to distinguish forgeries of presumably authentic ancient Chinese texts. For instance, since the forty \textit{pian Huangdi shui} 黃帝說 (Sayings of the Yellow Emperor) is noted as “unrealistic, bizarre, and falsely attributed [to the Yellow Emperor]”迂誕依托, it must be a forgery of some 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 never exit, identification 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 immediately dismissed as well. Now, in considering the vague and often conflicting representations of the Yellow Emperor and many

\(^1\) \textit{Hanshu} “Yiwenzhi,” 30:1740.

\(^2\) 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 \textit{Shanhaijing}; for a list of those passages about Zhuan Xu, see Xu Bingchang 1946, 56—58.

\(^3\) 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.

\(^4\) \textit{Hanshu} “Yiwenzhi,” 30:1731, 1744, 1759.
other culture heroes in early Chinese writings, few today accept the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor in the “Yiwenzhi” chapter as actually having been written by him; but the Han scholars who left these notes must have thought otherwise since they made the effort to single out particular texts as being “falsely” attributed to the Yellow Emperor. Accepting the sincerity of the bibliographic notes suggests that the Han scholars acknowledged the validity of at least some of the attributions to the Yellow Emperor.\(^{15}\) Indeed, in his writings about the ancient Five Thearchs (Wudi 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 to portray him as an historical figure, although he mentions the strangeness of some of the sayings about the Yellow Emperor that he encountered in the writings of the One Hundred Scholarly Lineages (Baijia 百家) in his time.\(^{16}\)

These issues of authorship raise another question deserving attention: Why did the Yellow Emperor receive so many more attributions than the many other culture heroes? To answer this question, this chapter will first examine the types of texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor and his ministers in the “Yiwenzhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*. I will then discuss how the Yellow Emperor is portrayed in various sources and the relevant Han-dynasty scholarship on these sources. In short, this chapter aims 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 eventually reveal how Eastern Zhou religious, ritual, and cosmological thinking influenced those attributions to the Yellow Emperor.

\(^{15}\) It is true that perhaps the Han authors merely referred to a perceived inconsistency between these texts and what they considered to be the authentic tradition of Huangdi followers in their own time when they left those “false attribution” notes, but what enabled them to do so was none other than the authority presumably from the Yellow Emperor conceived as the originator of that tradition, and, accordingly, the author of the authentic texts.

\(^{16}\) *Shiji* “Wudi benji,” 1:46.
1.1. The Yellow Emperor as Author in the “Yiwen zhi”

In his widely cited classical work on the format of early Chinese writings, Yu Jiaxi points out that later readers, not the “original” writers, retrospectively provided most of the titles of early Chinese texts. Moreover, when texts originally circulating in the form of brief *pian* (chapter) were combined with other *pian* into a larger text, the compiler would trace and attribute the new composite text to the supposed initiator of the thinking presented in the text, even though this ascribed initiator may have not written anything within it. 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.\(^{17}\) 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.\(^{18}\) This assertion also explains why Li Ling treats the writings related to the Yellow Emperor in the “Yiwenzhi” of the *Hanshu* as texts associated with each other in a larger category called the “Huangdi shu” (黄帝書; “the Yellow Emperor’s writings”). The titles attributed not only to the Yellow Emperor but also to his ministers and later followers form a compendium or an anthology of writings loosely grouped around the character of, and stories about, Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor.\(^{19}\)

Although there are uses for broadly grouping the writings associated with the Yellow Emperor and his ministers, we have to beware of how such categorization oversimplifies the issue of textual authorship. Because of the extensive loss of these writings in question, it is

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\(^{17}\) Yu Jiaxi 1996, 179—185.


\(^{19}\) Li Ling 1998, 278.
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. The attributions made by the Han scholars were not groundless to them, no matter how unconvincing they seem to us nowadays. In this light it is reasonable to consider that all the attributions posited in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter highlight features of the texts, otherwise, why endeavor to differentiate one text from another by ascribing them to different authors?

Certainly, archaeologically-recovered texts are increasingly confirming Yu Jiaxi’s assertion that the majority of early Chinese texts lacked both the titles and authors later attached to them. If this was still the situation confronted by the late Western Han scholars led by Liu Xiang 刘向 (ca. 77—6 BCE), Liu Xin 刘歆 (ca. 50 BCE—23 CE), and others in their rearrangement of the imperial collection of texts, how were they able to identify and categorize the brief pian or juan 卷 (fascicle) 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 scholar working with the imperial collection may have had means to ascertain the authorship, oral or written, of the collected texts. How exactly the information pertaining to authorship had been passed on is less than clear, but it seems not to have been a completely insurmountable problem for the Han scholars to overcome. How did they manage to do it?

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20 Pian Yuqian 2006, 87—146.
I suggest that the connections among various intellectual groups, including that of the Western Han scholars in the imperial text-arranging project, engaged in textual production and transmission 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 刘安 (179—122 BCE) and Liu De 刘德 (?—129 BCE), two famous Western Han princes and bibliophiles, are recorded to have presented texts to the imperial court. Both of them are well-known for attracting scholars to their local courts and forming their own intellectual circles engaged in the collection and production of texts. Of course, the texts produced in such circles had their attributions when presented to the imperial court. Similarly, the imperial court scholars also had their own circles. For example, in the postfaces recording relevant information about the edited texts, Liu Xiang usually mentions that the final version of a text was the result of the consideration of a number of versions, only some of which were in the imperial collection at the time, while others were held elsewhere. Those different versions consulted by Liu Xiang and his team not only helped in collating the final version presented to the emperor, but they should have also provided clues 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 transmission and learning, the authorship of the texts presented to the imperial court may have not been an issue to them in the first place. In fact, in the remaining postfaces composed and presented by Liu Xiang to the emperor, Liu does not express difficulty in identifying and ascribing those texts to certain individuals. Nevertheless, this does not mean

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22 Yan Kejun 1985, 331—335; Sun Deqian 1972, 9—12.
that the difficulty was not there, nor does it mean that the titles were fixed with the texts in the first place. The possible situation might be such: although some works lacked titles altogether and other works were not necessarily known by the same title to imperial scholars, the Han scholars were able to find enough information to reach a consensus of opinion about the titles of the collected texts.

So far as the writings associated with the Yellow Emperor are concerned, the attributions of all the texts are also very carefully given. For instance, the Han scholars even attempted to tease out those texts “falsely” ascribed to the Yellow Emperor: some of the notes unambiguously point out that a text entitled with the Yellow Emperor’s name should actually be attributed to some Warring States individual(s). Considering this attention to detail, using the “Huangdi shu” category generally 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” in such broad sense may also 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.24 Some scholars also use the term “Huangdi shu” in their discussion of the four manuscripts found in Mawangdui 馬王堆 Tomb 3.25 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

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23 For an example, see Hanshu “Yiwenzhi,” 30:1733.
25 Li Xueqin; Qiu Xigui 2008, 360.
Li Ling’s 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.26 Except where noted, this table was compiled on the basis of the texts listed in the “Yiwen zhi.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Texts and Their <em>pian</em> or <em>juan</em> Numbers</th>
<th>Notes given in the “Yiwen zhi” Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhuzi lüe 諸子略 (6/9)**</td>
<td>Daojia 道家 (4/5)**</td>
<td><em>Huangdi sijing</em> 黃帝四經 <em>4 pian</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Huangdi ming</em> 黃帝銘 <em>6 pian</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Huangdi junchen</em> 黃帝君臣 <em>10 pian</em></td>
<td>Appearing in the time of the Six States, the text resembles the <em>Laozi</em> (起六國時，與老子相似也).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Za Huangdi</em> 雜黃帝 <em>58 pian</em></td>
<td>Composed by a worthy man during the time of the Six States (六國時賢者所作).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Li Mu 力牧</em> <em>22 pian</em></td>
<td>Composed during the time of the Six States, the 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).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yinyangjia 陰陽家 (1/2)**</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Huangdi taisu</em> 黃帝泰素 <em>20 pian</em></td>
<td>Composed by the various Han noble sons during the time of the Six States (六國時韓諸公子所作).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Rong Chengzi 容成子</em> <em>14 pian</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zajia 雜家 (0/1)**</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Kong Jia pan yu</em> 孔甲盤盂 <em>26 pian</em></td>
<td>[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).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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26 Li Ling 1998, 278.
| Xiaoshuo jia | Huangdi shuo 黄帝說 (40 pian) | Unrealistic, bizarre, and falsely attributed [to the Yellow Emperor] (迂誕依托). |
| Bīng xíng shì | *Chiyou 蚩尤 (2 pian) | See the Lü xing (見呂刑). |
| Huangdi | 黃帝（16 pian） | Including charts 3 juan (圖三卷). |
| *Feng Hu 封胡（5 pian） | [Feng Hu was] the Yellow Emperor’s minister; false attribution (黃帝臣，依託也). |
| *Feng Hou 風後 (13 pian) | Including charts 2 juan. [Feng Hou was] the Yellow Emperor’s minister; false attribution (圖二卷。黃帝臣，依託也). |
| *Li Mu 力牧（15 pian） | [Li Mu was] the Yellow Emperor’s minister; false attribution (黃帝臣，依託也). |
| *Jia Yezi 鶉冶子 (1 pian) | Including charts 1 juan (圖一卷). |
| *Gui Rongqu 鬼容區 (3 pian) | Including charts 1 juan. [Gui Rongqu was] the Yellow Emperor’s minister; false attribution (圖一卷。黃帝臣，依託). |
| Di Dian 地典 (6 pian) |  |
| Bīng jí qiāo | Cuju 蹴鞠 (25 pian) |  |
| Shù shù lüè | Huangdi zazi qi 黃帝雜子氣 (33 pian) |  |
| 天文 | (Huangdi) taijia liufu （黃帝）泰階六符 (1 juan) |  |
| Lipu 歷譜 | Huangdi wujia li 黃帝五家曆 (33 juan) |  |
| Wuxing 五行 | Huangdi yinyang 黃帝陰陽 (25 juan) |  |

27 Wang Yinglin 2011, 268.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Number of Texts/Pieces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*texts allegedly written by the Yellow Emperor’s ministers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**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.</td>
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</table>

**Feng Hou guxu 風后孤虛 (20 juan)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23/37**

Wang Yinglin 2011, 299.
Based on the information in the above table, a few features stand out. First, if entitling a work with the name of a certain figure also suggested its authorship to 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. That is to say, none of the twenty-three texts ascribed to the Yellow Emperor is included in the Confucian *liuyi* 六藝 (six arts) category or the *shifu* 詩賦 (poetry and *fu* rhapsodies) category.

Second, the table indicates that the majority (15 out of 23) of the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor belongs 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*, since one *juan* can contain multiple *pian* writings. The *shushu* and *fangji* texts total 263 *juan* and 33 *pian*, suggesting that the amount of writing in these two categories could have been significantly more than the writing in 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. Ying Shao 應劭 points out in his *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (*Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Habits*) that when Liu Xiang

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29 Sun Deqian 1972, 34.
undertook to rearrange the Han imperial text collection, he “first wrote the rearranged texts on bamboo strips” 先書竹. It has been recognized that making corrections on bamboo strips, by scraping characters from the surface of the strips or by rearranging strips is much easier 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” 上素. Liu Xiang’s practice became a convention that continued through the Eastern Han, and this is why Ying Shao observed that even in his time the texts in the Eastern Pavilion (Dongguan 東覲) “had both their bamboo strip and silk copies” 竹素也. 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 lack copies preserved on bamboo strips, which could imply 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 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 texts on recipes and methods in the medium indicated in the “Yiwen zhi” makes it difficult to detect the exact reasons shushu and fangji writings were predominantly preserved on silk or cloth.

30 Fengsu tongyi jiaozhu “Yiwen,” 494.
31 Fengsu tongyi jiaozhu “Yiwen,” 494.
32 Fengsu tongyi jiaozhu “Yiwen,” 494.
These points raise a number of questions regarding the writings attributed to the Yellow Emperor. Why were the Yellow Emperor texts excluded from the Confucian Classics? What led to the majority of the Yellow Emperor’s writings being those that address methods, calculation, recipes, and techniques? Are these questions related to the question of why so many more works were attributed to the Yellow Emperor than to the other culture heroes? Although the contents of the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor look alien to the Confucian Classics, the Yellow Emperor sometimes appears in anecdotes collected in such texts as the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo Commentaries) 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. But did the Yellow Emperor really have previous forms? The following section addresses the virtual exclusion of the Yellow Emperor from the Confucian Classics and examines what the anecdotes suggest about how the rationalization occurred.

**1.2. Did the Yellow Emperor Have Four Faces?**

According to the *Shizi* 屍子, one day Confucius’ disciple Zigong 子貢 asked the master, “Is it true that in the past the Yellow Emperor had four faces” (古者黃帝四面信乎)? Confucius dismissed the question by indicating that Zigong misunderstands the term “simian 四面.” The master suggests a different, rational reading of this expression:

> The Yellow Emperor summoned four persons who agreed with him and dispatched them to govern the four quarters. They did not plan ahead but remained close to one another, did not contract but
accomplished, and had achieved great success and merits. This is what the term “simian” means.\textsuperscript{33}

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。

However bizarre Zigong’s question may sound, the notion that the Yellow Emperor had four faces does not seem to have been raised out of thin air. There is no extant narrative about a four-faced mythical Yellow Emperor, but the Zigong anecdote leads one to believe that such a narrative was circulating during that time. Otherwise, why would Zigong’s question deserve such a serious response from Confucius? Confucius’ 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.\textsuperscript{34}

The rationalization at work in the transmission of the Huangdi stories makes unifying the depiction of the Yellow Emperor difficult. If one aims to present a consistent image of the Yellow Emperor, this task requires not only the rationalization of all the Huangdi myths, but also the eradication of all the pre-rationalized myths to remove all those incompatible sayings and accounts from the repository of the Huangdi lore. Moreover, the reinterpretation of the Huangdi stories that resulted from such rationalization by different groups in different circumstances

\textsuperscript{33} Shizi yizhu, 67.

\textsuperscript{34} 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.
further complicates the consistency of the Huangdi lore.\textsuperscript{35} Such diversity of sources seems to have confronted the Grand Historian when he had to choose among available sources to compile the Yellow Emperor’s biography.

In terms of structural organization, the \textit{Shiji} account about the Yellow Emperor begins with the protagonist’s genealogy and his extraordinariness, even as a youth; then it delineates his achievements before ending with information regarding his death and progeny. Although the narrative is included in the “Benji” 本紀 (“Basic Annals”) section of the \textit{Shiji}, the structure of the story of the Yellow Emperor resembles that of a \textit{Shiji} biography. The \textit{Shiji} uses the biographical structure to present the first comprehensive image of the Yellow Emperor, one that depicts him as the founding father of the Chinese civilization flourishing at the time the \textit{Shiji} was compiled. Thus, the Yellow Emperor’s military accomplishments, i.e., his defeat of the Flame Emperor and Chi You 蚩尤, consequently saved a large domain from the chaotic rule of his predecessor, the Divine Farmer, and he became the starting point for human history as explored by the Grand Historian.\textsuperscript{36}

The Grand Historian’s comments at the conclusion of the chapter on the Yellow Emperor and the other four ancient Thearchs, however, indicate that the historicized Yellow Emperor is not the Thearch’s only image. He indeed had other “faces” preserved in those materials that the Grand Historian intentionally excluded from his writing on the Yellow Emperor, as he says:

\textsuperscript{35} Nakajima Toshio 中島敏夫 mentions 39 Han and pre-Han texts in which the Yellow Emperor’s name appears at least 1 time. 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.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Shiji} “Wudi benji,” 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 his letter to Ren An preserved in his biography in the \textit{Hanshu}; Hanshu “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2735.
Men of learning frequently mention the Five Thearchs and consider them ancient. Nevertheless, the \textit{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, which are difficult for gentlemen to talk about. Among what Confucius transmitted in replying to Zai Yu’s question on the virtues of the Five Thearchs as well as their lineages and clans, some has not been transmitted by 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 those that do not deviate from the ancient writings are close to the truth. I have observed that the \textit{Spring Autumn Annals} and \textit{Discourses of States} have noticeably elucidated the \textit{Virtues of the Five Thearchs} as well as the \textit{Lineages and Clans of the Thearchs}, even though I have not examined them in depth; what they present is not empty at all. The \textit{Documents} has remained incomplete for a while, yet what is not included in the \textit{Documents} frequently appears in other sayings. [One cannot know them] unless he is fond of learning, thinks deeply, and understands their meanings with his heart; it is indeed difficult to talk about them with those who lack experience and knowledge. I have discussed them all in order; choosing those words that are refined and elegant, I put them in the beginning of my writings as the \textit{Basic Annals}.\footnote{\textit{Shiji} “Wudi benji,” 1:46.}
to both “elegant” and “inelegant” materials, but he left out the “inelegant” materials for their lacking the canonicity of the more “elegant” Confucian Classics. What constituted “inelegant” information in the view of the Grand Historian? According to this passage, it consisted of both the sources related to the teachings of the Hundred Lineages and legends and myths orally circulated by seniors and elders as memory of the past. Bizarre details such as the belief that the Yellow Emperor had four faces must 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 “those words that are refined and elegant” to portray his version of the Yellow Emperor.

The second principle for selecting sources is closely associated with the first and requires the Grand Historian to offer further explanation. The Grand Historian’s decision to base the biography on the “Wudide” 五帝德 and the “Dixixing” 帝系性, the authoritative teachings supposed to have been passed down from Confucius through his disciples, requires the additional support of related information about an historical Yellow Emperor from other Confucian Classics, especially the Documents, the work considered the most reliable collection of materials about ancient kings and ministers. What made the Grand Historian uneasy is that the Yellow Emperor is not mentioned in the Documents at all. Instead, this collection of speeches and documents ascribes the beginning of a civilization ruled by the innovations of ancient sage kings not to the Yellow Emperor, as the Shiji does, but to Yao, another sage ruler who greatly postdates the Yellow Emperor according to the genealogy in the “Wudide,” which is also included in the Shiji account. This puts the Grand Historian’s historicization of the Yellow Emperor on unstable ground: his painstaking effort to exclude “inelegant” sayings is rendered moot because of this contradictory genealogy in the Documents, even though in reality he
consulted “ancient writings” (guwen 古文) to tease out “those words that are neither refined nor elegant.” This dilemma inevitably compromises the Grand Historian’s methods for evaluating and selecting materials to present an historical Yellow Emperor in his writing.

This leads to the last point about this passage I would emphasize. Aware of the above-mentioned dilemma, the Grand Historian offers a two-fold explanation for the stance he takes. On the one hand, “The Documents has remained incomplete for a while.” This statement indicates that he trusts the “Wudide” and believes that the Yellow Emperor is indeed the starting point of Chinese history even though this position is not verified by the Documents. The Yellow Emperor’s absence in the Documents could be due to the lack or the loss of written records. On the other hand, the Grand Historian finds that “what is not included in the Documents frequently appears in other sayings” of reliable texts like the Spring and Autumn Annals and the Discourses of States, which “have noticeably elucidated the Virtues of the Five Thearchs as well as the Lineages and Clans of the Thearchs.” 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 (at least according to this passage) Documents.

The Grand Historian’s historicization of the Yellow Emperor has influenced not only the interpretation of the Yellow Emperor’s 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

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38 According the commentaries, the term “guwen” denotes to the “Wudide” and the “Dixixing.” Nevertheless, if the word “gu,” or “archaic,” does play 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 “Wudi benji,” 1:46.
accepted as historical evidence and are fundamental in structuring, depicting, and interpreting an historically undocumented past. Although historians of the “doubting antiquity” persuasion have pointed out that the Yellow Emperor is a legendary or mythological figure, his stories are still tailored to match or interpret archaeological finds. To be sure, nowadays his image as an historical individual seems less appealing 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 is archaeologically traceable, but the premise of this view undoubtedly rests upon the historicization of the Yellow Emperor initiated in the *Shiji*.³⁹

Despite its lasting influence, the Grand Historian’s approach to the Yellow Emperor has a noticeable limit. His arbitrary method for omitting the “inelegant” sources when trying to historicize the Yellow Emperor results in an incomplete image of this figure, which inevitably affects the search for the rationale behind the phenomenon of the Yellow Emperor’s sudden rise in popularity since the Eastern Zhou period. Try as he may, the Grand Historian cannot obliterate competing images of the Yellow Emperor. One of his important sources, the “Wudide,” at times betrays the historicized image presented in the *Shiji*. For example, the description of the Yellow Emperor is initiated in this text when Confucius’ disciple Zai Wo’s 宰我 questions the sage about the Yellow Emperor’s abnormal longevity:

> 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 is indeed a human]?⁴⁰

³⁹ Many works approach both related textual and archaeological data in this similar vein, however different some of details might be. Cf. Xu Shunzhen 2005; Liu Qiyu 1991, 1—73; Yin Shengping 2005, 115—118.

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？

Zai Wo’s question is comparable to Zigong’s question about the Yellow Emperor’s four faces. Both of them question the superhuman characteristics of the Yellow Emperor. As when handling Zigong’s question in the Shizi, here in the “Wudide” Confucius interprets his disciple’s question within an ethical framework. After repeating almost verbatim some of the information included in the Yellow Emperor’s Shiji account, Confucius explains:

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 hears. For this reason, people say that [the Yellow Emperor lived] for three hundred years.41

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。

In answering his disciples’ questions, Confucius uses the same method to rationalize the old sayings mentioned 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’ rationalizations to historicize and moralize the old sayings. For instance, in demythicizing the saying 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 actual governing skills and his virtue of being willing to share power with others. Similarly, in explaining how the

41 Da Dai liji huijiao jijie “Wudide,” 62:690.
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 ask about it, but in a text preceding one of the versions of the Laozi 老子 on one of the silk manuscripts found at Mawangdui 马王堆 Tomb 3, the Yellow Emperor is literally depicted as having four faces. According to this account, these four faces enabled the Yellow Emperor to observe the four quarters and to collect information more efficiently than normal people, thereby allowing the Yellow Emperor to make more informed policies and to conduct the affairs of state with greater understanding of the conditions of the people: “he was therefore able to act as the model of all under heaven” 是以能為天下宗. Similarly, it is not surprising that in various sources the Yellow Emperor appears as a god-like figure associating with or commanding dragons, monsters, beasts, ghosts and spirits, or wind and rain gods either in ritual occasions or in battle. Even the Shiji preserves this image of a divine Yellow Emperor in the “Fengshan shu” 封禪書. 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 BCE) how the Yellow Emperor ascended to heaven as an

42 Chen Guying 2011, 196.

43 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 纂書 writings, and the zhuzi 诸子 writings considered inelegant by the Grand Historian. For examples on how the Shanhaijing depicts the Yellow Emperor, see Mori Yasutarō 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 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.
immortal. This account also reflects how different images of the Yellow Emperor circulated in different circles of learning. In fact, Yang Kuan 楊寬 points out that the name Yellow Emperor, or huangdi 黃帝, was derived from the general term “huangdi” 皇帝 (august god) because of the similar Old Chinese pronunciations of “yellow” 黃 *wâŋ and “august” 皇 *(g) wâŋ; therefore, the stories surrounding the Yellow Emperor and other sage kings all evolved out of the myth of this “august god.”

In short, the image of a mythical Yellow Emperor has to be included into the consideration 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 certainly lend authority and credibility to the texts under his name. His divine powers are more relevant to the nature of the contents in the texts attributed to him since 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 those principal numbers and patterns and issues of divinity and immortality. In this sense, it is only the mythical aspects of the Yellow Emperor that qualify him to author fangji and shushu writings.

On the other hand, 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 likely to survive if the knowledge proves efficacious. In the few surviving texts associated with the Yellow Emperor, such as the Huangdi

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45 Yang Kuan 1941, 195—206.
neijing 黃帝內經 (The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine) and texts dealing with
sex 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 receiver of
a divine text from a goddess. The presence of the Yellow Emperor as a human being in these
texts is not only associated with the revelation of secret texts, 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.
How did the historicizing and moralizing of the Yellow Emperor occur? This question can only
be answered by examining the various sources dealing with the Yellow Emperor and by
considering the dating of such sources. While dating a text or a passage within a text often
amounts to a leap of faith, close analysis usually benefits our understanding of both the text and
its contents. The following section analyzes the most oft-cited passages regarding the Yellow
Emperor.

1.3. The Yellow Emperor in Persuasion


47 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 descendents 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; 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” 陳候因齊
d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 1981, 75—83, 144.
One frequently cited passage about the origin of the Yellow Emperor appears in the *Discourses of States*. It says that on the eve of the Jin 晉 prince Chong’er’s 重耳 (r. 636—628 BCE) 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, Huai Ying 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 planned 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:

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 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, when their men and women match each other, will successfully generate offspring.48

昔少典娶于有蟜氏, 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。

48 *Guoyu* “Jinyu,” 4:356.
This passage, likely one instance of the euhemerization of the Yellow Emperor, names both the Yellow Emperor’s biological parents and the place where he succeeded, even though none of this information can be verified. 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 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 under debate. 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 CE), 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, the alleged ancestor of the Zhou according to the song “Shengmin” 生民. Later this Ji tribe migrated from Shanxi to Bin 邠 and then to the place called “Zhouyuan” 周原 (the plain of Zhou) in Shaanxi 陝西 province, which became its new base and from which it threatened the western border of the Shang 商 (ca. 1600—1046 BCE) domain as it grew in power.


50 Han Jianye and Yang Xingai 2006, 53—54.


A number of other sources agree with the *Guoyu* passage and add to its information.\(^{53}\) For example, both the *Shiji* and “Wudide” suggest that the Yellow Emperor was also called Xuanyuan 軒轅, and Huangfu Mi 皇甫諤 (215—282 CE) explains that he was named such because he was born on Mount Xuanyuan.\(^{54}\) Based on phonological similarities between the Chinese terms *gui* 龜 *kwrə* and *ji* 姬 (*kjə*), *xuanyuan* 軒轅 *hŋan wan* and *tianyuan* 天鼋 *thîn ŋwan*, as well as on the provenance of some of the bronzes marked with the symbol *tianyuan* 天鼋, which is interpreted as the family emblem of the Yellow Emperor, some modern scholars, for instance, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Yang Xiangkui 楊向奎, have proposed that the Yellow Emperor 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.\(^{55}\)

The *Guoyu* passage cited above also mentions the conflict between the Ji and Jiang tribes, which seem to denote the battle between the Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor (Yandi 炎帝)\(^{56}\) 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,\

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\(^{54}\) Da Dai liji huijiao jijie “Wudide,” 62:689; *Shiji* “Wudi benji,” 1:5.

\(^{55}\) 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 2002(1), 16—22; Guo Moruo 2002(2), 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” 涿鹿之戰 (Zhuolu zhi zhan) 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.

\(^{56}\) Sometimes also referred to as Chidi 赤帝, the Red Emperor, as seen in the cited sentence that follows.
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” 教熊貔貔豹虎，以與赤帝戰於版泉之野，三戰然後得行其志.57 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. 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,58 but it narrates the details of another battle—the “Battle of Zhuolu”—immediately following its account of the “Battle of Banquan.” In the narrative about the “Battle of Zhuolu,” Chi You 蚩尤, often depicted as a beast-like war hero in a number of sources, was captured and killed in the field of Zhuolu for disobeying the Yellow Emperor.59

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 punishment (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, starts as follows:

In the past at the beginning of heaven, two rulers were established; 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


58 Shiji “Wudi benji,” 1:5.

59 Shiji “Wudi benji,” 1:5.
Chi You then expelled the Emperor and the two competed by the Zhuolu River, leaving nowhere within the nice 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 released the anger toward Chi You with armors 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, was appointed as Minister of War and Master of Bird to command the officials of the five elements; therefore he was also called Zhi. Heaven thus accomplished its work, lasting till nowadays without being disturbed.

昔天之初，作二后，乃设典，命赤帝分正二卿，命蚩尤宇于少昊，以临四方，司上天未成之慶。蚩尤乃逐帝，争于涿鹿之河，九隅无遗。赤帝大懾，乃說于黄帝，執蚩尤殺之于中冀，以甲兵釋怒。用大正，順天思序，紀于大帝，用名之曰絕轡之野。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。

Despite its vague wording and poor organization, this passag 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—if he can be equated with the Red Emperor as

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61 Most commentators tend to consider “請” as “清,” name of Shao Hao. See Huang Huaixin et al 2007, 7734—7736.

62 The term “五帝” is interpreted as the five elements with the reference from Shanzhi’s 删子 speech recorded in the Zuozhuan. See Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu Zhao17.3:1386—1388.

63 Huang Huaixin et al 2007, 730—736.

64 Character missing.

65 Two characters missing.
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 synthesisization of the Huangdi lore, which elevated the Yellow Emperor to the role of the central protagonist in Chinese legendary history. 66 No doubt in assisting the Red Emperor to punish Chi You, the Yellow Emperor accomplishes what heaven had commanded the erhou 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—violence is necessary for the restoration of peace from chaos—remains consonant 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. The Zhou king’s reference to the Yellow Emperor’s defeat of Chi You in the “Changmai” pian of the Yi Zhoushu, invokes to this principle of statecraft.

The “Changmai” version of the Yellow Emperor’s story is considered fairly early. Li Xueqin 李學勤 observes that the wording of the “Changmai” greatly resembles early Zhou bronze inscriptions, which suggests that the “Changmai” could have taken its written form by King Mu’s 穆王 reign (r. 956—918 BCE), if not as early as King Cheng’s 成王 time (r. 1042/35—1006 BCE) as suggested in the postface of the Yi Zhoushu. 67 Li’s article aims to relate the “Changmai” to Western Zhou legal writings, particularly those mentioned in the Zuozhuan as the “Nine Punishments” (“jiu xing” 九刑). But Li’s article does not provide any substantial

66 Huang Huaixin et al 2007, 731.
67 Li Xueqin 1999, 575. For the related information in the postface of the Yi Zhoushu, see Huang Huaixin et al 2007, 1133.
evidence proving his speculation; his dating of the “Changmai” to King Mu of Zhou is especially untenable as there are not enough specifics in the “Changmai” that link it to the early Western Zhou King Zhao’s 周昭王 (r. 995—977 BCE) southern campaign, as Li surmises. As a matter of fact, Li recognizes those expressions anachronistic to Western Zhou writing conventions that undermine his early dating of the passage. A final blow to Li’s dating is delivered by Zuozhuan passages that indicate the creation of legal writings is a later occurrence. The use of the phrase “rectifying writings of punishment” 正刑書 in the “Changmai” appears to be an Eastern Zhou phenomenon when considered in light of the more concrete evidence of its historical context in the Zuozhuan. Interestingly, such a dating accords with Li Xueqin’s dating of the less archaic expressions in the chapter, which he considers to be Eastern Zhou interpolations. I maintain that the Zuozhuan narratives suggest that those less archaic expressions are not later interpolations; instead, they betray the later date of the composition of the “Changmai” chapter.

To attest to the reliability of Sikong Jizi’s statement about 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 in the Qinghua 清華 University collection of Warring States bamboo strips, and comparing it with its use in the “Changmai” of the Yi Zhoushu, he argues that both the “Changmai” and the “Baoxun” are written records passed down from the Western Zhou dynasty. Moreover, by

68 Li Xueqin 1999, 575.

69 Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 6.3:1274—1277. 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 “Punishment of Yu” (Yuxing 禹刑), the “Punishment of Tang” (Tangxing 唐刑), and the “Nine Punishment (writings)” (jiu xing 九刑) 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.
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 *Zuo zhuan*, 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 what is depicted in this text is also incredibly early and historically reliable.70

Despite his strong convictions, Wang Hui’s argument is flawed. To interpret the character “zhong” as a burial banner on the basis of information in such later texts as the *Liji* and *Yili* 儀禮 proves neither the “Baoxun” nor the “Changmai” to be an early text. Moreover, Wang Hui himself is aware of the conflicts surrounding the interpretation of the character “zhong”. Indeed, the different uses of the character “zhong” within the “Baoxun” only reflect how complex this issue is, which certainly compromises the “Baoxun” as evidence of the reliability of the “Changmai” as an early source. Also, the connection of the “Changmai” to some 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 and how its meaning changed over time. For example, I contend that he should not have excluded from his argument how the number “five” is related to the development of the theory of “five elements” in the Warring States period. A final shortcoming of Wang Hui’s argument is his assertion that the *di* 禘 sacrifice could only be performed by hegemonic rulers in order to explain why the Chen 陳 rulers had not offered the *di* sacrifice to the Yellow Emperor before they usurped the Jiang Qi family.71 The *Zuo zhuan* suggests otherwise. The *di* sacrifice

70 Wang Hui 2009, xi—xvii; for Shao Hao’s naming his officials, see *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* Zhao17.3: 1386—1388; for the “Baoxun” bamboo strips and text, see Li Xueqin 2010, 8—9; 55—62; 142—148.

71 Wang Hui 2009, 8—9. Here Wang Hui refers to the contents of the bronze inscriptions on the “Chenhou Yin Qi dui” 陳侯因齊敦 which is to be discussed in more detail in next section of this chapter.
consisted of two seasonal and ancestral offerings, and the right to present the *di* sacrifice to one’s ancestor was not merely limited to hegemonic rulers. For example, the state of Lu had never achieved hegemonic status, but its rulers presented *di* sacrifices to its deceased lords.

Instead of singling out different versions of the Huangdi story in different sources and emphasizing their historical value, I prefer reading them within their contexts. Take, for example, the two stories about the Yellow Emperor related in speeches by Sikong Jizi and the king of Zhou in the *Guoyu* and the *Yi Zhoushu*, respectively. If we suppose that the speeches were actually delivered by Sikong Jizi and the Zhou king, then how important is it to them whether the story about the Yellow Emperor is actually true?

Starting with Sikong Jizi’s speech, he informs us that the Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor were brothers, but because they grew up in different places, they developed different virtues. Because of these different “virtues,” they had to use force to deal with each other. If this has anything to do with the Battle of Banquan, a decisive battle won by the Yellow Emperor, it indicates that, after its defeat, the Jiang clan submitted to the Ji clan. Certainly, the “Shengmin” describes the Ji Zhou and the Jiang as longtime allies and praises the Jiang for helping in the ascendancy of the Zhou, 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 the Zhouyuan area, traditionally the Jiang clan’s territory.

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72 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao* 15.1:1369; see both the main text of the Zuo Commentaries and the notes by Yang Bojun.

73 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Min 2; Zhao 15; Zhao 25; Ding 8.

Interpreting 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 illustrated parallel relationships:

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Every point in the story regarding the relationship between the Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor corresponds to a parallel relationship between the states of Jin and Qin, and this correspondence highlights the thrust of Sikong Jizi’s speech for his intended audience. Sikong Jizi argues 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 descendents 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.
Seeking the historical factuality of the statements in stories about the Yellow Emperor misses the point of such stories. Sikong Jizi was concerned about the persuasive effect, not the accuracy, of the comparison he makes between the legend about the Yellow Emperor and the situation facing Chong’er. Although some scholars insist on the historical truthfulness of Sikong Jizi’s statements about the Yellow Emperor because his statements are part of a chain of oral transmission extending back to a distant past, it is impossible to determine how far into the past this chain extends, not to mention, how the narrative in question is actually linked to it. 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 allegedly grew up. Such difficulty is largely caused by the flawed assumption that all the sources record historical facts about the Yellow Emperor that can be pieced together without regard for their textual contexts to create a unified and accurate image of the history of the Yellow Emperor. The conflicting information presented in different sources, however, leads us to question the validity of the assumption. In fact, if we try to extract historical information about 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 in the vicinity of the Ji River with the territory of Jin. In other words, the precise location, let alone the actual existence, 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 mention the Yellow Emperor’s fighting against the Flame Emperor, but unlike the latter, the “Wudide” says nothing about the Battle of Zhuolu. The Shiji describes the “Battle of Banquan” and the “Battle of Zhuolu” as separate events, in each of
which the Yellow Emperor appears as the initiator and the eventual victor. In the “Changmai” of the *Yi Zhoushu*, however, the Flame Emperor and Chi You are the central characters, the two rulers appointed by heaven. The Yellow Emperor is portrayed merely as an assistant of the Flame Emperor, and there is no indication, as other sources claim, that the two engaged in a major battle with one another at Banquan. Interestingly, another chapter in the *Yi Zhoushu*, the “Shi jie” 史記解, even suggests that it was Chi You instead of the Flame Emperor who fought the Yellow Emperor at the “Battle of Banquan,” which would explain why this chapter refers to Chi You as “Sir Banquan” (Banquanshi 阮泉氏). Moreover, the *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 cites an earlier text to confirm this notion that Banquan is closely related to Chi You. Another geographical source even suggests that Banquan was also called Huangdiquan 黃帝泉 (Spring of the Yellow Emperor), while Zhuolu was the Yellow Emperor’s capital city. In synthesizing all the information, some scholars conclude that Banquan is located in the same area as Zhuolu and that the “Battle of Banquan” was none other than the Battle of Zhuolu. In short, what all these sources preserve is nothing but a narrative framework about “emperors” and battles in which the line between the memory of real events and an imagined past is almost impossible to draw.

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75 Huang Huaixin et al 2007, 965—966.
76 *Shuijing zhu shu* 1184—1186.
77 *Shiji* “Wudi benji,” 1:5.
78 Qian Mu 1991, 10; Liang Yusheng 2006, 3—4.
79 Some scholars attempt to solve this problem with the support of archaeological data. For example, Han Jianye 韓建業 and Yang Xingai 楊新改 believe that the Miaodigou 廟底溝 and Hougang 後岡 archaeological cultures in nowadays 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 枣園 culture in Shanxi and the Banpo 半坡 culture at Guanzhong 關中 area. This kind of match obviously accepts the interpretation on the locations of the three ancient groups provided by textual information as pre-knowledge. Archaeological cultures do not explain specific historical events or herorical biographies. For this reason, K. C. Chang laments that
If, however, we read the story about Chi You, the Red Emperor, and the Yellow Emperor related in the Zhou king’s speech 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. Keep in mind that the “Changmai” is a work devoted to the establishment of a series of laws relating to punishment. Since the real 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. For this reason, 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 he 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 in the life of the Yellow Emperor 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 king. As has hopefully been illustrated with the preceding discussion, anecdotes about 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 is a rearrangement of scattered, historicized information within a fixed narrative framework. Such biographical writing itself is not history. As K. C. Chang points out in his study

most of the pre-Shang legendary history cannot be proved by archaeological data. Chang 2005, 287; for Han’s and Yang’s idea, see Han Jianye and Yang Xingai 2006, 154—156.
on the Shang and Zhou myths, the primary approach to the Shang and Zhou myths is to view them as myths created to fill the need of their own times; these myths do not reflect the life of earlier societies even though their contents may claim so.80 The same can be said for the Yellow Emperor’s biographical account in the *Shiji*. Its historical value is not as a factual record of the times of the Yellow Emperor, but as a reflection of the Western Han scribes’ view of the Yellow Emperor. Likewise, the sources upon which the Han Grand Historian relied are a better record of how Eastern Zhou people viewed the Yellow Emperor than of who the Yellow Emperor actually was. Instead of studying an “historical” Yellow Emperor, we need to examine how he was received during the Eastern Zhou and early imperial periods. The remaining sections 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 with particular attention to a changing socio-political environment, religious mentality, and way of thinking.

1.4. The Yellow Emperor Associated with Violence and Statecraft

Let us begin this section with the mention of the Yellow Emperor on a *dui* 鼎 bronze vessel made by King Wei of Qi 齊威王 (r. 357—320 BCE) for his deceased father. King Wei of Qi is called “Chenhou Yinqi” 陳侯因齊 (Marquis Yinqi of Chen) in the inscriptions. Therefore, this *dui* food vessel is commonly known as the “Chenhou Yinqi dui.” The inscriptions have been intensively studied since the 1920s and are still frequently cited as one of the most important sources for the study of the Yellow Emperor.81 Dated to the mid-4th century BCE by Xu

80 Chang 2005, 288.

Zhongshu 徐仲舒, who first recognized the name of Huangdi in the inscriptions, this vessel’s inscriptions are the earliest among the datable sources pertaining to the Yellow Emperor.\footnote{Xu Zhongshu 1998, 412—431, 438. We need to be aware of the typo appearing in the Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 version of this article, saying that the Yinqi duì was commissioned in 375 BCE (p. 434). In consulting with what Xu says in its previous section, the Yinqi duì should be dated in the year of 357 BCE. See Xu Zhongshu 1998, 425, 427.} 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 and to legitimize their usurpation of the Jiang Qi 姜齊 ruling house. The Tian Qi family members were the descendants of the former Chen 陳 ruling house, which saw itself as the descendants of Shun, who is connected to the Huangdi lineage according to the “Dixi” in the \textit{Da Dai liji}.\footnote{\textit{Da Dai liji huijiao jijie} “Dixi” 63:737; \textit{Shiji} “Tian Jiangzhong Wan shijia,” 46:1879—1904.} Therefore, by claiming to be the progeny of the Yellow Emperor, the newly enthroned Tian Qi family aimed to evoke the memory of the Yellow Emperor’s subduing the Flame Emperor, the ancestor of the Jiang lineage. In other words, the “Battle of Banquan,” as narrated in the \textit{Shiji}, is used to insinuate the Tian Qi ruling house’s inevitable succeeding to power. What is more interesting in this regard is the suggested connection between the emergence of the Huangdi myth and the Jixia 稷下 scholars under the patronage of Tian Qi family, to wit, the Huangdi myth might have been invented by the Jixia scholars to legitimize Tian Qi’s usurpation.\footnote{Cf. Xu Zhongshu 1998; Dingshan 2006, 154—178; Zhong Zongxian 2005, 127—178; Lewis 1990, 165—212; Mori 1970, 149—174; Lin Jingmo 2008, 118—120.} According to this view, the Huangdi myth, although claimed ancient, was not old at all. People’s “memory” of the past, in this case, became a myth itself: it was no more than the byproduct of the political propaganda very well 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, which follows,

Now let me, 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.85

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。

The assertion of the Yellow Emperor as the ruling house’s progenitor is obvious in this inscription, but there remains the difficulty of accounting for the sudden need for the Tian Qi ruling house to make such a claim. According to the extant sources, none except for the “Chenhou Yinqi dui,” if we agree with Xu Zhongshu’s interpretation, connects the Gui-surnamed (媯) Chen to the Ji-surnamed Yellow Emperor. The Zuozhuan only traces the Chen to Zhuan Xu 頓頊, who was one of the grandsons of the Yellow Emperor according to the “Dixi.”86 In the Shiji, the ancestral origin of the Chen only begins with Shun 舜.87 Considering that even the Zhou royal family, which shared the Yellow Emperor’s surname, did not recognize the

85 Mainly based on Xu Zhongshu’s interpretation, see Xu Zhongshu 1998, 409—412. The Chinese characters are standardized by the author.

86 Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 8.6:1304—1305; Da Dai liji huijiao jijie “Dixi” 63:737.

87 Shiji “Chen Qi shijia,” 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 the power. He attempts to prove that the Tian Qi ruling family’s identifying themselves as the descendents 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 on the unstable 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.
Yellow Emperor as its progenitor—its ancestry was only traced to Ji 稷, the God of Millet—we need to weigh carefully why the “Dixi” and the *Shiji* exalt the Yellow Emperor as the ancestor of almost all the Eastern Zhou states. Even if the notion that the Yellow Emperor was the forefather of all the states was formed long ago, the available evidence suggests that a state preferred to trace its own ancestry back to a unique progenitor. In fact, the Yellow Emperor had his own descendants to sacrifice to him. A number of sources confirm that, after conquest of the Shang, King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (r. ca. 1046—1043 BCE) enfeoffed the offspring of the Yellow Emperor in Zhu 鑄 (or 祝) or Ji 薊 to maintain their ancestral sacrifices, just as he had also helped the descendants of Shennong 神農, Yao 堯, and other sage kings preserve their sacrifices by awarding them domains to support the ancestral temple. Moreover, what effect would Yinqi’s evoking the Yellow Emperor really have, then, if he was trying to claim legitimacy with the name of an ancestor whom anyone else could rightfully claim as ancestor? In a word, the fact that all extant textual sources lack evidence of a direct link between the Chen house and the Yellow Emperor compromises reading “gaozu Huangdi” as Yinqi’s means to legitimize the Tian Qi ruling family’s usurpation of the Jiang Qi.

In fact, the above rendering of the passage about the Yellow Emperor in the Yinqi *dui* inscriptions merely reflects one way of reading it. Guo Moruo offers a different reading in his famous *Liang Zhou jinwenci daxi kaoshi* 兩周金文辭大系考釋. He challenges interpreting the term *gaozu* 高祖 as “high ancestor;” instead, he considers the phrase “gao zu Huangdi” 高祖黃

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帝 to be parallel to “mi si Huan Wen” 弥嗣桓文。\(^{89}\) If this is the case, the character zu is a verb meaning “follow,” and gao, an adverb modifying the verb zu, denoting “highly” or “far.” The phrases “gao zu Huangdi” and “mi si Huan Wen” thus mean 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 BCE) and Lord Wen of Jin 晉文公 (636—628 BCE).\(^{90}\) 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. I find that Guo’s interpretation better fits the context and, thus, is more convincing than Xu Zhongshu’s reading. The following translation of the whole inscription reflects this different interpretation:

It is exactly on the guiwei day in June that the Chen marquis Yinqi announces: My august deceased father, the filial Lord Wuhuan, was great and the great plan could be accomplished. Now let me, Yiqi, 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 examples of] Lords Huan and Wen, and I have the various lords visit the court to conform to and praise these [sages’] virtues. The various lords 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\(^{91}\) forever regard this as their canon and guide.\(^{92}\)

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\(^{89}\) 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.

\(^{90}\) Guo Moruo 2002(3), 464—466.

\(^{91}\) Similar expression appears in the “Tangong xia” chapter of the Liji, which explains the bronze inscription “up 世 low 立.” Liji zhengyi “Tangong xia,” 10:294.
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。

In comparison with Xu Zhongshu’s interpretation of the line regarding 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 hegemons 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 politico-ethical basis of power rather than the ethnic basis. Indeed, Yinqi dedicates the vessel not to claim some birthright but to declare his political ambition by invoking the Yellow Emperor and other powerful lords as his exemplars, especially if we agree that the term “Huan Wen” 桓文 refers to the Jiang-surnamed Lord Huan of Qi and the Ji-surnamed Lord Wen of Jin.93

The inscriptions provide additional evidence to support Guo’s reading when Yinqi mentions that the metal used to make the bronze vessel was presented by various lords. This is actually a flamboyant declaration that directly alludes to the great sage king Yu 禹 or the first king of the Xia dynasty Qi 啟, who was said to have cast the legendary nine ding 鼎 tripods with metal offered by the tributary states.94 Similar expressions also appear on three other bronze

92 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 of interpretation, see Guo Moruo 2002(3), 464—466. For a different translation opposing Guo’s reading “高祖黃帝，弭嗣桓文” as parallels, see Doty 1982, 617.

93 Tang Yuhui suggests that the term “桓文” denotes “the cultured Huan [of Qi],” i.e., Yinqi’s father Wu 午. However, as Gao Xinhua 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 2012.

94 Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Xuan 3.3:669—672.
vessels commissioned by the Chen Marquis Wu 午 (374—357 BCE), Yinqi’s father, to Wu’s deceased mother. It is difficult to ascertain to whom the expression “various lords” refers, not to mention whether or not they really offered bronze metal to the Tian Qi rulers as tribute, but this recurring claim reveals the Tian Qi rulers’ political intention. If the legend of the nine ding tripods was indeed a constitutive part of Warring States political philosophy, as K. C. Chang and Wu Hung suggest, 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. 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 ambition.

Despite the problems with Xu Zhongshu’s argument 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 4th century BCE. 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 at this time. In this regard, we need to keep in mind that Guo Moruo, like Xu Zhongshu, considers the Yellow Emperor an invention of the Tian Qi rulers and the Jixia scholars they patronized. He argues the reason the Tian Qi rulers historicize the Yellow Emperor

95 These three bronze vessels, a gui 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.” See for the inscriptions on three vessels, see Xu Zhongshu 1998, 406—409.

96 Chang K. C. 1983, 63—65; Wu Hong 1995, 1—16.
lies in their intention to adopt the “Huang Lao zhi shu” 黃老之術 (“the techniques of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi”). But to what extent can this argument hold? The answer to this question is linked to the explanation for why so many more texts are attributed to the Yellow Emperor than to other sage rulers.

In Guo Moruo’s opinion, the argument that the Yellow Emperor was merely an invention related to 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 directly controlled by the Tian Qi rulers; therefore, the Guanzi’s advocacy of the Yellow Emperor as an exemplary ruler is political propaganda supporting the ambitions of the Tian Qi. 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, however, reveals that in most cases the Yellow Emperor is listed among other sage kings without any specific connection to the Tian Qi rulers. Moreover, the Yellow Emperor’s appearance at this time is not exclusive to the Guanzi; we do see various aspects of the Yellow Emperor in different texts. 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 about the connection between

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98 Gao Xinhua 2012.

99 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 Lushi chunqiu 呂氏春秋, and the Zhanguo ce 戰國策. Michael Puett also offers a good summary of the Huangdi narratives in the Warring States writings. Cf. Puett 2001.
violence and statecraft.\textsuperscript{100} We should doubt Guo Moruo’s conclusion about the connection between the Yellow Emperor and the \textit{Guanzi} in light of the facts that the \textit{Guanzi} does not exclusively promote the Yellow Emperor, the development of the image of the Yellow Emperor is not exclusive to the \textit{Guanzi}, and the Yellow Emperor was not an invention by the Jixia scholars to support the Tian Qi rulers’ desire for hegemonic status.

Even if the figure of the Yellow Emperor was an invention of Jixia scholars, it was not exclusively manipulated by the Tian Qi ruling family, and we need to explain how this figure became a common motif shared by a variety of Warring States period writings, especially those texts attributed to him in the “Yiwenzhi” that have been largely neglected in studies of the Yellow Emperor. But before exploring this issue through a consideration of the Yellow Emperor as an author, it is worth reviewing how other scholars handle the myth of the Yellow Emperor as it appears in Warring States texts.

Generally speaking, there are two scholarly approaches for dealing with the emergence of the Huangdi myth. One of them tends to view the Huangdi myth as an historical development, which I call the historical approach, while the other—the structuralist approach—prefers to explore the symbolic meanings of the Huangdi myth by analyzing its structural elements while avoiding embroilment in debates about the putative oral transmission upon which the historical approach relies.\textsuperscript{101} The historical approach consists of two main lines of arguments: one line, represented by Yang Kuan’s argument, suggests that the myth of the Yellow Emperor as presented in the Warring States writings was primarily the product of a tradition of oral transmission extending back to a distant past when the belief of the Supreme Being (shangdi 上天神).  

\textsuperscript{100} Puett 2001, 113.  

was first formed. According to Yang Kuan, this supreme being was called the “August Thearch” (huangdi 皇帝), which became a general term shared by many regionally-worshiped gods during the Eastern Zhou period as it imparts an air of antiquity to such deities. Since the character “huang” 皇 is phonetically identical to the character “huang” 黃 yellow, the term “August Thearch” was thus rendered later as the “Yellow Thearch” or the “Yellow Emperor.” Because of this, the myths of other god-like figures—Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹, for instance—also contain hints of the later historicizing of the Yellow Emperor.\(^{102}\) 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.\(^{103}\)

The second line of the historical approach, represented by Michael Puett, accepts that the emergence of the Huangdi myth concerns Warring States history, but it disagrees with the contention that the Huangdi myth was connected to any early 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 the diverse and, in some cases, even conflicting narratives on the Yellow Emperor. He also takes issue with the structuralist approach to the Huangdi myth. It is true that the structuralist approach successfully avoids the pitfalls associated with the reconstruction of a purported mythological tradition, but it cannot account for the differences among the various narratives on the Yellow Emperor. Puett

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\(^{102}\) Yang Kuan 1941, 189—199. For related arguments identifying the Yellow Emperor as Yao or Yu, also see Sun Zuoyun 2003, Chen Mengjia 1936.

\(^{103}\) Cf. Lewis 1990, 165—212.
feels that, by pursuing the “ultimate symbolism” in the structures of the Huangdi narratives, the structuralist approach fails to provide a contextual reading of the Huagndi myth. He suggests that in order to avoid decontextualizing the myth, one has to 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.¹⁰⁴ Since Puett’s approach is especially relevant to this chapter, I will first briefly summarize his argument.

Partly inspired by Lewis’ study of the Huangdi myth focusing 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 the creation 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-BCE and the third-century-BCE texts—that reflect the major concerns of all the individual authors of those texts about the relationship between rebel and sage, or nature and state.¹⁰⁵ Since he understands the two layers of writings as the direct product of the writers’ response to their contemporary sociopolitical “tensions and concerns,”¹⁰⁶ these writings become historically reliable sources to reconstruct a long lasting debate during those two centuries. In examining those exemplary passages from the selected texts arguably dated to the fourth and third centuries BCE, Puett finds that only those texts falling in his second stratum (dated to the third century BCE) deal with the Yellow Emperor and his adversaries. When he


¹⁰⁵ 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 Shangjushu 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 chunqiu 呂氏春秋, the Da Dai Liji 大戴禮記, and the Guanzi 管子. See Puett 2001, 101—133.

compares the nature of the debates in the two strata of texts, 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 because of his association with the use of force, including violent usurpation, not because he was considered an historical figure actually connected to the emergence of the state. Therefore, the mention of the Yellow Emperor in fourth-century references like the “Chenhui Yinqi dui” inscriptions and the Zuozhuan is largely irrelevant to the actual third century BCE intellectual debate: it matters to that debate only as a reference providing a figure that was to enter the debate about a century later.\(^\text{107}\) What these debates reflect, in Puett’s view, are the Warring States thinkers’ concerns about the relationship between nature and culture, a topic he more intensively tackles in another work of his.\(^\text{108}\)

While I agree with Puett’s suggestion for the need to examine the Huangdi myth in its due context, I nevertheless find that his approach to the Warring States texts is questionable. First of all, I find that Puett’s method for dating and dividing the texts into two temporal layers is underdeveloped. Since Puett stresses the authors’ response to the actual tensions and concerns of the Warring States intellectual world, the dates of composition are no doubt central to his division of the texts into two strata as well as to our understanding of the actual debates that Puett endeavors to reconstruct. Unfortunately, he offers little evidence justifying the dating of any of the texts grouped in those two strata. Nor does he provide a benchmark based on datable texts with which the differently grouped texts are comparable. His sophisticated argumentation about creation that is built upon his identified strata is inevitably undermined without more


detailed discussion of his methods for dating. In most cases, Puett intentionally avoids those perplexing dating issues that have been raging for a long time, or it seems that he takes the dates of the target texts for granted, assuming that readers will accept the dates commonly ascribed to the texts by traditional scholarship. The traditional way of dating an early Chinese text based on the author to whom the text is attributed, however, is untenable, as this dissertation aims to prove. In fact, in consideration of the complexity of the dating and authorship issues in early Chinese writings, to date the texts, let alone specific passages, included in Puett’s two strata is extremely challenging, if not impossible.

Secondly, Puett’s reconstruction of the evolution of the Warring States debates on the creation of state is unconvincing. Without more precise dating of the texts that he uses as evidence, it is impossible to trace the history of such putative debates conceived in Puett’s analysis. In fact, whether or not those debates described in Puett’s argument indeed occurred is also difficult to tell based on current evidence. Puett takes for granted that the passages he examines were written down by different Warring States writers as a response to concerns about the creation of state. Nevertheless, what we know about the formation of early Chinese texts tells a different story. 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,\(^\text{109}\) so it is extremely difficult to restore the authors’ original inputs merely relying on the reassembled texts Puett examines. Even though the Han scholars working on the Western Han imperial text collection managed to find clues to categorize them, their labels for different textual traditions were more a result of retrospective grouping and also present problems for

\(^{109}\) 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. Cf. *Hanshu* “Yiwenzhi,” 30:1701—1776.
understanding actual intellectual traditions during the Warring States. Moreover, the making and transmission of an early Chinese text is far more complicated than assumed in Puett’s analysis. The differences among the 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 stable at all. When the teachings were finally written down, even if we assume that the written record does not severely alter the original teaching, we still cannot verify with certainty the dates when those ideas originated and circulated. With this in mind, the discrepancy among the various Huangdi narratives that Puett painstakingly attempts to explain by classifying them in the putative debates is probably the result of variation arising during transmission or later editing work or of both. In short, Puett’s reconstruction of the two-century-long debates, instead of restoring the Huangdi myth to its context, repeats what he opposes in previous scholarship on the Yellow Emperor: it is true that he does not link the Huangdi myth to a mythological past, but he also puts it in an unverifiable, imagined framework.

Finally, in following Lewis’ emphasis on the Yellow Emperor as an exemplary figure of 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 and it is meaningful only within the framework that Puett constructs. 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. Besides weapons, he was the creator of many other things, including both ritual objects and daily utensils; he was not only a sage in governance and warfare, but was also involved in astrology, cosmology, calendar making, divination, medicine,

\[110\] Cf. Qi Sihe 1941.
sexual arts, and “recipes and techniques” in pursuing immortality.\textsuperscript{111} No matter how scattered the information on the Yellow Emperor is in those early texts, there is no doubt that the body of lore about the Yellow Emperor is far richer than what is represented in his portrayal as the inventor of warfare and statecraft. Overemphasizing the side of the Yellow Emperor as a statecraft maker in an invented historical framework inevitably limits our view of both the figure of the Yellow Emperor and the context that produced him. This is especially so if we consider that the texts on military art attributed to the Yellow Emperor make up less than one tenth of all the texts attributed to him, while nearly two thirds of attributed texts in the “Yiwenzhi” are about “recipes and techniques” related to cosmology, longevity, and immortality. In what follows, I try to provide a more reasonable context in which the popularity of the Yellow Emperor in a variety of aspects may be explained.

1.5. Ritual, Religious, Cosmological Thinking and the Yellow Emperor

In addition to the aspect of state making emphasized by Lewis’ and Puett’s works, I feel there are two other contexts related to the Huangdi narratives and how we are to interpret them. The first context worth considering is the ritual and religious context, especially the change in ritual and religious thinking of the people of the Eastern Zhou. Such change is observable, for example, in people’s understanding of the mandate of heaven. One of the greatest changes in this regard is that heaven changed from the supreme power granting awards to the good and issuing punishment to the bad into an impersonal entity represented with abstract patterns of numbers or the forms of constellations.\textsuperscript{112} Behind this change was an increased role of the human realm in

\textsuperscript{111} Cf. \textit{Hanshu} “Yiwenzhi,” as listed in Table 1 of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{112} Tao Lei 2008, 117—129.
the workings of the cosmos: heaven now responded to the human manipulation of those patterns and forms in which the mandate of heaven was believed to manifest itself. Under such religious mentality, people still presented sacrifices to all sorts of 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 Zuo zhuan rather strikingly demonstrate this trend. For example, from the ninth to the eighteenth year in the reign of Duke Zhao of Lu 鲁昭公 (r. 542—510 BCE), 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 郑 official Pi Zao 裨竈 not only predicted when the state of Chen was about to be re-located and how long it would last thereafter, but also explained how his knowledge of astrology as well as the Theory of the Five Elements allowed him to make such a prognostication.113 In the next year, Pi Zao predicted and explained the exact date when the Jin 晋 lord would die.114 In the eleventh year, Chang Hong 萇弘 predicted the assassination of Marquis of Cai.115 In the seventeenth year, it says that two Lu officials—Shen Xu 申須 and Zi Shen 梓慎—and Pi Zao of Zheng all foresaw the coming fires that would occur in the fifth month of the next year. Pi Zao even said to Zi Chan 子産, the Zheng prime minister, that the disaster could be avoided if Zi Chan would grant him the right to use certain vessels in ritual.116 In the next year, the fires occurred in those four states exactly as predicted.117 Certainly,

113 Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 9.4:1310—1311.
114 Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 10.1:1314—1315.
115 Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 11.2:1322.
116 Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 17.5:1390—1392.
117 Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 18.3:1394—1395.
not all predictions in the *Zuo Commentaries* are confirmed. For instance, Pi Zao’s prophecy in the eighteenth year that Zheng would suffer from another conflagration if Zi Chan would not heed his warning did not come true.\footnote{Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 18.3:1395.} It is also true that we cannot take the *Zuozhuan* narratives for granted as exact historical records. In fact, what really matters is that the narratives reflect a change in the way of thinking, which is illustrated in the narratives by the attention devoted to explaining the type of knowledge that rationalizes those predictions. Zi Chan seems to resist 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.\footnote{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?” (tiandao yuan, rendao er, fei suo ji ye, heyi zhi zhi,zao yan zhi tiandao 天道遠,人道邇,非所及也,何以知之,竈焉知天道?) Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 18.3:1395.} When we compare Zi Chan’s words with his response to the fire, however, his actions seem to reflect the changing ways of thinking about religion and ritual. He acted appropriately in all aspects including correctly handling diplomacy, controlling the fire, protecting the palatial and sacrificial buildings, aiding those were affected by the fire, and even performing rituals in different locations, which seems to contradict his previous rejection of Pi Zao’s suggestion of using certain ritual vessels.\footnote{Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao 18.3:1396.} Ritual, as used by Zi Chan in this context, no longer conveys a petition to avert evil or to seek blessings, but seems to be a practical routine that had been widely accepted as a means to restore order in the wake of the disaster.\footnote{Another fairly illuminating example is recorded in the fifth year of Lord Cheng (r. 590—573 BCE), 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 5.4:822—823.}
illustrates how “rational”—in an anachronistic sense—the Eastern Zhou way of thinking had become according to the *Zuo zhuan*.

As a matter of fact, both ways of thinking represented by Zi Chan and others mentioned above went along hand in hand according to the *Zuo Commentaries*. In some cases, the *Zuo zhuan* narrator deliberately presents these different lines of thinking side by side, suggesting that truth could be approached through different directions and valid predictions be made based on various bodies of knowledge. Take, for example, the two clusters of predictions made about 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 BCE). In the Battle of Pingyin, the Jin generals successfully scared the Qi lord away at night by tricking him into believing that the Qi army was overwhelmingly outnumbered by the Jin troops. The next morning, three Jin officials use different bodies of knowledge to declare the withdrawal of the Qi army:

Shi Kuang reported to Marquis of Jin, “The chirp of birds and crows sound happy, which means 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*], which means that the Qi army had fled.” Shu Xiang reported to Marquis of Jin, “On the city walls there stop crows, which means the Qi army had fled.”

師曠告晉侯曰：鳥烏之聲樂，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。

The second occasion eliciting predictions occurs 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, again including Shi Kuang and Shu Xiang, pronounced their judgments on the Chu military action:

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 heaven123 is largely located in the northwest. The southern army came in an inappropriate season and certainly will not achieve any merits.” Shu Xiang said, “[Whether the army will win or not] depends on their ruler’s virtue.”124

As with the prediction before the Battle of Pingyin, the judgments of all three officials were correct: having suffered considerable loss of fighting capacity due to bad weather, the Chu army failed to move further north to confront the Jin army. In both occasions the narrative confirms all the predictions. 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—it is unclear whether these different bodies of knowledge competed with one another in claiming the validity and accuracy of predictions, but these Zuozhan narratives about various forms of prognostication all demonstrate how

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123 According to Yang Bojun, the “way of heaven” here denotes the orbit of Jupiter. Chunqiu Zuozhaun zhu Xiang 18.3:1043.

124 Chunqiu Zuozhaun zhu Xiang 18.3:1043.
people of the Eastern Zhou understood the mandate of heaven to have readable and rational associations with the human realm.

All the above examples about interpreting the world are associated with the early Chinese cosmology generally labeled as correlative thinking. Although various sources present differences in the intricacies of correlative thought, such thought relies on the basic recognition that correlations exist between all facets of the cosmos—heaven, earth, man, one’s state, and all the myriad things—and that these correlations can be known by using such techniques as the manipulation of the hexagrams and the arrangement of the Five Elements (wuxing 五行).\textsuperscript{125} It is important to recognize that heaven in this context is no longer a mysterious commander and supreme judge issuing mandates according to the virtues of the living, but rather represents a spatial and temporal complexity consisting of both celestial bodies like the sun, the moon, and the various constellations, and the markers of the passage of time like the seasons, the months, and the days. 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 needs to be put in such a context. Indeed, one of the early sources explaining the naming of the Yellow Emperor relates it to wuxing cosmology:

\begin{quote}
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
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{125} Cf. Henderson 1984; Needham 1956, 216—389.
woods that 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.126

凡帝王之將興也，天必先見祥乎下民。黃帝之時，天先見大蜚大‥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，赤烏銜丹書集於周社。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。

This passage links the Yellow Emperor to the color of 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.127 In the “Zuo Luo” 作雒 pían of the Yi Zhoushu 逸周書, the Five Elements are


127 What the Lüshi chunqiu describes is a specifically Qin religious cult to the emperors of the Four/Five Directions, into which Huangdi was included, even though Huangdi may also have had a separate existence outside this cult (and perhaps before its rise).
arranged according to a spatial scheme, in which the color Yellow is positioned in the center.\(^{128}\) The “Guiyi” 貴義 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 戌己 days in the center.\(^ {129}\) The “Jixia ji” 季夏紀 of the Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 and the “Shize xun” 時則訓 of the Huainanzi 淮南子 even include many identical passages about 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 on, are correlated and can guide the ruler in governing.\(^ {130}\)

Although the bulk of 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 and his social and historical meanings is to explore the Yellow Emperor as he existed in some earlier myth since that provides the source of the Yellow Emperor that is transplanted into Eastern Zhou wuxing thinking. Xu Jinxiong’s 許進雄 argument serves as a good example in this regard. He concludes that the Yellow Emperor greatly predates the formation of the Theory of the Five Elements based on the following line of thinking: The character “huang” means either yellow or jade decoration huang 璜. By disproving that yellow could have been the most revered color during the Yellow Emperor’s reign, he posits that the character “huang” in the name of Huangdi must be associated with the huang for jade decoration


\(^{129}\) Mozi jiaozhu “Guiyi,” 47:674.

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, the second stage of Chinese civilization (as opposed to the first stage when sage kings created utensils and tools and the third stage characterized by the documentation of history).  

Although he furthers the discussion on the possible meaning of the graph huang brought up earlier by Guo Moruo and others, Xu’s argument is questionable on several points. First, when analyzing textual information from various sources to prove that the term “Huangdi” appeared earlier than the formation of the wuxing system, Xu, like Puett, relies on the traditional method of dating texts based upon attributed authorship, which lacks sufficient evidence to prove his argument. Second, he also fails to provide an explanation to how the Yellow Emperor as an institution creator turned into the central thearch associated with the Warring States wuxing thinking or an immortal especially popular in late Warring States and early imperial periods. In fact, although Xu attempts to reconstruct a Yellow Emperor prior to the Warring States, his argument does not explain the necessity of linking the Warring States Yellow Emperor to an

131 Xu Jinxiong 1981.

132 For example, Ding Shan 丁山 and some others even 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 2006, 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, which named after the ecliptic, a surmise remaining yet to be substantiated. See Ding Shan 2006, 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 of these suggestions is their assumption that the graphic meaning of the character huang contains and reflects considerable historical and social information; therefore, deciphering the meaning of the graphic to some extent equals to detecting traces of ancient social life. In fact, the graphic form itself does not tell any specific information on the ancient past, especially if we consider that the moment of the invention of a specific graph may never be recovered.
unknown earlier legend. Finally, the weakest point of Xu’s argument is its disregard of the context of Eastern Zhou thinking. Since the construction of an “earlier” Yellow Emperor relies primarily upon Warring States writings, it makes more sense to put the Yellow Emperor in the Warring States context than an assumed “earlier” setting when trying to understand what the Huangdi narratives really convey. Therefore, the Huangdi story has to 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, I feel it is also necessary to understand the Eastern Zhou and early imperial trend of emphasizing antiquity in one’s argumentation. As has been previously mentioned, the Yellow Emperor, along with other sage kings like Fu Xi 伏義 and Shennong 神農, becomes a component of the teachings of various Warring States textual traditions, as seen in the Guanzi, Zhuangzi, Han Feizi, Lüshi chunqiu, and so on. This inclusion of the sage kings was early on recognized as a rhetorical device to enhance the power of persuasion, as we see in the Huainanzi:

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 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.133

133 Huainanzi jishi “Xiuwu xun,” 19:1355.
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。

This passage clearly illuminates that, by the time these comments were made, revering antiquity and despising the contemporary had become a popular convention. Catering to such convention, a thinker intentionally presented his arguments in the name of the ancient sages, even when he preached something radically new. 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 disciples who 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 the ruling and the ruled, masters and disciples all followed this convention. The exaltation of antiquity became a necessary component in the creation of state ideology: however contemporary a teaching might be, it had to be coated with the patina of antiquity in order 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 its contemporary literature as such literature was frequently 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 clans and lineages. We begin to see such purported ancient figures as the Divine Farmer and the Yellow Emperor carrying significant persuasive force only in writings associated with the Eastern Zhou and thereafter.

Now we must ask: how had antiquity become a major concern by the Eastern Zhou period? The *Huainanzi* passage merely mentions that venerating antiquity had become a widely
embraced social convention and does not touch upon what led to it. As a matter of fact, there is little information in transmitted texts directly explaining why this occurred. It is the study of recently excavated materials that has 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 about the restructuring of Middle Spring and Autumn ritual based on Eastern Zhou burial remains, I attempt to argue that the phenomenon of venerating antiquity was connected with early Chinese ritual practice and religious thinking, which together provided the footing for the emphasis of antiquity in Eastern Zhou literary discourse.

According to Keightley, Shang ancestral veneration constitutes the core of the Shang religious conceptions that “were the conceptions of Shang life as a whole.” Ancestral veneration was not a religious practice divorced from social realities, but it permeated all aspects of Shang life politically, economically, 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.” 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 the Shang ancestor veneration is grounded in the Neolithic Chinese burial ritual, which can be traced to the fifth millennium BCE, 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 the ancestral veneration under discussion.

134 Keightley 2004, 4; Keightley 1972, 212.
Keightley classifies those who could receive sacrifices in the Shang pantheon into six groups: (1) *di* 帝 or *shangdi* 上帝, or the Supreme God; (2) Nature Powers, such as the River or Mountain Powers; (3) Former Lords, like Nao 夬 and Wang Hai 王亥, specific ex-humans associated with the Shang dynasty; (4) pre-dynastic ancestors; (5) dynastic ancestors; and (6) the dynastic ancestresses, mainly the consorts of those kings on the main line. Keightley calls 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 the 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 weather and crops.”136 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

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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.”

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 sometimes by being entitled as the “ancestor” (zu 祖) of the Shang kings. 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 begins to be venerated. 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 because of 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 ancestral cult and its associated religious beliefs and practices. A commonly held view about the Western Zhou

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137 Keightley 2004, 11.
138 Keightley 2004, 8.
religious belief 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.\textsuperscript{139} While this might be the case in a general sense, 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 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.\textsuperscript{140} The Zhou religious and ritual framework for organizing the ancestral cult was known as the \textit{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,\textsuperscript{141} 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, chant, 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 points out,

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

\textsuperscript{139} For example, Cf. Hsu and Linduff 1988; Tao Lei 2008.


\textsuperscript{141} Eno 2009, 98; Keightley 2004, 20—26.
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.142

Such collective memory was both the result of and the means for the negotiation of power among the living. Why was the access to privilege and power tied with a distant ancestor? Here we see the trace of a religious mentality similar to that 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 certain lineage was largely determined by the de 德 (virtues) of the lineage ancestors. In other words, the descendents continued to enjoy the Heaven’s Mandate initially obtained by their distant ancestors as it was passed on through the generations until it ended.143 What differentiated the Zhou ancestral cult from the Shang was the simplified way of organizing lineages, which, according to Falkenhausen’s observation about the late Western Zhou ritual reform, may have been associated with their enlarged population over time.144

After the Zhou royal court was forced to move eastward from their western power base, the Eastern Zhou period witnessed, among a series of pervasive changes, the change of its prominent political position. The rapid downgrade of the royal court was accompanied by its diminishing control of the local vassal polities, some of which seized the opportunity to claim

142 Falkenhausen 2006, 71.

143 For example, see Wangsun Man’s explanation of the Mandate of Heaven; Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu Xuan 3.3:669—672.

144 Falkenhausen 2006, 64—70.
hegemonic status by force. The internecine wars among the numerous vassal polities, which had been established by the Zhou founding fathers to back the power of the royal court, inevitably further degraded the 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 within its huge domain accountable to the Zhou power net. Accordingly, the traditional ancestral cult was attenuated, powers ascribed to ancestors or ancestralized Powers were diminished, and the tiered aristocratic ranking system, once the backbone of ritual and religious practice, was forced to bow out from history. The old religious thinking that regarded death and the 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 the tomb structure and the universal utilization of mingqi 明器 items exclusively for burial purpose throughout the Zhou cultural sphere.\footnote{Falkenhausen 2006, 293—325.}

The Warring States writings, such the Laozi 老子, “Neiye” 内業 chapter of the Guanzi 管子, and the excavated Taiyi shengshui 太一生水, also reflect this fundamental change in the Eastern Zhou religious belief. 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 BCE. He suggests that these cosmologists, the writers of the above-mentioned texts, proposed “the One, the ultimate ancestor from which everything—all sprits, all natural phenomena, and all human—were generated,” as a self-
generating model against the traditional sacrificial models 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.\footnote{Puett 2002, 318.} According to this new model, the living could become gods by “returning to and holding fast to the One” that “generated them and continue 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.”\footnote{Puett 2002, 318.} Puett also argues that this self-divinization model as the alternative to the traditional sacrificial model resulted from the age-old tension caused by the discontinuity between human and God.\footnote{Cf. Puett 2002, 122—200.} If we set aside the question of whether or not the tension between human and God was the driving force leading to the self-divinization model, this model indeed accords with the changed religious \textit{geist} centering on individual grandeur, as manifested in the Eastern Zhou burial culture.

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 clearly 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 BCE, a ritual restructuring occurred that quickly expanded throughout the Zhou culture sphere to harmonize the previous ritual system with the changed social realities. This ritual restructuring is seen in the funerary goods in élite tombs; such goods combined a “Special Assemblage” of spectacular objects and an “Ordinary Assemblage” to signify the tomb occupant’s social rank.

\footnotetext[146]{Puett 2002, 318.}
\footnotetext[147]{Puett 2002, 318.}
\footnotetext[148]{Cf. Puett 2002, 122—200.}
By augmenting the privilege of the top echelons of the social hierarchy, this ritual restructuring “would have reduced the ritual prerogatives of the lower élite, prefiguring the even more drastic reductions that were to occur during the Warring States period” and the downplay of the social importance of the ancestral cult.\(^{149}\) 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.

We need to understand the Yellow Emperor narratives in the same vein. What makes these narratives strikingly interesting is that they are not homogeneous at all. Even those remaining fragmentary passages in transmitted and excavated sources provide a variety of images of the Yellow Emperor. The Guoyu, the Shiji and the Da Dai liji consider him the lineage and state founder; questions raised by Confucius’ disciples, Zi Gong and Zai Wo, in the Shizi and the Da Dai liji, indicate that he was a mysterious figure with abnormal looks who achieved incredible longevity; 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, statecraft, and so on. 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, military master, and master of esoteric methods, recipes, and techniques.

The diversity of images associated with the figure of the Yellow Emperor not only suggests how he was received by different textual traditions, but also indicates the complex ritual

\(^{149}\) Falkenhausen 2006, 326-369.
and religious background in which he was situated. The complex figure of the Yellow Emperor as it appears in Warring States and Han texts was forged by both the legacy of ancestral veneration dating back to the Neolithic period and the Eastern Zhou ritual and religious thought changing to meet the needs of that period’s social realities. On the one hand, the creation of the Yellow Emperor in the extant literature with Huangdi narratives seems closely associated with the 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 an earlier Huangdi myth 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 about astronomy, calendrics, divination, wuxing theory, and the secrets to achieving immortality.

On the other hand, I argue that the description of the Yellow Emperor as an ancient sage king in the Warring States myth was grounded in conventions associated with ancestral veneration and was not the survival of an ancient myth transmitted through the centuries. In other words, the Yellow Emperor was purportedly more ancient than he really was. 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 increasing practice of constructing genealogies in 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 was 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, as we see in such extant genealogical literature as the *Da Dai liji* and the reconstructed *Shiben* 世本.

The above discussion also provides clues explaining why the Yellow Emperor is almost absent in the lists of sages in Confucian writings. Like the Huangdi narratives, the writings later canonized as the Confucian classics were also produced against the backdrop of Eastern Zhou cosmological thought. Whereas the Huangdi myth focuses on a self-divinization model, the Confucian writings stress those aspects of ancestral veneration allegedly reflecting Western Zhou ritual. As will be elaborated in the next chapter when Confucius as an author is discussed, archaeological remains reveal that what Confucian writings attempt to convey accords with the ritual system reflected in the Middle Spring and Autumn Ritual Restructuring, an effort to restore the early Western Zhou ritual.\(^{150}\) In comparison with the Huangdi myth, Confucian writings value ritual instead of self-divinization; accordingly, the sages promoted as models in the Confucian writings are those who represented the appropriate rituals, especially the Western Zhou sage king King Wen 文王 and sage minister Duke Zhou 周公. 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

\(^{150}\) For concrete examples regarding the Middle Spring and Autumn Ritual Restructuring, see Falkenhausen 2008.
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 ritual, even though in an anachronistic sense. Such a fundamental difference inevitably led to the exclusion of the Yellow Emperor as an exemplary figure in the Confucian writings. This we can also clearly see in the attributions to the Yellow Emperor listed in the “Yiwen Zhi” chapter of the \textit{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 may also explain why the Huangdi narratives and the Laozi textual tradition were sometime juxtaposed and called the “Huang Lao zhi shu” (“techniques of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi”), especially in the late Warring States and early Western Han discourses.\textsuperscript{151} Li Ling correctly points out that the juxtaposition of the two indicates that the bodies of knowledge generating these two kinds of writings were akin to each other, both rooted in the categories of \textit{shushu}, methods and counting, and \textit{fangji}, recipes and techniques, to which the majority of the Huangdi attributions belong.\textsuperscript{152} Nevertheless, to say that these two rose from the same background does not directly answer the above question, for, as he is aware, the Confucian writings also shared a similar background with the two.\textsuperscript{153} The key to this question, I suggest, lies in the rather radical, transcendent approach to heaven, god, immortality, or longevity taken by the Huang and Lao strands of thinking against the age-old ritual system upheld by Confucian propaganda. This seems to be the case when we consider that both the \textit{Laozi} and a number of


\textsuperscript{152} Li Ling 1998, 288.

\textsuperscript{153} Li Ling 1998, 288—289.
Huangdi attributions are closely related to how to cultivate life, pursue longevity, and achieve immortality.\textsuperscript{154} In other words, the textual tradition labeled with the names of Huangdi and Laozi resulted from the fact that the texts attributed to these two figures both advocate the Eastern Zhou self-divinization model as well as the early imperial political theory—\textit{xingming} focusing on punishment and law—associated with this model.\textsuperscript{155}

\subsection*{1.6. The \textit{Four Classics} by the Yellow Emperor}

To conclude this chapter, I must briefly discuss the attribution of the four manuscripts preceding one of the two versions of the \textit{Laozi} discovered in Mawangdui Tomb 3. The manuscripts precede the version of the \textit{Laozi} consisting of two \textit{pian} in the reverse order of the transmitted text—the Dao \textit{pian} is preceded by the De \textit{pian} in the Mawangdui \textit{Laozi} manuscript.

The four manuscripts preceding the Mawangdui \textit{Laozi} include the \textit{Jingfa} 經法, the \textit{Shidajing} 十大經 (or \textit{Shiliujing} 十六經), the \textit{Cheng} 稱, and \textit{Daoyuan} 道原. The coincidence between the number of these manuscripts and the \textit{pian} number listed after the text \textit{Huangdi sijing} 黃帝四經 (\textit{The Yellow Emperor’s Four Classics}) in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the \textit{Hanshu} inspires Tang Lan 唐蘭 (1901—1979 CE) to conclude that these four Mawangdui manuscripts are indeed the long-lost \textit{Huangdi sijing} (four classics by the Yellow Emperor). Tang’s argument rests on three pieces of evidence: the cohesive message that the four manuscripts convey, the dating of the

\textsuperscript{154} L Ling 1998, 286—288.

\textsuperscript{155} There numerous works on the connection of the \textit{xingming} thought with the “Huang Lao zhi shu;” for examples, see Li Ling 1998, 284—286; Tang Lan 1975; Guo Moruo 1996, 156—191.
manuscripts, and the circulation of these four manuscripts over time\textsuperscript{156}—but the key to his conclusion is a passage from the “Jingji zhi” chapter of the \textit{Suishu}. It says:

In the Han time under the category of Zhuzi, the kinds of texts on Daoism consist of 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 \textit{pian} by the Yellow Emperor and the two \textit{pian} by Laozi most obtained the deep essence [of Daoism].\textsuperscript{157}

This passage tempts Tang Lan to equate the four Mawangdui manuscripts with the \textit{Huangdi sijing} because of the astonishing coincidence between the total number of mentioned \textit{pian}—the four \textit{pian} by the Yellow Emperor (i.e. the \textit{Huangdi sijing}, according to Tang) and the two \textit{pian} by Laozi—and the layout of the six Mawangdui manuscripts (four manuscripts preceding the two-\textit{pian} Laozi). Tang bases his argument upon the number of \textit{pian}, but does not consider the content of the manuscripts with respect to the description provided in the “Jingji zhi,” a passage Tang conveniently omits from his citation.\textsuperscript{158}

Qiu Xigui believes that the “Jingji zhi” comments on the Han Daoist writings omitted from Tang Lan’s quotation actually disprove Tang’s argument, for, as he points out, these comments contradict the message conveyed by the four Mawangdui manuscripts. The \textit{xingming}

\textsuperscript{156} Tang Lan 1975, 8—10.

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Suishu} “Jingji zhi,” 35:1093.

\textsuperscript{158} Tang Lan 1975, 9.
governmental philosophy reflected in the four Mawangdui manuscripts is, according to Qiu, far more aggressive than the Suishu comments about 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 points 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 formed an integrated text like the Huangdi sijing. Moreover, the fact that none of the Huangdi quotations in extant texts can be found in the four Mawangdui manuscripts under consideration also lends credence to Qiu’s contention. Therefore, Qiu argues, the four pian writings attributed to the Yellow Emperor mentioned in the Suishu passage cannot be the Huangdi sijing suggested by Tang Lan.159

There are also other opinions about the attribution of the four manuscripts, but Tang’s argument and Qiu’s rebuttal represent the two major positions that continue to exert influence.160 Since most of the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter have been lost,161 Tang’s and Qiu’s arguments almost entirely rely on secondary sources. The Suishu passage, for instance, is the key source for both scholars, however biased it may be. In fact, its comments about the Han Daoist writings do not fully reflect what the thirty-seven textual

159 Qiu Xigui 1993.


161 Li Ling mentions 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 the Huangdi neijing, although we have a text with the same title edited by Wang Bing 王冰 in the Tang dynasty (618—907 CE), 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 scanty. See Li Ling 1998, 280; Leo 2011, 22—36.
traditions really were, as Qiu Xigui insightfully points out.162 Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that even though those comments are more applicable to post-Han Daoism, the information regarding the four pian by the Yellow Emperor and the two pian by Laozi may still possibly indicate the form of a text suggested by Tang Lan. However, we may never have the chance to clarify which argument contains more truth based on current evidence. Neither of the two arguments is verifiable. I do not accept Qiu’s argument that the different lengths of these four manuscripts prevent them from being incorporated into a single text entitled the Four Classics by the Yellow Emperor. 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 dramatic brevity in comparison with other chapters, but it keeps its position in the Lunyu no matter how much doubt has been cast on its authenticity. The assumption that all the textual units should match each other in terms of length should be considered an anachronistic projection. I would also take issue with Qiu’s suggestion 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, including more than three hundred pian and almost four hundred juan, associated with the Yellow Emperor, 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 hundred of juan and pian?

Questioning Qiu’s argument, however, does not amount to upholding Tang’s suggestion. In fact, I do not think that any of the three reasons leading to Tang Lan’s equation of the four

162 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 1998(3), 284—285.
Mawangdui manuscripts with the *Huangdi sijing* are tenable. Nor do I agree with his dating of the manuscripts or his assignment of the authorship to them. 163 I have outlined this debate in order to point out some of its questionable assumptions and flawed methods. 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 project of arranging the emperors’ book collection 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, except for some administrative documents, titles were very rarely provided in early Chinese writings, a phenomenon in accord with the fact that early Chinese texts mostly circulated as single pian units. 164 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, the title of any of them 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 BCE)) in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*. Although it is possible that some of the titles appearing in the bibliographical work compiled by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin might have been circulated orally all along, and although some of the titles might have become available slightly earlier than 26 BCE, the year when the imperial project started, extant evidence suggests that it was through Liu Xiang and his editing team that most of the texts listed in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter obtained their multi-pian or juan forms with titles and identified authors. In fact, the purpose of rearranging the Han imperial collection of texts was to provide authoritative editions that, under the painstaking efforts of the editing group,

163 Tang Lan 1975, 10—12.

164 Cf. Pian Yuqian and Duan Shu’an 2006, 87—146.
would include the most complete writings on any given topic, teaching, author, tradition. In order to accomplish this goal, the imperial editing team collected all the writings relevant to the topics, omitting duplicate versions and preserving those that had not been previously included in the imperial collections. As for the Confucian Classics, even those duplicates were preserved side by side with other versions of the same text.¹⁶⁵

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 four Mawangdui manuscripts in it. Even if the four Mawangdui manuscripts were included in it, it is possible that they had been reassembled in 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, existing prior to the rearrangement of the Han imperial text collection certainly ignores the actual making, circulating, collecting, and remaking of early Chinese writings. To equate any early Chinese text with that listed in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter merely on the coincidence of their number of pian, therefore, is methodologically misleading and irrelevant to the exploration of the nature of the text.

I would also point out another trend in dealing with the Huangdi narratives. One of the reasons Qiu Xigui’s doubts Tang Lan’s conclusion is that only one of the four, the Shidajing, manuscripts mentions the Yellow Emperor.¹⁶⁶ Building upon the 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

¹⁶⁵ Yu Jiaxi 2010, 239-240.

¹⁶⁶ Qiu Xigui 1993, 251.
ministers.¹⁶⁷ Those writings directly attributed to the Yellow Emperor, according to Li Ling, should be in the form of essay instead of dialogue. To include both essays and dialogues within a single text seems doubtful to Li Ling; therefore, he suggests that, in order to uphold the principle of consistency within a text, the *Shiliujing* must be separated from the other three manuscripts.

Both Qiu’s and Li’s observations are helpful in exploring the different layout of the four Mawangdui manuscripts, but the feature of consistency in early Chinese writings derives from the editing process; consistency would not have been an issue if most of the texts were transmitted in the form of 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 almost by default a primary pursuit of the editing team. While admitting that in the “Yiwen zhi” there are traces suggesting that some texts were grouped into categories on the basis of style,¹⁶⁸ I argue that the consistency of genre and writing style were not a determining factor when creating multiple *pian* texts in early China. For example, if we follow Li Ling’s theory, the *Huangdi junchen* 黃帝君臣 (*Ruler Huangdi and his Minister*) listed in the “Yiwen zhi” as a text including ten *pian* would at first glance of the title appear to be a collection of the Yellow Emperor’s conversation with his ministers, but it was actually a text resembling the *Laozi*, as the notes following this title indicate.¹⁶⁹ 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

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¹⁶⁷ Li Ling 1998, 280.

¹⁶⁸ For example, in the “Zhuzi lüe” of the “Yiwen zhi,” “Xiaoshuo jia” 小說家 as a subcategory seems to differentiate itself as a textual tradition by its specific contents: hearsays, gossips, and rumors. *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1744—1745.

¹⁶⁹ *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1731.
the main text at all, but this did not prevent the attribution of the text to him. In short, whether or not the main text mentions the figure to whom the text is attributed has little to do with the attribution.

In explaining what might have resulted in the incomparable number of attributions of texts to a “prolific” Yellow Emperor among culture heroes indicated by the “Yiwen zhi,” we have navigated the various aspects of the Huangdi myth, its euhemerization and “reverse euhemerization,” and finally, the Eastern Zhou ritual and religious context and cosmological thinking. The reason that the Yellow Emperor is portrayed as the most “prolific” author by the “Yiwen zhi” is deeply embedded in the changed socio-political structure, ritual context, and religious mentality. The Yellow Emperor as a proto-Daoist figure knowing the techniques of achieving immortality indicated by the majority attributions to him sharply contrasts the exclusion of him as author of any Confucian text, and this reflects two different approaches to this changed Eastern Zhou world. Accompanying this change was the rise and flourishing of a text culture spreading to and deeply influencing such Eastern Zhou societal aspects as governmental pattern and religious thinking. It is in this trend that the Yellow Emperor was invented (or reinvented) and fit and the attributions were made. Nevertheless, we cannot equate the well categorized “Yiwen zhi” attributions with the actual text making in the Eastern Zhou and early imperial periods. After all, the “Yiwen zhi” attributions result largely from the late Western Han project of rearranging the imperial text collection. The actual textual culture during the Eastern Zhou and early imperial time, as revealed in recent archaeological finds, was more complex. On this point, the textual history examined in next chapter serves as a good example.
Chapter 2 The Author as Head of Teaching Lineage: Confucius, the Quotable Author

This chapter is about the master, Kongzi 孔子 (551—479 BCE), or Confucius, the Lunyu 論語 (Analects), and the bond between the two. On the one hand, the text has long been considered the most important source for understanding the master. For example, the master’s official biography compiled by the Grand Historian (Taishi gong 太史公) \(^1\) replicates much material found in the Lunyu, but the Shiji biographical account of Confucius is sometimes criticized, for its reliance on materials outside of the Lunyu, as when it uses the “words of the savages from east of Qi” 齊東野人之語 to describe Confucius as sangjia gou 喪家狗, translated as “a disowned dog” or “a dog owned by a mourning family” depending on how the character sang 喪 is interpreted. \(^2\) This example demonstrates how the Lunyu exerted almost exclusive authority to shape the understanding of Confucius if 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.

Although not a biographical text, the presence of Confucius—speaking, conversing, teaching, and acting—is palpable everywhere in the Lunyu. \(^3\) We are reminded of his presence with the ubiquitous appellations “Zi” 子, “Fuzi” 夫子, or “Kongzi” 孔子, all used to convey the

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\(^2\) Cui Shu 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 and interpretation unless specifically noted.

\(^3\) For example, Christoph Harbsmeier reminds us “the smilingConfucius,” who “has always been privately and quietly appreciated by congenial readers and scholars, East and West.” See Harbsmeier 1990, 131.
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. The “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the Hanshu clearly states that the Lunyu is posthumously composed from the disciples’ notes on the words of their master, yet, there are many who still prefer to believe that all the words included in the Lunyu were “cut from Confucius’ writing brush” and that every word in the Lunyu “was decided by the sage himself” 聖人親定. Even if Confucius did not actually write the physical text, all the words were “prepared before being recorded” 預錄 in textual form and “sealed with Confucius’ approval” 孔子印可. Although the master describes himself in the Lunyu as one who “transmits yet does not create” 述而不作, this does not prevent a Tang bibliography discovered in a Dunhuang cave from saying that “Confucius created” 孔子作 the Lunyu. Clearly we see in these comments how much authorial power Confucius possessed over his text.

Not everyone adheres to the idea that Confucius wrote, edited, or supervised the making of the Lunyu. Many find the “Yiwen zhi’s” 藝文志 conclusion about the authorship of the Lunyu to be tenable, so most studies on the Lunyu’s authorship attempt to identify a singular, or a few definite, author(s) in order to use his biography to historicize the text. This trend began in the Tang dynasty (618—907 CE), and the debates about the identification of potential authors

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4 Hanshu “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1717.
5 Liao Yan 1999, 412.
6 Li Gong 1966, 24.
7 Huang Kan, Lunyu jijie yishu.
9 In Paul Pelliot No. 2721 manuscript, see Zhou Pixian 1991, 418.
have raged ever since. In presupposing the conclusions of the “Yiwen Zhi” chapter, recent scholarship also aims to reveal the nature of early Chinese master writings from the perspective of their authorship. It proposes that the author has a passive role in shaping the *Lunyu*, the starting point of Master Writing, 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 master writing in the Warring States period is characterized by a process by which disciples gradually escape the master’s presence in the writings to allow for increasing expression of their own authorial voices. This trend is evident as master writings shifted from the use of the dialogue to the use of the treatise.

Basic questions, however, still remain to be addressed that could shape our understanding of the development of master writings. Is the *Lunyu* really a text planned by Confucius’ disciples and made by collecting their class notes in order to remember and memorialize their master? If he is not regarded as the author of the text, what does Confucius mean to the *Lunyu*, in which he speaks most of the words and is the focus of most of the accounts? Moreover, what does the relationship between Confucius and the *Lunyu* tell us about the nature of early Chinese Master Writings and our understanding of Confucius as the author of the textual body of the Confucian canon? To answer these questions, we must deal with current issues surrounding the *Lunyu*’s textual history. Since the publication of Li Ling’s recent works on the *Lunyu*, the question of how to read the *Lunyu* has come to the front and center of academic debates on the text.

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11 Cf. Lewis 1999; Denecke 2010.

12 For example, his monographs *Sangjiagou—Wo du Lunyu* 喪家狗—我讀《論語》 published by Shanxi renmin chubanshe in 2007; *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.
Although my study does not directly address the central concerns currently occupying many specialists in this field, I must not avoid discussing those questions raised by both sides of this debate that are related to my study. What follows is a discussion of those questions using the metaphor of the disowned dog, with which Li Ling entitles one of his works on the reading of the *Lunyu*.

2.1. Sage, Disowned Dog, and the Problem of Interpretation

It is said in the *Shiji* that, disappointed by the Lu 魯 court’s indulgence in sensual pleasures, Confucius left Lu for the Wei 衛 court in 497 BCE, when he was fifty-five years old. After a few years, the master realized that Lord Ling of Wei 衛靈公 (r. 534—493 BCE), though deferential to him, was unable to employ him. He then left Wei in 493 BCE still attempting to peddle his teachings to other lords throughout the various states. Time and time again, he failed to find the favor of a lord. What is worse is that he often encountered haughty indifference or even malicious threats during his travels. For example, when Confucius was on his way to the capital of Song 宋, a Song general went so far as to cut down the tree under which Confucius and his students rehearsed the rites they were promoting, a strong warning that forced the master to turn his heels and flee to the State of Zheng 鄭. The Zheng lord, however, was unwilling to grant him an audience. Such spurning must have been disheartening for the master and his followers, especially when Confucius’ disciples lost contact with their master while he was in the capital of Zheng.13 When they finally reunited with their master at the eastern gate of the outer city wall of the Zheng capital, they found him standing alone, as recorded in the *Shiji*,

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When Confucius arrived at the Zheng capital, he lost contact with his disciples. For a moment Confucius stood alone at the eastern gate of the outer city wall of the Zheng capital city. A Zheng person 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 disowned dog.” Zigong told Confucius what he heard from the Zheng person. Smiling agreeably, Confucius said, “One’s appearance is trivial. However, his saying that I look like a disowned dog is indeed so!”

Although not included in the *Lunyu*, this passage appears in some other transmitted texts—namely, the *Baihu tongyi* 白虎通議, the *Lun heng* 論衡, and the *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語—without significant variations. A similar description of Confucius’ appearance using the phrase *sangjia gou* is also found in a *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 passage, even though its narrative structure differs from the one above. It is worth noting here that, even though all four of these texts are considered to be younger than the *Shiji* 史記, the similarities between the *Shiji* passage and its renditions do not necessarily prove the *Shiji* passage to be the ancestral version of the other four. The fact that the same sagely and canine features are used to describe Confucius’ appearance in different texts suggests that this anecdote was widely circulated and taken to be

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14 *Shiji* “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1921—1922.


historically accurate in certain circles. This is why it was tailored by the Grand Historian to reconstruct Confucius’ biography in the *Shiji*.

This 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” 活 and “real” 真 Confucius instead of a “dead” 死 and “fake” 假 one. According to Li Ling, the aspects of the real Confucius that are preserved within the historical presentation of the figure are probably his dedication to teaching an unprecedentedly large number of students, as well as his bent for playing an ancient Chinese Don Quixote who “acts though knowing that nothing will come to pass” 知其不可而为之 in attempting to restore an old, dying social and political system. A Confucius so defined 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.” In comparison with Confucius’ image as an exile and a marginalized figure, his portrayal as a sage actually “kills” the true Confucius. Aiming to restore, or rather, 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.

Li Ling’s clever use of a seemingly negative term, appreciated by none other than Confucius himself, to convey his critique of mainstream understanding of Confucius as the

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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 2008 (1), especially 12—14 and Li ling 2008 (2), especially 127—138.


19 Li Ling 2008(1), 12—14.

greatest sage in Chinese history has incited controversy, leading to heated exchange between Li Ling and his opponents.\(^{21}\) Li Ling’s original goal was to draw readers’ attention to the “lies” 和 “rumors” 謠言 that have enveloped the image of Confucius by inspiring them to read the original texts on Confucius.\(^{22}\) He quickly realizes, however, that attacks on his book are really attacks on his intentions and sincerity, and have nothing to do with how to read original sources. This somewhat surprises him, even though he anticipated some objections to his use of a term surrounded by controversy for centuries: Cui Shu’s 崔述 (1740—1816 CE) comments on the Shiji “disowned dog” anecdote illustrate such traditional concerns.\(^{23}\)

Cui Shu’s comments come after he has recapitulated the Shiji sangjia gou passage:

I (Cui Shu) note: Zheng is to the west of Song, while Chen is south of Song; travelling from Song to Chen one will certainly not pass through Zheng. Moreover, little time has passed between the time of Zichan’s death and when he acted as the minister of Zheng, so some Zheng people might have had the chance of seeing him; but Yao, Yu, and Gao Yao had been gone for one thousand seven hundred years--how could the Zheng person know their forms and bodies with such detail as to include precise measurements? As for comparing the Sage to a dog, those who have invented and believed in such sayings are all transgressors against the Sage’s

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\(^{21}\) 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 miwu 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 shuangchong 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>》), and 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 on, in the “Zhongguo Ruxue Wang” 中國儒學網.

\(^{22}\) Li Ling 2008(2) “zixu,” 1—7.

\(^{23}\) Li Ling mentions Cui’s comments in different places in his works, see Li Ling 2008(1), 16; Li Ling 2008(2), 137.
school. These belong to the words of the savages from east of Qi. I therefore cut them all and make it clear here.\textsuperscript{24}

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，而並為之辨。

Aiming to reconstruct Confucius’ life based on “reliable” sources, Cui Shu painstakingly examines a number of transmitted texts from which information on Confucius can be distilled, such as the Analects and the Shiji version of Confucius’ biography, and he ends up picturing a Confucius that accords with the image of the sage already in his mind. For this reason, an anecdote—like the sangjia gou passage in the Shiji—that disparages Confucius’ sagehood according to his understanding is unacceptable and must be excised from reliable sources. Although Cui Shu’s opening sentence eloquently debunks the “factual” information in this anecdote, whether or not Confucius really went to Zheng—establishing the veracity of “factual” information is beside the point. What matters most to Cui Shu is whether or not any perceived “fact” can be applied to Confucius’ sagely image. Even if this passage was factually accurate, it would be wrong to integrate Confucius’ dog-like appearance into his sagely image. To Cui Shu, therefore, the Shiji anecdote is nothing more than the untrustworthy “words of a savage”.

Cui Shu is certainly not the first person to denounce the reliability of some of the Shiji accounts shaping the image of Confucius. As a matter of fact, the phrase “words of the savages from east of Qi” used by Cui Shu to assess the sangjia gou anecdote echoes a judgment made by Mencius (372—289 BCE) in the Mengzi 孟子. Shun 舜 has long been considered one of the

\textsuperscript{24} Cui Shu 1983,298.
ancient sages in the Confucian tradition, but one saying describes him as a dictator, who forced his own father and the sage king Yao to serve in his court. When Xianqiu Meng, one of Mencius’ interlocutors in the *Mengzi*, asks why Confucius commented that “At that (Shun’s) time, how overwhelmingly dangerous it was in the world” Mencius dismisses his question by simply pointing out that “This is not the statement of a gentleman; these are words of savages from east of Qi” 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 without saying that Confucius would not have made those negative comments about Shun’s governance; finally, it reaches the conclusion that any sayings that contradict images of the sages must be considered “words of the savages from east of Qi,” which seems to suggest an ongoing debate regarding “civilized” and “savage” in the context of Warring States intellectual history.

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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 sixteenth-century Jesuits when they introduced the Chinese master’s teachings to the West, 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” 孔子, “ruzhe” 儒者, “rusheng” 儒生, “rujia” 儒家, “ru” 儒, or even “ruists,” “ruism,” and so on. For scholars’ wrestling with these words, see Zuffery 2003, especially 15—20; Jenson 1997, especially 3—28; Eno 1990. This dissertation, however, follows the convention of using “Confucian tradition” to denote “ru” or “rujia” unless specifically noted.


28 *Mengzi yizhu* “Wan Zhang (1),” 9.4:198. Similar passages on Confucius’ comments on Shun’s governance can also be in the *Mozi* and the *Han Feizi*; see *Mozi jiaozhu* “Feiru (2),” 9:433; *Han Feizi jijie* “Zhongxiao,” 20:466.
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 sagely 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’ disciples, You Ruo 有若 was chosen to succeed to Confucius’ position after the master’s death because of his resemblance to Confucius. He was later removed from the position because he could not predict rain as Confucius allegedly used to do.\(^{29}\) In discussing the authorship of the Analects, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773—819 CE) cites this Shiji passage to explain why You Ruo also receives the respectful appellation zi 子 (master) in the Analects.\(^{30}\) However, scholars like Zhu Xi 朱熹 and Wang Yinglin 王應麟 reduce this passage to “a shallow tale of a tub by the Historian”\(^{31}\) or “a mistake resulting from the Grand Historian’s collecting miscellaneous sayings”\(^{32}\), 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.\(^{33}\) Using a forced interpretation of Mengzi’s version of the anecdote, Cui Shu even goes further to argue that the

\(^{29}\) Shiji “Zhongni dizi liezhuan,” 67:2216.

\(^{30}\) Liu Zongyuan 1974, 68—69.

\(^{31}\) Zhu Xi 2002.

\(^{32}\) Wang Yinglin 2008, 923.

\(^{33}\) Mengzi yizhu “Teng Wengong (1),” 5:114—115. Different from the Shiji passage, the Mengzi version of this anecdote does not mention whether You Ruo accepted Confucius’ position or not and the attempt of raising You Ruo’s status to the master failed because of Zi Si’s 子思 (483—402 BCE) disapproval, but both versions preserve the fact that You Ruo was to take the position of Confucius after the latter’s death.
The Shiji version has to be a “far-fetched, unwarranted” 附會 one created by some “busybodies” 好事者.\textsuperscript{34}

These examples should illustrate this age-old touchstone used to assess the materials pertaining to Confucius the subject. Once he became a sage, Confucius could only be interpreted as a sage; therefore, anything that does not contribute to his sagely image must be “cut out” 削 of his biography.\textsuperscript{35} There are certainly contemporary political and cultural reasons for the recent trend of sanctifying Confucius, but the sanctification is no doubt deeply anchored 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 are all moored in this tradition, and so too are Li Ling’s contemporaries who challenge his argument and method.

Li Ling must overcome the intransigence to his use of materials that have been painstakingly “cut out” by scholars like Cui Shu. Li Ling believes Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 Shiji account of the lives of Confucius and his disciples is the most comprehensive and reliable source for understanding Confucius as a historical figure. According to Li Ling, the skeptical attitudes toward information in the Shiji version of Confucius’ biography reflect an underappreciation of Sima Qian’s efforts to depict Confucius as objectively as possible.\textsuperscript{36} In fact, not only the Shiji account, but also other sources long considered unreliable, such as the Kongzi jiayu 孔子家語 and the Kong congzi 孔叢子, need to be reappraised in light of recent

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{34} Cui Shu 1983, 383.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{35} Cui Shu 1983, 298.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{36} Li Ling 2008 (1), 1—2.}
\end{footnotesize}
archaeologically-recovered texts that have resulted in the reevaluation of texts once labeled “forgeries”. 37

Along with a reassessment of whole texts, the conventional ranking of source materials related to Confucius’ 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 Commentaries 左傳, the Mengzi, and the ritual texts by the two Dais 戴. 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. 38 Archaeological discoveries threaten to upend this order. For example, Li Ling champions the validity and authority of Confucius’ Shiji biography; recent archaeological finds in Hebei and Anhui provinces are confirming other Han texts like the Kongzi jiayu and the Kong Congzi to be reliable representatives from the heart of the Confucian tradition. 39 By comparison, the significance of canonical materials, including the Lunyu, has diminished. 40 For example, Li Ling clearly states the principle guiding his reading of the Analects in the Sangjia gou. His way of reading the Analects accords with Mencius’ method of reading the Documents. 41

38 Li Ling 2008 (1), 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.
41 Li Ling 2008(1) “Xu,” 12.
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.\(^{42}\)

“盡信書則不如無書。吾與武成取二三策而已。

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” 去政治化，去道德化，去宗教化 of it.\(^{43}\) In other words, readers of the *Analects* need to strip away the layers of politicization, moralization, and sanctification to tease out a true historical Confucius.

It is worth noting here how Sima Qian interprets and incorporates some of the passages from the *Analects* into Confucius’ biography in the *Shiji*. He weaves statements or words uttered by Confucius in the *Analects* into the biographical narrative, thereby contextualizing the quotations.\(^{44}\) Such contextualization enables readers of the *Analects* to transform its passages into vivid scenes directly connected to Confucius’ life, even though not all of the passages excerpted from the *Analects* are connected to historical reality.\(^{45}\) In fact, Sima Qian’s closing comments to Confucius’ biography describe how his admiration for Confucius leads to his

\(^{42}\) *Mengzi yizhu* “Jinxin (2),” 14.3:301.

\(^{43}\) Li Ling 2008 (1) “Xu,” 12.

\(^{44}\) For examples, see Sun Shiyang 1933, 93—94.

\(^{45}\) This does not mean, however, that we should deny Sima Qian’s efforts of collecting materials—including his visiting Confucius’ hometown and consulting as many textual resources as he could access.
empathetic reading of Confucius’ writings.\textsuperscript{46} Therefore, we should beware of Sima Qian’s conscious or unconscious projection of his own idealized image of the master into the biography.

Zheng Xuan’s (127—200 CE) commentaries also seem to employ Sima Qian’s empathetic method of reading and contextualizing the \textit{Analects}. Manuscripts unearthed at Dunhuang and Turfan have provided us with more than half of Zheng’s long lost commentaries on the \textit{Analects}. Using these recovered manuscripts, Kanaya Osamu identifies one of Zheng Xuan’s primary approaches to the \textit{Analects}. Many of Zheng’s commentaries, Kanaya observes, are astonishingly different from later commentaries and annotations: Zheng Xuan reads the \textit{Analects} much like Sima Qian, even though in many cases his interpretation of the passages differs from those of Sima Qian. Kanaya suggests that Zheng’s approach, especially as seen in his negative interpretations, is closely connected with his own life, personal experiences, as well as moral and political views.\textsuperscript{47} As was the case with Sima Qian, Zheng Xuan identifies with a Confucius who is largely a construct of his own mental and emotional projections. If this is the case, then the Confucius of Sima Qian and Zheng Xuan has not escaped being politicized and moralized. What makes their interpretations any different from later movements that regard Confucius as a demigod.

These problems with Sima Qian’s Confucius are not much of an issue for Li Ling as following Sima Qian’s way of reading the \textit{Analects} to create his own Confucius is not a central goal in his works. It is more important to counteract the contemporary sanctification of

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Shiji} “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1947. It says: In the \textit{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，然心繫往之。余讀孔氏書，想見其為人).

\textsuperscript{47} Kanaya Osamu 1991, 204—242, especially 221—237.
Confucius, and Li Ling indeed tolls a bell to alert readers of the *Analects* to the presence of the historical Confucius, an ancient Chinese intellectual who refused to be sanctified. But how does Li Ling achieve this? Can the *Analects* be read as Confucius’ biography, as Li Ling suggests?48

Li Ling takes a very interesting stance towards the *Analects*. On the one hand, he attempts to identify an historically real Confucius in the text. On the other hand, he seems less interested in confirming the historical validity and appropriateness of the materials he uses to construct his portrayal, even though he realizes the complexity of *Analects*’ textual history and insightfully points out that the *Analects* is not a collection of the original records but rather an abstract and abridgement of other textual units.49 Yet the image of an historical Confucius must be built with applicable materials containing historically solid information. How can the biography of an historical Confucius be written using scattered textual units removed from their original contexts or even devoid of any sense of historicity? How can one distinguish anecdotes invented historically late from those passed down from earlier periods? How can one define an anecdote about an historical figure? Do such anecdotes have any identifiable degree of historical reliability? In short, the nature of the *Analects* has to be explored before a reconstruction of the historical Confucius can be made. Otherwise, a reconstruction is at best another manufactured Confucius.

That being said, this chapter does not offer an alternative interpretation of Confucius in relation to Li Ling’s or reconstruct the life of Confucius, as a number of recent works do.50 Nor will I engage myself in the discussion of those timeless concepts labeled as Confucian values to

48 Li Ling 2008 (1) “Xu,” 12.

49 Li Ling 2008(1), 30—31.

promote, for instance, a model of self-cultivation.\textsuperscript{51} The major goals of this chapter, instead, are to address the above questions about the textual issues related to the nature of the \textit{Analects} and, then, to use the answers to these questions to consider how the \textit{Analects} functioned in the Western Han portrayal of Confucius as the author and creator of the body of the Confucian canon. The \textit{Analects} has indeed been hailed as one of, if not “the,” most trusted sources for studying and understanding Confucius.\textsuperscript{52} Such an appraisal deserves careful reconsideration as more and more evidence comes to light undermining its reliability. This chapter first investigates the textual history of the \textit{Analects}, then explores the formation of this text, before finally analyzing the elevation of \textit{Lunyu}’s status in relation to the \textit{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 \textit{Lunyu}’s representation of Confucius as a great transmitter of his teaching satisfied the need for a tangible and quotable Confucius to position the \textit{Gongyang} 公羊 myth as the Western Han ideology. It is my hope that in excavating how the \textit{Lunyu} was formed, transmitted, and interpreted, we may expose the fluidity undermining a long-held view on the fixity of the relationship between the text and the author to see how the establishment of an interdependent relationship between the two led to a stable hermeneutic for reading both Confucius and the Confucian classics.

\textbf{2.2. Was There a Text Called the \textit{Lunyu} before the Western Han?}

\textsuperscript{51} For example, cf. Tu Weiming 1998.

\textsuperscript{52} Zhu Weizheng 1986, 40.
The form of the *Analects* we commonly see today, which is often assumed to be the form of early texts as well, is a bound book with the Chinese characters (or language of the translation) printed on paper pages and the content divided into twenty chapters. Among the most authoritative editions is He Yan’s 何晏 (195?–249 CE) *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解 (Collected explanations of the *Analects*) annotated with sub-commentary by Xing Bing 刑昺 (932–1010) and contained in the Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849 CE) edition of the *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 published by Zhonghua shuju 中華書局. Most 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 one of the earliest collections of explanations on the *Analects*, but, as is stated in the preface of the *Lunyu jijie*, it is a “collection of the best [explanations] from various schools” 集諸家之善, such as those of “Kong Anguo 孔安國, Bao Xian 包咸, Zhoushi 周氏, Ma Rong 馬融, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, Chen Qun 陳群, Wang Su 王肅, and Zhou Shenglie 周生烈.” To trace the earliest versions of the original texts of the *Analects*, we must disentangle the complexities of its different transmitting lineages. Although John Makeham has filled the lacuna in the English academic world by introducing a basic framework of the textual issues of the *Analects*, there is still room to expand our understanding of what the earliest versions of the *Analects* might have been, based on materials that have recently become available. In order to have a clear picture of

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

54 *Lunyu zhushu* “Lunyu zhushu jiejingxu xu jie,” 6. It needs to be pointed out, however, this pre- or post- face is not for the *Lunyu zhushu*, but made by Han Yan for his *Lunyu jijie*. For this point, consult *Lunyu zhengyi* “Lunyu xu,” 24:771.

55 This is according to Xing Bing’s sub-commentaries; see *Lunyu zhushu* “Lunyu zhushu jiejingxu xu jie,” 6.

56 John Makeham has beautifully laid out the framework in bringing in various opinions to the discussion. He also does a good job by making the connection between the framework he introduces with some new archaeological
the earliest transmission of the *Analects*, I attempt to tackle two questions in the following sections: Was there even a pre-Han text called *Lunyu*? How were those earliest versions of the *Lunyu* related to the *Lunyu* that has been transmitted to us today? These two questions are intertwined with each other to some degree; therefore, the following discussion focuses on the first question by unfolding the textual history of the *Lunyu*, but it also touches upon issues pertaining to the second question when necessary.

One of the earliest clues to answering this question is in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu* 漢書, in which Ban Gu 班固 (32—92 CE) at least partly preserves the results of the late Western Han project of arranging the texts in the imperial collection. It says,

> The *Lunyu* includes the words said by Confucius when responding to his disciples and contemporaries as well as those directly heard by the disciples 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 the *Lunyu*.\(^{58}\)

This passage does not explicitly state when the *Lunyu* text was formed, but its attribution of authorship to Confucius’ disciples who lived shortly after the master’s death 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, 1—24.

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\(^{57}\) Ban Gu does mention that he did some editing work on the *Qilüe* 七略, which had been compiled by Liu Xin 劉歆 (circ. 50 BCE—23 CE) mostly based on the summaries of the texts rendered by his father, Liu Xiang 劉向 (circ. 77—6 BCE), but nowadays we cannot identify the parts edited by him; see *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1072.

\(^{58}\) *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1717.
indicates that this should be an early Warring States-period text.\textsuperscript{59} The rationale behind this dating presumes 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 points out.\textsuperscript{60} 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. Accordingly, to date the Lunyu means to identify the period of time in which both the textual idea and the physical form of the Analects emerged. The “Yiwen zhi” entry seems to suggest that Han scholars considered the Lunyu an early Warring States period (475—221 BCE) text in this sense.

Although the “Yiwenzhi” presents plausible circumstances surrounding the compilation of the Analects, many scholars are unsatisfied with its vagueness, especially its failure to identify the disciples behind the text. On this point, they attempt 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 子 and Kongzi 孔子. For example, according to a Qing 清 (1633—1911 CE) 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” 仲弓子游子夏等所撰.\textsuperscript{61} In support of this contention, the Song scholar Lu Jiuyuan 陸九

\textsuperscript{59} Even though Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629—1709 CE) opines that there is an 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 CE), for instance, points out that Zhu’s suggestion is the result of favorable evidence. See Jiang Boqian 1948, 284—286; Zhao Zhenxin 1936, 1—12; Zhao Zhenxin 1961, 11—16.

\textsuperscript{60} Lewis 1999, 53—97.

\textsuperscript{61} Lunyu zhengyi, 792.
淵 (1139—1193 CE) highlights the use of the appellation Zi in the *Lunyu*. Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858—1927 CE), on the contrary, objects to the authorship proposed in the “*Lunyu xu*” also on the basis of how Zi is used in the *Lunyu*. He contends that the application of this respectful appellation to Zengzi 曾子 (505—432 BCE) is a strong indication that the *Lunyu* was compiled by Zengzi’s students rather than by any of Confucius’ students.\(^6^2\) As a matter of fact, the whole debate on whether the *Analects* was compiled by Confucius’ students or his students’ students, began with Liu Zongyuan’s 柳宗元 (773—819 BCE) “*Lunyu bian*” 《論語》辨, which, as summarized by Cui Shu, is based on previous scholars’ interpretations of certain *Lunyu* passages related to the use of Zi and other appellations.\(^6^3\) The problem with all these arguments is that they assume a conclusion for a part can be extended to the whole.\(^6^4\)

Regardless of their differences, all these arguments seem to accept that the *Analects* as a text appeared no later than the time of Mencius (372—289 BCE) because the *Mencius* frequently quotes Confucius in ways remarkably similar to passages that now appear in the *Lunyu*.\(^6^5\) Such an assumption, I would point out, is directly linked with the “*Yiwenzhi*s” argument about the authorship of the *Analects*. The “*Yiwenzhi*” establishes a *terminus post quem* by assuming the pedagogical scene in the Eastern Zhou was one where the master speaks and the students take notes. Once the master’s messages have been delivered, they are immediately historicized. The only question about authorship that remains is when exactly the master’s messages were compiled together into a text. To answer this final question, those passages from which drops of

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\(^6^2\) Kang Youwei 1984, “*xu*,” 1.

\(^6^3\) Liu Zongyuan 1974, 68—69; Cui Shu 1983; Makeham 1996; Ogyū 1994; Yasui 1872; Lunyu jizhu 1992; Lunyu zhiyi 1990; among others.

\(^6^4\) Also consult Zhu Weizheng 43—44.

\(^6^5\) Li Ling 2008(1), 31; Zhao Zhenxin 1961, 11—16.
historical information may be distilled become pivotal in dating the text as a whole. Since Zengzi was said to be the youngest among Confucius’ students and because the Analects contains a scene with an aged Zengzi offering instruction to his students from his sickbed, the idea that Zengzi’s students finalized the text has remained influential. This dating describes a Lunyu that was formed by and transmitted through the Confucian teaching lineage. Why, then, is not the writing of one of Confucius’ direct disciples used in the discussion on the terminus ante quem of the Lunyu? What really matters in this case is 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 explains why the Analects is said to have been completed within a period between 479 BCE and 289 BCE, the two dates marking the death of the two masters—Confucius and Mencius, respectively.

The obvious problem with this traditional dating is that there is little additional evidence supporting the conclusion. If the Analects formed during the Warring States period, one would expect to see references to the title in other pre-Han texts. Or, at least in texts within the Confucian tradition, one would expect to see passages from the Analects being heavily cited. Unfortunately for those who embrace the traditional dating, these conditions are not present. First of all, none of the pre-Qin zhuzi (various masters) texts mentions the title Lunyu, a term that in itself is quite unique among the titles of other texts attributed to the various Eastern

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68 Li Ling 2008(1), 31; also see Hu Zhigui 1965(1), 1965(2), 1965(3). 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’ death.
Zhou masters. Although it appears in a *Liji* 禮記 passage, scholars have convincingly shown that this belongs to a later interpolation.\(^6^9\) This should not be that surprising as scholars like Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738—1801 CE) and Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 (1884—1955 CE) have demonstrated that most early Chinese texts originally lacked titles, the titles known to us today being affixed by later editors beginning in the Han dynasty.\(^7^0\) Recent archaeological finds basically support this conclusion, but the actual situation was slightly more complex. Zhang Xuecheng and Yu Jiaxi are right in stating that “book” titles were usually absent from the original forms of texts. Zhang’s suggestion about “pian” 篇 level units is compromised by newly excavated early texts written on bamboo strips. 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.\(^7^1\) In the case of the *Analects*, however, neither the “book” title nor the “pian” titles can be traced in 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 or *Kongzi yue* 孔子曰, only a few can be directly associated with the *Analects*. The author of the *Xunzi* 荀子, which is named after the great late Warring States-period Confucian thinker, for example, seems totally ignorant of the existence of

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\(^6^9\) For a great summary of scholars opinions on this point, see Zhao Zhenxin 1936, 1—5. Takeuchi Yoshio suspects that the interpolation of the term “lunyu” may have accidently originated from a marginal note added by a later reader. This is highly possible if we consult Yu Yue’s *Gushu yiyi juli* 古書疑義舉例, in which Yu Yue gives several examples as such. See Takeuchi 1979; Yu Yue 2010, 95—98.

\(^7^0\) Zhang Xuecheng 2011; Yu Jiaxi 2010; Zhao Zhenxin 1936, 25.

\(^7^1\) See Pian Yuqian and Duan Shu’an 2006, 87—114.
the Lunyu. Among the many passages pertaining to Confucius, none is nearly identical with any Lunyu passage.\(^{72}\) 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 counterparts.\(^{73}\) The remaining five display some correspondences to Lunyu passages, but not enough to conclude the availability of the Analects to the author of the Mengzi at that time. As a matter of fact, the differences between these similar passages highlight the high degree and nature 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—but if the Mengzi passages are indeed from the Lunyu, we would not expect to see such variation had the Lunyu indeed been a fixed text by Mencius’ time.\(^{74}\)

Of course, given the expense and material forms of early texts, we should not expect the Lunyu to have disseminated so widely immediately after its compilation that everyone knew and read it. Moreover, at that time, most knowledge was transmitted orally,\(^{75}\) so it is fair to say that there may not have been many copies of the Lunyu available to Mencius if the text was indeed completed during the early to mid-Warring States period. Although this is a defensible argument for explaining the textual variation we see in the purported Lunyu passages cited in the Mengzi, I

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\(^{72}\) Hu Zhigui 1965(1), 26.

\(^{73}\) Zhao Zhenxin 1961, 17—19; Gu Yanwu 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 (whose work is intensively examined in Chapter Five of this dissertation) suggests that oral transmission is even more stable than writing, at least in the discourse of Buddhist teaching. Finnegan 1996; Shi Sengyou 1995, 221—222.
have two reservations with this line of thinking, especially when dealing with a text like the *Analects*. First, as it is becoming increasingly accepted that Zengzi’s disciples had a hand 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’ teacher’s teacher, Zisi 子思 (483—402 BCE), 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’ words as recorded in the *Lunyu* for those of a disciple if the text was available to him.76 It is even more unbelievable that Mencius would have actually claimed in a meeting with King Xuan of Qi 齊宣王 (r. 319—301 BCE) that he did not know anything about Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685—643 BCE) and Lord Wen of Jin 晉文公 (r. 636—628 BCE) because such knowledge was not taught among Confucius’ disciples. This claim would certainly be untrue for one familiar with the *Lunyu* since Confucius’ comments on these two lords in the *Lunyu* are too obvious to overlook.77 The argument that Mencius knew the *Lunyu* very well contradicts this evidence suggesting that Mencius was obviously unfamiliar with at least parts of the *Lunyu* or that the *Lunyu* available at Mencius’s time must have been considerably different from the transmitted version.

My second concern with efforts to explain away the variations in the *Mengzi*’s use of purported passages from the *Lunyu* is that they fail to respond to how Mencius himself discusses

76 In Mencius’ *Shiji* biography, it says that Mencius was a student 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* “Mengzi Xun Qing liezhuan,” 74:2343; for the *Kongcongzi* passages, see *Kongcongzi jiaoshi* “Zaxun,” 6:111, 6:114, “Juwei” 7:131, and so on. Luo Genze argues that it would be impossible for Mencius to meet Zisi, thus, he concludes that the whole *Kongcongzi* is a forged text. See Luo Genze 1930, 189—195.

the state of knowledge about and the dissemination of Confucius’ sayings and teachings.

According to some passages in the *Mengzi*, there was an urgent need for the whole Confucian tradition to spread the actual sayings of Confucius. For example, in the previous section I cite a conversation between Mencius and Xianqiu Meng, purportedly one of Mencius’ students. Xianqu Meng asks his teacher how Confucius could have made some unflattering comments on the rule of the sage king Shun. In answering this question, Mencius points out that what Xianqiu Meng quotes as Confucius’ words “is not what a gentleman should say but the words of savages from east of Qi” 非君子之言齊東野人之語也.78 On another occasion, when Wan Zhang 萬章 asks whether it was true that Confucius lived with eunuchs during his stay in Wei and Qi, Mencius again strongly rebukes such hearsay by saying, “No! It was certainly not like this! This is made up by busybodies” 否不然也好事者為之也.79 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’ words to praise the Duke of Zhou, the master chastises him: “This is probably not what Duke of Zhou did, nor is this what Confucius said” 是殆非周公之行，非孔子之言也.80

If these passages accurately reflect late Warring States discussions, they suggest that anecdotes on Confucius were being freely circulated to the extent that there was the need to distinguish Confucius’ “real” words from those falsely attributed to him, either orally or in written forms, by “savages from east of Qi” or “busybodies.” Judging by the reactions of Mencius and Xunzi, the apocryphal sayings were damaging to the image of Confucius that the


80 *Xunzi jijie* “Ruxiao,” 8:134.
Confucian tradition wanted present, and thus, threatening to the reputation of the groups trying to spread his teachings. Under such circumstances, the best weapon to combat profane anecdotes about the master would be a collection of Confucius’ “real” words like the Lunyu. In both the extant Mengzi and Xunzi, however, we cannot find sufficient evidence of an authoritative collection of Confucius’ sayings, even though both texts vehemently rebuke false sayings. 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’ 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 be 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” chapter. As a matter of fact, the differences among the early versions of the Lunyu appeared soon after it was taught in different groups, such as the Lu and Qi groups mentioned in the Hanshu. Variations even appeared within individual teaching lineages, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter when treating the “Zhanghou lun,” the only version of the Analects passed down to the present day. Even though the “Zhanghou lun” belonged to the Lu textual lineage, it differs from the “Lu Lun” 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

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81 Zhao Zhenxin is probably right in pointing out that even many of Confucius’ words cited by Mencius and Xunzi in the Mengzi and Xunzi are actually created by themselves, which further suggests that an authoritative Confucius’ voice may have not been established then. See Zhao Zhenxin 1936, 22.

82 Xunzi jijie “Fei shi’er zi diliu,” 3:94—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 Han Feizi jijie “Xianxue di wushi,” 19:456—457. For the discussion on the social nature of and interactions among these different groups, cf. Eno 1990.
unavailable to Mencius and other masters and explain the glaring difference between the transmitted *Lunyu* passages and the citations of Confucius’ words in the *Mengzi* and other master writings?

In the following account of the long history of oral and textual transmission, we shall make it clear, based on available evidence, that the modifications in the “Zhanghou lun” mainly consisted in replacing auxiliary or dialectal words and could not have resulted in the many dramatic variations discussed above. At present, I have not been able to find evidence in either transmitted or excavated texts suggesting that later editing work on the *Lunyu* played a significant role accounting for all those variations. A more convincing explanation for these differences, as will be elaborated later in this chapter, is that all the words of and stories about Confucius included in the *Lunyu* merely constitute a small portion of the repository of the Confucius lore drawn upon by various early texts. In this lore, the words, deeds, and images of Confucius may differ from, and even contradict, one another depending on who is presenting him, 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 Chinese texts is scarce, even though the “Yiwen zhi” chapter suggests that it was a pre-Qin text. 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 around Mencius’ time, the quotations of Confucius’ words in the *Mengzi* would not have been so different from those corresponding passages included in the *Lunyu* passed down to us. The lack of textual evidence supporting the early

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83 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.
existence of the Lunyu text contradicts the report that the Lunyu was discovered in the walls of Confucius’ old mansion, an event used to demonstrate that a Lunyu had been compiled before the Qin dynasty. The following sections are dedicated to exploring this contradiction.

2.3. The Walls of Confucius’ Mansion and the Archaic, Lu, and Qi Lunyu

In comparison with the obscure argument for the early existence of the Analects, the earliest extant bibliographical records as well as other Han texts shed more light on the compilation and transmission of the Lunyu. In the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the Hanshu, it mentions three different versions of the Lunyu:

The Lunyu includes:
its archaic version, consisting of twenty-one pian (coming out of the walls of Confucius’ mansion, consisting of two pian of “Zizhang”),
its Qi version, consisting of twenty-two pian (having the extra chapters “Wen wang” and “Zhi dao” pian),
and its Lu version, consisting of twenty pian, with nineteen pian of commentaries.84

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。

Because the “Yiwen zhi” chapter states that it is an abridged version of the Qilüe 七略 (Seven Summaries) by Liu Xin, we may assume that the three versions of the Lunyu listed above had been available in the late Western Han dynasty when the imperial collection was rearranged and the Qilüe 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, or even the layout, of the *pian* of these two versions with the Lu version of the *Lunyu*.\(^8^5\) 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,\(^8^6\) 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 “Wen wang” and “Zhi dao” 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 of the versions’ twenty *pian* could differ.\(^8^7\) The reason that the Lu *Lunyu* serves as the standard is related to the popularity of another version of the *Lunyu*—the Zhanghou 張侯 (Marquis Zhang) *Lunyu*, which will be discussed in a coming section.

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\(^8^5\) Although 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 different order from the Lu *Lunyu*. See Huang Kan, “*Lunyu jijie yishu*.”

\(^8^6\) 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* “*Lunyu xu*,” 24:777; for Ru Chun’s suggestion, see *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30: 1716.

\(^8^7\) 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* “*Lunyu xu*,” 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 authoritativeness 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; Ess 1994; Nylan 1995.
We now know that by the late Western Han these three versions of the *Lunyu* were available to those who arranged the imperial collection. But when did they come into being? The “Yiwen zhi” chapter gives some clue on how the Qi and Lu versions were transmitted.

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. Those who transmitted Lu *Lunyu* include the Changshanshun Commander-in-chief, Gong Fen, the Chang Xin Chamberlain for the Palace Revenues, Xiahou Sheng, Counselor-in-chief, Wei Xian, the Lu Fu Qing, 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.

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, falls in the middle of the reign of the Han Emperor Wu (Wudi) 漢武帝 (r. 141—87

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88 In the He Yan “Lunyu xu” it mentions the names and official titles of the following 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 “Lunyu xu,”* 24:771—775.

89 *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30: 1717.
BCE) or thereafter. If these dates are approximately when the men taught, then it is useful evidence for identifying when the Lu and Qi versions of the *Lunyu* formed. As a matter of fact, 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*, the Lu or the Qi, was the earliest. This has to be discussed together with the provenance of the archaic version of the *Lunyu*. Interestingly, even though one of the notes mentions the discovery of the archaic version of the *Lunyu* in the walls of Confucius’ mansion, it does not specify the time of said discovery. Fortunately, other portions of the *Hanshu* provide additional information on the discovery of the archaic *Lunyu* as well as other ancient texts in the walls of Confucius’ house.

This discovery involved a Han prince Liu Yu 刘余 (r. 155—128 BCE), Prince Gong of Lu 鲁恭王, who has a brief biography in the *Hanshu*. It says that he was enfeoffed as the Prince of Huaiyang 淮阳王 in 155 BCE, second year of Jingdi’s 景帝 reign (157—141 BCE), and then as Prince of Lu the next year (i.e., 154 BCE). He died in 128 BCE, the first year of the Yuanshuo 元朔 era (128—123 BCE) 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’ mansion, according to his biography, had something to do with his hobbies:

In his early years when Prince Gong was fond of building palaces and chambers, he attempted to destroy Confucius’ old mansion to

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91 Emperor Jing of Han, Liu Qi 劉啟, ascended to the throne in 157 BCE, but 156 BCE is considered the first year of his reign. See Fang Shiming 2007, 35.
expand his palace. [When he started,] 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’ mansion some Confucian Classics as well as their commentaries written in archaic scripts were discovered.  

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。

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 the unusualness of this 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.  

When the three descriptions are compared, what stands out as relevant to the present discussion is the discrepancy between the times of the texts’ discovery. The above passage mentions 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.  

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 may give some clue to the date of the discovery of ancient texts in the walls of Confucius’ mansion:

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92 *Hanshu* “Jing shisan wang zhuan,” 53:2414.


When it came to the time that Prince Gong of Lu damaged Confucius’ mansion to build his own palace and obtained ancient texts from the ruined walls, the then lost ritual texts included thirty-nine *pian* and the *Documents*, sixteen *pian*. After the Tianhan era, Kong Anguo presented them to the imperial court, but the texts suffered from the unexpected calamity caused by witchcraft and were not put in use.\(^95\)

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。

Since Kong Anguo presented the ritual texts and the *Documents* after the Tianhan era (100—97 BCE), the discovery of these texts from Confucius’ damaged house must have occurred before 97 BCE, the year when the Tianhan era ended. The event alluded to as the cause of the texts’ damage was the scandal occurring late in Wudi’s reign (92—91 BCE) when Emperor Wu, his heir apparent, the Empress, a princess, and several other royal families engaged in witchcraft.\(^96\) Based on the two dates mentioned in this passage, Kong Anguo might have presented the two texts some time between 97 BCE and 91 BCE, a period falling toward the “end of Wudi’s reign.”\(^97\)

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\(^96\) For studies of this event, see Loewe 1974; Poo Mu-chou 1986.

\(^97\) 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 BCE) of Wendi’s 文帝 reign and the Yuanding 元鼎 era (116—111 BCE) of Wudi’s reign, but others, such as Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722—1797 CE) and Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877—1927 CE), doubt the reliability of his biographical information in the *Kongzi jiayu* since the dating contradicts the *Shiji* record that says Kong Anguo “died young” (蚤卒). Wang Mingsheng suggests that Kong Anguo lived between 150 BCE and 110 BCE, while Wang Guowei suspects that Kong should have died around 130 BCE. Zhao Zhenxin 趙振新 accommodates all the information and provides approximate dates of Kong Anguo’s birth and death—160 BCE and 120 BCE. 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 jiayu*, which mentions that Kong Anguo died at home at the age of sixty, Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 suggests that Anguo lived to the Tianhan era when he died in 98 BCE. 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
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 BCE, he could not have damaged Confucius’ former mansion during Wudi’s final years and recovered the texts, if the discovery of those ancient texts was indeed the outcome of the Lu Prince’s remodeling.

Could such a glaring conflict have been ignored by the *Hanshu* author, be it Ban Gu 班固 (32—92 BCE) or his father, Ban Biao 班彪 (3—54 BCE)? The great Qing Scholar, Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821—1907 CE), warns us of the danger of using modern grammar and syntax to read Han and pre-Qin texts, and he provides some examples illustrating the kinds of misunderstandings that arise when reading anachronistically.98 According to Yu Yue, it is not unusual for early texts to have two subjects head 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 grammar allows for different subjects for the verbs subsequent to the initial verb in the series.99 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.100 The translation of this passage follows a modern reading that sees both Yu and Ji as the subjects of all the verbs—order 平 (ping), pass 過 (guo), and enter 入 (ru). In fact, the correct reading recognizes that only calamity of witchcraft.” This is not unusual in early Chinese writings, as we will see in the following discussion inspired by Yu Yue. In other words, this problem is simply caused by the difference between modern and early Chinese grammars. The problem is gone if we read it using conventions of early Chinese grammars. For the *Shiji* information, see *Shiji* “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1947; for Zhao Zhenxin’s estimation, see Zhao Zhenxin 1936, 12—14; for Hu Pingsheng’s argument, see Hu Pingsheng 2000, 526—527.

98 Yu Yue 2010, “introduction.”

99 Yu Yue 2010, 10—11.

Yu is the subject for the clause about not entering his household gates despite passing them three times.\textsuperscript{101}

Yu Yue’s explanation helps us to resolve the conflict between the passages as it suggests a different way of reading the time phrase, “Wudi’s final years,” in the “Yiwen zhi” account. 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 when the texts were discovered in Confucius’ walls and the time when the witchcraft scandal precluded the texts’ official support; “Wudi’s final years” only applies to the latter event. This explanation eliminates any discrepancy among the three Hanshu accounts about the date when the archaic version of the Lunyu was found. As the biography of Prince Gong of Lu is the only one indicating a time frame for the prince’s partial destruction of Confucius’ mansion, the discovery of the archaic texts in the walls probably occurred during Jingdi’s reign or the early years of Wudi’s reign; i.e., some time between 154 BCE and 128 BCE.\textsuperscript{102} 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 would partly explain the limited citation of the Lunyu before the Western Han.

2.4. Texts Hidden in the Walls and the Function of the Lunyu

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\textsuperscript{101} Yu Yue 2010, 11.

\textsuperscript{102} Wang Chong mentions in the “Zhengshuo” chapter of his Lunheng 論衡 that it was during Wudi’s reign that people opened the walls of Confucius’ mansion and obtained the Lunyu with twenty-one pian, but when talking about 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’ mansion in Wudi’s reign. But in any case, this should have happened before 128 BCE, the year when the Prince died. See Lunheng “Zhengshuo,” 28:1136; Lunheng “Zhengshuo,” 28:1125; Lunheng “Anshu,” 29:1161—1162.
Comparing the date of the archaic *Lunyu* with those of the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*, we find a connection between the discovery of the archaic *Lunyu* and the transmission of the Lu and Qi *Lunyu.* It is probably not a coincidence that both the Lu and Qi lineages as well as their respective versions of the *Lunyu* first appear around the time of the discovery of the archaic *Lunyu*. Takeuchi Yoshio 武內義雄 thus suggests that, despite their differences, both the Lu and the Qi *Lunyu* were jinwen 今文 (current script) versions derived from the archaic *Lunyu* discovered at Confucius’ mansion. John Makeham embraces Takeuchi’s assumption and rebuts two major challenges to it, both of which try to undermine any connection among the three texts on the basis of formal differences in the arrangement of their pian and smaller textual units, the zhang 章 (passage) and the ju 句 (sentence). He argues that all these differences are related to, and, therefore, can be explained by reinterpreting the number of pian in the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*.

Takeuchi’s assumption is inspiring because it bridges the three *Lunyu*, but we have to beware of the argument’s exclusive reliance 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. Besides the two objections to Takeuchi’s theory as discussed by Makeham, additional sources point to other significant differences also deserving attention in a discussion of the relationship between the archaic *Lunyu* and the Lu and Qi

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103 According to Liu Xiang’s *Bielu* 別錄, cited by Huang Kan 黃侃 (488—545 CE) in his preface to the *Lunyu yishu* 論語義疏, “What the Lu transmitters had learned is called the Lu *Lunyu*, what the Qi transmitters had learned is called the Qi *Lunyu*” (魯人所學謂之魯論齊人所學謂之齊論). Huang Kan, “*Lunyu jijie yishu xu.*”

104 Takeuchi 1979, 69.

Lunyu. Further complicating the picture of the early Lunyu text is the existence of other versions besides these three. Indeed, Wang Chong lists a few other kinds of Lunyu in addition to the three mentioned in the Hanshu. Furthermore, Wang Chong’s description of the Lu and Qi Lunyu seems fundamentally different from that provided in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the Hanshu, as we see below.

When it came to the time of Emperor Wu, people opened the walls of Confucius’ mansion and obtained the Lunyu written in archaic style with 21 pian. Adding to it the two pian Qi and Lu Lunyu as well as that from Hejian, for a subtotal of nine pian, the Lunyu altogether includes thirty pian. When it came down to the time of Emperor Zhao, he began to read the Lunyu with twenty-one pian. Emperor Xuan put it in the charge of the Erudite of the Chamberlain for Ceremonials, but at that time people still thought that writing was difficult to understand, and called it a textual tradition. Later the writing was transcribed with official script to be transmitted and recited. In the beginning, Kong Anguo, one of Confucius’ descendants, taught it to Fu Qing of Lu, whose highest

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106 For example, in the Xinlun 新論 attributed to Huan Tan 桓譚 (circ. 23 BCE—56 CE), 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 “Zhengjing,” 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 “Lunyu xu,” 24:777); another commentator, Huang Kan 黃侃 (488—545 CE), 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, “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, “Lunyu jijie yishu xu”).

107 Su Shiyang 孫世揚 suggests that the number “nine” here be “seven” in order to match the total thirty pian. Since it says clearly later in this passage that the Qi, Lu, and Hejian 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 see almost everywhere 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. For Sun Shiyang’s suggestions, see Lunheng jiaoshi “Zhengshuo pian,” 28:1136—1137.

108 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 it. 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 before and after him as time markers. For Emperor Zhao’s edict, see Hanshu “Zhaodi Liu Fu,” 7:223—224.
official position was Jingzhou Regional Inspector and who began to call it the *Lunyu*. Nowadays people say that the *Lunyu* includes twenty *pian*, having lost the nine *pian* from 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.109

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 献王刘德 (171—130 BCE), were independent from the *Lunyu* found in Confucius’ walls. Moreover, the *Lunyu* read by Wang Chong’s contemporaries was actually an adapted version of the *Lunyu* transcribed from the archaic version and had nothing to do 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” chapter of the *Hanshu* need to be redefined. All must have begun with Confucius’ descendant Kong Anguo. The transmission of a number of ancient texts written in archaic scripts found in Confucius’ walls can be traced to this figure, for it says in the *Hanshu* that it was he who “obtained all the

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writings [discovered in the walls]”悉得其書.\(^{110}\) In the case of the *Lunyu*, what Kong Anguo taught to Fu Qing was none other than the twenty-one *pian* found in the walls of Confucius’ mansion. Moreover, this 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 might be some *Lunyu*-like texts, possibly similar to the “yi *Lunyu*”逸論語 (“scattered *Lunyu*”) passages mentioned in the *Shuowen jiezi*說文解字 or the “three-*pian* Ming, resembling the *Liji* but also like the *Erya* and *Lunyu*”名三篇似禮記又似爾雅論語 unearthed from a Ji tomb汲冢, allegedly belonging to King Xiang of Wei 魏襄王 (r. 318—296 BCE) or King Anli of Wei 魏安釐王 (r. 277—243 BCE).\(^{111}\) By comparison, the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* recorded in the “Yiwen zhī” chapter of the *Hanshu*, 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 them by relating them to their transmitting lineages, not to the archaic *Lunyu*: “What the Lu transmitters had learned is called the Lu *Lunyu*, what the Qi transmitters had learned is called the Qi *Lunyu*” 魯人所學謂之魯論齊人所學謂之齊論.\(^{112}\) 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*-style transcription of the archaic *Lunyu*, it would be unlikely that the archaic *Lunyu* was still incomprehensible and

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\(^{110}\) *Hanshu*“Yiwen zhī,” 30:1706.

\(^{111}\) *Shuowen jiezi* zhū說文解字, 1:15; *Jinshu*“Shu Xi zhuan,” 51:1433—1434.

\(^{112}\) Huang Kan, “*Lunyu jijie yishu xu.*”
in need of another transcription into the official script during the reign of Emperor Xuan (74—49 BCE), 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 style. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to confirm when and who made 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 eloquently demonstrates how unstable early Chinese texts could be. 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 needs, as we will see in Zhang Yu’s biography cited below.113 Because both the Lu and the Qi groups used the same ancestral text, the core of each textual tradition remained relatively stable, even though variation arose 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 mentions that “When Zheng collated Mr. Zhou’s version of the Lunyu, he used the texts of the Qi and archaic versions to correct Mr. Zhou’s; altogether there were fifty examples” 鄭校周之本以齊古讀正凡五十事.114 Wang Guowei is able to locate twenty-seven out of the fifty examples in the Jingdian shiwen, all of which demonstrate Zheng Xuan’s efforts to replace some words in the Lu Lunyu with those found in the archaic version.115 From Lu Deming’s account of the nature of

113 Hanshu “Kuang Zhang Kong Ma zhuan,” 71:3352. For details of this passage and discussions on it, see the discussion of the “Zhanghou lun” below.
114 Jingdian shiwen huijiao 24:695.
115 Guantang jilin 4:166—172.
the changes made, we can also infer that, in spite of a different ordering of the *piān*, the contents of the archaic and *Lu Lunyu* were more or less the same, only differing a little in wording.

Now, if the above argument is convincing, we must face the following questions: Who hid those ancient texts in the walls of Confucius’ mansion? When? And why? Scholars usually avoid these questions for lack of evidence. Nevertheless, Yan Shigu’s 颜師古 (581—645 CE) notes to the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu* indicate that the concealment of the texts may be associated with the notorious “Burning of the Books” during the reign of the First Emperor. His note says,

In the [*Kongzi Jiayu* it says that Kong Teng, courtesy name Zixiang, fearing the severe and strict Qin law, hid the *Book of Documents*, the *Xiaoqing*, and the *Lunyu* in the walls of the master’s old hall.116 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; one cannot distinguish which is correct.117

家語云孔濤字子襄，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。

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” 詩書百家語 that was promulgated in 213 BCE.118 However, because Yan Shigu cites Kong Anguo’s postface to the *Kongzi jiayu*, a source that has long been

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116 Yang Zhaoming and Song Lilin 2009, 580.

117 *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1706; this is clearly stated by Kong Yingda in the “Shangshu xu,” see *Shangshu zhengyi* “Shangshu xu,” 11.

118 *Shiji* “Li Si liezhuan,” 87:2546.
suspected a forgery by Wang Su 王肅 (195—256 CE), few scholars take it seriously. Yan Shigu’s other source, the *Dongguan Hanji*, was totally scattered by the Yuan dynasty 元 dynasty (1271—1368 CE), and all that we have of it today are Qing reconstructions using passages preserved in later anthologies. Although Yin Min’s biography is included in extant texts of the *Dongguan Hanji*, neither the Yao Zhiyin 姚之駰 (a Metropolitan Graduate in 1721 CE) nor the Wuyingdian 武英殿 reconstruction contains any information on Kong Fu’s hiding of texts. In the *Dongguan Hanji jiaozhu* 東觀漢記校注 (*Collations and Annotations of the Eastern Pavilion Records of Han*), Wu Shuping’s 吳樹平 attempt to improve upon the previous reconstructions, Yan Shigu’s note to the “Yiwen zhi” is woven into Yin Min’s biography. Nevertheless, there is no additional evidence to determine whether Kong Fu or Kong Teng hid the ancient texts in the walls.

Whether it was Kong Teng, as Kong Anguo asserts, or Kong Fu, as the Yin Min biography maintains, matters little. According to Kong Anguo’s postface to the *Kongzi jiayu*, Kong Teng was Kong Fu’s brother; both lived under the rule of the First Emperor, and both hated the Qin law. This explains why “the Lu Confucians carried the Kong family’s ritual vessels to serve the King of Chen” 魯諸儒持孔氏之禮器往歸陳王 and why Kong Fu served Chen Sheng 陳勝 (?—208 BCE) as Erudite. Whoever was responsible for hiding the texts, his purpose was to save those texts from destruction during the “Burning of the Books.” We can even 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.

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120 *Shiji* “Rulin liezhuan,” 121:3116.
Knowing that the concealment of the archaic Lunyu is tied to a well-known historical event, however, does not clarify when and how the text was formed. Whereas Han and pre-Han texts sealed in tombs have the burial context to aid us in analyzing them, what are we to make of texts concealed in walls? Should we simply regard them as similar to texts buried in tombs? Or should we just treat them as a response to the harsh Qin law, which, even after the fact, evokes unease among scholars for its persecution of their earlier brethren?

On this point, we have a few other examples showing the impact of the alleged “Burning of the Books” policy. In the Lunheng, Wang Chong mentions that during the reign of Emperor Xuan (r. 74—49 BCE) a women living in Henei prefecture (part of present-day Henan province) found one pian of each of the Changes, the Rituals, and the Documents (possibly the “Taishi” chapter) in an old house (laowu). On the discovery of the “Taishi” chapter, there is another account that also mentions finding it in a wall. 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. Another well-known example is also related to the transmission of the Documents. It is said in the Shiji that Fu Sheng hid the Documents in the walls in order to save the text from being burned.

How are we to understand these accounts about hiding texts in walls—Confucius’ walls, the walls of commoners living in Henei prefecture, and elsewhere? The similarity of such

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121 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. Lunheng jiaoshi “Zhengshuo,” 28:1124—1125; Lunheng jiaoshi “Xieduan,” 12:559—561; Shangshu zhengyi “Shangshu xu,” 12—13; Suishu “Jingji zhi,” 32:914—915.


123 Shiji “Rulin liezhuan,” 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 Lunheng jiaozhu “Zhengshuo,” 28:1124.
accounts seems like a conventional formula for describing ancient texts without provenance. Moreover, the narratives tend to mythicize the antiquity of the texts and their original owners—Confucius, for instance—in order to increase the value and potential reward if 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 the pre-Qin periods and their value increased, accordingly, 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 the accounts, we lack conclusive evidence to tie all the received narratives about hiding books in walls exclusively to the “Burning of the Books” in the Qin dynasty. It is possible that recent archaeological insights into the practice of burying texts within tombs can shed some light on other possible historical contexts, not associated with the “Burning of the Books,” contributing to the practice of framing texts within walls. Perhaps, as was the case with tomb texts, enclosing texts within walls conveyed specific meanings to those who did so.

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. In an article discussing the authority of texts in their burial and ritual context, Michael Nylan also points out that texts, together with the other burial objects, “were presumed to confer blessings and avert evil, in this life and the next.”

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124 Falkenhausen 2003, 487.

zhou’s argument that the search for personal welfare reflects the core of early Chinese religious mentality also helps to contextualize books 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 ancestors. 126 Placing texts within walls makes sense for those operating under such a religious mentality.

In fact, there is textual evidence, although of a later date, that explicitly attributes 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 witch by having the witch curse Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179—104 BCE), an ardent critic of witchcraft. While the witch attempted to harm Dong, “Zhongshu wore his official suits, faced the south, and recited and chanted the classics and treatises; 127 he could not be harmed; instead the witch suddenly died” 朝服南面誦詠經論不能傷害而巫者忽死. 128 Another story tells how Zhi Boyi 鄰伯夷, an Eastern Han Local Inspector, fought against a goblin fox who had been haunting an inn and harming travelers for a long time. It says that Boyi “dressed himself up, sat, and recited the texts of the Liujia, 129 the Xiaojing, and the Changes” 振服坐誦六甲孝經易本 before battling

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127 Though I translated “論” as “treatises” here, it can also denote “the Lunyu,” as we will see that the Lunyu is clearly viewed as a text expelling evils in other references.
129 It may be the Feng gu liujia 風鼓六甲 with twenty-four pian or the Wenjie liujia 文解六甲 with 28 pian recorded in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the Hanshu. See Hanshu “Yiwen zhi,” 21:1768—1769.
the monster. The Yiwen leiju 藝文類聚 and the Taiping yulan 太平御覽 cite the Han Xiandi zhuan 漢獻帝傳 and the Dongguan Hanji (both lost), which tell a similar story about how Wang Yun 王允 (137—192 CE) used the Xiaojing and a corresponding ritual to “dispel evil” (que jianxie 卻奸邪). Another reference preserved in the Sanguozhi records Guan Lu’s 管輅 (209—256 CE) explanation of what information he took away from the Classics:

[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 present the Qin and Han affairs; I merely attempt to discuss the modes of the metal, wood, water, fire, earth, ghosts, and spirits, and that is it.

It is also worth noting that, in addition to the contents of texts, the material on which early Chinese texts were written, bamboo, was 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 薊, to name a few—to be able to exorcise ghosts and drive out wild animals. It says:

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131 Yiwen leiju, 69:1204; Taiping yulan 709.
132 This appears in Pei Songzhi’s 裴松之 (372—451 CE) notes, said from the Guan Lu biezhuan 管輅別傳; see Sanguozhi “Weishu,” 29:811.
133 Wu Xiaoqiang 2000, 128—139.
If ghosts twist a person’s head when sleeping at night, beat the ghosts with the root of indocalamus, a reed-like bamboo, and then the ghosts will stop. If multitudes of wild birds, beasts, animals, or insects prefer to enter a specific person’s room, beat them with the root of indocalamus, then they will stop.\(^{134}\)  

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 contain all sorts of taboos specifying the dates when a house should not be built, the locations where a house should not stand, as well as orientations to avoid when siting a house.\(^{135}\) 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 in terms of their connection with the practice of hiding texts in walls of a house that were considered the place where harmful ghosts dwelt. For example, to expel a ghost who causes nightmares, one should 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.\(^{136}\) Texts, especially the Chinese Classics, written on bamboo strips may 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

\(^{134}\) Wu Xiaoqiang 2000, 133—134.  

\(^{135}\) Cf. Wu Xiaoqiang 2000.  

\(^{136}\) Wu Xiaoqiang 2000, 132. All these examples may reflect, as Robin Yates suggests, a culture of purifying pollution caused by various elements, among which certain ghosts are included. Writings, often applied on specific materials for certain rituals, could 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 related to the rites of purification. See Yates 1997, 479—536.
that writing a “Dong Zhongshu charm” 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. All these exorcistic practices associated with early Chinese religious mentality provide another context, besides the “Burning of the Books,” for understanding why texts might have been hidden in walls.

Considering the concealment of the archaic Lunyu in the walls of Confucius’ mansion as an action done for the welfare of the family helps us see some of the shortcomings with traditional explanations that tie the text to the Qin law. If Kong Fu or Kong Teng had hidden the texts in the wall in order 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 rule was toppled, especially when we consider that Kong Teng was still living when the Qin law banning books was abolished. 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 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’ mansion and appreciated for their supernatural powers before being widely circulated may well explain this phenomenon. That being said, it needs to be pointed out that the text was hidden away probably not because Confucius’ words were intended for ghosts; it is more possible that Warring-States texts in general could be used as talismanic objects—the supernatural power they contained was not necessarily generated from what those written words literally meant, but was

137 Chen Yuzhu 2007, 170—171.

138 Hanshu “Huidi Liu Ying ji,” 2:90. lived down to the Emperor Hui’s 惠帝 (195—188 BCE) time and served as his Erudite; see Shiji “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1947.
ascribed to the material and conceptual forms of a text and of the words within. In the case of the materials hidden in the walls of Confucius’ mansion and later excavated to form the *Lunyu*, they may have been originally made to preserve all those sayings about Confucius and his students, yet they ended up as talismans when being buried in those walls. We may even assume that those sayings were collected, written down, preserved, and intended to serve as teaching materials or references, but they were buried in walls before being passed down as a set of integrated texts. This assumption can be attested in recent archaeological finds: a fair number of excavated texts were never transmitted but ended up in tombs for thousands of years. Although so far 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, we do have a more recent example comparable to the talismanic use of the Confucian classics under discussion. According to the *Huaxi Metropolitan Newspaper* 華西都市報, a local Sichuan newspaper, in Bazhong district of Sichuan province, 四川巴中, after being damaged by the 2008 earthquake, people removed 36 old books from the walls of a Liu 刘 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.\(^{139}\) Why were these texts put in the walls of the shrine 100 years ago? It may not be too far-fetched to make a comparison between this case and the discovery of texts in the walls of Confucius’ mansion over two thousand years ago. Unfortunately, we have to leave questions about who recorded the words on bamboo slips and edited the texts and when and under what circumstances this occurred to future discoveries of the long-lost archaic, Qi, and Lu *Lunyu*.

\(^{139}\) See Liu Xiangui and Yang Qingsong, 2008.
2.5. The *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 *Hanshu* but from another text called the “Zhanghou lun” 張侯論, an adaption of the *Lunyu* by Zhang Yu (?—5 BCE), the childhood tutor of the Western Han Emperor Cheng 成帝 (r. 33—7 BCE) and later the enfeoffed Marquis of Anchang 安昌侯. Zhang Yu’s biography in the *Hanshu* describes how the “Zhanghou lun” was formed:

In the beginning, when Yu became a teacher for the future Emperor, because the future Emperor had difficulty in enumerating and replying to the classics that Yu asked about, Yu provided 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 ordering of some of the *pian* of the *Lunyu* was different from one another. Yu first served Wang Yang [as his student] and later followed Yong Sheng, collecting what (i.e., the *Lunyu* textual units) he felt satisfied with. His version of the *Lunyu* came out the latest but became the most revered. Many Confucian students said about his version, “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 remaining lineages gradually faded away.\(^\footnote{140 *Hanshu* “Kuang Zhang Kong Ma zhuan,” 71:3352.}\)

This passage enables us to understand the *Lunyu* from a number of aspects. First, unlike the “Yiwen Zhi” passage, in which the author strictly distinguishes the Lu *Lunyu* lineage 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 stabilized, even within a single 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: Zhang Yu pieced together the
“Zhanghou lun” by excerpting those passages he felt comfortable with from available sources.
Fourth, since the text that Zhang Yu made served as a textbook for a student only six or seven
years old then,141 we have reason to speculate that his Lunyu was a simplified version. Finally,
this passage indicates that the popularity of this simplified version resulted in the gradual demise
of the Lunyu’s transmission along other teaching lineages.

Why was the “Zhanghou lun” able to gain so much popularity that it ultimately
superceded the archaic, Qi, and Lu Lunyu? The reason is three-fold. First of all, 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. The Emperor’s edicts frequently cited Lunyu passages from the
“Zhanghou lun” version, thereby, lending it an air of supreme authority.142 Those who sought
official positions naturally chose the version promoted by the Emperor as their textbook, which
helped to speed the ascendancy of the “Zhanghou lun” version. Second, Zhang Yu’s
simplification of the Lunyu was certainly another factor leading to its triumph. We need to keep

141 Emperor Cheng was born in 51 BCE; Zhang’s biography says that he began to teach the Lunyu for the then Heir
Apparent in the Chuyuan 初元 era (48—44 BCE) of Yuandi’s 元帝 reign (r. 49—34 BCE). See Hanshu “Kuang
Zhang Kong Ma zhuan,” 71:3347.

142 For example, see Hanshu “Chengdi Liu Wu ji,” 10:313.
in mind that this specific version was created for a six- or seven-year-old boy; it had to be simple so that the boy could understand it. Simplification did not have to change dramatically the contents of the archaic version; it could have involved rearrangement of the passages and elimination of archaic characters. It is reasonable to assume that Zhang Yu’s primary goal in writing his version was to help the Heir Apparent understand and even memorize the Lunyu passages. To achieve this goal, Zhang Yu broke down the pian chapter into passages and sentences and explained them one by one for the Heir Apparent. Finally, the success of the “Zhanghou lun” is also attributed to Zhang Yu’s streamlined 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. It is also worth noting that 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.\(^\text{143}\) This is probably 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.

\(^\text{143}\) 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 son with a version different from the one used by the 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” of the Hanshu. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that neither the Lu nor the Qi Lunyu had been completely stabilized by the time Zhang Yu wrote the textbook. It says clearly in Zhang Yu’s biography that he had the freedom to adopt whatever he agreed with and liked. Taking all these factors into consideration, I suggest that the content 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 “Yiwen zhi,” 30: 1717; Hanshu “Kuang Zhang Kong Ma zhuan,” 71:3352.
Because of its huge 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, such as He Yan’s *Lunyu jijie*. According to He Yan’s “*Lunyu xu,*” two explanatory works by a Mr. Bao (包氏) and a Mr. Zhou (周氏) appeared after the “Zhanghou lun.” These two works have been completely lost, so we do not know whether either of them rearranged the “Zhanghou lun” on which their explanations were based. Nevertheless, their works must have been consequential, for a note by Lu Deming 隋書 (circ. 550—630 BCE), author of the *Jingdian shiwen*, clearly states that Zheng Xuan’s influential commentary on the *Lunyu* stemmed from Mr. Zhou’s work. 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, which belonged to the Lu *Lunyu*, while also consulting the Qi and archaic *Lunyu*” 隋書 146 The “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 chapter of the *Suishu* 隋書 explicitly states that the main *Lunyu* text used by Zheng Xuan was the “Zhanghou lun.” In fact, most secondary sources agree that Zheng Xuan made his notes using the “Zhanghou lun” version.

144 Both of them focus on the understanding of specific *Lunyu* passages and sentences (章句) in the “Zhouhou lun,” *Lunyu Zhengyi* “*Lunyu Xu,*” 24:780.

145 Lu Deming 2006, 24:695.

146 Lu Deming 2006, 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.

147 *Suishu* “Jingji zhi,” 32:939.

148 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, after all, 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* “*Lunyu xu,*” 24:783; Huang Kan, “*Lunyu jijie xu.*”
This point is important, for the *Lunyu* text that Zheng Xuan commented on is directly linked to the *Analects* that we read nowadays as preserved in He Yan’s *Lunyu jijie*, a comprehensive collection of explanations and comments based on a number of explanatory works—especially Zheng Xuan’s notes. Viewed retrospectively, the *Lunyu* that we read today is the final link in a long chain of textual adaption starting from the archaic *Lunyu* to the many different versions transmitted along the Lu and Qi lineages, to the “Zhanghou lun,” to the explanatory works by Mr. Bao and Mr. Zhou, to Zheng Xuan’s notes on the *Lunyu*, and in the end, the *Lunyu jijie* by He Yan. Along this chain, 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 敦煌 and Turfan 吐鲁番 enable us to glimpse some of the moments in the long history of the formation of the *Lunyu* text. The newly recovered materials also lend credence to the situation as described above in related secondary sources 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* 嘉平石經 because they are the outcome of a state-sponsored project lasting from the fourth year of the Xiping era (172—177 CE) to the sixth year of the Guanghe 光和 era (178—183 CE) in the reign of Emperor Ling 靈帝 (167—189 CE). The purpose of this project was to provide standardized versions of the seven Confucian Classics, including the *Changes*, the *Odes*, the *Documents*, the *Yili*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Gongyang Commentaries*, and the *Lunyu*. The biographies of Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133—192 CE) and Lü Qiang 呂強 (?)—

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149 The seven Classics have been mentioned as the “Five Classics,” the “Six Classics,” and “Seven Classics” in different sources. Those that call them “Five Classics” do not count the *Gongyang Commentaries* and the *Lunyu* as Classics; those who call them “Six Classics” combine the *Gongyang Commentaries* and the *Spring and Autumn*...
184 CE) explain the need for standardization. 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, in order to have the official versions accord with their own writings” 至有行賂定蘭臺漆書經字以合其私文者。150 After their completion in 183 CE, 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” 填塞街陌。151 Unfortunately, the destruction of Luoyang in the late Eastern Han (25—220 CE) soon led to the demise of the stelae as they were moved to various locations, scattered, broken, reused as building material, and eventually thrown into oblivion. Although a few Tang sources mention the discovery of pieces of the Xiping stelae, it was the substantial recovery of pieces in the Song 宋 (960—1279 CE) and the Republican periods that enabled the reconstructions of the Han versions of those Classics inscribed on slabs.152 The Lunyu is among these reconstructions.

A number of scholars believe that the Lunyu inscribed on the Han stelae follows the Lu Lunyu rather than the transmitted version.153 Proponents of this view offer three arguments. First, the text on the surviving stone fragments clearly states that the inscribed Lunyu includes twenty chapters, same as the Lu Lunyu. Second, there are many differences between the transmitted and

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150 Hou Han shu “Huanguan liezhuan,” 78:2533. Also see related information in Cai Yong’s biography, Hou Han shu “Cai Yong liezhuan,” 60:1990.

151 Hou Han shu “Cai Yong liezhuan,” 60:1990.

152 Lü Zhenduan 1975, 1—13.

153 Ma Heng 1957, 56; Lü Zhenduan 1975, 50—52; Qiu Dexiu 1990(2), 123—125.
the inscribed versions of the *Lunyu*. Finally, Ma Heng observes that one of the formal
covnventions of the *Xiping shijing* is that the inscribed Classic is usually followed by text
comparing it with other versions. According to Ma Heng 馬衡, the primary inscription must be
the Lu *Lunyu* since it is not listed with the Zhang 張, He 盖, Mao 毛, Bao 包, and Zhou 周
versions when these comparisons are made.154

These three reasons, however, do not conclusively eliminate the possibility that the
inscription follows the “Zhanghou lun” version. For one thing, it is uncertain whether the
“Zhanghou lun” is actually mentioned in the section discussing other versions. Reconstructions
of this section follow Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866—1940 CE) 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.” Such a reconstruction is nothing
more than speculation, since *gong* could form the left part of any number of characters. Even if
we accept *zhang* as the proper reconstruction, it does not necessarily refer to Zhang Yu. The
inscription is the first and only reference of the He and Mao versions, so there could have been a
version associated with another man named Zhang as well. Even if *zhang* refers to the
“Zhanghou lun,” we do not know the relationship between it and the inscribed version of the
*Lunyu*. We cannot ascertain that the Zhang, He, and Mao *Lunyu* were used together to collate the
version of the *Lunyu* preserved on the stone. The information on the fragments is simply too
limited to reach a definitive conclusion about the source of the inscription, not to mention it
being the Lu *Lunyu*.155

154 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 Shi 1985, 155; Ma Heng 1957, 55.
155 For this fragmentary piece, see Ma Heng 1957, 55; for the attempt of putting this piece into context, see Lü
Zhenduan 1975, 121.
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.\(^\text{156}\) 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.\(^\text{157}\) Nevertheless, as Hong Kua 洪适 (1117—1184 CE) points out, “when collated with the current version of the Lunyu, [the inscribed Lunyu] does not look much different from it” 以今所行板本校之亦不至甚異.\(^\text{158}\) Such differences between these two 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 thousand years after it. It is only natural to see such minor differences between them. If we examine the two more closely, we see that their similarities 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” 凡廿篇.\(^\text{159}\) Moreover, based on the surviving parts of the inscribed Lunyu, its pian order is identical with that of the transmitted Lunyu.\(^\text{160}\) 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

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156 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.

157 Lü Zhenduan 1975, 35—37; Hong Shi 1985, 153—156.

158 Hong Gua 1985, 155.

159 Hong Gua 1985, 155.

160 Qiu Dexiu 1990(2), 125.
passages included in the chapter, and for each pian, the number of passages is identical to the number in the corresponding pian in the transmitted Lunyu text.

All this formal evidence, in my opinion, suggests that the inscribed Lunyu preserves the “Zhanghou lun” version as it existed in the Eastern Han dynasty (25—220 CE). Additional evidence preserved in the inscribed Lunyu about its collation corroborates this conclusion. As far as can be deciphered from what survives, the group, led by Cai Yong, responsible for making the Xiping shijing edited the “Zhanghou lun” into an authorized version before it was inscribed on stone. Arguments positing that the inscribed Lunyu preserves the Lu Lunyu are all speculative without a confirmed copy of the text of the Lu Lunyu that matches the inscription. Chances are slim that such a text will be found since there is no indication of the existence of an authorized, stable version of the “Lu Lunyu” before the appearance of the “Zhanghou lun,” and even if there had been a relatively stable Lu Lunyu circulating before the “Zhanghou lun,” it must have been quickly superceded by the “Zhanghou lun.”

One of the most important discoveries for the study of the Lunyu was the recovery of manuscripts containing the Analects with Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127—200 CE) notes from the Dunhuang grottoes and some Turfan tombs. The Analects with Zheng Xuan’s notes steadily increased in popularity after its completion in the latter half of the Eastern Han. By the Tang dynasty (618—907 CE), it was the most celebrated explanatory work for the Lunyu, but it was gradually scattered during the Five Dynasties 五代 (907—960 CE), and as its significance further diminished in the Song dynasty, it almost vanished from the written record after that. Scholars had tried, with little success, to reconstruct Zheng Xuan’s notes, using the limited

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161 This may also explain some of the wording differences between the inscribed and the transmitted Lunyu, as described.
citations preserved in works such as the *Jingdian shiwen*, but our understanding of his notes and the text upon which they were based has dramatically improved with a series of discoveries at Dunhuang and Turfan beginning in the early twentieth century. Such well-known scholars as Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei have studied some of the early fragments acquired by Japanese and French collectors. Since the late 1950s more than two dozen fragments of the *Lunyu* with Zheng Xuan’s notes have been found in Turfan tombs. Among these manuscripts, the most famous one preserves long sections of the *Lunyu* clearly dating to the Jinglong 景龍 era (707—710 CE) in the reign of the Tang Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (684 CE, 705—710 CE). Found in Tomb 363 at Asitana 阿斯塔那, Turfan, this manuscript includes four chapters handwritten by Bu Tianshou 卜天壽, a boy who died at the age of twelve. The order of the four chapters is identical to that of the transmitted *Lunyu*. For example, it clearly states that “Bayi,” “Liren,” and “Gongye Chang” are the third, fourth, and fifth chapter, respectively, in the “Text of Mr. Kong annotated by Mr. Zheng” 孔氏本鄭氏注. Similar textual information is also found in other surviving manuscripts, such as, the Paul Pelliot (1878—1945 CE) No. 2510 manuscript and the one discovered in Tomb 184 at Astana, Turfan, which is stored at Ryūkoku 龍谷 University in Japan. Although we have not recovered every chapter of the *Analects* used by Zheng Xuan, all

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current evidence suggests 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 shiwen*, puzzled Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei, but they nonetheless offered a muddled explanation to account for the divergences. Both Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei feel that the number and arrangement of the chapters in Zheng Xuan’s *Lunyu* conform, for the most part, to the transmitted “Zhanghou lun” text, but when differences do occur, they result from Zheng Xuan’s adherence to the archaic *Lunyu*. References to the “Kongshi ben” are taken as an indication that Zheng Xuan collates the “Zhanghou lun” with the archaic *Lunyu*. This leads both Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei into a series of unsubstantiated claims conflating one text with another: because Zheng Xuan was known to have consulted the archaic *Lunyu* they consider the “Kongshi ben” to be none other than the archaic *Lunyu* arranged by Kong Anguo, and, although Zheng Xuan annotates the “Zhanghou lun,” they regard the “Zhanghou lun” to be the same as the Lu *Lunyu*. Similar conflations and contradiction are also present in the scholarship on the *Lunyu* text handwritten by Bu Tianshou. A Cultural Revolution-period article on the Bu Tianshou manuscript basically follows the explanation of Luo and Wang.

There are two conflations at work in this textual history. First, it blurs the difference between one of the texts used during collation and the final product of collation. In other words,

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168 Wenwu chubanshe 1972, 14.
if Zheng Xuan’s collation primarily supplements the “Zhanghou lun” with the archaic *Lunyu*, how can the the “Kongshi ben,” which Wang and Luo equate with the archaic *Lunyu*, also be the product of Zheng Xuan’s collation? Second, this account identifies the “Zhanghou lun” as the Lu *Lunyu*, ignoring their obvious differences mentioned in other sources.

Realizing the logical inconsistencies of this widely-accepted analysis, Kanaya Osamu 金谷治 offers another explanation. He regards the note, “Kongshi ben Zhengshi zhu” 孔氏本鄭氏注, to be the product of the textual transmission of Zheng Xuan’s notes to the *Lunyu*. He supposes that somewhere along the line of transmission there was a “someone” 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.”169 This attribution probably happened at a point in the transmission when the archaic version was no longer available to verify the accuracy of the label. He further suggests that the “Kongshi ben” probably has something to do with the record in the “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 chapter of the *Suishu* 隋書 on a lost “ten-juan archaic *Lunyu* with Zhengxuan’s notes” 古文論語十卷鄭玄注 that was in circulation during the Liang 梁 dynasty (502—557 CE).170

Inspired by Kanaya Osamu’s assumption, Wang Su 王素 re-examines passages about the textual format in the Tang manuscripts and finds that some include the note “Kongshi ben Zhengshi zhu” 孔氏本鄭氏注 and some do not. She uses this fact to posit the existence of two forms of manuscripts with Zheng Xuan’s notes to the *Lunyu* that should be linked to the southern and northern kingdoms. Those mentioning the “Kongshi ben” are manuscripts associated with

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170 *Suishu* “Jingji zhi,” 32:935.
the southern kingdoms, and those without this description are associated with the northern kingdoms. Of course, she has an explanation for her critics who might question how a southern manuscript ends up in the northern region of Turfan. She speculates that the southern version was transported to Turfan as the result of cultural and political communication between the Liang dynasty and the Gaochang (460—640 CE), the regime in control of the Turfan region at that time. The Weishu does indeed mention that one of the kings of Gaochang sent a messenger to the Liang asking for the Five Classics (even though the Lunyu is not among them) and a teacher to elucidate them. Ignoring the fact that the Lunyu is not technically 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” chapter of the Suishu. Although neither Osamu nor Wang falls into the trap of equating the archaic Lunyu with the “Zhanghou lun” version, neither really explains what the “Kongshi ben” really was. As a matter of fact, they accept the Luo and Wang assumption that the “Kongshi ben” was the archaic Lunyu arranged by Kong Anguo. They, however, introduce a mystery person who mistakenly equates the archaic Lunyu with the “Zhanghou lun” and makes this feeling part of the record of transmission by introducing the note about the “Kongshi ben”.

Wang Su further undermines her 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 obvious difference in the number of fascicles in these versions.

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172 Wang Su 1991, 244—249.
Osamu notices that both the Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts seem to preserve a four-juan version of the Lunyu. The Paul Pelliot No. 2510 Lunyu manuscript discovered at Dunhuang has the note—“Lunyu, 2nd juan” —at the end of “Xiangdang” 鄉黨, the tenth pian of the twenty-pian Lunyu, suggesting the text grouped five pian chapters into a juan fascicle. 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 is a strong indication that these five pian chapters were considered to have been included in one juan fascicle. The different layouts of juan units in the Lunyu in the manuscripts and in that described in the “Jingji zhi” certainly disapprove Wang Su’s argument that the two are the same; thus, we must look for a different explanation to the “Kongshi ben.”

A possible explanation might be provided by the brief bibliography preserved in the Paul Pelliot No. 2721 manuscript. The 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.” This bibliography is included in a collection of texts for readers of lower social status. We know from the nature of the Lunyu manuscripts that they were associated with elementary education, so it is reasonable to assume that the Lunyu listed in this bibliography describes a text similar to the ones preserved in the Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts. In this light, the “Kongshi ben” note in the Bu Tianshou and the Paul Pelliot No. 2510 manuscripts should not be understood as “Kong Anguo’s version of the Lunyu,” as generally held, but should

instead be interpreted as an attribution of the text to Confucius.\footnote{Confucius is referred to as “Kongshi” 孔氏 in his Shiji biography, see Shiji “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1936.} To correct this long-held misinterpretation, we should translate the term “Kongshi ben” as “the text of Confucius.” That is to say, the version of Lunyu annotated by Zheng Xuan was not the “archaic Lunyu” compiled by Kong Anguo, but the “Zhanghou lun” version that was annotated by Zheng Xuan and survives to this day. Clearing away this misunderstanding will hopefully enable scholars to accept all the textual evidence from surviving manuscript fragments that point to the similarity between the Lunyu annotated by Zheng Xuan and the “Zhanghou lun.”

2.6. The Formation of the Lunyu and the Re-creation of Confucius

This survey of the Lunyu’s textual history has thus far aimed to answer the following questions: Was there a pre-Qin Lunyu text? What have been the principal versions of the Lunyu during its transmission and how were they related to today’s Lunyu? Although the complicated history is full of conflicting evidence and contradictory interpretations with respect to the minutiae of the text, this analysis of the details has provided us with a general picture of the emergence and the transmission of the Lunyu of which five points stand out.

First, contrary to the long-held opinion, prior to the Han dynasty there was no text called the Lunyu similar to what we have nowadays. Such a statement does not mean, however, that anecdotes about Confucius and his sayings, like those in the present-day Analects, were not in existence or being circulated. As a matter of fact, evidence shows that the lore about Confucius began to develop in the Warring States period and that this lore served as the source for the compilation of the Lunyu. When did the text called Lunyu come into being? According to Wang Chong, it appeared only after Kong Anguo taught the text to Fu Qing, which probably occurred
in Emperor Wu’s early reign, and this remains consistent with the records on Lunyu’s transmission in the *Hanshu*.

Second, instead of accepting the speculation that the three Lunyu texts mentioned in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu* 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; the three of them were closely related to each other 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 individual preferences of transmitters contributed to textual variation.

Third, the archaic Lunyu can be dated as a pre-Han text, but whether or not its limited circulation thereafter was related to the Qin law banning personal possession of books is open to question. The widely accepted theory that the archaic Lunyu was hidden in a wall of Confucius’ former residence as a response to the harsh Qin law toward Confucian texts is speculative and insufficient for explaining why it was put into the wall in the first place. Many similar accounts about hiding texts in walls, if not merely narratives designed to lend an air of antiquity to the recovered texts, indicate that this phenomenon was related to the larger social and religious context and not just to a single historical event—the “Burning the Books.” Like texts buried in tombs, texts hidden in walls may reflect the religious mentality of those concealing them. I suggest here that enclosing the Lunyu within the wall was related to the practice of averting evil influences.
Fourth, the archaic *Lunyu* was probably not a pedagogical text before its discovery in the wall, but a text serving other needs,\textsuperscript{178} such as the need to store anecdotal knowledge or to respond to the unknown 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* 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 rediscovered in the wall, rearranged by Kong Anguo, and passed down to the Lu and Qi groups of scholars as part of the Confucian teaching. 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.

Finally, it is necessary to keep in mind that none of the three earliest versions of the *Lunyu* has survived to the present day. The *Lunyu* passed down to us today stems from the “Zhanghou lun,” a product by a Han emperor’s tutor trying to create 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 so popular, with the support of its intended audience, the future Emperor Cheng, that 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 information preserved in archaeologically-recovered documents and in explanatory works like the *Lunyu jijie*, we see that the “Zhanghou lun” has been passed

\textsuperscript{178} More will be said about these needs below.
down to us without major changes. In this sense, the “Zhanghou lun” is like the tip of an iceberg, with the archaic, Qi, and Lu *Lunyu* hidden from our view beneath the water.

The remainder of this section attempts to explore the submerged part of the *Lunyu*’s history by trying to answer two questions: How was this text formed in the first place? And if it was not formed for pedagogical reasons, why was it assembled? The answers to these questions will further demonstrate how, after the text was removed from the walls of Confucius’ mansion and rearranged by Kong Anguo in the Western Han, it was forever transformed from a collection of anecdotal materials into an authoritative text that has fixed, the image of the master. This powerful image, in turn, has added authority to the text itself and made it the most reliable biographical source for Confucius as a historical figure.

How did the *Lunyu* emerge as a text in the first place, then? Was it truly, as the “*Yiwen zhi*” proposes, a collection of Confucius’ actual words written down or memorized by his students as class notes and later compiled together into a whole text by disciples after the master’s death?179 Regardless of different opinions about the principal compilers of this *Lunyu*, scholars tend to accept the “*Yiwen zhi*” account as their working presupposition about the nature of the text’s contents and its early formation. 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 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.180 Certainly, in order to identify these textual

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179 *Hanshu* “*Yiwen zhi*,” 30:1717.

180 Jiang Boqian 1948, 290—294.
discordances, the core of the text needs to be settled; and 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 extreme example.\(^{181}\) The methodology for dating and categorizing the passages on the basis of scattered and minimal historical information is highly problematic. Consequently, their dating and categorization of passages is neither conclusive nor convincing and undermines their identifications of later interpolations. Their accretion theory on the formation of the *Lunyu*, therefore, can hardly be subscribed to.\(^{182}\)

Another influential method for dealing with the heterogeneous nature of the *Lunyu* is to divide the text into two parts—the first ten chapters called the “Shang lun” 上論 and the second ten chapters called the “Xia lun” 下論.\(^{183}\) The principle for this division depends on how Confucius is addressed, namely, 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’ disciples, while those that use Kongzi, by later generations as the inclusion 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).\(^{184}\) The “Shang lun” and “Xia lun” theory arbitrarily divides the *Lunyu* into earlier and later strata. The statistics on the use of appellations in these two parts, however, hardly support the sweeping claim of the Shanglun/Xialun theory. In fact, the appellations used to distinguish the “Shang lun” from the

\(^{181}\) Cf. Brooks and Brooks 1998, especially Appendix 1 on their accretion theory, 201—248.

\(^{182}\) Also consult David Schaberg’s and Li Zehou’s review on their methodology, see Schaberg 2001, 131—139; Li Zehou 1998, 448—450.


“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.\textsuperscript{185} Recent archaeological finds of \textit{Lunyu} texts also suggest that the usage of Zi and Kongzi is flexible.\textsuperscript{186} The subtle difference between the two appellations may simply result from anachronistic speculation. Therefore, the “Shang lun” and “Xia lun” theory is little more than a tautology that fails to remove the shadow of doubt from the “Yiwen zhi” presupposition.

Besides flawed logic, studies on the early formation of the \textit{Lunyu} tend to forget that our transmitted version today does not derive from the earliest texts, but rather the “Zhanghou lun.” When analyzing the text of \textit{Lunyu}, some take the transmitted \textit{Analects} to reflect exactly the format and layout of the “original” \textit{Lunyu}, or, at least, a version no later than the archaic \textit{Lunyu} arranged by Kong Anguo.\textsuperscript{187} This ignores evidence about the fluidity of the \textit{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.\textsuperscript{188} The notion of the \textit{Lunyu} as a fixed text immune from temporal or spatial change misleads those exploring the formation of the \textit{Lunyu} text.

I propose an alternative to the “Yiwen zhi” hypothesis about the \textit{Lunyu} as a compilation of words and anecdotes pertaining to Confucius and his disciples that represents the speech of

\textsuperscript{185}Jiang Boqian 1948, 289—290.
\textsuperscript{186} Liang Tao 2002; Yang Zhaoming 2004, 63—64.
\textsuperscript{187} Such notion can be traced to the Liang (502—557 CE) commentator Kuang Kan and lasted till the time of Liao Yan 廖燕 (1644—1705 CE), a Qing scholar, 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.
\textsuperscript{188} Jiang Boqian 1948, 290; Hong Gua 1985, 155.
these same historical persons. The passages included in the *Lunyu* were not necessarily spoken by the historical Confucius, nor were they necessarily written down by Confucius’ disciples. They were most probably extracted and compiled from anecdotal sources that had already been available during the Warring States period. As a result, those *Lunyu* passages containing information related to Confucius’ life cannot be treated as sheer historical records; more anecdotal than historical, they, instead, belong to a narrative tradition in which the Confucian lore is embedded. 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 oral form before assuming their written form.\(^{189}\)

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 is right in pointing out that the anecdotes included in both the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu* began as table talks in Eastern Zhou courts, were transmitted partly by blind reciters, and were gradually collected and crafted into teaching materials.\(^{190}\) In other words, the Warring States *yu* 語 (discourse) and *shuo* 說 (sayings) were actually developed out of the stories and songs originating in the Zhou courts and transmitted by court scribes and musicians.\(^{191}\)

It is also worth noting that one anecdote often has multiple versions, an indication of how freely the teller could adapt an anecdote to suit his own purpose. Evidence suggests that raconteurs usually cared more about their power of persuasion than about the historical accuracy of the information in their anecdotes. Although anecdotes are related to certain historical events

\(^{189}\) Schaberg 2000, 315—324.

\(^{190}\) Kaizuka 1976, 291—312; 321—337.

\(^{191}\) Xu Zhongshu 1980, 60—85.
or historical figures, we have to beware of the fabrication at work in the making of anecdotes, especially when they are delivered as part of a speech.\footnote{Schaberg 2000, 315—324.}

I believe that at least some of the words and anecdotes of Confucius collected in the \textit{Lunyu} were derived from this tradition. If we accept his depiction as one actively engaged in philosophical and practical matters of government, it is not surprising that Confucius figured prominently in the table talk of Eastern Zhou aristocrats.\footnote{\textit{Shiji} “Kongzi shijia,” 1905—1947.}

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 about Confucius, usually positive, were created by and disseminated through his students.\footnote{For example, Zigong is said to be the first among Confucius’ students who intentionally portray Confucius as a sage. See Li Ling 2009. For the information of Confucius’ disciples as well as other figures who may have been related to Confucius, see Li Ling 2008 (1), 17—29.} It is also easy to imagine, however, that Confucius’ political and philosophical opponents portrayed him negatively and used anecdotes to downplay him as a thinker, teacher, as well as persuader. In short, in comparison with the creation and transmission of the \textit{Zuozhuan} and \textit{Guoyu} anecdotes that are 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 derived from certain historical events or historical figures, many anecdotes must distort their historical cores to varying degrees depending on the purpose the anecdote was put to. The invention of anecdotes for the purpose of persuasion usually goes beyond the disinterested historicity possibly contained within the anecdotes. Take, for example,
the different versions of the anecdote in which Confucius is called “a disowned dog” discussed at
the beginning of this chapter. As pointed out, 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’
biographical account as an historical fact reflecting the hardship Confucius and his disciples
experienced in their exile. The *Hanshi waizhuan* version, however, makes this episode more a
story about physiognomy than about Confucius’ real life. Contrary to the *Shiji*, the *Hanshi
waizhuan* version does not contextualize the episode as part of Confucius’ 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 fortune 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’ appearance leads to the section, similar to that in the other
versions, in which Confucius’ body parts are compared to those of other sages and worthies to
denote that Confucius is a sage, although not as sagacious as Yao or Shun, and like a sangjia gou
喪家狗. Here it is Confucius who offers a positive interpretation of the term *sangjia gou*—
instead of taking it to mean “a disowned 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, which indicates that
Confucius could be the savior of the chaotic Spring and Autumn world.195

Which version is closer to historical fact, the *Shiji* or the *Hanshi waizhuan* version? Here
we face a problem of interpretation. Some have linked the *Hanshi waizhuan* version to

Confucius’ disciple Zigong and his desire to transform his master into a great sage, 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. The Shiji author adopts a different version that he feels reflects historical truth, but he too contextualizes it within his own design of Confucius’ biography. In fact, there is no way to prove which version is true and which version is not. Another illuminating example is provided by the differing accounts about Confucius’ exile as recording 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. 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:

The Lord of She said to Confucius, “Among my kinsfolk 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 kinsfolk those who are upright behave differently: the fathers conceal their sons’ misdeeds, the sons conceal their fathers’ misdeeds, and uprightness is contained within these concealments.”

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。

This short exchange on uprightness took place between the Lord of She, a Chu aristocrat, and Confucius. In addition to revealing Confucius’ notion of uprightness by contrasting it with

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196 Li Ling 2008(1), 16.
that of the Lord of She, this passage also highlights the subtlety of Confucius’ 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’ student, Zilu, stands in for the voice of the master.\(^{199}\) Of course, our understanding of these anecdotes has been shaped by how Confucius’ *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 陈, Confucius and his disciples left Chen in 489 BCE for the northern Chu domain then governed by the Lord of She.\(^{200}\) The short conversation translated above has, therefore, been interpreted as a real dialogue between Confucius and the Lord of She around 489 BCE. Reading historically, the import of the passage is that Chu and Lu had different conceptions of uprightness, or, at least, 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*:

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.\(^{201}\)

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。


\(^{201}\) *Han Feizi jijie* “Wudu,” 19:449.
What remains the same in this passage is the son’s reporting 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, for it cost him his father’s life, the failure of filial piety. The irony in the *Han Feizi* passage becomes more ridiculous in this *Lüshi chunqiu* passage:

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. Approaching the time 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 replaced 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 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.  


In comparison with the *Lunyu* and the *Han Feizi* passages, the *Lüshi chunqiu* passage further complicates the scene. 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

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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? Then Confucius is introduced into the narrative to comment on such irony. According to his view, the son cannot simultaneously betray his father and display his filial piety as a result of the betrayal, nor should either action be considered virtuous. 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 falls apart, and the son’s renown for virtue is exposed for what it really is.

Comparing the Lunyu anecdote with versions from other texts helps to confirm two points about the formation of early texts and their relationship with one another. First, it shows how a particular narrative can be developed in different texts. The narrative is flexible to the needs of the argument for which it is being used. This accords with what is known about the early Chinese narrative tradition, in which recording history in a disinterested manner was not among the primary requirements. 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, 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 BCE) in charge of public safety, who was famous for his integrity, found out that the murderer he had been chasing was his father, he could not simultaneously be filial to
his father and loyal to the king, so, in the end, he chose suicide to maintain his integrity. 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, is probably crafted for rhetorical reasons instead of historical accuracy. Recognizing rhetorical motives should prevent us from immediately reading *Lunyu* passages as an accurate record of the historical Confucius or as a depiction of an actual pedagogical scene.

Second, 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, agricultural tips—that had accumulated over time. The three passages presented above 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*, but it is inappropriate to claim that the *Lunyu* is the ancestor of the other narratives. And 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 very misleading because it obliterates the role of oral transmission in passing knowledge down from one generation to another, rules out the possibility that all those textually related passages could have been independently taken from a body of lore, and totally ignores how later editing work influenced, shaped, and reshaped the form of early Chinese texts.

It is necessary to point out here that the *Lunyu* passage under discussion is by no means the only one; the *Lunyu* contains numerous passages sharing similar anecdotes with at least one

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other passage either within the *Lunyu* or in other texts.\textsuperscript{204} 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 a text and the *Lunyu* also suggests how closely associated the texts are in terms of the issues they are concerned about and the knowledge they have access to. Again, it is worth noting that these numbers do not 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 of them is a direct quotation from the latter. As a matter of fact, we have not been able to identify any sayings attributed to Confucius in the *Xunzi* that are similar to what Confucius “says” in the *Lunyu*. As already pointed out, shared textual units in different texts are associated with the complex nature of formation of early Chinese texts, the role of oral transmission in early texts, access to a repository of common knowledge, as well as later editing work. If we take all the factors into consideration, a general picture regarding the formation of the *Lunyu* text emerges: the *Lunyu*, like many other *Lunyu*-like texts mentioned by Wang Chong and Xu Shen and unearthed from a Ji tomb,\textsuperscript{205} is a collection of anecdotes about Confucius and words allegedly said by Confucius that probably had been circulating in various circles connected to the Warring States court culture, methods of persuasion, different textual traditions, and a body of Confucius lore.

Table 1 lists the number of repetitive passages appearing in different chapters in the *Lunyun* itself. Although by no means complete, the list is representative enough to show how

\textsuperscript{204} In this regard, Yang Bojun 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.

\textsuperscript{205} *Lunheng jiaoshi* “Zhengshuo,” 28:1136—1139; *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, 1:15; *Jinshu* “Shu Xi zhuan,” 51:1433—1434.
often passages and textual units repeat themselves in different locations of the *Lunyu* text itself.

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*.

Table 1: Repetitive passages within the *Lunyu* (repetitions are grouped by row)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pian and their numbers</th>
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<th>pian and their numbers</th>
<th>passages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 學而 (1)</td>
<td>子曰：巧言令色鮮矣仁。</td>
<td>陽貨 (17)</td>
<td>子曰：巧言令色鮮矣仁。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 學而 (1)</td>
<td>子曰：主忠信，無友不如己者，過則勿憚改。</td>
<td>子罕 (9)</td>
<td>子曰：主忠信，無友不如己者，過則勿憚改。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 學而 (1)</td>
<td>子曰：君子…敏於事而慎於言。</td>
<td>里仁 (4)</td>
<td>子曰：君子欲訥於言而敏於行。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 為政 (2)</td>
<td>孔子對曰：舉直錯諸枉，則民服。</td>
<td>顏淵 (12)</td>
<td>子曰：舉直錯諸枉，能使枉者直。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 里仁 (4)</td>
<td>子曰：三年無改於父之道可謂孝矣。</td>
<td>學而 (1)</td>
<td>子曰：三年無改於父之道可謂孝矣。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 雍也 (6)</td>
<td>子曰：君子博學於文，約之以禮，亦可以弗畔矣夫。</td>
<td>顏淵 (12)</td>
<td>子曰：君子博學於文，約之以禮，亦可以弗畔矣夫。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 泰伯 (8)</td>
<td>子曰：不在其位，不謀其政。</td>
<td>憲問 (14)</td>
<td>子曰：不在其位，不謀其政。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 鄉黨 (10)</td>
<td>（子）入太廟，每事問</td>
<td>八佾 (3)</td>
<td>子入太廟，每事問。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I 憲問 (14)</td>
<td>子曰：邦有道，谷；邦無道，谷，恥也。</td>
<td>泰伯 (8)</td>
<td>子曰：邦有道，貧且賤，恥也；邦無道，富且貴焉，恥也。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J 衛靈公 (15)</td>
<td>子曰：已矣乎！吾未見好德如好色者也。</td>
<td>子罕 (9)</td>
<td>子曰：吾未見好德如好色者也。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K 子張 (19)</td>
<td>子張曰：士見危致命，見得思義。</td>
<td>憲問 (14)</td>
<td>（子）曰：見利思義，見危授命。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 堯曰 (20)</td>
<td>子曰：不知禮，無以立也。</td>
<td>季氏 (16)</td>
<td>（子曰：）不學禮，無以立。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791—1855 CE) deduces an explanation for these repetitions from the assumption that the *Lunyu* was compiled by Confucius’ students. Accordingly, the repetitions are notes on the same saying or event by a different student. Since the *Lunyu* is no more than a compilation of all the notes by Confucius’ students, he feels it is not surprising to see the teacher’s classroom lessons appear in identical, or near identical form, in students’ notes.\(^{206}\) If this were the case, we should wonder why there are actually so few repetitive passages? In other words, how can the notes be so different if they were taken by students in the same class? In answering this question, Wang Bo offers two possibilities that may have jointly shaped the current form of the *Lunyu*. One possibility is that disciples met to create a masterplan for the compilation of the *Lunyu*, and then divided the work by theme and assigned it to particular individuals. The other possibility is that later editing subsequently removed the many repetitions from students’ notes introduced into the original text.\(^{207}\)

Wang Bo’s explanation follows the “Yiwen zhi” statement that the *Lunyu* consists of Confucius’ students’ class notes that “his disciples collected, discussed, and compiled [into a text]” after Confucius died,\(^{208}\) a theory that has already been demonstrated as untenable. As a matter of fact, the idea of an editorial meeting held before the compilation of the *Lunyu* is pure speculation, and recent archaeological discoveries highlight how unlikely such a meeting would be. Most of the excavated early Chinese texts were transmitted in the form of short, single *pian*. Why would there be a planning meeting to design a multi-*pian* text, when evidence suggests no such multi-*pian* text existed? Wang Bo’s second proposition could have happened, but if

\(^{206}\) *Lunyu zhengyi* “Shuer,” 1:1.


\(^{208}\) *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1717.
removing repetitions was one of the editor’s duties, he was lax in his duties. It is hard to believe 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.

What these repetitions really tell us, I would suggest, complicates the assumption that the Lunyu was produced exclusively by Confucius’ students on the basis of their class notes. As I have tried to demonstrate, the form of the Lunyu we have today is indeed the result of a series of editorial efforts. As far as we can make out, today’s Lunyu began with Kong Anguo after the materials were removed from the walls of Confucius mansion, and it was largely finished when Zhang Yu shaped the materials into a textbook for a 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 for the first time brought together by Kong Anguo. Before his compilation, all the pian, whether in their current form or not, formed and circulated independently. Individual pian chapters do not exhibit repetitions, so this explains why the repetitions did not exist in the first place and why they 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 about other Lunyu-like texts that Wang Chong mentions in the Lunheng, that Xu Shen points out in the Shuowen jiezi, and that were 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 Lunyu type of writings to consist of Confucius’ words and deeds. People even considered this type of writing as part of the Lunyu tradition. For example, the Lunyu, according to Wang Chong, encompassed more pian chapters than contained in the transmitted version. In his mind, the
Lunyu was as much a concept as a finite text. It represented a body of lore about Confucius and his words, and it was not limited to the content transmitted in the “Zhanghou lun” or Kong Anguo version.

The recent finds of early Chinese texts written on bamboo strips have shed more light on pre-Han writings. The Warring States writings excavated from Tomb 1 at Guodian 郭店 209 include, among others, three sections named by scholars as “Yucong” 語叢 1, 2, and 3. These sections consist of pithy passages, mainly proverbs and aphorisms, resembling other such collections as the “chuanyue” 傳曰 quotations in the Xunzi 荀子, the “Tancong” 談叢 chapter of the Shuoyuan 說苑, and the “Shuolin” 說林 chapter of the Huainanzi 淮南子.210 Those passages, if introduced by the phrase “Zi yue” 子曰 (the master says), could be mistaken for what Confucius says in the Lunyu. In fact, what follows is a comparison of a few passages in the “Yucong” sections nearly identical to Lunyu passages:

Bear intention in the Way, be drawn close to virtues, lean toward humaneness, and be associated with arts.211

志於道，狎於德，依於仁，遊於藝。

One should not take anything for granted, nor should he be stubborn, nor should he be egotistic, nor should he be overconfident.212

毋意，毋固，毋我，毋必。


211 Jingmen shi bowuguan 2005, 101, 211.

212 Jingmen shi bowuguan 2005, 102, 212.
These two passages resemble the following *Lunyu* passages from the “Shu’er” and “Zihan” chapters:

The master says, “Bear intention in the Way, base oneself on virtues, lean toward humaneness, and be associated with arts.”\(^\text{213}\)

子曰: 志於道, 據於德, 依於仁, 游於藝。

The master refused to do four things: he did not take anything for granted, nor was he overconfident, nor was he stubborn, nor was he egotistic.\(^\text{214}\)

子絕四: 毋意, 毋必, 毋固, 毋我。

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*.\(^\text{215}\) Instead of considering such textual similarities as evidence proving that the *Lunyu* had already been compiled in the Warring States period,\(^\text{216}\) I feel they demonstrate that the *pian* units to be incorporated into the *Lunyu* shared the same form and origin as other Warring States period

\(^{213}\) *Lunyu yizhu* “Shuer,” 7.6:6.

\(^{214}\) *Lunyu yizhu* “Zihan,” 9.4:86.

\(^{215}\) For example, the “Yucong” 2 passage “小不忍則亂大勢” (Small impatiences may put the whole situation in disorder) resembles “小不忍則亂大謀” (Small impatiences may put the whole plan in disorder), a Lunyu passage in the “Wei Linggong” *pian*. For the “Yucong” 2 passage, see Jingmen shi bowuguan 2005, 93, 205; for the Lunyu passage, see Lunyu yizhu “Wei Linggong,” 15.27:165. It is also worth noting that the “Zizi” 紹衣 text comprises numerous pasaged 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 2005, 53—58, 171—176.

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 worth noting, however, 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 order words, various types of writings on Confucius did develop in the Warring States period. Confucius’ voice as presented in such texts as the Guodian “Ziyi” 綡衣, for instance, 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 Bowuguan collection are even more telling. Writings on Confucius appear from time to time in seven of the eight volumes that have been published based on the Shanghai Bowuguan collection of writings on bamboo strips: Volume 1 contains “Kongzi shilun” 孔子詩論 and “Ziyi,” a text closely associated with the Guodian “Ziyi.” Volume 2 preserves “Min zhi fumu” 民之父母 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 jiayu 孔子家語; it also contains “Lubang dahan” 魯邦大旱 and “Congzheng” 從政, which share textual similarities with both the Guodian and the Shanghai Museum “Ziyi.” Volume 3 has a dialogue between Zhonggong and Confucius in “Zhonggong” 中弓. Volume 4 contains “Xiangbang zhi dao” 相邦之道, which records the conversation between Confucius and

218 Ma Chengyuan 2002, 15—30; 49—56; 57—84; 149—180; 201—210; 211—238.
219 Ma Chengyuan 2003, 71—102; 261—284.
his interlocutors. Volume 5 has passages similar to ones found in the *Lunyu* in sections labeled “Junzi weili” 君子問禮 and “Dizi wen” 弟子問. Volume 6 has the text “Kongzi jian Jihuanzi” 孔子見季桓子 recording a conversation between Confucius and Jihuanzi. And Volume 8 preserves “Zi dao e” 子道餓 about Confucius’ travels during exile and “Yan Yuan wen yu Kongzi” 颜淵問孔子 about a conversation between Confucius and his student Yan Yuan.

These pieces represent Confucius’ diverse knowledge on the interpretation of the *Songs*, the performance of ritual, and the arts of governing. Anecdotes like the “Kongzi jian Jihuanzi” and the “Zi dao e” also include information on Confucius’ life that helps us picture the body of the lore on Confucius that was later consulted by Sima Qian when compiling Confucius’ biography. If the bamboo strips in the Shanghai Bowuguan collection are indeed Warring States period texts, they also suggest that writings on Confucius (and other writings alike) 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 about Confucius and his disciples. A wooden board excavated from a Western Han tomb, associated with Xiahou Zao 夏侯竈 (r. 171—165 BCE), the Western Han Marquis of Ruyin 汝陰, at Shuanggudui of Fuyang in Anhui province 安徽阜陽雙古堆 includes some

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220 Ma Chengyuan 2004, 83—88; 231—238.


222 Ma Chengyuan 2007, 31—60; 193—236.

223 Ma Chengyuan 2011, 13—20; 21—36; 117—136; 137—166.
prompts or cues related to anecdotes on Confucius. The 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*. The majority of the cues are closely associated with anecdotes on Confucius found in *Shuoyuan*, *Kongzi jiayu*, and *Hanshi waizhuan*. In another Western Han tomb (probably belonging to Liu Xiu) located at Bajiaolang of Ding Xian in Hebei province, archaeologists have found a *Lunyu* buried together with writings (called the “Rujiazhe yan” by the excavators) containing texts similar to the cues on the Shuanggudui wooden board, both of which have been classified as texts of *shuo* (sayings) or *yu* (discourses). This latter find indicates that additional anecdotes about Confucius continued to circulate even after the *Lunyu* had been compiled by Kong Anguo and promoted by the Han imperial court.

In short, all the *pian* of the *Lunyu* evolved out of a body of Confucian lore that was being circulated through oral and written forms during the Warring States period. Just as these *Lunyu* *pian* units were originally influenced by the content of the Confucian lore, they ultimately

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225 Hu Pingsheng 2000, 519.

226 Hu Pingsheng 2000, 519.


228 A testament to the popularity and longevity of Confucian lore is seen in one of the “bianwen” 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* 淮南子, the *Liezi* 列子, the *Shiji* 史記, among others. In the “Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu,” it is said that Confucius killed Xiang Tuo for being outwitted by him. For the “bianwen” piece of “Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu,” see Xiang Chu 1989, 363—373; for a study on the origin of this piece of “bianwen” literature, see Zhang Hongxun 2002, 222—244.
exerted their own influence on other *Lunyu*-like writings. This is why we see similar or identical passages in different *pian* of the *Lunyu* and other transmitted or excavated texts. Moreover, based on the archaeological evidence that most Warring States texts were transmitted as a single *pian* consisting of a few to a few dozen bamboo strips, all the *pian* included in the *Analects* probably originated as separate units. We have reason to believe that the *Lunyu* that Kong Anguo arranged and compiled out of a group of archaic texts recovered from the walls of Confucius’ former 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 representing 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.229

Accepting this new view of the text’s early history instead of the traditional account that sees it as the deliberate product of Confucius’ disciples raises new questions: Who wrote the shorter *pian* units that were ultimately combined into the *Lunyu* in the first place? And why did they do so? Available information makes it almost impossible to attribute the early *pian* to any specific individuals, but I would suggest that the 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 子貢, the most successful propagator of Confucius’ legacy, is depicted as a great persuader, whom, ironically, Confucius criticizes as being *bian* 辯, or eloquent, in Zigong’s *Shiji* biography.230 Moreover, Denecke points to connections between the chapter on Confucius’ disciples and the two chapters almost immediately following it 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’ legacy and Warring States persuasion. Whether or not the Warring States persuaders and Confucius’ disciples would themselves admit such ties is impossible to say. The proposed connection might only be the construct of the author of the Shiji or its readers, but it is certainly possible that anecdotes on Confucius and his disciples were collected as part of persuasive materials to be deployed to enhance the persuasive power of speech or writing. Indeed, a large number of the words and sayings in Confucian lore are rhetorically oriented and would appeal to those interested in persuasion. And, as discussed earlier, using anecdotes for persuasive purposes explains why similar anecdotes are woven into different narratives.

Beyond those interested in persuasion who might have recorded anecdotes about Confucius, intellectuals seeking court appointments and patronage would also identify with Confucius. Although Confucian lore portrays the master himself as a failure in achieving his political ambitions, the lasting impact his teachings and disciples made on court life and governance is undeniable. Confucius’ 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. Confucius’ career provides a rhetorical veneer to the market for talent that had developed and 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. The Warring States intellectuals enjoyed unprecedented

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flexibility of employment thanks to the geopolitical environment that enabled them to travel from one state to another in search of employment. Confucius’ frustration was reinterpreted as a kind of loftiness and used for a manifesto on talent arguing that one should seek a better position elsewhere when not appreciated by a ruler. Job hunters, who wanted to avail themselves of the master’s reputation, collected Confucius’ words and anecdotes to rebuild his reputation and reinterpret him as a figure useful in the flourishing Warring States intellectual market.

A third group of collectors of Confucian lore was probably a subset of this broader group of intellectuals competing in Warring States job market: adherents of Confucius’ teaching also had to compete in the new Warring States market for talent and would likely collect all sorts of anecdotes that could help position them favorably in the market. A pedagogical interest in disseminating the master’s teaching explains anecdotes with the master’s words on poetry and ritual, but this does not account for the many anecdotes in Confucian lore about holding office and serving the state. State service is listed first among the various ways proposed by Mark Lewis for Warring States schoolmen to make a living. In spite of the rhetorical loftiness coloring Confucian lore, numerous anecdotes indicate that Confucius’ students were interested in being engaged in the affairs of state. In this sense, Confucius’ frustration as presented in the lore 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 about the head of their teaching lineage to provide them with rhetorical ammunition was necessary. 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 jiayu as well as newly discovered texts, such as “Rujiazhe yan” found in Dingxian and the shuo lei (the “saying” category) text excavated

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233 Lewis 1999, 73—83.
in Fuyang, are all remnants of the Warring States polemical culture. *Yu* and *shuo* writings were not limited to Confucius, he suggests, as other textual traditions also compiled their own *yu* and *shuo* types of writing, as preserved in the *Zhuangzi* fables and anecdotes, the “Chushuo” 儲說, “Yulao” 喻老, and “Guanxing” 観行 chapters of *Han Feizi* 韓非子; the “Feiru” 非儒, “Luwen” 鬆問, and “Gongmeng” 公孟 chapters of *Mozi* 墨子, and the excavated materials on persuaders like Su Qin.234

I would suggest one final motive for those originally engaged in gathering Confucius’ words into written form: some were probably very keen on defending the image and reputation of Confucius against attacks from other textual groups and teaching traditions. Passages from *Mengzi* and *Xunzi* presented earlier in the chapter illustrated the urgency to distinguish Confucius’ “true” words from “false” attributions. This need may have prompted Confucius’ followers to extract out of the body of Confucian lore the words and deeds helpful in elevating Confucius’ reputation, on the one hand, and in refuting the disparaging remarks about the master being propagated by other textual traditions, on the other hand. We see both tendencies in the *Kong congzi* 孔叢子. In addition to the positive assembly of anecdotes about Confucius in the first five chapters, the text also includes the “Jiemo” 諳墨 (interrogating Mohism) chapter refuting Mozi’s words for his attacks against Confucius and Confucian ideas.235 This “Jiemo” chapter is 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 Confucianism) chapter of

234 Hu Pingsheng 2000, 532.

235 Fu Yashu 2011, 1—110, 391—409.
the *Mozi*. Each rebuttal shares the same form: it opens with an account of “what Mozi says” (Mozi yan 墨子言或 cheng 稱) about Confucius, 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 would have it be. I contend that, however late 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; 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 shierzi” 非十二子 and other chapters of the *Xunzi*. The *Xunzi*’s efforts to distinguish the “true” words of Confucius by citing transmitted aphorisms, the *zhuanyue* 傳曰 passages, could have been instigated by the desire to counter the criticisms of Mohists and other groups. 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’ 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’ residence, but it was a lucky accident that the Prince of Gong rediscovered the texts when expanding his residence. Regardless of who (Confucius’ descendants, Confucius’ adherents, or outsiders) hid the texts and why they were hidden (to avert evil or to escape

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236 Six of the nine cited anecdotes can be found in the “Feiru” pian of the *Mozi*. The other three are available in the *Yanzi chunqiu*. 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.


confiscation), the discrete pian were forever transformed when Kong Anguo began to treat the units as part of a whole collection, called the Lunyu, or Analects, and teach it as such to his student, Fuqing of Lu. The reorganization of the pian entailed a reconceptualization of the material: the anecdotes originally used for a variety of purposes as discussed above were redefined as snippets capturing real moments during Confucius’ life. This redefinition especially elevates the status of the anecdotal conversations between Confucius and his disciples, as they become the core shaping the image of Confucius as a great educator—the head of the Confucian teaching lineage. New teaching and learning groups developed soon after the compilation of the Lunyu to focus on the newly formed text, 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 positions for the Erudites of the Five Confucian Classics. The Lunyu is distinguished from the collections of writings on one of the Various Masters (zhuzi 諸子) in the “Yiwen zhi” by being listed with the classics—the liuyi 六藝, or six arts. It also became a text read by Han emperors and taught to future emperors when they were still very young. 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’ life and thoughts, so much so that it has become the most reliable source for studying Confucius, his life and his thinking.

Seeing how the texts in the walls were transformed after their discovery helps us trace the ascendancy of the Lunyu thereafter, but the finds also help us trace the general nature of Warring States Master Writings back to an earlier period before the ascendancy of the Lunyu skewed our vision of texts from that time. Previous scholarship tends to describe pre-Qin Master Writings as
following an evolutionary path: The path begins with Confucius and his \textit{Lunyu}, with a style of writing dominated by the presence of the master and his words. By the time of Mozi, the extended treatise begins to replace the short dialogues of the \textit{Analects} as the preferred format for presenting the master’s ideas. The treatise influences the subsequent writings of Mencius, Zhuangzi, and logicians until it fully matures in the perfected legalist texts, \textit{Han Feizi} and \textit{Lüshi chunqiu}.\footnote{Cf. Luo Genze 1985; Denecke 2010.} As pointed out by Mark Lewis, 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 our new understanding of the \textit{Lunyu} and new knowledge about excavated texts. Hopefully I have demonstrated that the \textit{Lunyu} is not a compilation of class notes recording the statements of the teacher Confucius. We also know that the \textit{Lunyu} as a text formed much later than assumed by this model. Moreover, archaeological discoveries of texts on bamboo strips have revealed that collections of pithy aphorisms and short narratives similar in form to those in the \textit{Lunyu} coexisted with and were produced during the same time as more lengthy prose writings (treatises). Finally, we need to keep in mind that this evolutionary model is based upon the form in which we read pre-Qin master writings today: 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 came at a price as those engaged in the project altered the texts, and how we now understand them, by compiling individual \textit{pian} chapters into larger unified texts. These new textual units reflect Western Han thought and cannot be considered a product of the pre-Qin period. . If this study proves anything in dealing with early Chinese literature, it is a gentle
reminder of the anachronistic trap that transmitted texts may lead to if the complexity of the formation and authorship of early Chinese texts is neglected.

2.7. The *Lunyu*, the *Chunqiu*, and the Quotable Author

The elevation of the *Lunyu*’s status would not have become possible without the re-formation of the various discrete *pian* included in the *Lunyu* into an integrated collection of the words and deeds of the master in the early Western Han era. A final explanation is needed, however, to answer why these accidentally discovered and deliberately rearranged texts were able to obtain so much credibility and fame in a relatively short period of time. Keep in mind that this newly formed text was at first transmitted via some private teaching lineages (i.e. the Lu and Qi lineages, as far as we know). Even though some of the members associated with those lineages were officials before the *Lunyu* played a significant role in the Han imperial court, this does not explain its rapid rise in popularity. The choice of the *Lunyu* as one of the texts for educating the imperial heirs apparent from the mid-Western Han onward certainly requires further explanation with respect to its popularity. I suggest that the promotion of the *Lunyu* has to do with the significant role that the *Chunqiu*, a text long considered to have been “created” (zuo 作) by Confucius, played in 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, a form that is helpful in revealing his voice, thought, and action. The then newly-assembled *Lunyu* helped to reify Confucius, the *Chunqiu* author, as it contained the information needed to reconstruct an historical Confucius, especially when one considers that its passages—at least as interpreted—presented the words spoken by the master and the stories about him as recorded by those closest to him. The final section is attempted to elaborate this point.
The Western Han arose following the downfall of the Qin (221—206 BCE) empire. On the one hand, the newly founded dynasty inherited the Qin legacy, including its overall geopolitical structure for ruling an empire. On the other hand, 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 賈宜 (200—168 BCE) writings,²⁴⁰ 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)²⁴¹ from the Qin way.

As a matter of fact, 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 on how various rebel forces were allied under the descendant of the former Chu ruling family and why the rebel leaders quickly divided the Qin Empire into a number of local polities once they captured the Qin capital city.²⁴² This kind of thinking may have also resulted in the early Western Han’s application of a dual system featuring the coexistence of a centralized government and multiple principalities. That is to say, the early Western Han political landscape was largely the outcome of a compromise between imperial and feudal governance, the Qin imperial system and the Eastern Zhou political structure. The restoration of the Zhou feudal system was a response to the harsh Qin rule, which was blamed for the downfall of the Qin Empire in early Han political discourse. The search for a

²⁴⁰ For example, the “Guo Qinlun” 過秦論.
²⁴¹ For the term Handao, Cf. Hanshu “Yang Xiong zhuan,” 87:3582; “Xuzhuan,” 100:4237;
more humane way of governing to differentiate itself from the Qin is considered the hallmark of early Western Han political thinking.

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” (shiji 史記) that Confucius might have access to, the *Chunqiu* outlines 242 years of history from the first year of Lord Yin 隱公 (722 BCE) to the fourteenth year of Lord Ai 哀公 (481 BCE). 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. 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’ contributions to it is clearly presented in the *Mengzi*:

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* is a 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 though the *Spring and Autumn Annals*?”

世衰道微，邪說暴行有作，臣弒其君者有之，子弒其父者有之。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！

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243 *Shiji* “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1493.

244 *Mengzi yizhu* “Teng Wengong xia,” 6.9:141.
Put in its context, this passage is part of Mencius’ response to Master Gongdu’s 公都子 question of why Mencius was fond of debate. Mencius says that he does not really like debate at all, but the contemporary intellectual atmosphere forces him to do so: he must confront the forces of disorder in the world in order to restore order, just as the former sages and sage kings confronted chaos: Yu 禹 tamed the floodwaters, Duke of Zhou 周公 assisted King Wu 武王 to conquer the debased King Zhou of Shang 商紂王, and Confucius completed the Chunqiu to deter those “treacherous subjects and villainous sons” 亂臣賊子. For Mencius, however, Confucius’ encoded messages for remedying the chaotic world were being obstructed and obscured by such Warring States thinkers as Yang Zhu 杨朱 and Mo Di 墨翟, who proposed alternative methods for restoring order. By engaging in debates against his opponents, Mencius thus continued the sagely endeavor to bring order to this world. This duty had been passed down from the sage king Yao 堯 to the sage Confucius, and to Mencius himself, the “disciple of the Sage” 聖人之徒, as he labels himself elsewhere as such in the Mengzi.

It should be clear, then, why Confucius created the Chunqiu. According to this passage, the Chunqiu was a weapon to terrify and reform 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 created methods for dealing with the natural and 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 is a matter of the son of heaven,” he implies that

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the *Chunqiu* reflects the true mandate of heaven. Furthermore, he suggests that Confucius’ 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 writing the text, Confucius faced the predicament of being blamed for his actions, even though he also expected that those who understood the situation would recognize and appreciate his efforts.

Equating the *Chunqiu* as a matter for a king also appears in another passage of the *Mengzi* as follows.

The extinction of the king’s Messengers\footnote{I follow Zhu Junsheng 朱駿聲 in considering the character “迹” as a wrong rendering of the character denoting the Zhou kings’ Messengers in charge of collecting songs. *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng “Yibu diwu.”* Also see *Mengzi yizhu “Lilou xia,”* 8.21:177—178.} in charge of gathering odes led to the dying out of *Odes*; the dying out of *Odes* led to the writing of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The *Sheng* of the State of Jin, the *Taowu* of the State of Chu, and the *Chunqiu*\footnote{Based on the context, this *Chunqiu* is not the *Chunqiu* created by Confucius but more like the other historic works listed.} of the State of Lu, are all the same: their contents were related to Duke Huan of Qi or Duke Wen of Jin, the words were written by the scribes. Confucius said, “I, Qiu, dare to borrow the model of the songs [in my writing the *Chunqiu*].\footnote{*Mengzi yizhu “Lilou xia,”* 8.21:177.}”

This passage makes two comparisons to define how Confucius’ *Chunqiu* is different from other historical records. First, the writing of *Chunqiu* is compared to the gathering of odes,
through which the Zhou king was able to reach his people. 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 and at the same time claimed his authority over the territory visited by his Messengers. 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. Comparing Confucius’ Chunqiu to the Odes distinguishes it from the historical records written by the Lu scribes (which are also called the Chunqiu), to which Confucius’ work is also compared. What is missing from the Lu Chunqiu is the “model” that Confucius adopted from the odes gathered by the king’s messengers. In other words, Confucius imbued his Chunqiu with the principles of the Zhou’s orderly governance.

Both comparisons confirm what Mencius says about 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 because he was the author of the Chunqiu. Why is the Chunqiu so important? The Mengzi passage distinguishing the Chunqiu from other historical texts tells that it is the specific “model” added by Confucius that makes the Chunqiu important. This may seem to be a circular argument, but the interdependence of Confucius and the Chunqiu is emphasized to an extreme degree in the Gongyang Commentaries (Gongyang zhuan) that exerted tremendous influence on early and mid-Western Han politics.

According to the Gongyang Commentaries, the completion of the Chunqiu signals a revolutionary change in governance. The text immediately became a canon because of its

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message on this new way of ruling. However, because Confucius himself was not a king when he was alive, the new mandate of heaven encoded in this text has to be recognized and carried out by a future king, as it says in the following passage:

Why did the gentleman make the *Spring and Autumn Annals*? To dispel the chaotic world and make it return to the right, nothing works better than the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Perhaps some do not know that he (the gentleman) made it (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?\(^{251}\)

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？

The “gentleman” referred in this passage is none other than Confucius. It clearly states that the reason Confucius created the *Chunqiu* is 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 more than happy (le 樂) to be a transmitter of the way established by the former sage kings.

The idea that Confucius wrote the *Chunqiu* for the future king is also echoed in the postface of the *Shiji*. In answering the Han Senior Grand Master Hu Sui’s 壺遂 question of why

\(^{251}\) *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu*, 28:626—628.
Confucius wrote the *Chunqiu*, the Grand Historian replies that besides its function of restoring order out of chaos, the *Chunqiu* reflects the “gathering and scattering of myriad things,” i.e., the running of this world, and is all about the truth. People of all walks should read it, since it contains instructions on every aspect of people’s life; it is not only the “great text on the kingly way” but also the “great model for ritual propriety and rightness.” As Hu Sui summarizes,

In the age of Confucius, above there were no bright rulers, below he could not be appointed to govern, therefore Confucius created the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, transmitting empty words to define ritual proprieties and rightness, and having the *Spring and Autumn Annals* serve as the law of a king.254

If, as this passage suggests, Confucius created the *Chunqiu* and made it a kingly law, why is it called a text of “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.” 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

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252 I discuss the identification in more detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation. Nevertheless, whether he was Sima Tan, Sima Qian, or someone else does not matter. Suffice it to know that this Grand Historian embraces the Gongyang Commentaries.

253 *Shiji* “Taishi gong zixu,” 130:3297—3299.

254 *Shiji* “Taishi gong zixu,” 130:3299.

exert the power of a king in his lifetime and could only be an “uncrowned king” (suwang 素王). 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 about the connection between the capture of a unicorn (lin 麟) and Confucius’ writing of the Chunqiu. According to the Zuo Commentaries, the capture of a unicorn occurred in the spring of the fourteenth year of Lord Ai of Lu (r. 494—468 BCE). Confucius recognized it as a unicorn and took it with him. Neither the concise Chunqiu entry nor the Zuo Commentaries further comments on this event. The Gongyang Commentaries, however, interpret 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” 麟者仁獸也。有王者則至，無王者則不至. This seemingly auspicious portent, according to Confucius, however, predicts his tragic destiny. Upon recognizing the captured unicorn, Confucius sighs and says, “My way is exhausted” 吾道窮矣. He then felt the urgency of revealing his way to later generations and created the Chunqiu, as the Grand Historian (also a Gongyang scholar strongly influenced by Dong Zhongshu) narrates the event in Confucius’ biography:

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256 Han Shu “Dong Zhongshu zhuan,” 56:2509.
258 Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu 28:619—621.
259 Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu 28:624.
“No! No! A gentleman regrets passing away from this world without his name being praised. If my way will not be carried out, how could I reveal myself to later generations?” He then created the *Spring and Autumn Annals* based on the scribal writings.  

“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。

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 (liuyi 六藝), as we see in Confucius’ *Shiji* biography. It says that when Confucius saw that the Zhou royal house was so weak that “ritual proprieties and music were abandoned, and songs and documents were imperfect” 禮樂廢詩書缺, he felt the obligation to “trace the rituals of the Three Dynasties and put the documents and commentaries in order” 追跡三代之禮序書傳. He not only arranged, but also transmitted the ritual texts and the documents. “Therefore the documents and commentaries as well as the records of ritual originated from Mr. Kong” 故書傳禮記自孔氏. Confucius also “set the music right” (yue zheng 樂正) after returning to his home state Lu from the State of Wei 衛. To perfect ritual music, Confucius again edited the songs. He “deleted the duplications” 去其重, condensed the collection from over three thousand to about three

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hundred lyrics, and made all the three hundred and five songs “accord with the music of the Shaowu, ya and song” 合韶武雅頌之音. 266 The Shiji account continues to relate Confucius’ 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” 韋編三絕. 267 More importantly, it mentions that he contributed a number of writings—“the Preface, the Tuan, the Xi, the Xiang, the Shuogua, and the Wenyan” 序彖繫象說卦文言—to the Yi textual body. 268

In short, the whole notion that Confucius authored the Six Arts, especially the Chunqiu, is thus associated with the idea of Confucius being an “uncrowned king” emphasized in the Gongyang Commentaries. It is true that we can see the ennobling of Confucius in a number of texts; in particular, the Mengzi elevates Confucius to an unprecedentedly high position, 269 but it is the Gongyang Commentaries that clearly state that the Chunqiu served as the king’s law and it is the Gongyang scholars who considered Confucius a king. This notion greatly influenced Western Han society, as Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895—1990 CE) points out. “In the Han dynasty, the Spring and Autumn Annals seem like a constitution” 在漢朝，《春秋》彷彿一部憲法, so much so that the Han imperial courts always had recourse to the Chunqiu for important political and legal issues. 270 Indeed, Han intellectuals seriously believed that Confucius wrote the Chunqiu exclusively to “establish the law for the Han dynasty” 為漢制法. 271

266 Shiji “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1936.
269 For the summary, see Leng Dexi 1996, 166—168.
270 Feng Youlan 2001, 51.
271 Lunheng jiaoshi “Xusong,” 60:857.
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 their contemporary world. The Reformists, however, suggested that to solve contemporary problems the Han rulers must have recourse to the past, to the governing philosophy and social and religious system of the Zhou.\footnote{Loewe 1974, 11.} These two attitudes were also associated with different texts: the Modernists were sponsors of texts written in contemporary scripts (\textit{jinwen} 今文) and were especially fond of \textit{Gongyang Commentaries to the Spring and Autumn Annals}. The Reformists, by comparison, favored those texts written in archaic scripts (\textit{guwen} 古文) and preferred to use the \textit{Guliang Commentaries to the Spring and Autumn Annals 春秋穀梁傳} first and then the \textit{Zuo Commentaries 左傳} to counter the influence exerted by the \textit{Gongyang Commentaries} on the Han imperial court.\footnote{Loewe 1974, 12—13.} Despite its oversimplification, Loewe’s description of the two political forces does provide a general view on the dynamic of the power struggles throughout the Western Han dynasty. In this description, the popularity of and struggles between the three commentaries to the \textit{Chunqiu} text would not have existed had the \textit{Chunqiu} not first established itself as a dominant text in shaping the Western Han ideology and policy.

Besides the \textit{Chunqiu}, other classics considered to have been edited or written by Confucius also began to achieve canonical status in the time of Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 272 Loewe 1974, 11.

It seems that Gongyang scholars had success in persuading the great Han emperor to enact the “kingly way” (wangdao 王道) that Confucius had not accomplished in his own lifetime. Confucius’ vision was being executed ideologically and politically and influenced major policies, judicial decisions, as well as the education of the ruler and his subjects. In short, the sage had never been such a part of statecraft and everyday life. It is in the historical context of the Han Empire that the formation and transmission of the Luyu and its sudden increase in credibility and authority should be understood. Is there a better source for offering the people a tangible picture of the sage than the biographical details of his life? What provides these details better 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 teachings?

The values represented by the Confucius in the Lunyu also accorded with the Han Gongyang scholars’ argument that Confucius had prepared a humane way of governing for the Han rulers to follow. 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 and still followed 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 stresses the importance

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274 Shiji “Taishi gong zixu,” 130:3298.

275 He Xiu interpret 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 hzushu 28:628.
of humaneness (ren 仁), virtues (de 德), and ritual propriety in governance.\textsuperscript{276} 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 preacher of these values certainly fit the Gongyang scholars’ approach to a more humane governance. Moreover, the image of Confucius portrayed in the 
\textit{Lunyu}, according to Kai Vogelsang, is that of a revolutionary figure who advocated a whole new ethical system to suit the unprecedented social complexity of the Spring and Autumn period.\textsuperscript{277} 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.\textsuperscript{278} This was viewed as a dramatic precursor of the Han’s conquest of the Qin. In short, the timely emergence of the \textit{Lunyu} text not only filled the need for a text describing Confucius as a person, but the contents of the \textit{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 \textit{Gongyang Commentaries to the Spring and Autumn Annals}. The \textit{Lunyu} provided the tangible Confucius. Without the various teaching scenes depicted in the \textit{Lunyu}, Confucius would have remained a myth created by the \textit{Gongyang Commentaries} to explain how the \textit{Chunqiu} was written when the unicorn reminded Confucius that heaven had mandated him to restore peace and order out of chaos. The text of the \textit{Chunqiu} still existed in the Western Han dynasty, but the existence of the unicorn and Confucius had receded in the minds of people. To demonstrate the credibility and applicability of the \textit{Chunqiu} as a law left by a sage, and not the creation of a

\textsuperscript{276} Chen Suzhen 2001, 98—194.

\textsuperscript{277} Cf. Vogelsang 2010.

\textsuperscript{278} Leng Dexi 1996, 173.
contemporary political faction, primarily requires hard evidence of the sage’s existence. In this sense, the Lunyu’s writings about Confucius the man and teacher help anchor the myth of the Chunqiu by locating Confucius as a person in the real world teaching his students. Once the writer of the text was proven to be real, the credibility of the text was consequently enhanced.

In the Shiji account of Confucius we can also see this effort to reframe the Gongyang myth about Confucius’ writing of the Chunqiu into a narrative focusing on the text’s authorship. Let us look at the key Shiji passage on why Confucius decided to write the Chunqiu:

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 others. 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. As for 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, “Alas! Alas! A gentleman regrets passing away from this world without his name being praised. If my way will not be carried out, how could I reveal myself to later generations?” He then created the Spring and Autumn Annals based on the scribal writings.279

顏淵死，孔子曰：天喪予！及西狩見麟，曰：吾道窮矣！喟然嘆曰：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

Although this passage does reiterate the *Gongyang* myth about the connection between the capture of the unicorn and Confucius’ self-awareness of his fate, it does not emphasize how Confucius encoded a kingly law in the *Chunqiu* text, as the *Gongyang Commentary* does. In the conversation between Confucius and his disciple Zigong, Confucius’ response to Zigong’s question focuses on a philosophical understanding of his situation instead of on 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; 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 to three types of famous men: those who stick to their principles like 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 a little cynical.

How will the master be judged, then, if none of the above standards is applicable to him? Confucius’ actions suggest he is to be judge by his writing. Disappointed as he was when realizing that his “way is exhausted,” Confucius still exhibits hope in writing, which he thought would help transmit his fame to future generations. This explains why he wrote the *Chunqiu*. Indeed, what is interesting in the last part of this passage is how much Confucius cared about his fame and how eager he was for others’ recognition. This concern contrasts with his previous comments on those exemplary individuals and with the ease he seems to feel when acknowledging that no one in this world understood him. The inconsistency in Confucius’
answer can be viewed as a reflection of Confucius’ struggle to find a way to have his teachings passed down. Elsewhere in his biography, we learn that Confucius believed that he was chosen to be the transmitter of culture (*wen* 文).\(^{280}\) That is why he felt so desperate when his favorite disciple Yan Yuan died young and when he saw the unicorn omen predicting his own death. On both occasions he recognizes the threat of a sudden cultural breakdown. Toward the end of his life, as this passage reveals, Confucius prevented a cultural breakdown by authoring the *Chunqiu* and a number of other texts.

I would like to reiterate here how eagerly the reader wants to locate the tangible author when reading his works by quoting the Grand Historian’s line in his “Encomium” to Confucius’ biography:

> I, in reading Mr. Kong’s writings, imagine him being a [real] person.\(^{281}\)

余讀孔氏書，想見其為人.

In order to have a more fixed image of the master, the Grand Historian even visited Confucius’ hometown, “observed Zhongni’s (Confucius’) temple, hall, chariot, clothes, and ritual objects” and indeed meditated on the spot what the master could be like four to five hundred years before the Grand Historian wrote about him.\(^{282}\)

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\(^{280}\) It says that during the master’s exile, people of Kuang was hostile to Confucius and his entourage and tried to capture him. Confucius’ disciples felt frightened when the people of Kuang besieged them. To ease his disciples, Confucius says, “After King Wen passed away, isn’t the culture with us? If heaven would have this culture lost, those who die later could not have been with this culture; if heaven would not have this culture lost, how the people of Kuang do with 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* “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1919; same words can also be seen in the *Lunyu*, see *Lunyu yizhu* “Zihan,” 9.5:87.

\(^{281}\) *Shiji* “Kongzi shijia,” 47:1947.

The Grand Historian’s manner of reading the Confucian classics is by no means unique. For him, authorship is inseparable from the understanding of the text. When authorship becomes hermeneutical, the text that is interpreted on the basis of its authorship also enriches the authorship by attaching additional information to the life and thinking of the author. Once such an interaction is established between the text and its author, the meaning of the text is stabilized, the interpretation of text in relation to its author is fixed, and the reading of both the text and its author becomes self-contained. In this sense, the Lunyu was exactly what the Chunqiu needed when the Chunqiu rose to be the primary document about the principles of governing 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 of Confucius’ 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 Han intellectual and religious atmosphere. 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 those creating a coherent 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 reading using the author-text hermeneutic continues.
(Viewed from this perspective, I interpret the *Sangjiagou: Wo du Lunyu* as Li Ling’s attempt to break the author-text exegetic circle and relocate the construction of Confucius to a modern intellectual discourse. Li Ling fails to realize, however, the physiognomic passage from which the title of his work derives is closely associated with the *Gongyang* myth transforming Confucius into a sage king. To translate the term *sangjia gou* as “a disowned dog” is somewhat 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 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.²⁸³

To conclude this chapter we should consider the broader issue 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 hardly disputable 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. How could a relatively powerless figure in his lifetime rise to such remarkable fame after his death? There is no easy answer to this question. This question can be fully answered only through an exhaustive investigation of all available sources, be they historical or anecdotal. Here I merely attempt to touch upon this question by breaking it into two sequential sub-questions: Why did Confucius become one of the most quotable figures during the Warring States period, no matter how contradictory his images and words may appear in different textual

²⁸³ *Hanshi waizhuan jishi* 9.18:323—324.
traditions and even within his own tradition? How was Confucius’ fame established in the Western Han and was continuingly enhanced thereafter?

The answer to the second question relates to the Gongyang myth and the Western Han official promotion of Confucian teachings. As discussed above, the invention of Confucius as the author of a kingly law codified in the Chunqiu and the timely emergence of the Lunyu as a biographical text providing the much needed information to reify the originator of the kingly law worked together to anchor Confucius’ fame in the Confucian classics then being established as imperial ideology, in a court-sponsored education system based on the classics, and in imperial institutions that employed officials educated in the court-sponsored system. Unfortunately, the answer to the first question relating to Confucius’ fame in the Warring States period is not as easily answered as the question on his later fame.

Earlier in this chapter when tackling the issue of the formation of the Lunyu, I proposed the existence of a large body of lore on Confucius providing the materials for those collecting sayings and anecdotes about Confucius. 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 table talks in court settings, why would such an insignificant figure continue to be featured in those talks and be quoted by different groups of thought long after his death? There must be a reason accounting for Confucius’ fame, however delayed, in the Warring States period.

Confucius’ social status may have been too lowly to exert any direct social and political influence upon his time;284 his teachings, however, may have been radical enough not only to attract people’s attention in table talks, but also to have gradually been recognized as a realistic

284 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’ social status was even lower than the shi strata. Cf. Hsu Cho-yun 1965; Gassmann 2003.
solution to the problems facing the Eastern Zhou period. The problems faced by Warring States
people were largely the same in kind, but probably worse in degree, as what 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
BCE) no longer functioned. Archaeological finds from the early sixth century BCE (around a
half century before Confucius’ 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. 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’
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. Now, discounting
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’ time, we need to seek
other explanations for the selective invention of an ancient Zhou culture presented in the
Confucian classics in the light of the archaeological evidence illuminating the “new” ritual and
social context in which Confucius taught. The “new” context is probably associated with, as
Lothat von Falkenhausen puts, “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

285 Falkenhausen 2006; Rawson 1999.
287 Falkenhausen 2006, 403—404.
élite and commoners had become largely meaningless.”
Confucius’ teachings were then a response to the changed, much more complex socio-political structure that had thrown the old ritual institutions into disorder. By projecting the current ritual restructuring to the very beginning of the Zhou dynasty, Confucius and his followers were propagating a new system that evoked a past sense of order and unity while being firmly rooted in the social complexity of his times. Despite wrapping his approaches 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.”

Accordingly, the *Lunyu* also deserves a reading against the Warring States social and ritual background. Kai Vogelsang’s recent publication offers a good example of this sort. He considers the increasing social complexity of Confucius’ time as the driving factor leading to the appearance of Confucius; therefore, in order to better understand the *Lunyu*, we need to 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 different members navigate their increasingly complex society.

In this sense, the contents of *Lunyu* remain historically consistent with Eastern Zhou social life. This

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288 Falkenhausen 2006, 402.
289 Fingarette 1972, 60.
consistency would also confirm that the *Lunyu* could have been formed based on Warring States writings discovered in the walls of Confucius’ mansion.291

As discussed elsewhere in this chapter when addressing the textual history of the *Lunyu*, I propose that the smaller textual units collected by Confucius’ family292 that were later compiled into the *Lunyu* were put in the walls of Confucius’ mansion together with other ancient texts for religious purposes, possibly 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, and to ensure the dead stay away, the living also used talismans to dispel evils that the dead may invite. While burial practices and talismans varied across the early China region, it is conceivable that hiding texts in walls served a talismanic function in the context of the Warring States religious mentality.

Using texts as talismans in early China certainly resulted in the loss of many texts as they decayed along with the entombed corpses, but this practice also preserved a number of early writings otherwise destined for oblivion. Archaeologically recovered writings indeed enhance our understanding of early Chinese writing and history in ways that transmitted texts cannot. The *Lunyu* writings accidentally found in the walls of Confucius’ mansion in the early Western Han

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291 Here it is noteworthy to mention the argument, mainly based on parallels of wording between the *Lunyu* and the texts arranged in the Han, 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* without the availability of such *pian* textual units are vastly different enterprises. 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.

292 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’ 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.
dynasty were probably hidden for some talismanic function, once rediscovered, the texts were soon edited to satisfy the Western Han intellectual, political, and ideological need for materials to portray a tangible Confucius as author of the *Chunqiu*, a text functioning as the model for the Western Han.
Chapter 3 The Author as Patron: Prince of Huainan, the Presented Author

The Chinese term Huainanzi 淮南子 (Master of Huainan) denotes both an 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, it is generally held that only one of them was related to the text entitled Huainanzi,¹ and he was Liu An 劉安 (179—122 BCE), grandson of the Western Han (206 BCE-9 CE) founding father Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 206—195 BCE). He inherited the title “Prince of Huainan” from his father, Liu Chang 劉長 (198—174 BCE) (Liu Bang’s seventh son), who died at a young age when in exile for allegedly plotting a rebellion against the imperial court during Emperor Wen’s 文帝 reign (r. 180—157 BCE).² As a text, the Huainanzi, named after the title granted to Liu An, consists of twenty-one chapters in its present-day form and has been considered one of the most voluminous works completed in the early Western Han period. Examining information about the history of this text, it seems the life of the Prince has been the key to the understanding of the text under his name; at the same time, for over two thousand years, the text has served as the primary source for characterizing Liu An as its author. For this reason, both the Prince and the text in his name are closely associated with the discussion of the authorship of the Huainanzi, the main focus of this chapter. I will begin with a brief review of various ideas regarding the Huainanzi’s authorship; then, in light of this survey, I will present my own observations about the Huainanzi and its authorship in connection

¹ The four Princes were Ying Bu 英布 (?-196 BCE), Liu Chang 劉長 (198-174 BCE), Liu Xi 劉喜 (?—144 BCE), and Liu An 劉安 (179—122 BCE). See Shiji “Qiong Bu liezhuan,” 91.2598-608; Shiji “Huainan Hengshan liezhuan,” 118.3075-94; Loewe 2000, 651-652; Major 2010, 4-5.

² Shiji “Huainan Hengshan liezhuan,” 118.3075-3081. For an almost identical account, see Hanshu “Huaina, Hengshan, Jibei wang zhuan,” 70.2135-44.
with the formation, circulation, and editing of early Chinese texts. In disentangling the issues regarding the *Huainanzi*’s authorship, I hope to shed some new light on our understanding of the *Huainanzi* in particular and early Chinese texts in general.

### 3.1. The Author: Writing or Presenting the Text?

Most discussions about the authorship of the *Huainanzi* grow out of the following assumption: authorship not only provides biographical and historical background for dating the text and identifying textual variants, but it also serves as a fundamental aspect in 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. In this sense, an author is viewed as the writer or producer of the text and has absolute control over it. It is true that certain authorial information may enhance our understanding of the text attributed to the author, but the author as an hermeneutical device is really a double-edged sword. Any interpretation of a text relying upon authorial information is inevitably at risk of falling in the “intentional fallacy” proposed by William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley.³ Moreover, as suggested in the introduction, early Chinese authorship is a different species that by its very nature cannot fit into an arbitrary interpretive framework oriented by author. Nevertheless, before challenging the assumed importance of authorship to the interpretation of the *Huainanzi*, it is necessary to provide an overview of the scholarship operating under this assumption.

One general theory of the *Huainanzi*’s authorship relies on relevant information in Liu An’s *Hanshu* 漢書 biography to propose Liu An and his entourage of intellectuals as the writers

³ Wimsatt 1982, 3—18.
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*” 招致賓客方術之士數千人作為內書二十一篇. ⁴ The late Eastern Han commentator Gao You 高誘 (activ. 205-210 CE) offers more specific 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*, he specifies the “eight elders” (bagong 八公) and a few Confucian scholars, such as Dashan 大山 and Xiaoshan 小山. ⁵ Gao’s identification, though occurring centuries after Liu Xiang’s 劉向 (77—6 BCE) *Bielu* 別錄 preserved in the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 of the *Hanshu*, has been widely accepted down to the present day. ⁶ 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) in his Huainan court. After they finished writing this text, Liu An presented it to the imperial court during a visit in 139 BCE apparently in hopes of providing advice about governing and winning the favor of the newly enthroned Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 141—87 BCE). ⁷ Currently available

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⁴ *Hanshu* “Huaina, Hengshan, Jibe wang zhuan,” 70:2145.

⁵ He Ning 1998, 5. Gao’s postface is incorporated in the *Huainanzi jishi* by He Ning and will be discussed more intensively later in this paper.

⁶ If Gao You finished his commentaries in 212 CE, 17th year of 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 劉歆 (a. 50 BCE-23 CE). If we trace the *terminus ante quem* of the *Huainanzi* to the year of 139 BCE when Liu An visited the imperial court, then the gap expands to 350 years. The reason that I hesitate to take 139 BCE as the *terminus ante quem* of the *Huainanzi* will be explained later in this paper.

⁷ It says in the *Shiji* that “in the second year of the Jianyuan era, 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* “Huainan Hengshan liezhuan,” 118:3082.
information is, however, insufficient for determining the precise roles Liu An and other members of the writing team played in compiling each chapter.\(^8\)

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 apparent. He tries to settle the issue of the *Huainanzi*’s authorship by examining three kinds of data (which he terms “external and internal evidence” pertaining to the method examined in Chapter 5): (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.\(^9\) After examining three periods—the Han, the Song, and modern—of scholarship on the *Huainanzi*, 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.”\(^10\) This argument emphasizes Liu An’s role in the making of the *Huainanzi*, that is, it was Liu An rather than his intellectual entourage who played the major role in both writing and editing this text. Liu An should therefore be considered the author of the *Huainanzi*.\(^11\)

It is worth noting, however, that Le Blanc not only interprets the “Han testimony” (including relevant passages from the *Lunheng* 論衡 and the *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記) too literally, but, as pointed out by Harold Roth, he also reads Gao You’s prefatory comments about the text’s

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\(^9\) Le Blanc 1985, 25.

\(^10\) Le Blanc 1985, 41.

\(^11\) Le Blanc 1985, 24-41.
authorship in a way that especially favors his argument.\textsuperscript{12} The rationale behind his readings actually remains consistent with his study’s promise to reject the notion of the \textit{Huainanzi}’s unoriginality and to prove the intrinsic consistency within this text.\textsuperscript{13} This lays the foundation for further analysis of the text based on the biographical information of Liu An, the assumption he attempts to prove applicable to the reading of the \textit{Huainanzi}. By attributing the \textit{Huainanzi} to Liu An, Le Blanc opens the way for Griet Vankeerberghen and Chen Jing 陈静 to historicize and analyze the \textit{Huainanzi} in conjunction with Liu An’s life and his contemporary socio-political atmosphere. It seems to me that 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 the text.\textsuperscript{14}

In comparison with the above arguments that take the assumption that Liu An played a major role in writing the \textit{Huainanzi} as their cornerstone, Martin Kern emphasizes the “Yaolüe” 要略 (Summary of the Essentials), the last chapter (Chapter 21) of this text in its extant form, as a performative piece to define the \textit{Huainanzi}’s authorship. He suggests that Liu An can be considered the author of the \textit{Huainanzi} only in so far as the work is conceived as such in the “Yaolüe,” which he considers a \textit{fu} 赋 rhapsody presented by Liu An to Emperor Wu of Han in 139 BCE. The remaining twenty chapters of the \textit{Huainanzi}, Kern proposes, may have been prepared and produced 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

\textsuperscript{12} Le Blanc 1985, 25-30; Roth 1992, 21.

\textsuperscript{13} Le Blanc 1985, 6-8.

Liu An. In other words, the *Huainanzi* is a text generated in the specific historical occasion of 139 BCE; without this historical occasion, the incorporated individual chapters might have remained scattered. The term authorship, in this sense, is defined by this historical occasion of performing the text. In this case, the author is not necessarily the person who actually wrote the text but the person who presented the text and created coherence among the incorporated chapters in his performance. From this point of view, the author still functions as a helpful factor in understanding the text, but it functions in a different way: the author is no longer the fundamental element guiding the analysis of the text, but a keyword (usually the name of a certain scholarly tradition or a patron) 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. That is to say, in looking at the meaning of the text, the author functions more like a prism than a mirror.

Kern’s approach is, no doubt, inspiring to the study of the *Huainanzi*’s authorship, especially for shifting the focus from Liu An’s role in writing the text to his role in presenting it, but how sure are we that the “Yaolüe” was actually performed before the Han Emperor in 139 BCE? Is the “Yaolüe” truly a *fu* rhapsody? The rhyming scheme teased out and examined by Kern constitutes the cornerstone of Kern’s argument that the “Yaolüe” is a *fu* piece for performance. Rhyming is certainly an euphonic and mnemonic device useful for performance, but not all rhymed lines were actually performed. It should come as no surprise that writers employ euphonic patterns for other reasons besides performative purposes. After all, rhyming enhances the aesthetic effect of a piece of literature even if it is not read out. Moreover, not all the “Yaolüe” passages are rhymed. Finally, Kern’s belief that the performance must have

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delivered by Liu An to Emperor Wu during his court visit in 139 BCE needs to be further substantiated. The *Hanshu* does say that Liu An visited the imperial court and presented an “interior pian” (neipian 内篇) to the Emperor,16 but the *Hanshu* account neither mentions that this “inner pian” was indeed the *Huainanzi* to which the “Yaolüe” is attached nor indicates that Liu An’s presentation of those writings involved any performance. We cannot accept Liu An’s performance of the “Yaolüe” as the means for presenting writings to the Emperor without more evidence supporting a connection between two such events. 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 BCE. A reexamination of relevant evidence thus becomes necessary as all of the arguments above, including Kern’s, rely on the same set of materials preserved in a few texts. A scrutiny, and, when necessary, reinterpretation, of these materials constitutes the next section of this chapter.

3.2. The Sources: Narratives or Historical Accounts?

The body of materials used most frequently in discussing the *Huainanzi*’s authorship includes some related passages in 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 transmitted texts such as *Lunheng* and *Xijing zaji*. The earliest sources are found in the two *Hanshu* chapters compiled by Ban Gu’s 班固 (32-92 BCE), born ninety years after Liu An’s death.

Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography in many places resembles his *Shiji* biography, but the *Shiji* biography in no place mentions Liu An’s fondness for literary study and writing, nor does it say

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anything about the *Huainanzi*, as the *Hanshu* does. The silence of the *Shiji* on the *Huainanzi* and Liu An’s other writings makes us wonder how Sima Tan 司馬談 (165-110 BCE) or Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145 or 135-86 BCE ), both contemporaries of Liu An, could have neglected such a critical aspect of Liu An’s life, but this 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:

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,” which includes twenty-one pian,17 as well as many pian of “exterior shu.” They also wrote eight juan18 of “central shu,” amounting to over two hundred thousand words, which discuss the techniques of achieving divine immortality and making gold and silver. At that time Emperor Wu was fond of art and literature. Because An and An’s brothers were his uncles, and because An was eloquent, erudite, and good at literary expression, the Emperor respected him greatly. Whenever responding to his letters or rewarding him, the Emperor often summoned Sima Xiangru and others to inspect the draft before sending it out. Some time earlier, when An visited the court, he presented the “interior pian” he created, which was new, and the Emperor liked and put it in his collection.19 The Emperor asked An to write commentaries on the “Lisao” (Encountering the sorrow); An

17 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 2003, 135-168; Wilkinson 2000, 444-447; Tsien 2004, 120-125; Sun Deqian 1972, 34-35.

18 A juan, or “volume,” is a completed pian that is rolled and bound together by strings. But Tsuen Hsuin 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 2004, 120-125; Sun Deqian 1972, 34-35.

19 My translation is based on the awkward punctuations of this part. I will get back to it later.
received this imperial order early in the morning and presented his commentaries by breakfast time. He also presented to the Emperor 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 him to banquets, the Emperor would like to talk with him about success and failure, recipes, techniques, \textit{fu} rhapsodies, and encomium writings. They would not end their conversations until it was getting dark.  

Although the sentences stressing the Prince of Huainan’s preferring texts and music over shooting and hunting remain identical in both the \textit{Shiji} and \textit{Hanshu} accounts, we find several critical pieces of information regarding Liu An’s writing missing in the \textit{Shiji} account. It is this \textit{Hanshu} passage that 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 Liu An was received by the Emperor during a visit to the imperial court in 139 BCE. Most important of all, it is in this passage where scholars locate the key—the “interior \textit{pian}” presented to Emperor Wu by Liu An—to the authorship of the \textit{Huainanzi}. It has long been held that this “interior \textit{pian}” was indeed what was included in the text later called the \textit{Huainanzi}.

The link between this “interior \textit{pian}” and the \textit{Huainanzi} is by no means clear on the basis of the \textit{Hanshu} account; instead, the identification of the “interior \textit{pian}” as the \textit{Huainanzi} results

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Hanshu} “Huainan, Hengshan, Jibei wang zhuan,” 70:2145.
from a synthesis of a few isolated pieces of information, including the mention of “central pian” in both Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography and the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*. First of all, the “interior shu” mentioned in Liu An’s *Hanshu* account is considered the same as the “Huainan nei (interior text of Prince of Huainan),” a text with twenty-one pian attributed to “Wang An 王安,” as listed in the “Yiwen zhi”. 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*. 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:

\[
\text{interior pian (neipian 内篇)} = \text{interior shu (neishu 内書)} = \text{“interior text of Prince of Huainan (Huainan nei 淮南内)} = \text{*Huainanzi* (Huainanzi 淮南子)}.
\]

In order to clarify how the *Huainanzi* is linked to the “interior pian,” I must first try to explain why the *Hanshu* passage translated above only appears in the *Hanshu*, 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.

In an attempt to explain the inconstancies between Liu An’s *Shiji* and *Hanshu* biographies, Vankeerberghen proposes that Liu An’s *Shiji* biography is a severely biased one and,

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22 See, for example, Zhang Shunhui 1990, 184-185.
by comparison, Liu’s *Hanshu* biography, as a version attempting to counter the *Shiji*’s bias, is more objective and closer to a 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.²³ 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 explain the inconsistencies between the two versions.

Inquiries regarding consistency constitute a crucial part in modern scholarship, but did the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* compilers weigh issues of consistency the same as modern scholars do? 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. The cause of the inconsistencies in both the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* is a complicated issue. So far as the discrepancy between Liu An’s *Shiji* and *Hanshu* biographies is concerned, I suggest that it is 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, transmitted texts could be altered, new materials could be added, both transmitted and new added materials could be synthesized—in such a complicated process of making and remaking early Chinese texts, inconsistency should be viewed as a normal and natural phenomenon, not an aberration. When seen against this background, textual alteration, however

²³ Vankeerberghen 2001, 67—78.
severe, was not necessarily linked to systematic political and cultural control, such as the imperial censorship used by Vankeerberghen to explain the discrepancies between the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* versions of Liu An’s biography. In fact, 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 examined in Chapter Four of this dissertation demonstrate that the *Shiji* was not intended to be presented to the imperial court and that this was done only decades after Sima Qian’s death and the end of Emperor Wu’s reign. 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 more likely occur during the strict reign of Emperor Wu, a time closer and more sensitive to Liu An’s alleged rebellion. Rather than try 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 maintain that such information was probably not available to the *Shiji* compiler (let alone the alleged party compiling the ancestral biography), but was later added into the *Hanshou* 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.24

I suspect that at the time Liu An’s *Shiji* biography was written that 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 unlikely that the Simas, as Grand Historians, did not have access to Liu An’s texts when they prepared to 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 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* version of

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24 Nienhauser 2002, xiii—xiv. Nienhauser tries to oppose the trend of thinking that considers the *Hanshu* is a primary source upon which some of the *Shiji* chapters were reconstructed. A. F. P. Hulsewé 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 CE and 400 CE 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 *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.” Nienhauser 2002, xxii. For Nienhauser’s entire comparison of the Shiji and Hanshu chapters on Liu Bang 劉邦, see Nienhauser 2002, xiii—xlvi; for Hulsewé’s argument, see Hulsewé 1975; for Honey’s view, see Honey 1999; for the primary sources mentioned, see *Shiji* “Dayuan liezhuan,” 123:3157—3180; *Hanshu* “Zhang Qian Li Guangli zhaun,” 61:2687—2698; *Shiji* “Xiongnu liezhuan,” 100:2879—2920; *Hanshu* “Xiongnu zhuan,” 94:3743—3834; *Shiji* “Gaozu benji,” 8:341—361; *Hanshu* “Gaodi ji,” 1:1—58.
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 Huananzi consists of 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.\(^{25}\) One explanation to this difference 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 are indeed the same, 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 Prince of Huainan” had been viewed as the same text with two different titles at least since the late Eastern Han dynasty.\(^{26}\)

It is in the “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 chapter of the Suishu 隋書, however, that the Huainanzi is for the first time listed as the title of the text in twenty-one juan.\(^{27}\) 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 ziji gives some clue. It states, as follows,

\(^{25}\) He Ning 1998, 1439, 1454, 1456.

\(^{26}\) He Ning 1998, 5-6.

\(^{27}\) Suishu “Jingji zhi,” 34:1006. Also, the difference of pian and juan in this case seems not to affect the length of each textual units but merely indicate different materials on which the twenty-one textual units were written on.
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 perspicuous. The text is called the *Huainanzi*, or the *Liu Anzi*.\(^{28}\)

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 *Xijing zaji* is 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 CE), we may say that the name “Huainanzi” had been applied to title Liu An’s “interior *pian*” by the Eastern Jin 東晉 dynasty (317-420 CE).\(^{29}\)

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, nevertheless, when the “interior *pian*” is considered the same text as the “interior *shu*.” The evidence is not strong enough to make such an equation. First of all, 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 though 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 roughly like a chapter. By contrast, *shu* may denote a larger piece of writing, like a book containing multiple *pian* chapters as is the case of its usage in this *Hanshu*.

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\(^{28}\) Xiang Xinyang and Liu Keren 1991, 146.

\(^{29}\) For the date and authorship of the *Xijing zaji*, consult Xiang Xinyang 1991, 1-4; Yu Jiaxi 2007, 1007-1017; Lao Gan 1962, 19-34. Hong Ye 1981, 393-404; for the discussion on the different titles of the Huainanzi, see Chen Jing 2004, 16-19; Roth 1992, 55-78.
A pian could be a book-length text, but to understand “pian” automatically as a book-length text may be misleading.

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 the king 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 CE) believes 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.31 Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 (1884-1955 CE) agrees that nei and wai was used by Liu Xiang to group different texts, but he goes further to point out that nei and wai can also differentiate styles and contents.32 Without any extant “exterior texts of Prince of Huainan” we cannot compare the styles and contents of the two groups of texts, but the speculation that nei and wai were originally used as editorial categories stands. Whereas “neishu” refers to a category, “neipian” in the Hanshu very likely denotes a specific text—consisting of one or more pian, but probably short in length—presented to the Emperor on a specific 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 demand are all short pieces suitable to be called individual pian and are clearly not comparable to the “neishu” or “waishu” categories. Moreover, adjusting the somewhat awkward punctuation

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30 Tsien 2004, 120-121; Pian Yuqian and Duan Shu’an 2006, 87-114.

31 Sun Deqian 1972, 35.

32 Yu Jiaxi 2010, 244-250.
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.

Some time 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. 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 to the Emperor 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 him to banquets, the Emperor would like to talk with him about success and failure, recipes, techniques, fu rhapsodies, and encomium writings. They would not end their conversations until it was getting dark.

Reading the passage punctuated in this manner makes the whole passage refer to a single occasion when Liu An visited the court, and the pieces presented to court stand out more. It seems that all these pieces, being improvisational and performative in nature, are mentioned to demonstrate Liu An’s writing talents and broad knowledge. The performative nature of the works would also explain their relative briefness. As for their styles, the “Chang’an duguo song” and the “Song de” 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. What category might the neipian fall into? Could it be related to political history (“success and failure”), life-nourishing techniques (“recipes and techniques”), or literary writing (“fu rhapsody and song encomium”)? Any is possible as we know the emperor liked to discuss all these matters with Liu An, but according to Gao You’s postface to his commentaries on the Huainanzi, the piece that “the emperor liked and put in his collection 愛而秘” is a fu rhapsody:

Some time earlier, because Liu An was incisive and was 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 a lot 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.34

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 narratives about 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 the two passages.

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33 According to Gao You, it was the “Lisao fu” 異騷賦. Scholars notice this difference between the Hanshu and Gao You’s postface. Some suggest that Hanshu passage is more reliable than this postface, others argue for the opposite. See He Ning 1998, 5. Yu Jiaxi 2010, 37-38.

34 He Ning 1998, 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage in Gao You’s postface (in its original order)</th>
<th>The <em>Hanshu</em> passage (with slight change in the sentence order to facilitate comparison)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>初，安為辨達，善屬文，皇帝為從父，數上書，召見。</td>
<td>初，時武帝方好藝文，以安屬為諸父，辯博善為文辭，安入朝，獻所作。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>孝文皇帝甚重之。</td>
<td>甚尊重之。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>詔使為離騷賦，自旦受詔，日早食已。</td>
<td>使為離騷傳，旦受詔，日食時上。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>上愛而秘之。</td>
<td>上愛秘之。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The similarity of the passages should not be a surprise since 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 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 time of Emperor Wen instead of 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” 爱 and “mi” 秘 (or 祕 in the *Hanshu*) 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 (playful things) and “nongqi” 弄器 (fun stuff) imply.

Changing the setting of this scene to Emperor Wen’s time also gives us clues as to whether the *Huainanzi* was presented to the imperial court or not. Immediately after recounting

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35 The pronoun “zhi” 之 here denotes the *neipian* instead of the “Lisao zhuan.”
Liu An’s composition and presentation of texts to the emperor during this visit, Gao You’s postface continues to tell how the *Huainanzi* was created:

Many of those 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 such Confucian scholars as Dashan and Xiaoshan, discussed the way and its virtues, summarized and unified ideas on humaneness and rightness, and wrote this text (the *Huainanzi*).  

This passage suggests that the writing of the *Huainanzi* occurred after Liu An’s meeting with Emperor Wen (202-157 BCE). 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 Confucian scholars” hosted by Liu An. Accepting this sequence of events, it becomes clear that the *Huainanzi* was not among the pieces that Liu An presented to the court. 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 these differences, Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848—1908 CE) and Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911—1966 CE) accept the sources at face value and propose that the *Hanshu* and Gao

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36 He Ning 1998, 5.
You’s postface depict two different occasions when Liu An visits the imperial court: once in Emperor Wen’s era and again during Emperor Wu’s reign. Many others accept this kind of 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. 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 imagines that Liu An’s literary reputation must have been greatly enhanced by this meeting with Emperor Wen, and that is why Liu An was able to attract masters of various learning traditions to his Huainan court to write the *Huainanzi*, a project begun during the final years of Emperor Wen and not finished until the end of the reign of Emperor Jing (r. 157-141 BCE). Finally, in the second year of Emperor Wu’s reign, i.e., 139 BCE, Liu An paid another visit to the imperial court. Again his writing skills were tested, but by a different emperor, again he wrote something about the “Lisao” within a few hours, and again, as described almost identically in both sources, the emperor “liked and put it in his collection.”

Certainly a Han royal family member like Liu An may have visited the imperial court more than once. 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 receives an edict to write on the same topic, which he does at

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37 For example, Sun Yirang and Chen Jing strongly argue for this point. See He Ning 1998, 5; Chen Jing 2004, 27-31.

38 Chen Jing 2004, 30. Others, though not specifically pointing out Liu An’s possible two different visits to the Han imperial court, agree on Chen Jing’s theory on the writing time of the *Huainanzi*; for examples, see Major et al 2010, 7-13; Li Xueqin 1996, 166-167; Xu Fuguan 2001, 110.

39 It says in Liu An’s *Shiji* biography that Emperor Wu granted Liu An the right not to pay visit to the imperial from 126 BCE. *Shiji* “Huainan Hengshan liezhuan,” 118:3082—3083.
exactly the same time of day, and that the emperors’ response is identical. 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 the different account actually describe two different occasions, then whose court did Liu An visit, Emperor Wen’s or Emperor Wu’s? I propose that this is the wrong question to ask as no definitive answer can be reached using currently available evidence. Liu An could have visited the court of either emperor, or neither of them. Liu An may 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. More importantly, I propose that these two sources cannot be read as historical accounts but as merely as narratives connected to the lore about Liu An. That is to say, those scenes depicting the presentation of texts to the imperial court belong to a body of anecdotes that arose some time 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 cannot be viewed as a hoard of historical facts. In this light, the desire to reconcile the details in Gao You’s postface with those in the Hanshu biography stems from a misreading of these two accounts. The series of unbelievable coincidences demanded by a reconciliation reveals the fallacy of reading these two sources as historical accounts. Although we should not take 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 really composed this text, but by the conception of who did it.

3.3. Esoteric Writings, Authorship, and the Liu An Lore
This section deals with how this lore has influenced the writing of Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography as well as the authorship of the *Huainanzi* touched upon in a number of sources.

As previously mentioned, the silence of *Shiji* about Liu An’s writings could have resulted from the unavailability of Liu An’s works later referred to in the *Hanshu*. The *Huainanzi*, in particular, was first seen to have be available by the time Liu Xiang or Liu Xin rearranged Han imperial library toward the end of the Western Han, although it is 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, in my opinion, associated with the minimal influence exerted by the Liu An lore at the time the *Shiji* biography was written. We do not know exactly when and how this lore of Liu An formed and developed, but we can see how this lore began to influence the historical writing of the Han in the *Hanshu*.

The *Hanshu* version of Liu An’s biography not only adopts the typical narrative of Liu An’s legendary genius for composition, but also includes information regarding his writing that caters to the trend of describing him as a magician and an immortal. Upon close examination, there is a short passage regarding the “‘central pian’ in eight juan” 中篇八卷 that seems out of place in the context. The “central pian” that follows the “interior shu” 内书 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 appear neither in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu* nor any other bibliographical writings in Chinese official histories. Based on related
information found in a number of texts, such as Liu Xiang’s biography in the *Hanshu*,\(^41\) the *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義,\(^42\) the *Baopuzi* 抱樸子,\(^43\) the *Lun Heng* 論衡,\(^44\) and the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳.\(^45\) Pan Mengbu 潘猛補 suggests that the “zhongpian” is actually the abbreviation for “Zhenzhong hongbao yuanmi” 枕中鴻寶苑秘,\(^46\) a text about “the techniques of achieving divine immortality and making gold and silver” 神仙黃白, similar to what is mentioned in the *Hanshu* version of Liu An’s biography. In the *Shenxian zhuan* it also says,

\[
(\text{Liu An}) \text{ created the “interior } s\text{hu,” consisting of twenty-two } p\text{i}a\text{n; he also wrote the “inner } p\text{i}a\text{n” in eight chapters, talking about techniques of achieving divine immortality and making gold and silver, and it is called the “great treasure;” he wrote the “exhausting ten thousand things” in three chapters, discussing the way of change and transformation; altogether they amount to one hundred-thousand words.}^47
\]

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。

Compare the *Shenxian zhuan* passage with the *Hanshu* passage about the “inner pian,” which runs as follows:

\[^42\] Wu Shuping 1988, 87.
\[^44\] Huang Hui 1995, 319-320.
\[^45\] Li Fang 1961, 51-53.
\[^47\] Li Fang 1961, 51.
They also wrote “inner pian” in eight juan⁴⁸, talking about techniques of achieving divine immortality and making gold and silver, also amounting to over two hundred thousand words.⁴⁹

The similarities of the two passages are obvious. Can we make the argument that the Shenxian zhuan passage is based on the Hanshu? Even if we take textual corruption into consideration, this 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 “inner pian.” The “inner pian” passage becomes all the more suspicious when we consider the presence of the adverb yi, or also, which indicates that line about the “inner pian” is paralleled with a line on another text that also provides a word count. Second, if the Shenxian zhuan passage had indeed consulted 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 “inner pian,” information that seems important to the writer since he provides the sum of characters in all the listed texts. Finally, the length of the “inner pian” mentioned in the Shenxian zhuan seems much shorter than the “inner pian” referred to in the Hanshu: compared to the eight-juan Hanshu “inner pian,” the Shenxian zhuan “inner pian” only has eight zhang, which is usually considered 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 “inner pian” mentioned in the Hanshu.

⁴⁸ 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 2004, 120-125; Sun Deqian 1972, 34-35.

An alternative explanation for the similarities between the *Hanshu* and *Shenxian zhuan* passages is that they may both have been influenced by the lore about Liu An that evidently increased in popularity in the Eastern Han (25-220 CE), as suggested by a passage found in the *Fengsu tongyi*:

According to some vulgar sayings, 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.\(^50\)

This passage clearly states that the writing of esoteric texts attributed to Liu An and his retainers is nothing but a “vulgar saying” that needs to be corrected. Ying Shao 应劭 refutes all the vulgar sayings about Liu An by citing evidence from the *Hanshu* that indicates Liu An did not become an immortal ascending to heaven but instead ended up committing suicide. He also suggests that such sayings may have originated from hearsay fabricated purposely by some of Liu An’s retainers who were able to evade the death penalty despite their involvement in the alleged rebellion led by Liu An.\(^51\) Such “vulgar sayings,” according to Wang Chong’s 王充 (27-97 CE) critiques recorded in the *Lunheng*, must have been in circulation at least from the beginning years of the Eastern Han period, around the time when Ban Gu compiled the *Hanshu*. In the “Daoxu pian” 道虚篇 Wang Chong cites sayings similar to those listed in the *Fengsu tongyi*:

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\(^{50}\) Wu Shuping 1988, 87.

\(^{51}\) Wu Shuping 1988, 87.
A Confucian text says: when the Prince of Huainan studied the *dao*, he invited and gathered those who had the *dao* under heaven. He condescended as the ruler of a state to the masters of techniques of the *dao*. For this reason the masters of techniques of the *dao* all gathered at Huainan, all striving to come out with rare recipes and strange techniques. The Prince therefore was able to achieve the *dao*, his entire family was also able to ascend to heaven, 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 *dao* and study immortality all believe that this is true.52

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。

Wang Chong criticizes these rumors as “false 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 how these sayings affected writing: these “false” words created and possibly believed by those who were fond of the *dao* had, by the early years of the Eastern Han, already been written down into texts that belonged to the Confucian teaching tradition. I suspect that what drove Wang Chong to fight against these sayings was their popularity among both common people and the Han intellectuals. These false sayings also help explain how the information regarding the “inner 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 mentions those writings related to “recipes and techniques,” the texts that have not survived but have long

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been esoterically colored in the legend of Liu An and his retainers. He concludes by explaining how such “false sayings” arose and spread.

When people of this world saw their writings abstract, mysterious, rare, and strange, and furthermore observed that what had been transmitted of the “eight elders” seemed to be valid, thus they spread the sayings that Prince of Huainan achieved immortality and ascended to heaven. These sayings failed to recognize the truth.53

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。

We may try to understand the eight authors mentioned in Gao You’s Huainanzi postface in the same vein. I would not say, as Wang Chong and Ying Shao do, that the eight elder authors were completely fabricated by the “false sayings” or that they themselves were among the fabricators of those “false sayings.” They were, however, situated in the formation and transmission of the Liu An legend, in which the prominence of his literary talent and esoteric writings were understandably exaggerated. When viewed as part of the Liu An lore, Gao You’s attribution of the Huainanzi to the eight authors as well as the depiction of Liu An’s writings, especially the Huainanzi, in his Hanshu biography become reasonable and understandable. The authorship of the Huainanzi 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 part of the Liu An lore. One of the earliest examples of using the term ba gong, or eight elders, is found in the Lunheng, “Daoxu pian” passage. This passage, however, does not specify who the “eight elders” are. Gao You does mention eight names grouped together in his

postface, but it is unclear whether these eight men were the “ba gong” or not.\textsuperscript{54} The \textit{Shenxian zhuan} includes an anecdote telling how the eight elders shocked Prince of Huainan by turning themselves into teenage boys and later helped Liu An ascend to heaven from the top of a mountain.\textsuperscript{55} Nevertheless, the \textit{Shenxian zhuan} does not specify who the eight elders are either. It was not until the middle Tang 唐 commentator Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (activ. 713-741 CE) that the term \textit{ba gong} was linked to the eight names mentioned in Gao You’s postface. According to Sima Zhen’s commentary,

\begin{quote}
The “Yaolüe” chapter of the \textit{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.”\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

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 passage’s identification of the eight named individuals who constitute the “eight elders,” however, has its problems. Besides the fact that two names—Chen You 陳由 and Mao Zhou 毛周—in Sima Zhen’s list slightly differ from names—Tian You 田由 and Mao Bei 毛被—in Gao You’s postface, another problem of this passage is that we cannot find either the term “ba gong” or any group of eight names listed in the current “Yaolüe” chapter. Though there exists the possibility that all the above information may have been lost because of textual corruption, scholars tend to agree with the Qing scholar Hong Yixuan 洪頤煊 (1765-1833 CE) that Sima Zhen mistook Gao You’s preface for the “Yaolüe” chapter. The reason for this mistake

\textsuperscript{54} He Ning 1998, 5.
\textsuperscript{55} Li Fang 1961, 51-53.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Shiji “Huainan Hengshan liezhuan,”} 118:3082.
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.⁵⁷

His inability to distinguish Gao’s postface from the “Yaolüe” chapter notwithstanding, Sima Zhen’s commentaries, for the first time, connected the eight elders directly with the eight persons mentioned in Gao You’s postface. Once this connection was made, it was widely accepted thereafter. However, it is reasonable to believe that Gao You may have considered the eight men he groups together as the eight elders, although he does not directly say so. After all, the term *ba going* had been circulating long before Gao’s postface was written, so that might explain why his postface chooses to list exactly eight names.

As for how Gao You obtained these eight names, Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202 CE) adds another layer to the Liu An lore. In the “Huainan wang” entry of his *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆, Hong Mai argues that the legendary “eight elders,” unmentioned in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*, would have never existed had Gao You not made up their names 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 Liu An met and hosted his retainers.⁵⁸ It says in this entry:

In Shouchun there is a Bagong (eight elders) Mountain. It is there where Liu An invited and hosted the guests. In commentaries and 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.⁵⁹

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⁵⁷ Cf. Hong Yixuan 1939; Chen Jing 2004, 23.

⁵⁸ Hong Mai 2005, 299.

⁵⁹ Hong Mai 2005, 299.
According to Hong Mai, the name of the mountain—Bagong—certainly predates the *ba gong*, or eight elders, listed in Gao You’s postface; in other words, before Gao You listed the eight names under the term *ba gong*, it had been merely the name of a mountain. It is unclear what source Hong Mai’s argument relies upon, but he seems reluctant to interpret *ba gong* as eight elders because no names are associated with it in “commentaries and notes.” What could those “commentaries and notes” be? Since sources like Gao You’s *Huainanzi* postface do not belong to this category, it is likely these “commentaries and notes” are narrowly defined as official histories, such as Liu An’s biographies in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*. This inference is supported by Hong Mai’s inability to locate five of the eight names in official histories, a suggestion that the five might have been fabricated by Gao You.

It is hard to tell, however, based on current evidence, whether the eight elders were named after the Mount Bagong or vice versa. One of the earliest references to the mountain in official dynastic histories is found in the account of the famous Battle at the Fei River between the Eastern Jin 东晉 (316—420 CE) and the Former Qin 前秦 (351—394 CE) armies that took place near the Bagong Mountain in 383 CE, but this is hardly helpful in finding when the term *ba gong* was adopted as the name of this mountain. Earlier records on Mount Bagong are found in the *Zuozhuan* accounts of a local polity Zhoulai 州來, probably established in later Western Zhou (1046—771 BCE) and appearing here and there in the *Zuozhuan* as a place.

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60 *Weishu* “Lin Wei Di Fu Jian, fu Hong, zi Sheng, zongzi Jian, Jian zí Pei, Pei zuzi Deng,” 95:2077; *Jinshu* “Fu shang,” 113:2893; *Jinshu* “Fu Jian xia, Wang Meng, Fu Rong, Fu Lang,” 114:2918; and passim.
marking the changing boundaries of Wu 吳 and Chu 楚 as well as the relationship among the southern states Wu, Chu, and Cai 蔡. The mountain later named Bagong was then located in Zhoulai’s southern border, yet how the Zhoulai people referred to it is unclear. But we do know from the *Hanshu* that it was called Feiling 肥陵 (probably because it is located by the Fei river) by the time the *Hanshu* was compiled. It says that Liu An’s father, Liu Chang 劉長, murdered and buried one of his retainers in this mountain. If Feiling is what this mountain was called 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 CE. This indicates that the Mount Bagong featured in the lore of Liu An is not incorporated into the lore until after Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography was compiled. Yet according to Wang Chong’s *Lunheng*, legends about Liu An and the “eight elders” had already influenced Han intellectual writings. When weighing the evidence, it seems that the renaming of Mount Feiling as Mount Bagong was inspired by the story of the “eight elders” in the Liu An lore and also by the rise of religious Daoism in the Eastern Han. Nevertheless, the interaction between local culture, including local place names, and historical records is far less than clear. For example, it is possible that the *Hanshu* compilers simply adopted the old name (if it was) “Feiling” to name this mountain, overlooking the fact that it was locally called Mount Bagong.

Establishing whether the name Mount Bagong predates the legend of the eight elders or vice versa is not essential for my argument. The examination of this dynamic is important for

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62 Also rendered as Feiling 肥陵, fei 肥 or 肥 is the name of the same river.

revealing how folkloric information had influenced the authorship of the *Huainanzi*. It tells how the lore about the Prince of Huainan, his entourage, and the literary or esoteric writings formed in the center of Huainan had been localized and in the meantime been spread to groups of different traditions during the Eastern Han, as we see in Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography, the *Lunheng*, as well as Gao You’s *Huainanzi* postface.

To summarize, this part discusses some major sources pertaining to the authorship of the *Huainanzi*, paying special attention to those passages that have been accepted throughout history as historical records. These passages are actually closely tied with the Liu An lore forming since the early Eastern Han period, if not earlier. In identifying these passages, the analysis also reveals how the Liu An lore, in which writing plays a significant role, affects the reading of the texts attributed to him. 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 stake on a specific historical occasion—for example, Liu An’s visit to the court in 139 BCE—to interpret the *Huainanzi* not only needs extra explanation to differentiate itself from the hermeneutical “intentional fallacy,” but it also needs to rethink how those sources should be handled. To distinguish the folkloric from the historical layer of the authorial information of the *Huainanzi* opens up a new way to view the formation and the authorship of the *Huainanzi* and consequently leads to a different 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, as many scholars suggest, but as a kind of editorial effort that aims to combine multiple discrete texts together to create a certain sense of coherence and to stabilize them.

### 3.4. 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 that makes us see the twenty different chapters of the *Huainanzi* as coherent and meaningful by taking for granted that Liu An played the key role in writing the *Huainanzi* in general and the “Yaolüe” in particular. 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 has to be related to Liu An’s personal reflection on his relationship with the Emperor in regard to the future of Liu An’s own principality as well as his political ambition. This assumption by default leads to the conclusion that the *Huainanzi* must be a text through which the Prince of Huainan 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, possibly by playing the role of a mentor to teach the Emperor how to govern.64 In short, almost all the previous arguments prefer to read the *Huainanzi* by tailoring the text to conform to Liu An’s personal details as reconstructed on the basis of Liu An’s *Shiji* and *Hanshu* biographies and as situated in the early Western Han socio-political atmosphere.

The biographical information commenting on Liu An as author, especially that found in the *Hanshu* passage examined above, is not enough to support the assumption that the “Yaolüe” was directly addressed to the Emperor when the whole *Huainanzi* was presented to the imperial court. We do not know for certain whether the text Liu An presented (supposing he presented a text) was the one we now call the *Huainanzi*. All the historical sources are insufficient for

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64 Cf. Chen Jing, 2004; Jiang Boqian 1948, 505; Major 2010, 5, 7, 9-12; Ke Mading 2010; and passim.
determining what was presented, while the folkloric evidence presents many different stories
about Huainanzi’s transmission and authorship. All these conflicts and lacunae alert us to the
presupposed coherence of all the Huainanzi chapters upon which other scholarly inquiries into
the Huainanzi rest65 or to the presumed presence of an emperor as the audience to whom the
“Yaolüe” was performed.66

The alternative approach to the authorship of the Huainanzi I propose here is to depart
from these convenient presuppositions for the purpose of aligning the text with the Early
Western Han political context and Liu An’s personal life and to take into consideration the
formation of a text both in its material sense and as a part of early Chinese intellectual history. It
is important to note that 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, I agree with McKenzie 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, in the process of its being produced, reproduced, transmitted,

65 This can especially be seen in the scholarly handling of those differing portions of the text when scholars
painstakingly reconcile different ideas and 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 rendition) work, simply because the Daoist perspective provides a promising theoretical
framework for answering her 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 the convenience of
implying Liu An’s life to 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 even argues that the
Huainanzi actually has two summaries: one of them is the “Yaolüe,” which was written by a Daoist retainer of the
king of Huainan, and the other is the “Taizu” chapter by a Ruist scholar among Liu An’s intellectual entourage.
Therefore, he points out, understanding the Huainanzi merely by studying the “Yaolüe” is very misleading. Xu

66 Ke Mading 2010.
edited, interpreted, reinterpreted, or even misinterpreted, a text means different things and conveys different information to its readers each time its form is changed.\textsuperscript{67} The material form of a text 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 in which it formed, 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” in this section. I believe that the “Yaolüe” does provide valuable insight into the key moment of the formation of the \textit{Huainanzi} as a single, integrated text, the moment that proclaims the birth of a new text in the presence of the “Yaolüe.” To find what it says and how it explains why it was written as such in the “Yaolüe” not only helps unravel the mystery regarding the hidden meaning behind the \textit{Huainanzi}’s received form, but it is also provides the clue to the issue of the \textit{Huainanzi}’s authorship.

One theme throughout the “Yaolüe” is its repeated testimony to the \textit{Huainanzi}’s voluminousness and comprehensiveness. In fact, it seems that the whole “Yaolüe” is structured on the basis of these repetitions. In discussing the major principle guiding the making of \textit{shu lun} 書論 (text and argumentation) in the beginning of the “Yaolüe,” the main contents of the \textit{Huainanzi} are listed and explained chapter by chapter:

Generally speaking, making text and argumentation serves as a means to manage the way and the virtues, and to articulate human affairs,

\textsuperscript{67} Cf. McKenzie 2004.
then above to investigate them against heaven, below to evaluate them on earth, and in the middle to make them comprehensible according to principles. Even if unable to draw out the heart of the mysterious essence, the contents of a text should be abundant enough for one to observe the ending and beginning. In summarizing the essence and listing the general, if the words used in a text could not analyze the pure and distinguish the simple but make the great principles disappear or scattered, one should be afraid that others would be confused and unable to understand them; therefore in a text the expressions should be many and the explanations be plentiful; yet there is another fear that the readers may leave the basic for the trivial. Therefore if a text talks about the way without mentioning affairs, then there is nothing by which the text could float and submerge with the world; if a text speaks of affairs without mentioning the way, then there is nothing by which the text could run and rest with the changes. Therefore in this work twenty pian were created, including “Originating the Way,” “Starting of 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 Speech,” “A Forest of Speech,” “In the World,” “Cultivating Duties,” and “The Great Lineage.”

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，懼為人之懵懵然弗能知也，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、有俶真、有天文、有墬形、有時則、有覽冥、有精神、有本經、有主術、有繆稱、有齊俗、有道應、有氾論、有詮言、有兵略、有說山、有說林、有人間、有脩務、有泰族也。

Several points in this passage deserve further attention. First, the syntax of the statement on the purpose of writing texts and making argumentations indicates the formation of a specific writing style used for summation. The description of how to evaluate the writings—“above to investigate them against heaven, below to question them on earth, and in the middle to make
them understandable according to principles” (上考之天，下揆之地，中通諸理)—is quite similar to what we find in the “Xuyi” 敘意 (“Narrating the Intention”) chapter of the *Lūshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Mr. Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals*). The “Xuyi” also begins with an extended “者…也” structure as follows.

Altogether the “Twelve Records” serve as a means to record order, chaos, perpetuation, and extinction, as a means through which to conceive longevity, premature death, the auspicious, and the inauspicious, then above to evaluate them against heaven, below to test them on earth, and in the middle to examine them through the human world.”

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。

The *Lūshi chunqiu* has long been considered one of the earliest Chinese texts with a postface informing the readers of the principles in forming the main text and of its overall structure. We cannot determine from current evidence whether the “Yaolüe” writer consulted the “Xuyi” chapter or a third source ancestral to both of them, but it is reasonable to speculate that in the late Warring States period (475-221 BCE) a specific writing format resembling the forms of the postfaces to the *Lūshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi* began to form. The significance of the emergence of such a writing format in early Chinese writing will be discussed in more detail later, but it suffices for now to know that the “Yaolüe” belongs to this kind of writing.

Second, before naming the chapters included in the *Huainanzi*, the “Yaolüe” writer thoughtfully explains why the *Huainanzi* chapters are arranged as such. The defensive overtone is highlighted by the noticeable concern that the voluminousness of the work might lead to

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misunderstanding of the main point of the whole text. The ideal writing should be able to deal with the way, virtues, and human affairs efficiently and according to principles in the whole universe; but if this ideal is difficult to achieve, an abundance of writing with broad coverage, which has to do with 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 points by the trivial; therefore, both the abstract “Way” and concrete “affairs” should be taken into consideration in writing. The “Yaolüe” writer boasts that this is exactly what the *Huainanzi* does. But why is there the defensive overtone? In reading the summary of the chapters as well as the subsequent account explaining connections between chapters, one sees an effort to articulate the coherence unifying the chapters into a whole as opposed to the idea that the chapters are a collection of discrete texts. The defensive overtone, explanatory in nature, is associated with the editorial efforts to create such a whole. It seems that a kind of editorial tone is instituted from the very beginning of the “Yaolüe.”

The third point regarding this passage concerns the rhyme scheme of the titles of the twenty *Huainanzi* chapters. 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 of the *Huainanzi*), these twenty titles were consciously composed to serve specific purposes. Kern argues that the list of the titles not only sets up the layout of the contents of the *Huainanzi*, but the change of rhyming patterns also dictates how the contents are arranged. 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.” I agree that the rhyme scheme was

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70 Ke Mading 2010; Luo Changpei and Zhou Zumo 1958, 76-83; 246-266.

71 Ke Mading 2010.
created consciously and may have indeed been used as a mnemonic tool, but I tend to downplay the purely performative nature of it, preferring, instead, the possibility that the rhyme scheme is the product of editorial effort. If we relate the use of rhyme to the “Yaolüe’s” concern about 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. 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.

Finally, in summarizing the contents, each chapter is practically interpreted to demonstrate how all chapters fulfill the practical purposes of the text as a whole, and this is yet one more means to create cohesion among the individual chapters. For each chapter, the summary begins with its two-character title followed by a *zhe*, a particle here reminding that what follows will be a definition 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* (that by which)… or *shiren* (enable a person to)…*ye* (also, or the like, as listed in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Patterns of expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Originating the Way</td>
<td>“使人…矣”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting of the Truth</td>
<td>“使人…也”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly Patterns</td>
<td>“所以…”“使人…者也”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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72 Ke Mading 2010.

73 Be aware that different from dealing with the rest of the twenty chapters, “A Mountain of Speech” and “A Forest of Speech” are described together in a brief passage. He Ning 1998, 1450.
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, the summary talks about nothing other than how to guide one’s life and how to put the world in order from various perspectives. This seems to be another editorial strategy for encompassing all the individual chapters in 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,

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

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74 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 Blanc 1985, 2-4.
landforms of mountains and hills, locate the positions of rivers and valleys, understand the quintessence of 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 around with full preparation, not to be shaken by deities, and not to be shocked by devils.\footnote{He Ning 1998, 1442.}

墬形者，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，使人通廻周備，不可動以物，不可驚以怪者也。

The “Earthly Forms” chapter does discuss a few geographical categories, introduce some kinds of animals and plants, and mention other forms of mythological knowledge similar to what we see in the \textit{Shanhaijing} (GuideWays to Mountains and Seas), but the material is not structured in the manner of some guide manual as promised by the \textit{suoyi} 所以… and \textit{shiren} 使人…\textit{zheyu} 者也 patterns used in the chapter summary. As is the case with all chapters, the contents of the “Earthly Forms” are not structured well enough to form an argument, let alone indicate a how-to format employed in manuals—the chapter itself apparently is more like an assemblage of blocks of material from various sources. Even though the contents may not have been randomly assembled together, we can hardly detect 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 \textit{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 \textit{Huainanzi}. It is the self-referential chains following the chapter summaries that tie the chapters together as a whole textual body.
The 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 without understanding Chapter 2, then one will not know 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 follows:

Therefore, if one speaks of the Way yet without knowing its end and beginning, then one will not understand what to imitate and rely on; if one speaks its end and beginning without knowing heaven, earth, and the four seasons, then one will not understand what to escape and avoid.\(^{76}\)

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。

Such connection continues until the twentieth chapter and forms a chain linking the twenty chapters 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 zhushu \(^{77}\), which I think somewhat betrays how early Chinese texts were written or created (zhushu \(^{78}\)) and the Huainanzi serves as such an example. The early pronunciations of the two Chinese characters zhu 屬 *tok and zhu 著 *trakh sound close, and in the Huainanzi

\(^{76}\)He Ning 1998, 1454.

\(^{77}\) He Ning 1998, 1453.

\(^{78}\) He Ning 1998, 1454.
the two characters both mean to create texts. But as far as their connotations are concerned, the latter denotes “placing texts,” or “putting texts in order,” but 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 to put relevant textual units in order; in the material sense, forming a text also means to string the bamboo or wood strips together. Indeed, as we see among the chapters and within each chapter of the *Huainanzi*, early Chinese writing is much like using various sources of materials as building blocks: 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*, whoever he might be, the “Yaolüe” writer must have confronted the question of how to make the twenty chapters a cohesive entity before he wrote down this piece. 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 defensive overtone taken when the “Yaolüe” writer stresses the voluminousness and comprehensiveness of this piece, and which appears again after the description of the referential chains:

Therefore, twenty *pian* writings were created, in which the principles of heaven and earth are studied, the affairs of human realm are handled, and the ways of Thearchs and Kings are completed. Its words are either big or small, either subtle or general; its denotation and presentation, different from one another among those chapters, are expressed one by one. Now if only the way is spoken of, there is no place where the way 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

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confusion and would not know how to waken themselves with the techniques of achieving brightness and illumination.\textsuperscript{80}

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。

Earlier the “Yaolüe” writer begins with a statement of the purpose of writing; now after making each chapter meaningful in the summary of contents and building up the needed coherence among the twenty chapters, he returns to his previous point, concluding that all the goals have been accomplished in this text—the principles of heaven and earth, human affairs, as well as the ways of ancient Thearchs and Kings are all set up in this text. The defensive voice, however, arises immediately after this promising conclusion in arguing how necessary it is to engage in the “detailed discussions” 祥說 provided by the \textit{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 need to be illuminated through the discussions on all of the details provided in this text because they are not comparable to sages.

The defensive voice not only addresses the need of lowering writing standards to meet the needs of a less sagacious readership unable to penetrate complexity though simplicity, but it also argues for the necessity of elaboration in learning. Intellectual activity, thereby, inevitably causes the voluminousness of 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 \textit{yi} 易 system, the increasing delicacy in music composition, and the display of the full

\textsuperscript{80} He Ning 1998, 1454.
form in dragon drawings. Then returning to the writing of the *Huainanzi*, the writer extols its voluminousness and comprehensiveness, as follows:

Now if one says that they (the twenty chapters) are on the Way, then they are superfluous; if one says that they are on things, then they contain less than enough; if one says that they are on method, then they are too extensive; if one says that they are on matters, then they seem too narrow; if one could infer and argue for something from them, then they belong to those that cannot be spoken of. Those who take the twenty chapters as what they study surely desire to reach the point that they are not spoken of and then stop. Now that the theory of the Way is extremely profound, therefore one needs to write more words to narrate what it is; the myriad things are tremendously many, therefore one needs to make extensive explanations to understand what they mean. The words may be gathering and rolling without end, may be winding, increasing, and reaching afar slowly, but this is the means by which one elaborates the meanings with enormous expressions, makes them flow without coagulation or obstruct, and grasps them without letting them be scattered. Now that the rotten carcasses in the Yangzi and Yellow rivers are countless, yet those who present sacrifice still draw water from it: this is because it is big; a cup of wine may be sweet, yet if a fly is immersed in it, a commoner would not taste it: this is because it is small. If one can indeed understand what is discussed in the twenty *pian*, see the general, 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 to wonder freely in the whole universe and govern and craft the forms of the myriad things will be like travelling with leisure. 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 and enjoy. How far-reaching! How magnificent! How boundless! There one can wonder.

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81 He Ning 1998, 1455.

82 Here we may have encountered some textual corruption between “則無可言者” and “所以為學者.” Following “則無可言者” (then those that cannot be spoken of), there should be the other half of this sentence supposed to define or describe “those that cannot be spoken of” with such a sentence ending as “之” and “也.” It is also possible that the phrase “those that cannot be spoken of” belongs to the latter part of the sentence to explain the pronoun “之” in its former part “推之以論.” In either way, the narrative aims to exalt the perfect balance of contents in the “twenty chapters.” Sarah A. Queen and Judson Murray offer a different translation of this and the sentence that follows: “…and we extended this [throughout] our discussions, we would be left speechless. Anyone who intended to study this and who firmly wished to build on it, would [also] find himself with nothing to say.” See Major et al 2010, 861.

83 He Ning 1998, 1456-1457.
Although continuing to focus on the voluminousness and comprehensiveness of these twenty chapters, this passage defines this text with an unprecedented positive tone. As brought up by the “Yaolüe” writer, this is not a text discussing either the Way, things, method, or matters specifically, but one 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 and standards, and this is exactly what a student needs. 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 because of its profoundness. The myriad things certainly require numerous words to describe and explain. All this inevitably leads to the voluminousness of this text. At this point the defensive voice appears again: yes, the words are many, and sometimes they scramble around the themes and may seem farfetched, but they are needed for complete explanations of meanings and comprehensiveness is the new form of knowledge. On this point, the writer uses metaphors 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 of a text are thus treated as representative of the profoundness and boundlessness of the Way.

The last part of the “Yaolüe” adds the historical dimension 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 墨 tradition, the writings of Guanzi 管子, the remonstration of Yanzi 晏子, the strategies of the persuaders, the Legalist texts, texts of Logicians, and the Qin laws made by Shangyang 商鞅, the “Yaolüe” writer not only once again stresses the Huainanzi’s comprehensiveness, but also boasts its timelessness and usefulness, the thread invented by the “Yaolüe” writer to make the twenty chapters cohesive and coherent.84 Thus, it is not surprising that the claim of the Huainanzi’s usefulness appears again at the end of the “Yaolüe” as its conclusion:

Mr. Liu’s text is as such that observes the images of heaven and earth, makes understandable the matters of the ancient and present, makes judgment on matters to establish institutions, and measures forms to put the appropriate in practice. It examines the core of the Way and synthesizes the customs of the Three Kings to promote the immense. In the center of the mysterious distance, every movement of the essentials is revealed in the text. Discarding boundaries and limits and considering the purity and tranquility, this text unites the world. It arranges the myriad things, responds to changes, and makes different categories understandable. It does not follow the path with merely a single track, nor does it adhere to the intention of merely a single corner, nor is it confined to related things, nor 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.85

84 For how the texts were created to correspond their times, see He Ning 1998, 1457-1462.

85 He Ning 1998, 1462-1463.
Two points are worth noting in this closing passage. One is about the interpretation of *Liushi zhi shu* 刘氏之書. In contrast with the most popular rendering, “this book of the Liu clan,” I translate it as “Mr. Liu’s text.” Early commentators hold that *Liushi zhi shu* is the term Liu An used for referring to his own work. This idea was widely accepted, passed down, and now dominates the interpretation of both this chapter and even the whole *Huainanzi* as well. Such interpretation is built on the argumentation that the *Huainanzi* was a work presented to the Han imperial court in 139 BCE and the performance of “Yaolüe” as a fu rhapsody constitutes part of the scene of Liu An’s court presentation. Since we cannot be certain whether or not this court presentation happened historically, I prefer to consider “刘氏” in its usual sense as a third-person designation, 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, but at the same time it requires an alternative explanation on how this term was used at the moment it was written down. I propose the term’s use has to do with the editorial process 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

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86 Major et al 2010, 867.
87 He Ning 1998, 1462.
“Yaolüe” writer attributes a group of texts to a specific person, and in doing that, successfully injects personality as well as authority into THE text that is ready for use.

The other point is about the triumph of synthesis. All the texts listed before Mr. Liu’s text in the “Yaolüe,” as it claims, were responses to the problems of specific eras. Each of these texts, in the Hegelian term, was the crystallization of a certain modality of the Zeitgeist. As Hegel considers the Prussian state the incarnation of the “end of history,” the “Yaolüe” writer claims that the *Huainanzi* is the “end of text.” It apprehends the universe, history, as well as societal systems completely, removes all the boundaries and limits that may confine its omniscient understanding, comprises all the ways and intentions 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. The courts of local principalities and the empires from late Warring States period through the Qin to the Han dynasties, as their power, wealth, and interests permitted, served as the platforms where intellectuals were attracted and texts were collected, arranged, and synthesized. 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 certain coherence to make the whole text meaningful. The summary of contents and the explanation of their connections were thus created to meet such need. I consider the “Yaolüe” 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.

3.5. Composition of the “Yaolüe” and Early Postface Writing

Since the composition of the “Yaolüe” is closely associated with the formation of the Huainanzi, it is necessary first to examine when the “Yaolüe” was written. The “Yaolüe” itself mentions more than one time that the text it summarizes consists of twenty pian, and it remains consistent with the number of the chapters listed in the “Yaolüe.” If the text mentioned in the “Yiwen zhi” as the Huainan nei 淮南内 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 the “Yiwen zhi” was completed. It has been generally considered that the convention of writing a xulu 敘錄, a summary regarding the contents as well as the authorship of a text, and attaching it to an arranged text had been established at least by the time Liu Xiang was assigned to arrange the books in the Han imperial collection. Nevertheless, exactly when the “Yaolüe” was incorporated into the main text of the Huainanzi as one of its chapters is not very clear. It seems that the “Yaolüe” must have been included in the Huainanzi as one of its chapters at least since the time the “Yiwen zhi” chapter was compiled; otherwise, the “Yiwen zhi” entry would not say that the Huainan nei includes twenty-one chapters. The incorporation of the “Yaolüe” into the originally twenty-chapter text could also have happened in Liu Xiang’s time, since the bibliography in the “Yiwen zhi” was based on Liu Xin’s “Qilüe” 七略, the crystallization of the project led by Liu Xiang and his team. The exact terminus post quem of the incorporation of the “Yaolüe” into the main text of the Huainan nei depends on whether or

89 Hanshu “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1701; Ruan Xiaoxu; Sun Deqian 1972, 72-75; Yu Jiaxi 2009, 36-77; Zhong Zhaopeng 1985, 59-73.

90 Hanshu “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1701.
not the *Huainan nei* was recorded as including twenty-one *pian* in the “Qilūé”. If it was indeed listed in the “Qilūé” as a twenty-one *pian* text, we have reason to believe that the “Yaolūé” was already available toward the end of the Western Han.

Although the date of being incorporated into the main text of the *Huainanzi* does not amount to the date when the “Yaolūé” was written and although we must remain uncertain about Liu Xiang’s hand in the arrangement of the *Huainanzi* as the reconstruction of Liu Xiang’s long lost Xulu is far from complete, we have to rely on the above events to figure out a possible date of the composition of the “Yaolūé.” Another important source is Liu An’s *Shiji* biography. If the silence on Liu An’s writings in Liu’s *Shiji* biography indicates that the *Huainanzi* was not available at the time this biography was written, 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. One thing is certain, the date of the “Yaolūé” and that of the formation of the *Huainanzi* as a twenty-chapter text are directly linked to each other. On the one hand, the “Yaolūé” seems to be a product responding to some sort of textual compilation aiming to form a larger text; on the other hand, it was the “Yaoē” that proclaimed the birth of the multi-*pian* voluminous *Huainanzi*. In other words, the dates of the two overlap.

Thus, we have three relevant events—the completion of Liu An’s *Shiji* biography, the rearrangement of the imperial collection of texts starting in 26 BCE, and the compilation of the “Yiwen zhi” bibliography—that provide the necessary temporal markers to allow for two approximate datings of the “Yaolūé.” 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 BCE, which was close to Sima Qian’s (145/135—87 BCE) death; 1 CE, close to Liu Xiang’s (77—6 BCE); and 90 CE, close to Ban Gu’s (32—92 CE). Based on the discussion on the possible dates when the “Yaolüe” could be incorporated in the Huainan nei, we have two approximate dates assigned to the completion of the “Yaolüe:” 90 BCE—1 CE or 1—90 CE. The first possible date is based on the assumption that the Huainan nei was listed in the Qilüe with twenty-one pian and the second, on the assumption that the Huainan nei was not included in the Qilüe or if it was, as a twenty-chapter text. 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 also 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 at the time Liu An visited 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, at least he was the person presenting it to the emperor. The scene of presentation, however, is not firmly supported by our reading of the relevant 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.  

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91 Based on a dichotomous reading of the “Yaoüe,” 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 2001, 117-118, 163-177, especially 176-177.
I propose that the compiler or editor of the *Huainanzi* composed the “Yaölüe” and did 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 are set, as we see in the “Yaölüe,” it becomes more difficult to alter the composite text, and as later readers begin 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 羅文弨 (1717-1796 CE) observed the danger of accepting content lists as something intrinsic to and original in a text:

The lists of contents prior to their main texts in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* have already been there ever since the existence of their printed editions; this has been set up 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 meanings of the two historical 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 narrative by Ban Gu is indeed that of the *History of the Han*. It is because later readers tried to avoid the difficulty of looking into the main texts that they rearranged the lists and attached them before the main texts. Readers of even later ages, however, again mistook the list of contents prior to a text as that determined by the author himself, so much so that there appear those who preposterously comment on these texts based on such misunderstanding.\(^9\)

史記漢書書前之有目錄，自有版本以來即有之，為便於檢阅耳。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，致有據之妄訾謗本書者。

\(^9\) Lu Wenchao 1939, 67.
In this passage Lu Wenchao mentions two kinds of mistakes made by 后人 (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 function as content lists. Consequently, it is completely groundless to analyze the main text on the basis of content lists added at some point later in the history of the text. The cause of such misunderstanding, Lu continues, is the ignorance about the layout and stylistic forms of early Chinese texts:

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” of 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 be traced here.93

Taking the “Yaolüe” of the Huainanzi and the postface to the Fayan as examples, Lu Wenchao points out that in early Chinese texts, contents are listed after the main texts, not before, 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.

93 Lu Wenchao 1939, 67.
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 version until added by later editors. Unfortunately, his examination ends there. He never questions how the sections originally functioning as contents—the “Self Narration by the Grand Historian,” the “Biographical Narration,” as well as the postfaces to the *Huainanzi* and *Fayan*—came into being. It seems he considers that the postfaces of early Chinese texts, at least the five he mentions, were composed by the authors to whom the texts are attributed. He recognizes the editorial efforts in the compilation of the content lists, but we cannot fully appreciate the postfaces without a consideration of how they functioned differently from today’s lists added for the convenience of locating materials.

We may consider the “Yaolüe” in the same light. Although we must avoid the sweeping conclusion that all early Chinese postfaces were written by later editors and discuss them on a case-by-case basis, the writer of the “Yaolüe” is most likely a later editor. I propose elsewhere in this chapter 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 at the time Liu An’s biography was written. According to the *Shiji*, Liu An died in 122 BCE, but the *Shiji* was most likely not completed until around 90 BCE. That is to say, 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” 内書 or *Huainan nei* 淮南内, probably had not been compiled by 90 BCE. Kanaya Osamu 金谷治 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.

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 conventions and functions related to the writing of early Chinese postfaces. The date of the commentaries on the *Changes* (including “Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams”) has been debated ever since Ouyang Xiu (1007–1073 CE) challenged the canonical idea that Confucius was the writer of these commentaries. Now it is generally held that the “commentaries of *Changes*” were composed much later than Confucius’ 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 among the latest pieces. Li Jingchi 李鏡池 (1902–1975 CE) even considers that it could not predate the reign of Emperor Zhao of Han 漢昭帝 (86-74 BCE). Nevertheless, in the “Inappropriate Expressions” (or “Miucheng”) chapter of the *Huainanzhi* 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,

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94 Kanaya Osamu 1960, 457-459; Loewe 2000, 244. They both consider the “nei pian” mentioned in the *Hanshu* version of Liu An’s biography and the “Huainan nei” with twenty-one chapters, as says in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*, are not completely the same. The latter was a later edition including the presented chapters and those added after Liu An’s death. It seems, even though they have not made clear on this point, that both of them tend to believe that the *Huainanzhi* was a result of Liu Xiang’s arrangement of the imperial collection of texts.


96 Li Jingchi 1978, 301-324.
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 it, 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.”

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。

It clearly says 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”:

The bo hexagram means decorticating. Yet things cannot end with being completely decorticated: when the top is exhausted, the bottom returns. Thus one accepts and restores it.

剝者，剝也，物不可以終盡剝，窮上反下，故受之以復。

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” 象傳 (“Tuan zhuan”), and the “Commentaries on the Images” 象傳 (“Xiang zhuan”), 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 the

97 He Ning 1998, 725.
98 Li Daoping 1994, 722-723.
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 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)→2 (kun)→3 (tun)→4 (meng)→5 (xu)→……→23 (bo)→24 (fu)→……→64 (weiji)→1 (qian)

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, one of the two basic ways of constructing meaning in early Chinese philosophical writing. 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.99 This typical method of argumentation resembles what the “Yaolüe” writer does to make the twenty pian a meaningful whole: first defining each category under discussion

99 Meyer 2008, 55-95.
from certain perspective and then stringing all the categories together within the cross-referential framework. \(^{100}\) The “Wuxing” manuscript is among a number of texts excavated from Guodian 郭店 Tomb 1 dated to late Middle Warring States period. \(^{101}\) This suggests that the major techniques applied to early Chinese postface writing have their roots in the compositional techniques in Warring States argumentative essays; or 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 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 we must remind ourselves that the writing of a postface ultimately has a different function from an argumentative essay like the “Wuxing.” 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. As a matter of fact, we can observe this form of writing in other early works, including the Shangshu 尚書 (Book of Documents) and Maoshi 毛詩 (Mao version of the Odes) postfaces. In the extant versions of these texts, the comments have been separated from one another and placed right before each document or poem, but originally these comments were actually each compiled in single pian forms. In other words, they can be viewed as the postfaces to the Shangshu and Maoshi, respectively. \(^{102}\) Scholars

\(^{100}\) For detailed textual analysis of this type of meaning construction represented by the “Wuxing” manuscript, see Meyer 2008, 70-87.


disagree about when exactly these writings started to be written, but recent archaeological discoveries, such as the “Kongzi shilun” 孔子詩論, suggest that this type of writing had already come into being by late Middle Warring States period. Scholars also tend to agree that this type of writing was associated with the early Chinese pedagogical tradition focusing on a few Classical works passed down from the past, such as the Shi, the Shu, and the Yi.103 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 few Classical works. This actually 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, the above analysis exposes two very important features of the postface. One highlights the function of the “Yaolüe” as a means to string the individual chapters together into a coherent unity expressed by the cross-referential framework; the other calls attention to the authority provided to this type of writing by borrowing a format related to an early Chinese pedagogical tradition with its emphasis on a few Classical works. These two points merge into the “Yaolüé’s” promotion of the Huainanzi as a universal work serving all times.

3.6. The Nature of Early Chinese Writing and the Authorship of the Huainanzi

Before moving on to examine the particular issues of authorship associated with the Huainanzi, it is necessary to provide a brief review of the general issues surrounding the term “authorship” as discussed in the introduction. Instead of adopting its modern definition as the set

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of attributes possessed by an author considered the source or origin of a piece of work, my working definition brackets out the author as the creator of the text in order to fit the early Chinese context. I also exclude the creators of other intellectual products from this definition since I am primarily concerned with early Chinese texts like the *Huainanzi*. In short, I consider the author as an individual to whom a text is attributed but who is not necessarily the writer of that text. What distinguishes this definition of the author from its modern concept is that we cannot take the author for granted as the writer of the text. As a matter of fact, both textual and archaeological evidence suggests the opposite was the case for early Chinese texts: those to whom the texts have been attributed are most likely not the writers of them.104

If the various types of author we see associated with early Chinese texts—for instance, the author as legendary figure, as founder of a teaching lineage, as patron—are not the creators of those texts, why have they been viewed as the authors? The answer to this question has to deal with the nature of early Chinese texts—in particular the nature of textual formation and transmission. Several basic points regarding the formation and transmission of early Chinese texts were made in the introduction of this dissertation. Those points provide a useful framework for our current discussion.

Removing the “writer” from the concept of authorship has opened up new lines of questioning when trying to understand the authorship of the *Huainanzi* and other early Chinese texts. Rather than simply asking, “Who is (are) the author(s) of the *Huainanzi,*” we need to ask two related questions: How was the *Huainanzi* composed? And why was Liu An still needed as an author even if people realized that he was not the writer? In answering these questions with

respect to Liu An and the *Huainanzi*, we will also get a picture of early Chinese writing in general. Exploring the first question helps illuminate what kind of role a writer may have played in forming a text. The investigation of the second question attempts to explain what an author means to a voluminous early Chinese text like the *Huainanzi*. The remainder of this section is devoted to these two questions.

In a marvelous study on the making of traditional Chinese culture, Lothar Ledderose insightfully discerns the modular structure in the mass production of Chinese art and culture. He identifies various modules serving as building blocks to produce and reproduce Chinese material culture as well as to shape Chinese society. His investigation covers the nature of production in a number of fields, including printing, pottery, bronzeware, architecture, and even in the bureaucracy, but he unfortunately does not touch upon the formation of early Chinese texts in the same vein.105 It is William Boltz who, in a study on the composite nature of early Chinese texts, carries forward Ledderose’s method in studying early Chinese text formation.106 Relying on both recently excavated manuscripts (the Mawangdui 馬王堆 *Yijing* 易經, Guodian 郭店 *Laozi* 老子, and Guodian “Ziyi” 淄衣) and transmitted texts, he suggests that the formation of early Chinese texts resembles an assemblage of individual textual units, which he calls “textual building blocks.”107 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 B.C.E., and the early

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106 Boltz 2005, 50-78.
107 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 cf. Wagner 1999, 32-56.
Han, went about their compositional, editorial, and revisionist tasks.\textsuperscript{108} This also indicates that early Chinese writers to a large degree acted as editors. As a result, we have to rethink and revise the way we think of early Chinese authorship, especially in regard to those lengthy, literary (as opposed to administrative documents) texts with single authors.

The noticeable intertextual relations between the \textit{Huainanzi} and other early Chinese textual traditions, for instance, the \textit{Zhuangzi}, \textit{Laozi}, \textit{Wenzi}, \textit{Lüshi chunqiu}, \textit{Han Feizi}, have attracted people’s attention for a long time.\textsuperscript{109} For those who emphasize the integrity and originality of the \textit{Huainanzi} or even consider it a work directly written by Liu An, the \textit{Huainanzi} is unlikely to be seen as an anthology or encyclopedia of pre-Han philosophical and literary work.\textsuperscript{110} Le Blanc is right in pointing out that the \textit{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 \textit{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 need as much creativity to generate a text as people today would expect for such an

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\textsuperscript{108} Boltz 2005, 59.


\textsuperscript{110} Le Blanc 1985, 79-80.
}
undertaking. Reliance on preexisting materials, i.e., those textual building blocks, to produce new texts was natural and normal in early China. This may very well have been the way they created texts on popular aphorisms, anecdotes, and other short pieces of materials preserved either orally or in written form. In order to see how this affects the writing of the *Huainanzi*, I give an example to show how freely a textual building block could move around and be fit into different texts.

In the “Responding to the Way” 道應 (Daoying) chapter of the *Huainanzi*, there is the following story of Li Fuji,

The Jin noble son Chong’er went out in exile. When he visited the Cao, the Cao did not meet him with ritual propriety. Li Fuji’s wife said to Li Fuji, “The Lord of Cao did not treat the Jin noble son with ritual propriety. I observed that his 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?” Li Fuji then presented pots of drinking and food, and also put some jade *bi* disks within the containers. Chong’er accepted Li Fuji’s food but returned his *bi* disks. When Chong’er returned to his state, he raised troops to attack the Cao and conquered it. He commanded that none of the three armies should enter the alley where Li Fuji lived.111

In the *Zuozhuan*, there is a similar story mentioned during the narration of Chong’er’s exile, even though the character of Li 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:

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111 He Ning 1998, 875.
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.\footnote{Zuozhuan “Xigong” 23.6. Yang Bojun 2006, 407.}

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。

But in the “In the World” 人間 (“Renjian”) chapter, the improper behavior of the Lord of Cao differs from how it is described in the preceding passage.

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. Li Fuji tried to stop the Lord of Cao, saying, “The Jin noble son does not belong to the ordinary; his three followers could all be assistants to the 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 being perished, they could not do it. If the Cao lord could have listened to Xi Fuji’s words, then he would not have suffered the disaster of being extinguished.\footnote{He Ning 1998, 1284.}
晉公子重耳過曹，曹君欲見其骽肋，使之袒而捕魚。釐負羈止之曰：“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。聽釐負羈之言，則無亡患矣。

Besides the different 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 so that he can observe Chong’er’s ribs. This detail of having Chong’er bare his torso to fish is echoed in the “Shangde” chapter of the Lüshi chunqiu. It says,

When [Chong’er and his followers] left Qi for Cao, Lord Gong of Cao wanted to observe Chong’er’s doubled ribs so he made him bare his chest when fishing at a pool.114

去齊之曹，曹共公視其騑裃，使袒而捕池魚。

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 these two differences between the Zuozhuan account and the “Renjian” version—the court setting and the conversation between Xi Fuji and his wife—into a single narrative. What follows is the narrative as it appears in Han Feizi:

114 Chen Qiyou 1995, 1256.
In the past when the Jin noble son Chong’er went out in exile, he visited Cao. The Cao ruler made Chong’er bare his torso and observed him. Li 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 when he returned to his state and raised troops, I am afraid that the state of Cao will be harmed. Your majesty had better have him killed.” The Cao ruler did not follow his advice. Li Fuji went back home and did not feel happy. His wife asked him, “Why is it you look so unhappy after having come 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 goes out in exile. He visited the 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, adding 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.

昔者晉公子重耳出亡，過於曹。曹君袒裼而觀之。釐負羈與叔瞻侍於前。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。釐負羈歸而不樂。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。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。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。

Of the two conversations recorded in this anecdote, the *Han Feizi* version emphasizes the one between Xi Fuji and his wife, but the *Guoyu’s* version gives more prominence to the

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115 Wang Xianshen 2006, 76.
communication between Xi Fuji, Shu Zhan and the Lord of Jin, especially Xi Fuji’s and Shu Zhan’s long speeches.116 In the *Lienü zhuan*, however, it is Xi Fuji’s wife’s speech that is again put in the spotlight:

The Jin noble son Chong’er went out 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 thin curtain to observe him.117 Fuji’s wife said to her husband, “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 him, 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.118

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

116 Xu Yuangao 2006, 327-331.

117 The similar syntax can be 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 the time when the latter took a shower, and set up a thin curtain to observe him (聞其駢脅，欲觀其狀，止其舍，諜其將浴，設微薄而觀之).” See Xu Yuangao 2006, 327.

118 *Lienü zhuan* “Ren zhi zhu,” 3:27.
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。負羈乃遺之壺飡，加璧其上，公子受飡反璧。及公子反國，伐曹，乃表負羈之閭，令兵士無敢入。

There are yet other versions of the Xi Fuji anecdote appearing in the “Guan Cai shijia” 管蔡世家 and the “Jin shijia” 晉世家 of the Shiji and other Han and pre-Han works.¹¹⁹ 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 monograph planned, supervised, or written by a single writer—Liu An.

Second, the versions vary the focal point. Some versions (Lienü zhuan and Zuozhuan) pay more attention to the speech given by Xi Fuji’s wife, while others focus more on the court setting where Xi Fuji and Shu Zhan offered their remonstration and advice to the Cao ruler (the Guoyu passage, for example). 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 倖 *hə or Li 禘 *rə. The inclusion of both “Xi” and “Li” in the *Huainanzi* is more evidence 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 chunqiu* 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 useful for distinguishing and grouping the sources, oral or written.

Notwithstanding the various differences, the basic plot of this narrative remains consistent throughout the sources. The story goes that when Chong’er was about to return 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 “doubled 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 presented both food and some jade *bi* disks to Chong’er. Chong’er accepted the food but returned the *bi* disks. Not long after this incident, Chong’er indeed punished Cao for the insults he received from the Cao ruler. Yet he announced that Xi Fuji’s family should be spared from his attack because 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. How to account for the variation we do see? Certainly some variation naturally occurs in the course of oral and/or written transmission. But it may also indicate deliberate choices being made about how best to present different aspects of a short narrative for purposes of persuasion and argumentation. For example, the Han Feizi uses this story to show how dangerous it could be if the ruler of a small state did not observe ritual proprieties and did not listen to his officials’ admonition.120 By contrast, the Lienü zhuan highlights Xi Fuji’s wife’s speech and demonstrates her farsightedness and wisdom in dealing with the Cao ruler’s impertinence toward the Jin noble son.121 Using the same anecdote for different purposes can even be observed within a single text, as we see with the Huainanzi. The “Daoying” chapter of the Huainanzi is a collection of anecdotes used to explain different passages of the Laozi. Xi Fuji’s story is quoted to illustrate the Laozi passage “曲則全，枉則正” (Bends himself, then one saves himself; distorting himself, then one achieves correctness).122 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” 夫使患無生易於救患而莫能加務焉，則未可與言術也.123 In the “Mungkin” 繹稱 (Inappropriate

120 Wang Xianshen 2006, 76.
121 Lienü zhuan “Ren zhi zhuan,” 3:27.
122 He Ning 1998, 875.
123 He Ning 1998, 1284.
Expressions) chapter, it emphasizes Xi Fuji’s virtue (de 德), while in “Qisu” 齊俗 (Equate
customs), it underlines Xi Fuji’s “honest heart” (chengxin 誠心), or sincerity.

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 get 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 刘德汉 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. 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 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

124 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 (僖負羈以壺餐表其閭，
趙宣孟以束脯免其軀，禮不隆，而德有餘).”

125 He Ning 1998, 779. The passage reads: “Therefore, a hu container of food offered by Li 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 can easily find how the Fuji-Xuanmeng
textual building block works in both passages.

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.\(^{127}\) 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 in this text, or even within an individual chapter, 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 in the *Huainanzi* in particular. The 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 need be), 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 economical, social, and political prestige, or to express philosophical or political ideas and ambition. 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* under discussion, concerns the third stage—the formation of multi-*pian* texts through

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\(^{127}\) Cf. Ding Yuanzhi 1999 (1), 1-27 and passim; 1999 (2).
compilation and rearrangement, such as those resulting from the later Western Han project of rearranging the imperial text collection.

Now that the compiled nature of the *Huainanzi* is clear to us, why is Liu An as author of this text still needed? Elsewhere in this paper I point out that an author is necessary for modern scholars because they need his biographical information to interpret 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 way of thinking about 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 the relationship has been heavily influenced by the Romantic construction of authorship, which advocated 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 to understand the text. Not surprisingly, the method results in many forced sociopolitical interpretations. We see this clearly in studies on the *Huainanzi*. Most studies prefer to accept the account about *Huainanzi*’s formation being associated with the presentation of the text to the imperial court by Liu An. I have hopefully demonstrated the problems with assuming such an event. Despite these problems, scholars like this event because it attaches Liu An to the text, allowing them to explore it in terms 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 the modern interest in interpreting the text based on Liu An’s biographical information or not. This question has to be answered in terms of their contemporary understanding of the concept of authorship. This is why I redefine authorship by keeping the writer out of the concept of the author before discussing the formation of early Chinese writing in general and the *Huainanzi* in particular. That is to say, for early Han and pre-Han writings, their authors did not have to be, and usually were not, their writers. Even an early Chinese writer should not be considered the originator of the text he composed, but more likely, as Boltz and others demonstrate, he acted as an editor and transmitter. One of the skills the editor-writer acquired was skill in editing and assembling textual building blocks to form new texts, 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 a 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 like the *Huainanzi*. Without his fondness of literature and patronage of literary scholarship, the individual chapters contained in the extant *Huainanzi* may have never come into being. Moreover, if we think of these texts in terms of their ownership, there is little doubt that Liu An was their owner. In this sense, Liu An as the author of the *Huainanzi* means its patron and owner at the same time.

Nevertheless, we also need to be aware that, even though it is possible that all the twenty *pian*, or chapters, of the *Huainanzi* were composed in the Huainan court, the *Huainanzi* as a
whole, single text may not have come into being until some time later. After all, the earliest
information about a text including twenty-one chapters in Liu An’s name, which has traditionally
been identified as the *Huainanzi* under discussion, 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 attributed to Liu An in later sources. While it is possible that information on the
*Huainanzi* was removed from the *Shiji* version of Liu An’s biography by Western Han imperial
censorship, there is absolutely no evidence at present supporting such a conclusion. 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. As discussed earlier in this chapter, based on the available
evidence, we can infer that the compilation of the *Huainanzi* happened between the time 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* in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter
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 clarify who actually made this record. 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.128
But 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.\textsuperscript{129} 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*.\textsuperscript{130} Nevertheless, it is difficult to distinguish Ban Gu’s editing work from the information provided by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin in the *Qilüe*, since the *Qilüe* has been lost since the late Tang dynasty (618-907 CE).\textsuperscript{131} If it was Liu Xiang who arranged the *Huainanzi* and wrote the “Yaolüe,” it seems unlikely that the *Qilüe* served as a source for the number of *pian* attributed to the *Huainanzi* in the “Yiwen zhi”. 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,\textsuperscript{132} considered the postface left by Liu Xiang or others (whoever wrote the “Yaolüe”) the last (twenty-first) chapter of the *Huainanzi*, and the “Yiwen zhi” entry on the *Huainanzi* reflects this newer understanding of the text.\textsuperscript{133}

The writing style of the “Yaolüe,” however, does not exactly accord with reconstructed postfaces allegedly written by Liu Xiang. Unlike Liu Xiang’s postfaces, the “Yaolüe” omits any information about the text’s authorship as it is much more interested in emphasizing the target text’s comprehensiveness.\textsuperscript{134} The defensive overtone of the “Yaolüe” suggests that the person

\textsuperscript{129} Zhong Zhaopeng 1985, 67.

\textsuperscript{130} 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.

\textsuperscript{131} Zhong Zhaopeng 1985, 69-73.

\textsuperscript{132} Liu Dehan 2001, 290.

\textsuperscript{133} *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1701.

\textsuperscript{134} For the reconstructed postfaces allegedly by Liu Xiang, cf. Yan Kejun 1995, 330-335.
who composed it must also be a strong advocate of it, but Liu Xiang employs an objective voice in his postfaces.

Despite these obvious differences, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that Liu Xiang or other members participating in the project of arranging the imperial collection wrote the “Yaölüé” as a postface. For one thing, we have no reason to believe that Liu Xiang would have strictly adhered to a single format when he wrote the postfaces for different texts. Even if we believe that the few reconstructed postfaces truly reflect Liu Xiang’s postface writings, the extant postfaces surviving in the printed editions dated to the Song or thereafter may not reflect the whole picture of all the postfaces composed by Liu Xiang and others. In fact, whether or not the reconstructed postfaces reflect the original versions is still an on-going debate. Nevertheless, he has generally been associated with the 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. 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. For another thing, we need to consider the limited access one would have to the kinds of texts incorporated in the Huainanzi at the time the “Yaölüé” was written. Liu Xiang was among the few who would have had the opportunity to work on them. It says in Liu Xiang’s Hanshu biography that Liu Xiang’s father, Liu De 劉德

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135 For example, Wang Xianshen 王先慎 doubts that the postface of the Han Feizi 韓非子 of its current version is its original postface at all for the current version is almost totally identical with Han Fei’s biography in the Shiji. See Wang Xianshen 2006, 16. For an outline of the discussion on the reconstructed postfaces, cf. Xu Xingwu 2005, 199-207.

136 He Ning 1998, 6.

137 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 yiwen” 1; also see Zhong Zhaopeng 2001, 554.
(?—130 BCE), participated in handling the case of Liu An’s rebellion and was able to obtain some of the texts from Liu An’s collection. Even though it does not particularly mention the *Huainanzi*, it does indicate that Liu Xiang was fascinated by the texts his father acquired from Liu An’s collection. It is a possibility that this connection between Liu Xiang and Liu An’s collection of texts 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 the “grand” 鴻 writings attributed to Liu An and Liu Xiang’s deadly fascination with alchemic writings (he was almost executed by the emperor for his interest). There is the possibility that Liu Xiang compiled those different *pian* included in the extant *Huainanzi* from Liu An’s collection acquired by his father and wrote the “Yaolüe” postface aiming to make his compilation a textual unity. The strong defensive overtone can thus be explained in connection with Liu Xiang’s admiration for those texts—alchemic writings in particular—attributed to Liu An.

In any case, some time after the “Yaolüe” was written, arguably by Liu Xiang, and attached to the textual body consisting of twenty *pian* chapters, the “Yaolüe” was also considered part of the main text and became its last chapter. This occurred no later than the time when Ban Gu compiled the “Yiwen zhi.” Assigning 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 the text, helping us to observe the formation of Chinese texts from the Warring States to early Han periods.

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At this point it is natural to mention another large text—*the Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋—that is comparable to the *Huainanzi*. Like the *Huainanzi*, the *Lüshi chunqiu* is also named after a powerful political figure, the Qin 秦 (221-206 BCE) minister Lü Buwei (ca 290-235 BCE), 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 traditions of thinking.¹⁴⁰ Such endeavors need both monetary and political support and certainly require 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 his intellectual entourage in late Warring States or even before. Recent archaeological finds, especially those located in the southern region long considered the area of the state of Chu 楚, enable us to get a glimpse of the formation of early Chinese texts and the role of patronage in this process.

In a remarkable study on Chu social ranking in the Eastern Zhou period focusing on mortuary data, Lothar von Falkenhausen examines the ranks of the occupants from a number of tombs that yielded bamboo-strip manuscripts.¹⁴¹ Of the 16 Warring States tombs for which analyzable archaeological information is available, 6 belong to the category of high aristocrats, 3

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¹⁴⁰ Lewis 1999, 302-308.

belong to that of Magnates, 5 belong to that of Gentlemen, and only 2 belong to that of Commoners.\textsuperscript{142} Despite the limited sample size and issues of precise social rank, the available data are informative enough in revealing that manuscripts in the tombs of the Warring States period are most often connected to individuals of a relatively high social status. The data also indicate 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 buried in tombs. 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.\textsuperscript{143}

This understanding of the manuscripts excavated from Warring States tombs inspires us to connect the text making of the Qin and early Han periods, as reflected in the extant \textit{Lüshi chunqiu} and \textit{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 probably had demonstrable literary talent like Liu An, but others might have been like Lü Buwei, who has long been ridiculed as a vulgar merchant. Actual literacy is difficult to prove, and this is why Lothar von 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

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{142} Falkenhausen 2003, 484-485, 490-494.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Falkenhausen 2003, 485-486.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Lüshi chunqiu and the Huainanzi when viewed as cultural production for their patron.\textsuperscript{144} 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 “schoolmen” to make a living.\textsuperscript{145} 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 “Qilüé” as a text including twenty-one pian essays and seven juan illustrations) serves as a good example. It mentions clearly in the Shiji biography that “the text is popularly referred to as the Weigongzi bingfa” 世俗稱魏公子兵法, even though people know that all the individual pieces included in this text were presented by the retainers to the Wei prince Wuji 無忌, one of four princes famous for supporting a large assembly of retainers in the Warring States period.\textsuperscript{146} 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 it being named for him. Recognizing how patronage worked then, we see that whether or not the patrons were actually engaged in the composition of the texts

\textsuperscript{144} Falkenhausen 2003, 495-596.

\textsuperscript{145} Lewis 1999, 53-97.

\textsuperscript{146} Shiji “Weigongzi liezhuan,” 77:2384.
they patronized, a question consuming those investigating the *Huainanzi*, is secondary; it makes more sense to consider if the authors are the patrons of the writers producing texts attributed to them. As the actual writers were members of the retainers coming from all walks of life trying to earn a living by selling their skills, writing became just one of the many small tricks performed by retainers, among whom we find traveling persuaders, coldblooded assassins, and those who were good at “cock-crowing and dog-snatching” 鸡鳴狗盗.\(^{147}\)

What, then, motivated the patronage of textual formation? And why did those texts end up being buried in tombs? These questions could be explored from various perspectives, but for our present purposes, a brief explanation can be offered in connection with the patrons’ individual preference and economic wealth as well as with what Michael Nylan calls the “culture of display.”\(^{148}\) This culture of display is often seen as the backdrop against which is set 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. Generally speaking, attracting talented people from all walks of life, including “schoolmen,” to serve him, not only displays the patron’s economic wealth that enables him to host large group of retainers, but also spreads his reputation, virtue, and influence in a positive way; thereby, helping him reap more social, political, and economic benefits. The display of the texts produced under his patronage together with other burial goods associated with his life, then,

\(^{147}\) The anecdote of imitating cock crow and dog snatch is associated with Lord Mengchang 孟嘗君, another prince of the famous four recorded in the *Shiji*. According to the anecdote, two retainers—one was good at imitating roosters to crow and the other, good at imitating dogs to steal—were treated by Lord Mengchang with ritual propriety, although their skills were despised by other retainers. But these two retainers played critical roles in Lord Mengchang’s exile with their skills mocked as the trivial. This is one of the famous examples not only illuminating the important theme of recognition, but also demonstrating the diversity of the skills those retainers could have. See *Shiji* “Mengchangjun liezhuan,” 75:2354-2355. This term also appears in the “Youxia zhuan” of the *Hanshu*; see *Hanshu* “Youxia zhuan,” 92:3697.

\(^{148}\) Nylan 2005, 3-49.
reflects the patron’s life again in a positive way that will bring further benefits to his descendents. 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, even though the compilation and circulation of the twenty pieces as a whole text had to wait for another hundred years after his death.
Chapter 4 The Author as Individual Writer: Sima Qian, the Presented Author

In an inspiring article on how to understand the *Shiji*史記, or *Records of the Grand Historian*,¹ in its connection with the author Sima Qian司馬遷 (ca. 145/135—86 BCE), Michael Nylan discusses three major ways of reading the *Shiji*—social scientific, lyric/romantic, and religious.² The social scientific reading stresses Sima Qian’s objective way of dealing with his materials and sources as well as his principle of “transmitting those that are doubtful as doubts”疑則傳疑 ³ in writing the *Shiji*. For example, although criticizing Sima Qian for his not being able to stick to his classical learning and his failing at various points to remain consistent in categorizing and describing the past, the *Hanshu* author Ban Gu had nonetheless followed Liu Xiang 劉向 and Yang Xiong 揚雄 in considering Sima Qian “having the talents of a good historian”有良史之材, “admiring him 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”服其善序事理，辨而不華，質而不俚, and praising his writing because “its composition is straight, its events are accurate, it does not leave out those that are

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¹ This rendering of this title follows Burton Watson; it is also translated as The Grand Scribe’s Records, *The Records of the Gentleman Grand Astrologer*, or *The Book of the Eminent Grand Astrologer*, depending on how the term “shi” is understood and translated. Grant Hardy thinks that Watson might have intentionally avoided the word “astrologer” because of the “taint of pseudoscience still attached to the term astrology today.” Nevertheless, Hardy considers “astrologer” a more appropriate rendering for the term “shi” for its accordance with the job description of the “shi” position, a rendering also leaning toward Hardy’s interpretation of the *Shiji* text in comparison with the word “historian.” I can live with any of the above translations of the term “shi” or “Taishigong;” the reason that I choose to follow Watson simply because his translation have been widely accepted. See Durrant 1995; Nienhausser 1995; Hardy 1999, xvi, 18.


good, it does not cover up those that are bad; thus it is called a dependable record” 其文直，其事核，不虛美，不隱惡，故謂之實錄.⁴

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 reliance on writing to pursue fame, and his intention to seek revenge for his humiliation of being castrated to the understanding of the Shiji, this approach tends to suggest the whole Shiji text can be analyzed on the basis of a small portion of the Shiji text from which Sima Qian’s autobiographical information can be carefully drawn out.

Feeling satisfied with neither of the above approaches, Nylan proposes her religious reading of the Shiji by emphasizing the key word “filial piety,” which is mentioned not only in the “scene of the author” depicted in the postface, but also reflected in the main text of the Shiji as the most significant clue to make the entire work a coherent whole. According this reading, the entire 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 (historian or scribe) position, and the entire culture of the Central States.⁵

When it comes down to the authorship of the Shiji, however, each of the above three approaches, no matter how sophisticatedly differentiated, apply information (especially information considered to be of authorial significance) teased out of a small part of the Shiji. The authorial intent is the key focus of all the three readings. In this sense, the lyric/romantic reading serves as the cornerstone for each of them. A widely received argument views the Shiji as the very vehicle through which Sima Qian, the undisputable author of the Shiji, was able to vent his

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anger and frustration at his contemporary political atmosphere and to 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 of imitating Confucius, the sage of Chinese intellectuals, who exerted tremendous influence on the political and ideological landscape of the Han dynasty and beyond, through the close examination of the lines and passages interpreted as Sima Qian’s authorial voice. Consciously or not, the presupposition of equating Sima Qian with the author of the *Shiji* according to a modern definition of authorship, features centrally in this sort of argumentation. In other words, such arguments are sustained by a willing recognition of a kind of transparent author-text linkage, which holds that the author and the text explain each other. Following this premise, therefore, it is no surprise that the “Taishigong zixu” 太史公自敘 (“Grand Historian’s Self Narration”), the last chapter incorporated in the transmitted *Shiji* text we have today, and the “Bao Ren An shu” 報任安書 (“Letter in Response to Ren An”), a letter preserved in the biography of Sima Qian in the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*History of the Han*) said to have been written by Sima Qian to his friend 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 賈誼 (200—168 BCE), are important materials for studying this issue, but before one goes any further, one must first ask: were these two documents written by Sima Qian at all?

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6 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 he underlines and goes directly attributing this work to Sima Qian as a premise for his discussion. See Durrant 1995; Durrant 2005, 93.
The answer to this question is not only critical for defining the relationship between the *Shiji* and Sima Qian, but it also extends to our understanding of the whole *Shiji* project and of early Chinese text formation in general. This will be the focus of the present chapter. The key method adopted is a careful rereading the above-mentioned two texts and an analysis of relevant textual evidence, including some of the Grand Historian’s comments and encomiums included in the main texts of the *Shiji*. Rather than aiming to explore the presupposed authorial connection between these two texts and Sima Qian, my rereading disputes such a connection. Instead of taking such an authorial connection for granted, I argue that the authorial voice and persona seen in the “Taishigong zixu” and the “Bao Ren An shu” were projections of later editorial efforts, and their long-standing interpretation as the voice of Sima Qian himself is based on a misunderstanding. By throwing into doubt the long-held premise that Sima Qian unveiled his intentions for making the *Shiji* in the “Taishigong zixu” and the “Bao Ren An shu,” I hope that this chapter will help *Shiji* studies switch from a plausible presupposition of the authorship to the investigation of what various authors really meant at various stages in the formation and transmission of the *Shiji*. I will 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, and how this has influenced our understanding of the *Shiji*. The following two sections include a careful reading of the postface to the *Shiji* and the letter to Ren An. I will raise and discuss a series of questions in connection with the previous scholarship’s handling of some of the obvious warnings against the abovementioned presupposition. At the end of this discussion, I will propose a new interpretation. I argue that there is no guarantee that either the postface to the *Shiji* or the letter to Ren An was 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 a way to express their pent-up political intentions and their yearning for freedom in relation to their Eastern Zhou predecessors. In this sense, Sima Qian’s story as well as the work he compiled, like those of all the 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, and at the same time painfully realizing that as a social group in the newly established imperial social and political structure, the intellectuals had forever lost their freedom, however limited, of choosing which ruler to serve, as their Warring States predecessors had been able to do.

4.1. Early Literature of Individual Frustration and Authorial Voice

Considered as the author of the two autobiographical sources the “Taishigong zixu” and the “Bao Ren An shu,” Sima Qian is aligned with those frustrated authors in a Chinese literature tradition starting from the *Odes*. Mark Lewis recognizes the “observing author” through the use of the third-person narrative in some of the “Daya” 大雅 (“Greater Elegantiae”) poems.7 The switch of the narrative 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.8 The implied author is associated with the voice of frustration and

7 Lewis 1999, 150—151.
8 Lewis 1999, 150—151.
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, though reflecting a variety of attitudes toward people’s social life, was in the end largely contextualized with the decline of Zhou court and the royal political power. Behind this politicized voice in the Mao version of the Odes (Maoshi 毛詩), therefore, stands an alienated or abandoned individual, named or not, complaining about his suffering and grievance. Indeed, five out of seven of the Shi poems each with a given author (four named and three unnamed), with their strong critical voice, tempt 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 this generalization that the emergence of the author is necessarily linked to the feeling of isolation and frustration, for those two poems celebrate the Zhou King Xuan’s reign in which the author played a praiseworthy role. In fact, it is held that an author’s persona being tied to an impression of an isolated individual was first successfully created in the Chuci 楚辭 (Songs of Chu).

The Chuci is an anthology compiled by the Eastern Han intellectual Wang Yi 王逸 (ca. 89—158 CE). Although a collection of southern style songs of different origins ranging from the Warring States period to the Han dynasty, the Chuci is famous mainly for its inclusion of the twenty-five songs attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (340—278 BCE). In his anthology, by attaching a brief preface to each of the songs relating the authorship and the circumstance under which a

9 See “Song gao,” in Maoshi zhengyi 18:1206—1218; and “Zheng min,” in Maoshi zhengyi 18:1218—1225.

10 The songs assigned to Qu Yuan in Wang Yi’s Chuci zhangju 楚辭章句 include the “Lisao” 遭騷 (Encountering Sorrows), “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.
song was composed, Wang Yi creates a coherent narrative about Qu Yuan, the exiled political dissident, as the author of the twenty-five songs grouped under seven titles. Certainly Wang Yi did not conjure a Qu Yuan from thin air; the Qu Yuan anchored in the Chuci songs can actually be immediately linked to Qu Yuan’s biography included in the Shiji. In fact, in the preface to the “Lisao” (Encountering Sorrows), Wang Yi does provide a short biography for Qu Yuan based on the Shiji after claiming that “The Classic of Lisao was created by Qu Yuan” 禦騷經者屈原之所作也. Following a short introduction of Qu Yuan as a nobleman from a preeminent family and a capable minister is an explanation of why Qu Yuan composed this song: Qu Yuan’s political enemies’ had slandered him leading to his estrangement from the Chu king; to express his frustration and to “admonish the ruler” 風諫君, the alienated minister resorted to poetic composition:

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 Sorrow. 

The king of Chu would not listen to Qu Yuan however, and he adopted the foreign policy that Qu Yuan’s political enemies proposed. As a result, the Chu king was trapped and died in Qin, a tragedy that could have been avoided if he had listened to Qu Yuan. Nevertheless, continuing to heed those slanderers, the dead Chu king’s new successor put Qu Yuan in an even

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worse situation by sending him into exile in the desolate south. Here Wang Yi contextualizes another work, the “Jiuzhang” 九章 (“Nine Pieces”) in pointing out that Qu Yuan composed them “to prove and demonstrate for himself [his loyalty and honesty]” 以自証明 to the new Chu ruler. Realizing that he would not be trusted, the lyricist drowned himself in the Mi River (Miyuan 汨淵). 13  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 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 the Qin, the rest of the collection assigned to Qu Yuan is contextualized within Qu Yuan’s exile under the watch of the successive ruler. Accordingly, all the songs attributed to Qu Yuan demand their due allegorical interpretations, as exemplified by Wang Yi’s discussion of wording in the “Lisao”:

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 fowls and rotten matters are employed to figure slander and flattery; spiritual, nice, and beautiful human beings are compared to rulers; tranquil goddesses and pretty ladies are likened to worthy subjects; dragons and phoenixes are metaphors of gentlemen; and blinding winds, clouds, and secondary rainbows are tropes of petty men. 14

離騷之文，依詩取興，引類譬諭，故善鳥香草以配忠貞，惡禽臭物以比饗佞；靈修美人以媲於君，宓妃佚女以譬賢臣；虯龍鸞鳳以讖君子，飄風雲霓以為小人。

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13 Same as the Miluo River (Miluojiang 沙羅江).

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 in attempts to get close to the befuddled king. The meaning of the other songs is anchored in the same allegorical tropes in connection with Qu Yuan’s exile described in his biography. No matter how different these songs are in terms of their origin and style, they are all interpreted in a framework consisting of the following lines of meaning: Qu Yuan’s anger toward the slanderers, his complaints and frustration of not being understood, and his 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 all these “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.”

15 To Mark Lewis, this identification was significant in the Han political and intellectual milieu, for it enabled the constitution of new social groups aligned with the feeling of not being fully understood, as evidenced in the writings of the Han literatus Jia Yi preserved in the Shiji and other songs included in the Chuci zhangju anthology attributed to those Han individuals. In this sense, the “Lisao” and other Chuci songs attributed to Qu Yuan

15 Lewis 1999, 189.
functioned as a common touchstone and provided a common vocabulary to all Han literati who felt politically underappreciated.16

In an unpublished conference paper on the authorship of early Chinese poetry, while stressing the connection of the Han political and social life with the Han intellectuals’ self-identification with Qu Yuan as the author of the “Lisao” and the image of an alienated man of virtue, Martin Kern also points out that the attribution of the “Lisao” to Qu Yuan betrayed Wang Yi’s and other Han intellectuals’ anachronistic reading of the “Lisao” that may now be properly labeled as biographical fallacy, a voluntarily distorted projection of the problem they faced in their own time. The truth is, Kern argues, that Qu Yuan as the author did not create but 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 willful (mis)reading of the Chuci songs built up since the Han time, such questions as “Who was the real author of the ‘Lisao’?” or “Who virtually wrote the ‘Lisao’?” no longer matter. According to Kern, the first-person narrator as well as the protagonist of the songs, deeply rooted and at the same time functioning in a culture of performance, not only cried out about his frustration, but he also claimed his own authorship. In making the self-revealing heroic author recognizable, the Han intellectuals who identified themselves with Qu Yuan, who were both dissidents and loyalists of his state and rulers, filled the blank themselves, albeit indirectly, by attributing the “Lisao” and other songs to Qu Yuan.

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 of the Chuci songs, served as the medium linking the frustrated protagonist complaining in the world of

16 Lewis 1999, 190.
literature to the actual 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 considerably reduced the choice of the career seekers, especially when they modeled their careers on their predecessors, the Warring States traveling persuaders of days gone by. However, it did not take a long time for the Han imperial career seekers to figure out that their fortune was no longer in their own control, but was entirely under 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 their race through the narrow path that led to access in the imperial court. Those who failed in this race, however, could no longer travel to another state for employment as their Warring States predecessors did, but had to remain loyal to the emperor hoping that their loyalty might be appreciated eventually—if not by the current, by the future ruler. As a result, the loss of freedom of choice in serving the court and the feeling of being a failure after having been ignored or abandoned by the ruler swelled that part of literature venting individual frustration and resentment. Following this understanding, it is not farfetched 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.

As I will return to this point later in this chapter, I would like to continue by pointing out that if we follow the attribution of the twenty-five Chuci songs to Qu Yuan, we find that what the Qu Yuan myth voices is more than merely the author’s frustration—it also implies the solution to overcome this frustration, although the solution suggested is associated with death. Qu Yuan’s suicide set an extreme yet explainable example. It is said both in his biography and in interpretations of his writings that he tried his best for his state and his rulers. However, on
realizing that he lived in the wrong time and would never have a chance to be employed again, he chose death to save his virtue and purity from being polluted by this “muddy-witted” (zhuo 濁) world. In declaring his sublime intention to the “junzi” 君子 (gentlemen) who is the same kind as Qu Yuan and understands and appreciates him, Qu Yuan is transformed into an exemplary loyal dissident who was fully devoted to moral principles and public good even at the cost of his own life. In this light, the devotional integrity seen as “the ground of individual authorship” presented in the Qu Yuan myth as well as the stance of those who numbered themselves with Qu Yuan, “was sanctioned by the willingness to die.”

4.2. 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 the frustration they had encountered:

Now that the Earl of the West was arrested and he developed the Changes of Zhou, Zhongni (Confucius) was in difficulty and he

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17 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 Sand), one of the pieces included in the “Jiuzhang” and cited in the Shiji. See Shiji “Qu Yuan Jiasheng liezhuan,” 84:2490.

18 Lewis 1999, 190.
created the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, Qu Yuan was banished and he composed the *Encountering Sorrows*, Zuo Qiuming lost his sight and thus there was the *Discourse of the States*, Master Sun had his feet amputated and the *Military Tactics* was arranged, Lü Buwei was demoted to Shu and through generations was transmitted the *Overviews of Mr. Lü*, Han Fei was imprisoned in Qin and he wrote the *Difficulties of Persuasion* and *Solitary Frustration*, the three hundred pieces of *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 and thus narrated the past affairs in expectation of the recognition of those to come.19

蓋西伯拘而演周易；仲尼戹而作春秋；屈原放逐，乃賦離騷；左丘失明，厥有國語；孫子髕腳，兵法修列；不韋遷蜀，世傳呂覽；韓非囚秦，說難、孤憤。詩三百篇，大氐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。

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 BCE) political catastrophe. He was not afraid of death, confesses the narrator Sima Qian in the letter to Ren An. The reason that he chose the punishment of castration, which he knew would bring shame to his family and his own reputation while he remained alive, was to pass his name to future generations and obtain his fame through his “literary talents” 文采.20 It is not wealth, nor high social status that brings men fame, for history tells us, “In the past, persons who were rich and noble and whose names nevertheless went to oblivion are countless” 古者富貴而名摩滅不可勝記.21 Only writing, or

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specifically the writing of the *Shiji* in Sima Qian’s case, as the above cases show, is considered the correct agent to carry and transmit his fame.

What is more telling about the above listed exemplary figures, according to the narrator Sima Qian’s theory, is that the writings that had successfully enabled their names to endure in history resulted from their pent-up mind, the frustration caused by imprisonment, amputation, alienation, or other difficult situations. Such punishments or difficulties were certainly unwanted and must be understood in the framework that Qu Yuan myth brings out, which is that those who received the punishments or dealt with the difficulties were something more that simply innocents: they were exemplary men of virtue, their moral principles unshakeable, their mind steady, and always willing to sacrifice their life for public good. In the implication of numbering himself with those exemplary figures, the 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, as long as his writing is being read and transmitted.

If aligning Sima Qian with Qu Yuan makes him a martyr, then comparing Sima Qian to Confucius portrays him a sage. As a matter of fact, the notion that Sima Qian intentionally imagined himself as Confucius in his writing of the *Shiji* tempts 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.\textsuperscript{22} The cornerstone for both Bauer’s and Durrant’s claims is unsurprisingly the priceless information given by the \textit{Shiji} postface narrated by the Grand Historian and the letter to Ren An, in both of which Sima Qian is considered as the author who “speaks extensively of himself.”\textsuperscript{23} Following this hermeneutic strategy, we find that Durrant’s interpreting Sima Qian as “the Second Confucius” is very convincing, for Sima Qian himself declares so, or at least he can be interpreted as doing so in the \textit{Shiji} postface attributed to him:

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 \textit{Changes}, follow the \textit{Spring and Autumn Annals}, and set the \textit{Odes}, \textit{Documents}, \textit{Rites}, and \textit{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?”\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} 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.

\textsuperscript{23} Durrant 1995, 1.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Shiji} “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3296. It is worth noting that the conventional interpretation of these words is not without question. First, instead of as Sima Qian, I identify the “Taishigong” here as Sima Tan, 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 short of “xianren”) suggests that, instead of translating it specifically as Sima Tan, we would be wiser 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，汙辱先人，亦何面目復上父母之丘墓乎？(\textit{Hanshu} “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2736); 衆先周室之太史也 (\textit{Shiji} “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3295); 僕之先人非有剖符丹書之功 (\textit{Hanshu} “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2736); 太上不辱先 (\textit{Hanshu} “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2372); 行莫醜於辱先 (\textit{Hanshu} “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2727); 請悉論先人所次舊聞 (\textit{Shiji} “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3295). Finally, I would question some of the punctuation in this short passage given by the \textit{Zhonghua shuju} 中華書局 version of the \textit{Shiji}. The \textit{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 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. On the one hand, 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:
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。’

Here the term “Grand Historian” is understood as Sima Qian and the “predecessor”
whose words are referred to by Sima Qian, his father Sima Tan 司馬談 (ca. 165—110 BCE).

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 to write history, so that the four hundred years after Confucius’ death would
not pass into oblivion.25 The five-hundred-year myth mentioned by the father Grand Historian

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<td>Death of Duke Zhou</td>
<td>Death of Confucius</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Grand Historian</td>
<td>Death of Confucius</td>
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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 work? To end the sentence with a question mark after the character “ji際,” as the Zhonghua shuju version does, obviously ruins the above parallel and, consequently, makes the Chinese sentence awkward and the reading of it farfetched. On the other hand, considering the above sentence as a meaningful whole 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’ enterprise. The Grand Historian’s response to Hu Sui, while taking a modest stance expressing that his work is not comparable to Confucius’, 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’ death, now it is the time for him to continue the tradition established by Confucius.

resonates with the famous *Mengzi* saying that a sage appears every five hundred years.\(^\text{26}\) By recounting his father’s words linked up with Mencius, another sage-like figure, Sima Qian was well aware what a task he was taking. Indeed, in saying that he, mentioned as “the youngster,” dared not to decline such great responsibility, he knew that he was doing a sage’s job.

Imitating a sage to write history is obviously associated with fame and the transmission of fame; bringing the five-hundred-year myth into this conversation further indicates the involvement of some mysterious, unchangeable force 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 (which, according to his contemporary moral code, was considered as a noble way to end one’s life in dealing with a punishment as what Sima Qian had received in reference to the letter to Ren An),\(^\text{27}\) but to choose castration, the most humiliating punishment in both Sima Qian’s own view and that of his contemporaries.\(^\text{28}\) Such understanding demands a reappraisal of Sima Qian’s choice and that immediately turns 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 gave him the (moral?) 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” 輕於鴻毛 by committing suicide, he

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\(^{26}\) In his conversation with the interlocutor Chong Yu, Mencius mentions, probably derived from some proverb, that “every five hundred years there must be a true king rising” 五百年必有王者興. See *Mengzi yizhu* “Gongsun Chou xia,” 4.13:100.

\(^{27}\) 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.

\(^{28}\) It is mentioned in the letter to Ren An, saying, “among humiliations, none is worse than that brought by castration” 説莫大於宮刑. *Hanshu* “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2727.
would rather have a death “heavier than Mount Tai” 重於泰山, leaving behind him a fruitful, meaningful life.29 For Sima Qian, his choice not to die was a choice to live though humiliation in order to accomplish a sage’s responsibility, as he expresses:

I myself venture, not being modest, but being shallow,30 to rely on my incapable words to put together under heaven the abandoned, scattered old hearings, examining them based on historical deeds, and investigating those deeds for the patterns of accomplishment, failure, rising, and decline. In all there should be one hundred and thirty pian units, in the attempt to explore the border between the heavenly realm and human affairs, to comprehend the changes from the ancient to the present, and to create the teachings of my own. After the project was launched but before it was completed, 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 cause it to be circulated in towns and cities, then I would have fulfilled the responsibility associated with the 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 vulgar men.31

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, 是以就極刑而無慍色。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, 雖萬被戳, 豈有悔哉! 然此可為智者道, 難為俗人言也。

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30 I suspect that the character jì 近 could be an interpolation or copy error; nevertheless, since this character could also denote “being shallow,” a meaning close to what búxún 不遜 contains, I consider it being read together with búxún instead of with the sentence following it.

It becomes clear in this passage, if viewed as Sima Qian’s self-confession, that the noble mission of accomplishing the writing as the sage’s work enabled him to go through the most degrading humiliation and to overcome death once the text was completed. But again, Sima Qian expresses his rather pessimistic estimation of others’ reactions that truly frustrated those historical figures in his list, those who left their monumental works that brought them fame: the vulgar people would not understand why he 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, either to Ren An or others, resonates the expression of “expecting the recognition of those to come” 思來者 in the Shiji postface as well as the junzi gentleman in the Chuci, while the term “vulgar people” is clearly linked to the “muddy-witted” (hun 汚) 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 some “unfathomable penalty” 不測之罪 32 at that moment and was soon to be abandoned by this world, just as what Sima Qian had experienced and was experiencing. That is to say, Ren An would soon join Sima Qian et al and could only expect recognition from future ages.

Different from Qu Yuan, who, as said, committed suicide after finishing those songs attributed to him, Sima Qian had to defer his death by enduring the “defilement” (gou 垢) first to get his work done. The time that he managed to win for his writing the history, therefore, was also the time when he dealt with the overwhelming humiliation brought by castration, as he describes in the letter:

Even after a hundred generations have accumulated, the defilement would only get even more severe. 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 forget where to go. Whenever I realize this shame, sweat never fails to effuse from my back and wet my clothes.33

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，汗未嘗不發背霑衣也。

Such extraordinary pain that the Grand Historian endured every day during his compiling his monumental work is so vividly depicted here that the image of a suffering author inevitably rises from his work and becomes absolutely necessary for an autobiographical reading of the *Shiji*. Time and again the author of this letter reminds its readers of the suffering author and the frustrated group related to text creation behind him, and has never failed to convey his authorial voice—“this is a text written with shame!”—in demanding an autobiographical analysis of a text of unprecedentedly vast scale and ambition. 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 of the cruelty of a whimsical Emperor Wu, who ordered to castrate Sima Qian, and a claim of the Grand Historian’s final triumph over this emperor.34


34 Such reading of the *Shiji* started rather early. For example, according to a *Hou Han shu* account, *Shiji* was considered a “slanderous 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. Such reading is also echoed in modern scholars’ reading of the Shiji, for example, see Lewis 1999, 313—315; Lévi 1995.
Such reading may find its reference from another passage in the letter to Ren An. The author says:

> The reason that I bore patiently to barely remain alive and placed myself in soil without complaint, 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.  

> 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。

While elsewhere in this letter the author talks about his care about his writing and fame, his imitation of the sage Confucius, and his claim of moral purity by evoking those frustration of the authors of the past and aligning himself with them, the above passage emphasizes the expression of his private world, “what is in my own mind,” as he says. Linked with his theory that great writers write due to the frustration they suffered and his agony brought by the extremely humiliating punishment, according to the hermeneutic framework stressing authorial intent, 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 and allows, 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”) as a sort of insinuated message conveying the author’s anger at and criticism of the emperor.  

All the above-mentioned motifs, such as humiliation, fame, and self-expression, nevertheless, cannot be separated from Sima Qian’s filial obligation to his father in the

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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 be humiliated.\(^{37}\) 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*, argues Nylan, serves as a sort of sacrifice to the Sima lineage, including the father 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.\(^{38}\)

What draws people’s attention to the consideration of the role that filial piety played in the writing of the *Shiji*, is the highly emotional scene before the deathbed of the father Grand Historian, who entrusted his son, Sima Qian, with the task of writing a history which seems to have already started. It is said, based on the *Shiji*’s postface, that around 110 BCE, the year when Emperor Wu of Han performed the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices on Mount Tai and its adjacent area, Sima Tan 司馬談, the then Grand Historian, was stopped at Zhounan 周南 either by illness or other reasons that prevented him from participating in the *feng* and *shan* ceremonies. He was “so disappointed and resentful over this matter that he nearly reached the point of death” 發憤且卒.\(^{39}\) It was at that moment that Tan’s son, Qian, met his father on his way back from an official trip. Lying in deathbed, Sima Tan held his son’s hands, while crying, and left his will:

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37 Knechtges 2008.


39 *Shiji* “Taishigong zixu,” 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 Official; in the late 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 am not 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, trace to 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 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 knight 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 it. You should keep this in your mind!”

余家先周之太史也。自上世尝显功名於虞夏，典天官事。后世中衰。绝於子乎？汝复为太史，则续吾祖矣。今天子接千岁之统封泰山，而余不得从行，是命也夫，命也夫！余死，汝必为太史；为太史，无忘吾所欲著著矣。且夫孝始於事親，中於事君，终於立身。扬名於后世，以显父母，此孝之大者。夫天下称诵周公，言其能论歌文武之德，宣周邵之风，达太王王季之思虑，爱及公刘，

40 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3295.
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！

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, the then Grand Historian Sima Tan thought highly of his family tradition of being scribes and this explains his fear in seeing the decline of his family tradition passed down from ancient ages. In order to prevent this family tradition from being discontinued, he earnestly asked 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—obeying his parent and extending his filial piety to his family tradition.

Second, Sima Tan considered serving the ruler a higher level of being filial, carrying more significance than merely preserving his parents. This claim is more than taking a lofty stance to praise 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 how good their service could be. This explains why Sima Tan felt so disappointed when not being able to participate the *feng* and *shan* ceremonies with the emperor. Sima Tan’s resentment, therefore, rather than toward the emperor, was more likely the outcome of some unexpected incident, such as being ill on his official trip, which frustrated his strong will to accompany the emperor in such grand 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 this notion. This point also weakens the reading of the
Shiji as the expression of Sima Qian’s frustration. 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 received his castration punishment.\(^{41}\)

Finally, in Sima Tan’s eyes, to establish himself successfully, to have his fame spread to later generations, was the highest expectation for a man when fulfilling his filial obligations. For those who carried their family tradition like the Sima father and son, nothing could bring about more efficacy in extending their family tradition than being successful in providing their service as scribes and spreading their names as being “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 tradition continue. In this sense, the success of a Grand Historian in his writing and transmitting the past served the best interest of establishing their fame and keeping their family tradition alive as long as possible.

The would-be Grand Historian Sima Qian, upon hearing his father’s wish, “bowed his head and wept” 俯首流涕, promising:

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 have them fall short.\(^{42}\)

小子不敏，請悉論先人所次舊聞，弗敢闕。

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\(^{41}\) The Qing scholar Zhao Yi also points out this trend of overestimating the role of the castration penalty that Sima Qian suffered from in the composition of the Shiji. Based on Zhao Yi’s calculation, till the year when Sima Qian received his punishment, he had already worked on the Shiji for ten years; see Zhao Yi 1984, 1.

\(^{42}\) *Shiji* “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3295.
As this scene shows, Sima Qian’s weeping and promise not only demonstrate his full acceptance of his father’s teaching on filial piety, but they also put Sima Qian’s signature on the *Shiji* and validate a close link between the text and its author’s intent. All the motifs, the Grand Historian’s family tradition and fame, for instance, are put under the banner of filial piety tinted with religious color and encourage a reading the *Shiji* focusing on its authorial intent. That is to say, both the religious and the lyric/romantic readings originate from the prerequisite of *Shiji*’s authorial intent, which is readily provided almost exclusively by the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An. But the question remains: even if we set aside the issue of biographic fallacy, could we take it as truism that both the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An were actually written by Sima Qian?

For many readers, the answer appears to be yes. After all, the *Shiji* postface is included in Sima Qian’s own work as the last chapter, and the letter to Ren An, is in Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography compiled in the beginning of the Eastern Han dynasty (25—220 CE), 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 literature tradition. The *Shiji* postface, rendered as “self narration” (“zixu” 自序), has long been considered not only among the earliest authorial writings, but also the precursor of Chinese autobiography. 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 whole *Shiji*, even when doubts arise to question it. Take for example, the

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43 Wu Pei-yi 1990, 42—48; Wells 2009, 30—32.
question why the letter to Ren An is not included in the autobiographical *Shiji* postface, although the former seems to contain more information on Sima Qian’s life, work, and thought, and at the same time, it conveys Sima Qian’s strong authorial intent of speaking to, not merely a close friend who was going to be executed soon, but also to a much broader audience for their recognition and understanding. A common explanation focuses on some of the sensitive issues touched upon in that letter, so sensitive that they may supposedly threaten Sima Qian’s life if disclosed. For instance, in this letter he extensively recounts the catastrophic Li Ling political affair. However, this argument also contains its counterargument that if Sima Qian was indeed afraid of being caught, he would not have written it in the first place, for, in any case, sending a letter of that length (requiring around one hundred bamboo strips to write it, according to Lu Yaodong⁴⁴) to a convict waiting for execution in prison was much more dangerous than incorporating it in the *Shiji*. To avoid the trap of self-contradiction, one supposition holds that Sima Qian’s letter to Ren An may have never been sent out after having been carefully drafted,⁴⁵ and it was probably made public for the first time only in the time of Yang Yun 楊恽 (?—54 BCE), Sima Qian’s grandson, who, according to Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography, was responsible for making Sima Qian’s work known to and circulated among public circles.⁴⁶

But a supposition like this does not really help solve the problem. As Kern 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

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⁴⁶ 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 this letter are interestingly comparable to the letter to Ren An. This letter is preserved in Yang Yun’s *Hanshu* biography; see *Hanshu* “Gongsun Liu Tian Wang Yang Cai Chen Zheng zhuan,” 66:2394—2396.
been circulated and ended up in Ban Gu’s (班固, 32—92 CE) hands around 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 this passage is very well written, it is unlikely that Sima Qian would have written it twice. Yet Kern does not feel the necessity of explaining who could have possibly composed that core passage and attributed it to Sima Qian before moving forward to dismiss the authenticity issue of this letter and to stress its significance in the Han textual culture. By associating this letter with early Chinese text formation, he seems to suggest that whoever wrote the letter is not important, what matters is that the Han intellectuals were finally able to find an author for that letter, an author-hero who dared to challenge the imperial authority, just as Wang Yi found Qu Yuan for the “Lisao.” 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, yet Sima Qian was an author who actually wrote.

The question, however, remains. To say, “the author of the *Shiji*, Sima Qian, who also wrote the ‘Letter to Ren An’” is not the same as to say “the author of the *Shiji*, Sima Qian, to whom the ‘Letter to Ren An’ is attributed.” If Sima Qian indeed wrote the letter to Ren An, Sima Qian’s authorial intent conveyed in this letter would have to 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. Otherwise, an explanation is much needed. If it was not written by Sima Qian, who could have possibly composed this letter? Why had such attribution been made to Sima Qian? In any case, whether the “Letter to Ren An” was written by Sima Qian or not needs to be addressed, and this is part of the task of the following sections. In what follows, I will first examine the *Shiji* postface to discern its textual nature through close reading and, based
on that analysis, decide whether or not Sima Qian composed it by himself. The letter to Ren An will be discussed along with the reading of the *Shiji* postface and in the context of the Western Han epistolary writing.

### 4.3. Author’s Intent and Textual Chaos in the *Shiji* Postface

The format and the position of the “Taishigong zixu,” or literally, “the Grand Historian’s Self Narration,” generally accords with Liu Xiang’s brief statements on those rearranged texts in his working on the Han imperial collection of texts. Each of these brief statements, called “xulüe” 序略 (ordered summary) and attached to their corresponding texts that had been put in order, usually includes two major parts: a brief biography of the author and a detailed explanation on how many pian or juan textual units are incorporated in the text as well as how those textual units were obtained. The summary of information on the sources, editions, and pian units of the texts must be a form closely associated with the list of contents of all the pian chapters, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, functions to keep the originally disconnected textual units together to form a whole, serving both the purposes of transmission and that of interpretation. To attach the author’s biography to such summary not only satisfies the reader’s curiosity about the author, but it also further secures the stability of the text, in terms of both its form and meaning. As for the biographical information of the author, if he has an official biography in history, the bibliographer would often go directly to that history book and incorporate the author’s biography

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47 For example, see Liu Xiang 1995 (1); Liu Xiang 1995 (2).

48 In a talk with Wan Zhang 萬章, Mencius says that in order to understand a piece of writing, on 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 *Mengzi yizhu* “Wang Zhang xia,” 10.8:231—232.
into his postface, as commonly seen in this type of writing.\textsuperscript{49} Using the form of biography to write history is usually considered an invention of the \textit{Shiji}.\textsuperscript{50} In other early postface writings, such as the “Xugua” 序卦 (ordering the hexagrams), the “Shixu” 詩序 (the ordering of the songs), and the “Yaolüe” chapter of the \textit{Huainanzi}, the author’s biography section is missing. I would not go so far as to conclude that the incorporation of the author’s biographical information began with the \textit{Shiji}, although the “Taishigong zixu” happens to remain among the earliest bibliographical writings of this sort. It is necessary to bear in mind that postface writing did not appear immediately with the initial form of a text, which was usually circulated as a short \textit{pian} unit in early China. Postfaces were rather the product of textual compilation combining multiple originally separated texts to form a larger body of text, similar to the later form of anthology. For an early transmitted Chinese text, its main body may have appeared and indeed may have been transmitted very early, but the postface that we now have attached to it usually appeared later, possibly a great deal later. For an unprecedentedly voluminous text like the \textit{Shiji}, the writing of its postface must be considered in accordance with this historical background, especially the court sponsored project of rearranging the imperial collection of texts led by Liu Xiang, his son Liu Xin, and others from the late years of the Western Han dynasty (202 BCE—8 CE) lasting to the Xin 新 (9—23 CE) dynasty, which is usually considered the interregnum between the Western and Eastern Han (25—220 CE) dynasties.

The \textit{Shiji} postface clearly consists of a biographical part and a summary of contents. The consistency of the narrative in this postface, however, is frequently interrupted by several long and relatively independent textual units that I dub the “text blocks.” Although these text blocks

\textsuperscript{49} Yu Jiaxi 2010, 40—41.

\textsuperscript{50} Wu Pei-yi 1990, 4, 42—43.
have been understood as integral components of the narrative, their independence from the rest part of the postface is noticeable. As the following table shows, the *Shiji* postface can be divided into eight parts based on its contents.

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<td>3296-3300</td>
<td>The Grand Historian’s conversation with Hu Sui on why it was necessary to compile the <em>Shiji</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>於是論次其文</td>
<td>於是卒述陶唐以來，至于麟止，自黃帝始</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td>Qian received his punishment of being castrated and imitated frustrated writers in history to write the <em>Shiji</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>維昔黃帝作貨殖列傳第六十九</td>
<td>3301-3319</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>維我漢繼五帝末流</td>
<td>第七十</td>
<td>3319-3320</td>
<td>Summary of the reason of writing the <em>Shiji</em>, contents and meaning of all categories (“benji,” “biao,” “shu,” “shijia,” and “liezhuan”), and the goal that the Shiji tries to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It (part 1 in the table) begins with the genealogy of the Sima family from the distant legendary Thearch Zhuan Xu all the way to Sima Tan, followed by a relatively detailed biography of Sima Tan:

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 BCE) and Yuanfeng (110—105 BCE).51

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間。

The narrative is interrupted here by the recounting of a rather long essay on the essentials of six major scholarly traditions, including the thoughts of Yinyang 隱陽, Ru 儒, Mo 墨, Ming 名, Fa 法, and Daode 道德. It (part 2 in the table) is a very 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 reaching his intent of pro-Daoist thinking. Nevertheless, it intrudes into the middle of the introduction of the Grand Historian’s official duties, a passage immediately following:

The Grand Historian, since taking the Heavenly Official position (astrology), did not govern the people. He has a son called Qian.52

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51 *Shiji* “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3288.

52 *Shiji* “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3293.
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.

Another reason that I consider the essay on the six scholarly traditions an intruding textual block deals with its content. If, as the common reading has it, this essay indeed represents Sima Tan’s thinking, he considered the Dao superior to the Ru tradition. The teaching of the Dao tradition, according to this essay, is a comprehensive, ideal way of achieving good governance in all aspects, for it includes all the merits and rejects all the limits of other traditions. As for the Ru tradition, since the “six arts” 六蓺 representing the Ru value became so voluminous that a learner could not grasp the teachings even through his entire life, it has significant disadvantages: “broad, yet it lacks the essential; laborious, yet it enables one to achieve little merits” 博而寡要,
勞而少功，\(^{53}\) which is exactly the opposite of the Daoist approach, “doing nothing” \(\text{無為}\) yet “nothing has not been done” \(\text{無不為}\).\(^{54}\) With such sharp contrast of the two approaches in mind, it is hard to understand why, in his deathbed, the father Historian willed his son to continue Confucius’ enterprise of putting the “six arts” in order by compiling the \textit{Shiji}.\(^{55}\)

The brief biography of Sima Tan basically ends where Sima Qian’s biography begins: the linking sentence “He had a son called Qian” 有子曰遷 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 in his early age, his immense travelling experience, and his official duties as Gentleman of the Interior. The most cited passage of this part is certainly the description of the emotional scene in which the dying father Historian talked with Sima Qian. Sima Tan’s wishing his son to be the second Confucius, as pointed out above, enables the identification of the contradictory portion that I call the intruding essay. More important, the above scene provides an explanation to Sima Qian’s motivation of writing the \textit{Shiji}. The narrative explains that, to fulfill his father’s wish, Sima Qian indeed took his father’s position in order to resume the enterprise initiated by his father, as follows:

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.\(^{56}\) Five years after Qian became

\(^{53}\) \textit{Shiji} “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3290.

\(^{54}\) \textit{Shiji} “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3292.

\(^{55}\) \textit{Shiji} “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3295.

\(^{56}\) According to Ru Chun, the meaning character “紬” (chou) leans more toward “drawing materials from” or “compiling,” indicating that Sima Qian already started his writing the Shiji then. Yet a later passage does tell 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 \textit{Shiji} “Taishigong zixu,”
the Grand Historian, i.e., the first year of the Taichu era (104—101 BCE), 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.\(^5^7\)

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。

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 probably also to legitimize his attempt to write a history for the dynasty in which he lived as well.\(^5^8\) What readers expect for the next point in this narrative is Sima Qian’s action of writing the *Shiji*. The next passage (part 4 in the table), however, introduces a rather long conversation between a Grand Historian and Hu Sui 壺遂, who, according to the biography of Han Changru 韓長儒 as well as the Grand Historian’s remarks in that chapter, was a contemporary of both the father and the son Historians.\(^5^9\) The main purpose of introducing this conversation to the postface is to give the Grand Historian, either the father or the son, to defend his writing the *Shiji*. It starts with the words of an ambitious Grand Historian

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\(^{57}\) *Shiji* “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3296.

\(^{58}\) 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 (57—75 CE), he had been accused, charged, and imprisoned because of his writing the Han dynasty history. This example indicates that one must have special permission, such as the offer of a scribe position from the court, to write dynastic history; otherwise he would face death penalty. It seems that Sima Qian was authorized to continue his father’s undertaking only after he took his father’s position. See *Hou Hanshu* “Ban Biao zhuan,” 40:1333—1354.

\(^{59}\) *Shiji* “Han Changru liezhuan,” 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, the son Historian.
aiming to continue the work of Confucius with the enlightenment of the five-hundred-year myth, as discussed earlier in this chapter; it continues with an ardent exaltation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, among other Confucian Classics, as the great achievement of Confucius in terms of its undisputed authority in passing the judgment to this world, as if the Grand Historian was modeling his work on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*; and ends with the Grand Historian’s defending his position by claiming that in comparison with Confucius’ enterprise, his own writing could only be considered secondary, serving not for the purpose of criticizing the world but to praise the emperor, those worthy ministers, as well as their tremendous virtue, merits, and achievements.

This section of the text, while not totally unrelated to the flow of the narrative, is redundant in terms of its contents and function. What is assembled in this conversation, if compared with Sima Tan’s words to his son left in the former’s deathbed, looks not very different at all. The basic messages conveyed through such narrative cues as Confucius’ arranging the classics, especially the creating of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the five-hundred-year myth on the transmission of sagely message, as well as the Historian’s fear of not being able to write down the merits and achievements of the Han ruling classes, which all appear in the unfulfilled wish of Sima Tan, are repeated in the Grand Historian’s conversation with Hu Sui. It is true that in this conversation, or rather debate, the significance of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is singled out and deliberately emphasized, obviously 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 to 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. The 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 of the narrators are also the same:

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 to abandon the annals and
literature of this world, I am so afraid of it.60

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.

From the time when the Han rose to that when the bright Son of
Heaven obtained those auspicious omens, the Son of Heaven have
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 beyond the seas of different customs
with multiple translators knocking the presses and request for
imperials visits by presenting gifts, are countless. Even the subjects
and officials with all their best to praise the emperors’ sagely
virtue, still they cannot claim that they have exhausted what should
remain in their praises. 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 I would let my ancestors’ words
scattered—no guilt is more serious than this.61

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

60 Shiji “Taishigong xizu,” 130:3295.

61 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3299.
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。

Although the second passage is longer than the first, the comparison shows the overlap of the two passages in terms of their contents and structure is obvious: both of them tell the flourishing of the Han, the virtue and brightness of the emperor and his ministers, and the necessity of writing and transmitting their merits; both of them begin with the same temporal phrase denoting the “rise of Han” 漢興, then praising the emperor and his ministers with the same adjectives “bright” 明 and “worthy” 賢, respectively, and ends with the same self-driven motive of writing history: if this duty cannot be fulfilled, the Historian should feel fearful 懼 or guilty 罪, both reflecting the narrating Historian’s strong awareness of his obligation.

An even more telling expression indicating that Sima Tan was the Historian speaking with Hu Sui is that “I was once in charge of the office of the Grand Historian” 余嘗掌其官 in the second passage cited above. This is one of the few expressions in the Shiji postface betraying the identity of its speaker. The character “嘗” (chang) unmistakably denotes the narrator’s past experience: he used to serve actively in the position of Historian, but now, or very soon in the future, he would not continue to remain in that position. This cannot be Sima Qian, for, as traditionally held, he had not held that position for very long at this time, and he would continue to serve the emperor in that position for many years to come. Since there are two Grand Historians—the father and the son—speaking in the Shiji postface, if the son is ruled out, the Historian under discussion here must be the father.
My suspicions that this rather long conversation between the Historian and Hu Sui was another intruding textual block in the Shiji postface narrative can further be confirmed by how much more smoothly the narrative is if we take this textual block out. As mentioned above, the passage prior to this conversation with Hu Sui describes the kickoff of Sima Qian’s political career as Grand Historian as well as his move to the writing of the Shiji: three years after his father’s death, Sima Qian inherited his father’s position; five years later after he had became the Grand Historian, the Western Han calendar was changed and Sima Qian participated in that project. Now, if we skip the intruding textual block and extend the narrative directly to the passage right after the conversation with Hu Sui (part 5 in the table), the narrative flows very well, as shows:

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 BCE), 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 put into prison and bound.

卒三歲而遷為太史令, 紹史記石室金匱之書。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，幽於繚縈。

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62 According to the Tang commentator Sima Zhen 司馬貞, both the “stone room” and the “metal casket” denote to the places where the Han imperial collection of books were kept; see Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3296.

63 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3296—3300.
If we follow the flow of time marked in the above reconstructed narrative, it is almost irresistible to claim the feasibility of such reconstruction: the father Historian’s death serves as the starting point of his son’s new trajectory, 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 those events, which are naturally associated with Sima Qian’s writing of the *Shiji*, and form a smooth, efficacious narrative structure. The insertion of a Historian’s conversation with Hu Sui claiming the necessity of writing the *Shiji*, which, as demonstrated, is generally an enlarged version of the unfulfilled will left by Sima Tan on his deathbed, not only unbalances the overall narrative structure of this part, but also causes unnecessary confusion in understanding.

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 his famous argument that monumental writings result from great personal frustration, which is also unambivalently echoed in the letter to Ren An. 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, used as one of the most important cross-references shedding great light on how to understand the *Shiji*. As I will return to this passage to explore why this very passage appears in both documents, suffice it to mention here that in this part of the *Shiji* postface, it well serves the purpose of explaining why Sima Qian continued to write the *Shiji* after his political misfortune. This passage ends with a concluding announcement:
Therefore, he completed narrating the accounts from the time of Tao Tang all the way to the time when the unicorn stopped by. The narration begins with the Yellow Emperor. 64

於是卒述陶唐以來，至于麟止，自黃帝始。

Since what follows (part 6) lists the outlines of all the Shiji chapters, which resemble the “xiaoxu” 小序 (“lesser postface”) of the Mao version of the Odes, all that prior to the concluding announcement belong to the “daxu” 大序, or “greater postface,” which usually includes such contents as the authorial information. 65 The above short passage, therefore, serves as the joint of the two parts of the Shiji postface.

Nevertheless, this short passage is problematic for the information it provides. It first says that the narration of the Shiji starts from the time of Tao Tang, which is, the rule of Yao 堯, yet almost immediately it again claims another different terminus post quem—the narration begins with the Yellow Emperor, who, according to the Shiji, lived and ruled generations before the Thearch Yao. Moreover, this passage further contradicts the last part of the Shiji postface, in which the Grand Historian makes such final remarks (part 8 in the table):

I have narrated and examined the history starting from the Yellow Emperor and ending in the era of Taichu, including one hundred and thirty pian chapters. 66

余述歷黃帝以來至太初而訖，百三十篇。

64 Shiji “Yaishigong zixu,” 130:3300.

65 Cui Shi 2005, 227—228.

66 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3321.
It is obvious that according to this remark, not only the \textit{terminus post quem}, but the \textit{terminus ante quem} of the \textit{Shiji} narrative is also different from the above-mentioned “greater postface” of the \textit{Shiji}. The year when the unicorn visited has long been considered as the first year of the Yuanshou 元狩 era (122—117 BCE), while the first year of the Taichu era (104—101 BCE) was around two decades later. The list of contents, i.e., the “lesser postface” of the \textit{Shiji}, which immediately follows the “greater postface,” indeed begins with the account of the Yellow Emperor, and the preface to the chronology of Western Han princes surely confirms that the \textit{terminus ante quem} was the Taichu era. How could the messages on these least questionable issues be so different, especially when we consider that these messages were delivered by a Historian with the reputation of seriously devoting himself to facts? Such discrepancies certainly demand an explanation.

In response to the contradictory message delivered in the sentence right before the start of the list of contents, Cui Shu 崔述 (1740—1816 CE) notes that the phrase “自黃帝始” is apparently an interpolation that originally might have been a side note. The time of Thearch Yao and the year when the unicorn stopped by, according to Cui, are indeed the beginning and ending dates of the \textit{Shiji} narrative. Nevertheless, even if this phrase was indeed accidentally incorporated into the main text in the long history of this text’s transmission and, therefore, can be removed from the main text, the list of contents following the claim that the \textit{Shiji} narrative begins with the Thearch Yao does unmistakably start from the Yellow Emperor, a challenge that

\begin{itemize}
  \item 67 Also see in the preface to the “Sandai shibiao,” see \textit{Shiji} “Sandai shibiao,” 13:488.
  \item 68 \textit{Shiji} “Han xing yilai zhuhou wang nianbiao,” 17:803.
  \item 69 Cui Shu 2005, 227. Liang Qichao holds a similar argument: he considers the dates given by the Grand Historian’s remarks a later interpolation; see Liang Qichao 1997, 25.
  \item 70 Cui Shu 2005, 16—18.
\end{itemize}
Cui Shu fails to explain without continuing to accuse an imagined interpolator of arbitrarily changing the originally “Tao Tang benji” into the “Wudi benji” to fit the then altered text. In other words, to identify the scribal mistake and accuse the interpolator are less than enough to answer why these two distinct sayings on the terminus post quem of the Shiji narrative are so ostensibly juxtaposed.

Cui Shu’s explanation is merely one of an array of theories brought up in the debates on the terminus post quem and terminus ante quem of the Shiji narrative provoked by the above contradictory records. A recent consensus in Shiji study suggests that these two differing statements on the terminus post quem and terminus ante quem of the Shiji appearing in the Shiji postface are posted by Sima Tan and Sima Qian, respectively. This suggestion maintains that the Shiji project was initiated by the father Historian with a time frame set up from the time of Thearch Yao to that of the reappearance of the unicorn; nevertheless, by the time the son Historian resumed his father’s writing plan, he felt the need to alter his father’s original framework under the influence of a changed contemporary 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 more meaningful to the Shiji writing. Zhao Shengqun argues that the preservation of his father’s original time frame of the Shiji project in the final postface was Sima Qian’s deliberate rendering

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71 Cui Shu 2005, 20. Since this kind of alteration, if indeed it was such, appears in multiple contexts of the Shiji, a convincing explanation on the motivation of such comprehensive interpolation is urgently needed. The problem of Cui Shu’s argument is its lack of substantial evidence.

72 For a summary of those main theories in this regard, see Zhao Shengqun 2001, 89—93.

73 Zhao Shengqun 2001, 93. Zhao admits that the three scholars, Zhang Dake, Wu Ruyu, 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 1983; Wu Ruyu 1983.
not only revealing his father’s original plan, but also expressing his gratification of finally carrying out his father’s will.\textsuperscript{74}

This line of argument, however, suffers from its lack of evidence. All that such argument relies upon is no more than what Sima Tan said about his intent of imitating Confucius, but Sima Tan’s words have little to do with either the \textit{terminus post quem} or the \textit{terminus ante quem}. It is true that the event of “capturing the unicorn” 賜麟 was indeed mentioned in Sima Tan’s words, but there is no implication that Sima Tan had made the year when “the unicorn stopped by” 麟止 as the \textit{terminus ante quem} of his project. As a matter of fact, the gap of 360 years between these two events (481 BCE—122 BCE) related to the unicorn does not agree with the gap of time in the \textit{Shiji} postface.\textsuperscript{75} Moreover, considering the ubiquity of Sima Qian’s voice that seldom hesitates to clarify any confusion, I find that it is difficult to explain why Sima Qian would have intentionally created such a maze regarding the time frame of the \textit{Shiji} narrative in the postface.

The subject of the passage “於是卒述陶唐以來，至于麟止，自黃帝始” is not obscure at all if put into its context: it is unmistakably Sima Qian. There is no reason for him, a filial son who had been faithfully observing his father’s teaching till then, to have chosen such a sneaky way to insult his father’s authority. The implication of the filial motif is so strongly conveyed through the scene of a dying father speaking to his son on his deathbed that it entails the inference that even a tiny alteration of his father’s would demanded a serious explanation. A silent juxtaposition of the time frames of his father, if indeed it is his, and Sima Qian’s own time frames together, while at the same time claiming himself as the author, I would argue, is not a

\textsuperscript{74} Gu Jiegang 2005, 226—233; Zhao Shengqun 2001, 98—99.

\textsuperscript{75} According to the \textit{Shiji} postface, Sima Tan says that “since the event of capturing the unicorn, there has been over four hundred years 自獲麟以來 四百有餘歲. See \textit{Shiji} “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3295.
promotion of his father’s original writing plan by any means; it is rather, contrary to Zhao Shengqun’s speculation, an offense to his beloved father’s will.

Why are these two distinct sets of *terminus ante quem* and *terminus post quem* juxtaposed as such in the *Shiji* postface? Before an attempt to answer this question from a different perspective, I would examine another strange and problematic passage (part 7 in the table) in the list of contents associated with the problem pointed above. It is the summary of the contents considered to belong to the seventieth chapter, the *Shiji* postface. The reason that I consider it a strange summary is first 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 its form. Many outlines use formulaic quadrisyllable 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* summary of this sort, states:

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 arrayed tradition.76

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。

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76 *Shiji* “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3319.
In contrast, the supposed outline of the one hundred and thirtieth chapter is far lengthier than an ordinary chapter summary, around ten times 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 is belong to the list of contents.

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 ought to have been a summary of the “greater postface” of this chapter, which begins with the family tradition, continues with the biographies of both the father and son Historians, and concludes with the completion of this work. The actual outline of the seventieth arrayed tradition, however, goes far beyond what it ought to be and apparently makes itself the summary of the whole Shiji. The narrator begins this passage with the description of a desolate and chaotic scene of the early Western Han literature, which 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 BCE), Han Xin 韓信 (?—196 BCE), Zhang Cang 張 蒼 (253—152 BCE), and Shusun Tong 叔孫通 (ca. ?—194 BCE) 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 father and son Grand Historians to write a comprehensive history in their own time. And so they did, by taking advantage of those collected “lost words and ancient deeds” 遺

77 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3319—3320.
文古事 and “abandoned old hearings” 放失舊聞 they compiled a history that stretched from Xuanyuan 軒轅, or the Yellow Emperor, to the Historians’ own time. The narrative continues as an explanation of the contents of the five Shiji categories—the Basic Annals, Chronological Tables, Treatises, Hereditary Houses, 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, making this odd passage even stranger, gives the information that is largely repeated in the letter to Ren An. It reads as follows:

Altogether the text comprises one hundred and thirty pian chapters, including five hundred and twenty-six thousand and five hundred words, called the “Writings of the Grand Historian” and put in order to collect the lost, remedy the Six Arts, create the teachings of his 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 the famous mountain and placed a copy in the capital, in order to await the sages and gentlemen of later ages.

凡百三十篇，五十二萬六千五百字，為太史公書。序略，以拾遺補蓺，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。

78 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3319.

79 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，是以就極刑而無慍色。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 “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2735). Except for the last sentence 俟後世聖人君子, all the other underlined sentences or syntaxes, which constitute the backbone of this passage, have their identical counterparts in the outline of the seventieth arrayed tradition.

80 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3319.
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, suffice it here to say 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. Then why was this passage considered and indeed labeled as the last chapter of the Shiji? I suspect that this had to do with 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 the number of one hundred and thirty. In the previous chapter when discussing the “Yaolüe” chapter of the Huainanzi, we find out 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”—the Huainanzi postface—to its total number of pian. We thus have reason to think that the same thing happened to the “Yiwen zhi” records on the Shiji regarding its the overall pian number: however bizarre it may sound, the main text of the Shiji originally only includes one hundred and twenty-nine pian chapters, and the present one hundred and thirtieth chapter is not a chapter originally integrated in the Shiji body of text, but added later as a generic Shiji chapter by those who cataloged this text, which is followed by Ban Gu when he compiled the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the Hanshu. Based on this understanding, I would consider the phrase “第七十” an interpolation intentionally made probably under the influence of a record on the Shiji pian number similar to that seen in the transmitted “Yiwen zhi” chapter in an attempt to make the outlines included in the “lesser postface” match the overall one hundred and thirty pian number.81

81 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 zhuang di qishi 述敍傳第七十). Unlike the “Taishigong zixu,” the outline of Hanshu postface as well as the tidy, rhyming format of this outline remains consistent with the
By the same token, we may also explain the mention of the different *terminus post quem* and *terminus post quem* of the *Shiji* narrative brought up in the Grand Historian’s final remarks at the end of the *Shiji* postface. The inclusion of a final remark in 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 “lesser postface” to make the postface a new “arrayed tradition” chapter, the postface must now 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 in the end of an arrayed tradition chapter, if applied, would certainly be forceful reminder of the postface being one of the chapters incorporated in the main text. Moreover, if, as said, 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 Shu confidently infers that this passage had to be an interpolation based on the beginning passage of the second part of the *Hanshu* postface.  

As for why the time of the Yellow Emperor and the Taichu era are chosen to mark and be juxtaposed with a different set of identifications of the *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* of the *Shiji* narrative in the same piece of writing, the answer has to do with more complicated issues related to the formation, transmission, and authorship of this piece. Indeed, 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, it is at least plausible if we agree with Cui Shu that the Grand Historian’s remarks on the “Taishigong zixu” were originally not there but a later interpolation based on the *Hanshu* postface. Cui Shu 2005, 229.

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82 Cui Shu 2005, 229; *Hanshu* “xuzhuan di qishi xia,” 100(2):4235.
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 and hands involved in its formation and transmission, but they also put forward the doubt of the long held idea that the *Shiji* postface was in any case penned by Sima Qian or that it exposes Sima Qian’s authorial intent to his readers. The widely received conventional explanation centering on Sima Qian’s authorial intent has to be reconsidered, and this constitutes the focus of the following sections.

4.4. Author of or Authored by the Biographical Information?

Based on the basic structure of early Chinese postface writing mentioned in the beginning of previous section—consisting of a biographical part and a part on textual form—I have attempted to identify those chunks of text that, if gauged by this structure, considerably block the flow of necessary information generally provided by a postface. The essay on the essentials of the six teaching lineages and the long conversation between the Grand Historian and Hu Sui, for instance, belong to such textual blocks. In both cases, the narrative proceeds more smoothly and naturally if these textual blocks are removed. Nevertheless, I would not argue that these chunks of text were later interpolations inserted in an originally well composed postface by Sima Qian—a piece of writing just like the prose without those textual blocks. I doubt that Sima Qian had ever played a role in the writing of the *Shiji* postface.

The rationale underlining such argument lies in the genesis of postface writing. As already pointed out in the previous section, the genesis of postface writing had to do with 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, among others. The main purpose of such text cataloging was to provide an authoritative edition comprising 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 a text is the margin of the textual body resulting from the removal of those overlapped units from the sum of that text collection under a certain category. Take the Yanzi 晏子 for 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 参. The final pian number that the Yanzi included was the result of the sum of thirty pian deducting the twenty-two overlapping pian units.83 This example is by no means an isolated one; instead, 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. In short, the postface writing was the product of textual transformation from the form of single to multiple pian chapters and the means, which were definitely needed, to bind independent textual units together to form larger text bodies. We can clearly see this in the “Yaolüe” chapter in its relationship with the main Huainanzi text of twenty pian, as discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation.84

83 Liu Xiang 1995(3).
84 The Lushi chunqiu, as mentioned in the Shiji, is obviously an anthology of the writings made by Lü Buwei’s intellectual entourage. A corrupted passage immediately following the “Shi’er ji” 十二纪 main texts is sometimes considered the postface to the Lushi 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.
I consider the *Shiji* postface to be of the same nature, which entails the inference that the writer of the main text is separated from the writer of the postface, who wrote the postface 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 be. 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 led by Liu Xiang and others. The convergence of these two separated types of writings, i.e., the main text and the postface by the same writer, I believe, had to do 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 sense of self-awareness of the significance of writing to the writer himself, which was strong enough to stir his fear of the loss of his writings. So far as earliest postfaces, such as those to the *Odes* and *Changes* and those written by Liu Xiang, are concerned, the postface writing was an invention by the Western Han scholars, appreciated and adopted by scholarly circles of local princedoms first, and then by the imperial court toward the end of the Western Han dynasty. Most important of all, all those 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 as mentioned above.

Could Sima Qian have had the awareness of writing down a postface for his work in order to bind the large volume of his writing as tight as possible? It sounds more than plausible

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85 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* 鐘山札記 by Lu Wenchao 劉文弨, 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 1995, 388.
in the framework of the conventional interpretation as summarized in the second section of this chapter. But this is a tautological answer: in that framework, that Sima Qian is the author of the *Shiji* postface has been taken for granted as the presupposition in the first place. The problem of this sort of reading is its negligence, intentional or not, of the contradictions and warnings revealed by the postface itself, which are irreconcilable with the assumption of projecting Sima Qian as the author of the postface. In what follows I will examine some of the major issues of this sort appearing in the *Shiji* postface writing.

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 is 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. In an illuminating work on traditional Chinese autobiographical writings, Wu Pei-Yi insightfully links traditional Chinese autobiography with Chinese biographical writing, which he thinks is an invention of the *Shiji*. The *Shiji* postface, called by Wu the authorial self-account, although not an autobiography in its strict sense, is considered the earliest recognizable autobiographical writing. Since a third-person, impartial, and unobtrusive narrator characterizes traditional Chinese historiography in which biographical and autobiographical writings are situated, the third-person stance adopted in the *Shiji* postface, argues Wu, is mostly a

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86 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*, therefore its postface is called the ‘Taishigong zixu’” (*Shiji yuan ming Taishigong shu, gu cheng 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 need further clarification. See Zhang Dake 1986, 380.

87 Wu Pei-yi 1990, 3.
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 his conscious choice.\textsuperscript{88}

While correctly pointing out the self-restrictive nature of Chinese autobiographical writing, Wu has not fully answered why he considers the \textit{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, it is precisely relying on one’s belief instead of definable features which 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 self expression or catharsis. In this case, there is really 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 as what it is in order to satisfy the actual need of the author until a later author who writes a postface for his main text mistook the earlier third-person postface as the self narrative model.

We also do not see the kind of self-restraint associated with the enhancement of the postface’s objectivity and impersonality preventing the Grand Historian from speaking up with his own voice. 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

\textsuperscript{88} Wu Pei-yi 1990, 4-5; 42—43.
Historian as a reader or witness in regard to the figures he writes about frequently emerges from the remarks attached to the main text. Such phrases as “When I read Confucius’ writings” 余讀孔氏書 and “Respectfully, I lingered there and could not bear to leave” 余祗迴留之不能去, certainly enable the Grand Historian to portray himself as both the writer on Confucius and witness of the latter’s influence through the writer’s own presence at the very spot where the Master used to live, observing the ritual paraphernalia and ritual performance passed down by the Master, and imagining in this context the Master as a living man around four hundred years ago exactly at the very spot he visited. In the first “arrayed tradition,” the Grand Historian even stands up as the first-person narrator in the main text. He says, “I am very confused by it” 余甚惑焉, who says Heaven is always in favor of benevolent people? If, as said, it is so, why would heaven not have let the virtuous ones have a natural death and leave the wicked punished? 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—or even intervention, in some cases—in the Shiji narrative is well-known to scholars. For example, Li Changzhi 李長之 (1910—1978 CE) associates it with Sima Qian’s unique personality that he calls the romanticist tendency; Stephen Durrant sees it as the result of tension between his pursuing 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

90 Shiji “Bo Yi liezhuan,” 61:2125.
epic author, and it is the author’s personal invention that makes the *Shiji* among the greatest literary works.\(^9^1\) It is true that such an impression is 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 Historian is not shy in presenting himself before the reader in explaining why he has chosen this or that to write and what his writings have meant to be.

It is worth noting, however, that the first-person pronoun *wo* 我 (*I, me, my, we, us, our*)\(^9^2\) does appear once toward the end of the *Shiji* postface, as follows:

> It is only our Han that inherits the late stream of the Five Thearchs and continues the discontinued enterprise of the Three Dynasties.\(^9^3\)

維我漢繼五帝末流，接三代（統）（絕）業。

It becomes clear that the first-person pronoun here does not carry any information about 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.”

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\(^9^1\) Cf. Li Changzhi 1968; Durrant 1995; Pu Andi 1996, 14—15.

\(^9^2\) 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 and Zhang Yujin 2010.

\(^9^3\) *Shiji* “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3319.
Since the author of this passage is impossible to be 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 CE) singles this grammar point out and dubs it “the expansionary usage of *wo* (*I, me, or my*)” 我之擴張用法, pointing out that *wo* in such occasions usually denotes *our state* or *our army*, stressing the addressee as a first-person party rather than individual.94

Even interpreted as such, the term *wo Han* is rarely seen in the Han texts, for, unlike the tint of nationalism that it carries nowadays, 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 the imperial power with them. In fact, this term is only seen in the above passage in the entirely extant corpus of Han historical writing.95 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 CE), who at the time of using the word “*wo Han guo*” 我漢國 (*“our Han state”*)96 modeled himself on the Duke of Zhou;97 Empress Dowager Yuan 元皇太后 (71 BCE—13 CE), who used “*wo Han jia*” 我漢家 (*“our Han imperial family”*)


95 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 CE), but that encomium was supposed to composed by Fan Ye 范曄 (398—445 CE), a Southern Dynasty literatus. According to the Tang commentators Li Xian 李賢 (654—684 CE) and others, Fan should not have identified himself a Han 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 “Guangwudi Liu Xiu,” 1:87.

96 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 more narrowly clinging to the connotation of the ruling family’s territory; or we may simply regard it as a synonym of “ruling house” or the “imperial family.”

97 Hanshu “Zhai Fangjin zhuan,” 84:3429—3431.
to specifically distinguish the Han ruling family from Wang Mang. Although it says in his *Hanshu* biography that he was appointed as Palace Secretary and enjoyed great honor and favor on that position, it is unlikely that Sima Qian would have addressed in the *Shiji* postface like an imperial family member.

Nevertheless, I do find in the extant Han literary works that, in a few cases, the Han writers would identify themselves with the Han culture in a sense that they were apparently aware of. For example, in the *Hanshu* postface, Ban Gu praises Emperor Wen’s (180—157 BCE) 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. Such usage of “deng wo Han dao” is similar to the expression “shi wo Han xing” (“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 Place 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 CE) and Emperor Huan’s 桓帝 (147—167 CE) reigns, the author uses “wo Han shi”我漢室 (“our Han imperial house”), although Wang was not a Han imperial family member. In the “Yang Sigong song”楊四公頌 (A Eulogy to Yang Sigong) attributed to the late Eastern Han scholar Zhang Chao 張

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98 *Hanshu* “Yuanhou zhuan,” 98:4032.

99 *Hanshu* “Xuzhuan di qishi xia,” 100:4237.

100 Wang Yanshou 1995.
超，它说“Mr. Yang’s family of our Han dynasty, has in his generations been its ridge beam” 我漢楊氏，作代棟梁.\(^{101}\)

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 dissertation, suffice it to mention that all the sources in this regard suggest that such cultural identity might have emerged rather late: even the earliest example of such usage was 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 not only grammatically but also in its overtone fairly alien to the image and thinking of Sima Qian reconstructed mainly on the basis of the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An. Could this rather exceptional usage of the phrase “our Han” in the *Shiji* be a flashing red light on the “authenticity” or the date of this passage or even the whole *Shiji* postface? I would not claim such definite conclusion that would suggest the *Shiji* postface was composed in the Eastern Han, even though it is not completely impossible at least for part of it, but we should feel confident to ponder on this point that this postface is much less possible to have been written by Sima Qian.

In short, the Grand Historian’s presentation of himself as the first-person narrator everywhere else in his work except for the postface 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 a self narration

\(^{101}\) Zhang Chao 1995.
written by Sima Qian, he has no need to restrain himself from employing the first-person narrative, especially when we consider how willing he was to offer his comments on a variety of issues either in his remarks following each major chapter, or sometimes directly speaking in the main text. The idea that the *Shiji* postface was a self narration is especially difficult to stand before the application of the term “Taishigong” both to Sima Qian’s father and Sima Qian himself.

It is well-known that there are more than one “Taishigong” speaking and spoken of in the *Shiji* postface. According to Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722—1797), all those “Taishigong” making the remarks attached to the chapters in the *Shiji* main text should be Sima Qian, the author of the *Shiji*; when it comes to the *Shiji* postface, however, things become a little more complicated. As shown in the following table, in these fourteen locations where the term “Taishigong” appears throughout the *Shiji* postface, this term can be related either to the father Historian or the son Historian, or both: in the first six cases (1-6 referring to the table), the appellation of “Taishigong” is used for the father Historian Sima Tan; in the next four cases (7—10 referring to the table), it is applied to the son Historian Sima Qian; and among the rest four cases, in no. 11 and no. 14 it refers to the father and the son, respectively, and in the other two, it refers to both the father and son in each case.102

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passages with the term “Taishigong”</th>
<th>Denotations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 喜生談， 談為太史公</td>
<td>Tan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 太史公學天官於唐都</td>
<td>Tan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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102 Wang Mingsheng 2005, 42.
太史公仕於建元元封之間

太史公既掌天官，不治民

是歳天子始建漢家之封，而太史公留滯周南，不得與從事

太史公執遷手而泣曰

太史公曰：先人有言

太史公曰：余聞董生曰

太史公曰：唯唯，否否，不然

七年而太史公遭李陵之禍，幽於縲紲

百年之閒，天下遺文古事靡不畢集太史公

太史公仍父子相續纂其職

凡百三十篇，五十二萬六千五百字，為太史公書

太史公曰：余述歷黃帝以來至太初而訖，百三十篇

But how do we understand this appellation? Is it an honorific term, as suggested by Wang Guowei and others, or an official title of the position occupied by both the father and the son? If it was an honorific appellation, why would Sima Qian apply it to himself in this postface? To overcome this difficulty in interpretation, many would adopt what Wei Hong (fl. 25 CE) says in the Han jiuyi 漢舊儀 (Old Han Rituals) and contend that the term “Taishigong” was an

official title instead of an honorific term. According to that Han jiuyi account cited by Ru Chun, a scholar who probably lived in the Three Kingdoms era, “Taishigong” was an official title of a position established by Emperor Wu of Han, a position even enjoying higher prestige than that of Counselor-in-chief in the time when Sima father and son held the office but losing most of its power after Sima Qian died. The problem of this statement, however, is the lack of reliability of the Han jiuyi account. Following Ru Chun’s citation, the Western Jin (265—316 CE) scholar Chen Zan immediately points out that “Taishigong” as such prominent position is not documented in the table of Han officials 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” and “Taishiling” instead of “Taishigong.” 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 even more prestigious than Counselor-in-chief, indeed becomes highly questionable. By comparison, the argument that the appellation of “Taishigong” serves as an honorific term appears to be a relatively superior interpretation.

104 Such contention apparently started very early, as reflected in the Shiji commentaries. Wei Hong, the Three Kingdoms (220—280 CE) period Shiji commentator Ru Chun, Yu Xi (281—356 CE), and the Tang Shiji commentator Zhang Shoujie, are among the earliest who hold that “Taishigong” was an official title; see Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3286—3288. For later contenders in this regard, see Liang Yusheng 2007, 26—27; Xu Wenshan 1973, 35; Zhao Shengqun 2001, 121—132.

105 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3286—3288.

106 Shiji “Taishigong zixu,” 130:3288.

107 In order to validate Wei Hong’s saying, Yu Xi and Yu Shenxing interpret the word “wei” 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
Since “Taishi” 太史 used to be 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.108 The cornerstone of such an interpretation is certainly the premise that Sima Qian is the author of the postface, and, by adding the honorific word gong to the official title “Taishi,” he has 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 to different contexts. The term gong is evidentially related to those who in the Western Zhou cultural sphere enjoyed high social status usually referred as aristocratic, royal family members, high officials, or feudal lords, but over time it gradually lost its original denotation and was more than often applied to mark an honorific form toward the end of the Zhou. These two branches of meaning continued in the Han dynasty context, but became more complicated. In the Han discourse, this term was not even necessarily an honorific marker; it could even carry negative connotations. This is why some argue that the word gong as in the term “Taishigong” has nothing to do with the honorable appellation.109 Nevertheless, if Sima Qian was the author of this postface, there is no reason for the word gong to be negative. 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.

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108 For example, see Zhang Dake 1983.

109 For a good discussion on the word “gong” on which this passage is based, see Yuan Tingdong 2007, 19—204.
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 hard to believe that Sima Qian would have occupied this honorific title and lifted himself side by side with his father. Huan Tan 桓譚 (ca. 23 BCE—56 CE) and Wei Zhao 韋昭 (204—273 CE) 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 BCE); but Wei Zhao holds that it should be by Sima Qian’s grandson Yang Yun 楊惲 (?—54 BCE). 110 Wang Guowei considers Wei Zhao’s suggestion especially reasonable, because Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography does mention that it was thanks to Yang Yun’s efforts that the *Shiji* began to be circulated and it should not be a surprise for Yang Yun to use the *gong* honorific form for both his grandfather and great grandfather. 111 This line of reasoning, however, is criticized for being too specific; as the late Northern Song (960—1127 CE) scholar Huang Chaoying 黃朝英 argues that others besides Yang Yun could also use the *gong* honorific form to refer to Sima Qian. 112 But whatever stance the above scholars take on this issue, none have gone the further step to disentangle this age-old debate by questioning Sima Qian’s authorship of the *Shiji* postface. That is to say, 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. The way to avoid this problem, since Sima Qian would not have applied this honorific title to himself, is to say that it must have been “someone of later generation” (hou ren 後人) who replaced Qian’s name with this honorific term.


112 Huang Chaoying 1986, 53—54; Wu Renjie 1983.
applied by Sima Qian to his father.\textsuperscript{113} Theoretically, such speculation is not completely impossible, but considering the lack of substantial evidence for this point of view, I would propose that this honorific term was not a later addition but a long-neglected reminder leading to the need to reconsider this postface’s authorship.

It is now meaningful to connect the current discussion with the issue on the two juxtaposed pairs of \textit{terminus post quem} and \textit{terminus ante quem} of the \textit{Shiji} raised previously: one saying holds that the narrative of the \textit{Shiji} starts from the time of Thearch Yao and ends in the year when the unicorn visited in Wudi’s reign; the other, from the reign of the Yellow Emperor to the era of Taichu. It is also said that the former is a time frame planned by the father, and the latter, by the son; the reason that both are preserved in the postface is, as Zhao Shengqun argues, out of Sima Qian’s respect to his father. Above, I argue against this theory by questioning its reasoning that Sima Qian would have altered his father’s unfulfilled will, which is so strongly presented in the scene of a dying father speaking to a filial son, in order to show how he followed his father’s will.

But why are these two glaringly differentiated sayings allowed to stand side by side in the postface, anyway, 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 \textit{Shiji}, Gu Jiegang suggests that these two different sayings about the \textit{terminus ante quem} and \textit{terminus post quem} of the \textit{Shiji} narrative by the two Historians indeed reflect the father’s and son’s different temperaments, varied degrees of attachments to Confucius’ \textit{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 in favor of archaism, Gu Jiegang

\textsuperscript{113} Wang Guowei 1961, 494.
attempts to explain why Sima Qian introduced a new time frame to replace the one his father provided. But when it comes to the question of “why are both versions of time frame for the Shiji narrative preserved in its postface?”, Gu Jiegang proposes 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 father Historian. 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, as a result, he failed to delete his father’s.114

Although Gu Jiegang’s argument is burdened with too much speculation, especially when it comes to the comparison and estimation of time used to compile the Shiji and the Hanshu, it is inspiring in the sense that it opens the way to questioning 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 rough edges and contradictions found in the Shiji narrative. The solution that Gu Jiegang offers in this case, however, is not sophisticated enough to answer all these questions. This is especially true when he attributes the Shiji postface to Sima Tan without any substantial evidence, an attempt generating even more questions than it answers. For example, different from a blueprint, a postface is a de facto summary of a multi-chapter text produced after the text is written, how could such a postface have come out before the writer finished his work if it is attributed to Sima Tan? Also, in order to exalt his father’s efforts, should we downplay Sima Qian’s role in the formation of the Shiji? How should we identify and

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114 Gu Jiegang 2005, 226—233. For a more elaborate discussion on those chapters possibly written by Sima Tan, see Zhao Shengqun 2001, 69—88.
evaluate Sima Qian’s part in the entire *Shiji*, if what his father left was basically a finished work? Merely editing his father’s writings?

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 was composed by “someone of later generation” in an attempt to form and maintain the *Shiji* as a cohesive whole, just as the author of the “Yaolüe” did to the *Huainanzi*, and at the same time to express his understanding of this text and his deep sympathy with its author Sima Qian. As for who this “someone” could have been, I agree with Wei Zhao that it might have something to do Sima Qian’s grandson Yang Yun. However, I disagree with Wei Zhao’s speculation that Yang Yun merely added the honorific appellation “Taishigong” to the postface allegedly written by Sima Qian. I propose that Yang probably crafted the whole postface. The rationale of this speculation to a large extent lies in a *Hanshu* account pertaining to the transmission of the *Shiji*, as follows:

After Qian had passed away, his writings came out little by little. In Emperor Xuan’s reign (74—49 BCE), Qian’s grandson Yang Yun, Marquis Pingtong, followed and transmitted his 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.115

This short passage provides three different eras marking the gradual transmission of the *Shiji* text and its increasing influence on the court. Although it says in the *Shiji* postface that,

115 *Hanshu* “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2737.
after having completed this unprecedentedly lengthy text (requiring an oxcart to carry it in its
form as bamboo strips), Sima Qian “placed a copy in the capital” 副在京師, generally
understood as the imperial library, this text had nonetheless remained obscure for decades after
Sima Qian’s death. In which way and under what circumstances this work began to be known is
by no means clear. Were merely copies of some of its chapters granted to members close to the
Han imperial court as gifts or rewards by the Emperor, as we see in those cases mentioned in the
Hou Hanshu?\footnote{Hou Hanshu “Dou Rong liezhuan,” 23:803; Hou Hanshu “Xunli liezhuan,” 76:2465.} Was a copy of the whole Shiji truly presented to the imperial court? It has been
generally held among scholars that writing history was not even part of the responsibility of the
position that was held by Sima Qian, and that the Shiji was a dangerous text;\footnote{According to a Hanshu account mentioned both in the biography of Pince Si of Dongping 東平思王 (r. 52—19
BCE) 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 this text to Prince Si for its contents dangerous to the imperial court. See
Hanshu “Xuan Yuan liuwang zhuan,” 80:3324—3325.} would Sima Qian
have ventured to do so, risking his life and the future of his writings?\footnote{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 to take that chapter out of the Shiji. Later when Sima
Qian was punished for his defending Li Ling, Sima Qian complained and was sentenced to death. See Xijing zaji
6:267.} It would be more
reasonable to infer, under such circumstances, that the Shiji was a private instead of a court-
sponsored text when it was finished, no matter what it was planned to be at the beginning.\footnote{Gu Jiegang 2005, 232; Liang Qichao 1997, 21; Wu Zhangkuang suggests that there is evidence indicating that
Sima Qian originally tried to make his writings be recognized by the imperial court, but he soon realized that this
was impossible after his castration. See Wu Zhongkuang 1988, 76—77.}
This inevitably leads to the doubt of the credibility of the saying that Sima Qian actually
presented a copy of the Shiji to the Han imperial court. The copy that the imperial library finally
possessed, I suspect, was not 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 really from Yang Yun that the *Shiji* had become gradually known to the public.

We then have reason to believe that the study of the *Shiji* in the first several decades after Sima Qian’s death remained as a family tradition largely within the Sima family. This actually reflects what is said in the *Shiji* postface—to “create the teachings of his own” 成一家之言, that is to say, to make his own teaching and learning lineage based on his text. Although we do not know exactly how the Sima family teaching lineage actually operated, I believe that Yang Yun must have been included in that learning and teaching circle. As said in the above passage, Yang “followed and transmitted his writings” 祖述其書, and the word zu literally means to study the *Shiji* as the textual ancestor, the very top of that teaching lineage. What Yang Yun managed to accomplish was to extend 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 very possible that the influence of the *Shiji* reached the Han imperial court through such efforts made by Yang Yun.120 A passage in Yang Yun’s biography may also shed some light on this point:

Yun at the beginning studied the *Grand Historian’s Records* by his maternal grandfather, investigated tremendously 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 kinds of students of Confucian learning; his fame was prominent in the imperial court; and he was promoted to Head of the Left Section.121

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120 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 BCE. 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* “Gongsun Liu Tian Wang Yang Cai Chen Zheng,” 2888—2889.

This short passage provides the key information linking the *Shiji* with the Han imperial court. The linkage, no doubt, was built through Yang Yun as the necessary medium. It seems, based on this passage, that, even if the study of 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 further helped him earn a great reputation in the imperial court which allowed him to be promoted to be Head of the Left Section. This was indeed a noteworthy position: the person who held 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 than one of his favored companions.\(^{122}\) Since Yang Yun actively involved himself in Emperor’s Xuan’s purge of the Huo 霍 family political faction around 67 BCE, he was eneoffed as Marquis of Pingtong 平通候 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.\(^{123}\) A few years later, in 61 BCE, 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

\(^{122}\) Hucker 1985, 526.

all Court Gentlemen and the emperor’s personal counselors and bodyguards. Connecting this information with the role that Yang Yun played in transmitting Sima Qian’s writings, as mentioned in Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography, I tend to believe that the wide distribution of the *Shiji* began with Yang Yun’s introducing it to Emperor Xuan’s court and this probably occurred in the years when he was favored by the emperor.

Little information remains on how the *Shiji* was presented to the imperial court. Since we do not see reason for the Sima family’s learning and teaching tradition centering on the *Shiji* to be discontinued after it was presented to the imperial court, the presentation of this text to the court might have involved considerable efforts in making other copies of the writings left by the Grand Historian. It is also imaginable that to make a copy of the original writing was not merely copying the over one hundred and two dozen *pian* chapters word by word, but it was also an editing process, in which, among other things, it might have become necessary to compile a postface introducing the author(s) and promoting the text. Who could have been the writer of this postface? Based on relevant information that we have, Yang Yun is definitely the most noticeable person who could have possibly composed it. The materials he utilized to compile this postface, however, were by no means his own invention. Based on the flow of the narrative, the insertion of those textual blocks, and the anecdotal nature of the materials examined in the second portion of this chapter, I would speculate not only that the materials adopted to construct the postface narrative were provided by the Sima family learning and teaching tradition, but also that the composition of the postface might have been related to the family learning and teaching circle as well. The finalization of the postface to some extent resembles the consensus reached through discussions occurring in editorial board meeting of today in which different concerns,

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questions, and suggestions must be fully considered before this piece of writing was finally presented to and possibly read by the emperor.\textsuperscript{125}

Such speculation, while remaining highly possible based on the above analysis, is by no means the single, definite answer to the question of the authorship of the \textit{Shiji} postface. It is possible that, unlike what the available evidence suggests, Yang Yun did not present the \textit{Shiji} to the court; or, if Yang Yun did indeed present the \textit{Shiji} to the court, that he did not write the postface. However, by far the most definite, reasonable viewpoint that we can reach based on available information is to attribute the \textit{Shiji} postface to Yang Yun. Nevertheless, my final conclusion is not dictated by the inference that Yang Yun must be the author of the \textit{Shiji} postface. The farther-reaching significance of the authorship issue of the \textit{Shiji} postface has to be connected to the late Western Han and early Eastern Han intellectual world in general. Suffice it here to say that this postface was not composed by Sima Qian, but was produced later when the \textit{Shiji} was presented to the imperial court after Sima Qian’s death.

Although it was included in the imperial collection, a few decades later when the imperial text collection was rearranged and cataloged by the Western Han scholars led by Liu Xiang and others, ten of the \textit{Shiji} chapters had already been lost, if the “Yiwen zhi” records on the \textit{Shiji} faithfully preserved the outcome of the rearrangement of the imperial library starting from 26 BCE.\textsuperscript{126} What those ten lost chapters were has been a keenly disputed issue, although a third-

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{125} There is no guarantee that the \textit{Shiji} postface we have received through a long, complicated history of transmission (over two thousand years) is 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 specifically.

\textsuperscript{126} It says in the “Yiwen zhi” that the among the 130 \textit{pian} of the \textit{Shiji}, “the writings of ten \textit{pian} on the catalogue have been lost” (shì piān yǒu lù wú shū 十篇有錄無書); see \textit{Hanshu} “Yiwen zhī,” 30:1714; for the year when the rearrangement of the imperial library started, see \textit{Hanshu} “Chengdi Liu Wu,” 10:310.
\end{footnotesize}
century scholar provides a list of them.\footnote{Zhang Yan 張晏, a Three Kingdoms (220—280 CE) period scholar and the author of the \textit{Hanshu yinshi} 漢書音释, provides a list of the ten lost \textit{pian Shiji} chapters. For the list of the lost ten \textit{pian Shiji} chapters, \textit{Hanshu} “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2724—2725. For a summary of this debate, see Yu Jiaxi 2007, 1—108.} As for how those ten chapters had been lost, we can only speculate. 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. Nevertheless, up to the time of Emperor Cheng 成帝 (33—7 BCE), “many of those texts had been scattered or disappeared” 書頗散亡 and this led to the initiation of the decades-long project of rearranging the imperial collection.\footnote{\textit{Hanshu} “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1701.} The \textit{Shiji} textual loss may have occurred before the late Han rearrangement of the imperial collection that had up to that point not been well cared for.

We need to be aware, however, that the actual number of loss of the \textit{Shiji} chapters in the imperial collection might have been more than ten. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, one of the goals of that late Han project directed by Liu Xiang was to recover the lost texts to form more inclusive versions of those texts. When it says in the “Yiwen zhi” and elsewhere in the \textit{Hanshu} that ten of the one hundred and thirty \textit{pian} chapters had been lost, this does not merely mean that those ten chapters could not be found in the imperial text collection, but almost amounts to a permanent, state-wide loss of them. But how could Liu Xiang and his team have known that there used to be those ten chapters? It was the table of contents included in the \textit{Shiji} postface, which happened to have survived the textual loss that told them how many chapters had been included when the text was presented to the court and this shows only that those chapters were not available at the time when the text was rearranged.

Notwithstanding the textual loss, the \textit{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 either attempted to obtain a part of the *Shiji* or even tried to recover those lost chapters or to add the writings of recent eras that had not been covered by the *Shiji*. The story that Liu Yu 刘宇, Prince of Dongping 東平 (r. 52—19 BCE), submitted a memorial to the throne asking for the Grand Historian’s writings is mentioned both in his own biography and in the *Hanshu* postface, where Ban Gu brags somewhat that his father had the honor of receiving the *Shiji* as a gift from the Emperor while the Prince of Dongping failed. It is also known that a number of Han literati followed the *Shiji* trying to write about the eras not covered by the *Shiji* or to patch the one hundred and thirty chapters by adding contents for those lost chapters, including Feng Shang 馮商 (ca. 53 BCE—18 CE), whose writings (also entitled as the writings by “Taishigong”) are listed in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*, and Chu Xiansheng 褚先生 (Mr. Chu, a *boshi* 博士 (Erudite) between the reigns of Emperor Yuan (r. 48—33 BCE) and Emperor Cheng (32—7 BCE)), whose writings have been almost integrated into the *Shiji* and have consequently survived to the present day. Liu Zhiji 劉知己 (661—721 CE) 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 班固 compiled the *Hanshu*. Moreover, although it says in the *Han jiuyi* that beginning from the time of Emperor Xuan the Grand Historian’s descendents could no longer inherit the position that their ancestors had held, the Sima family were enfeoffed during Wang Mang’s reign (r. 9—23 CE), albeit for a short while, thanks to the influence of the *Shiji*. The title that Wang Mang granted to them—“Masters of Comprehending History”—

129 *Hanshu* “Xuan Yuan liuwang zhuan,” 80:3324—3325; *Hanshu* “Xuzhuan,” 100:4203.

130 *Hanshu* “Yiwen zhi,” 30:1714; According to Zhang Yan, Chu xiansheng added four pian into the *Shiji*.

indicates that the Sima family learning tradition based on the *Shiji* might have continued till the time when they were enfeoffed.

From the time of its being known little by people outside the Sima family to the time of its being widely spread, and then to Wang Mang’s reign when the Sima family was enfeoffed because of it, the *Shiji* became a well-known text about half a century after Sima Qian’s death and was to exert great influence on the writing of Chinese history and people’s understanding of early Chinese history. The key point of this process was its reaching the Han imperial court and I believe that it must be associated with Sima Qian’s grandson 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 people’s mistaking the *Shiji* postface as Sima Qian’s self narration. For example, it seems that the *Hanshu* author Ban Gu evidently believed that this postface was written by Sima Qian, if what he says in Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography—“Qian’s self narration says so” 遷之自敘云爾 after the repetition of the contents of the *Shiji* postface—does not belong to an interpolation. Could Ban Gu have not been aware of how postfaces emerged and functioned in the formation of the multi-chapter texts, especially when we consider that Ban Gu’s father, Ban Biao, (on whose writings the *Hanshu* was based) participated in the late Western Han rearrangement of the imperial collection directed by Liu Xin? Or could Ban Gu’s belief that Sima Qian wrote a postface for his own work merely represent the intention of willingly mistaking that piece of writing as being written by Sima Qian, a Qu Yuan-like figure carrying his political scar that had a broad ramification on late Western and early Eastern Han intellectual thinking? The following section is an attempt to explore this issue.

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4.5. Authorial Intent and Han Intellectual Self-identification

The author functioned not only as an efficient agent in cataloging and stabilizing a multi-chapter text in the formation of early Chinese texts, as mentioned in the previous section, but it has also been applied as an important means to theorize and interpret the text attributed to him. Although this sort of authorial intent teased out from the author’s biographical or autobiographical information may lead to what is dubbed as the pitfall of “intentional fallacy” by literary criticism of the twentieth-century, it had been taken as a powerful approach to the dating, examining, and interpreting of early Chinese writings. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, author and text are mutually dependent in this two-dimensional framework, which in many cases suffers from the pitfall of circular interpretation that characterizes the “intentional fallacy.” Notwithstanding such fallacies, the author-text two-dimensional framework of interpretation had been the major approach to the Shiji in the past and it still is at present. Insisting upon the validity of the author’s intent approach in the history of Chinese narratology, as Yang Yi puts, has always been a “productive” method, and thus, the hallmark of the study of Chinese literature.\footnote{Yang Yi 1997, 199—202.} As a result, seeking Sima Qian’s intent by building cross-references between the Shiji postface and accounts from other sources still serves the major method in the Shiji study. The Shiji postface and the letter to Ren An that have inevitably become the most valuable primary sources are very rarely, if at all, scrutinized critically in terms of their authorship.

In throwing the truism that the Shiji postface is Sima Qian’s self narration into doubt, I also remain cautious not to take the claim of Sima Qian’s authorship of the letter to Ren An for granted. Considering it a supplement providing rich materials in regard to Sima Qian’s intent of
writing the *Shiji*, scholars usually go directly to dispute when this letter was written instead of who could have possibly written it.\textsuperscript{134} Nevertheless, in an interpretive framework focusing on the author’s intent, the inquiry on the reason for which Sima Qian wrote this letter sounds more fundamental. The real purpose for Sima Qian to compose this letter, as has long been held, is to vent his resentful feeling toward the punishment of castration that had brought unbearable shame to both himself and his family, and to confess that his enduring such great humiliation was in order to finish writing the *Shiji* that conveys his critical thinking of the Han government. This is also largely in accord with its contents. But could the contemporary political atmosphere have allowed Sima Qian to express freely his frustration and resentment over the emperor who ordered to castrate him? Has it not been mentioned in this letter that “I encountered and suffered from this disaster for the words that I spoke” 僕以口語遇遭此禍, an expression strongly indicating the danger of the kind of words that he is speaking?\textsuperscript{135} A careful consideration of this letter’s contents and the actual political situation under which this letter was allegedly composed seems not to fully embrace the seemingly undisputable truism that Sima Qian actually 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 the *Shiji* postface viewed as Sima Qian’s self narration and obviously presented as supplementary materials for Sima Qian’s biography. The *Hanshu* author does not mention how he obtained this letter, but pointed out that it was written in response to Sima Qian’s friend Ren An, who wrote to Sima Qian admonishing him to work more diligently to promote more worthies for the good of the dynasty at a moment when Sima Qian “enjoyed the honor and favor,”

\textsuperscript{134} For example, see Zhao Yi 1984; Wang Mingsheng 2005; Wang Guowei 1961.

\textsuperscript{135} *Hanshu* “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2736.
尊寵 serving as Secretariat Director after being castrated and before Ren An encountered his own political misfortune. According to what the narrator says in this letter, he had been busy with his official errands and could only find time to respond Ren An’s previous letter until the latter was accused of some unidentified “unfathomable crime” 不測之罪 and could be executed at any moment. In order not to have Ren An die with the regret that he had not received Sima Qian’s reply (if it indeed was) to his previous letter as well as to “release (Sima Qian’s own) resentment and frustration to make you (Ren An) understand” 舒憤懣以曉左右, Sima Qian crafted this letter. Intentionally or not, the narrator of this letter chose a moment that savors of both cruelty and irony not only to the receiver, but also Sima Qian, the purported author of this letter.

The focus of this letter is, without doubt, the punishment of castration that Sima Qian had suffered from. Ranked as the worst punishment in this letter, castration 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. It was such insurmountable humiliation, says in the letter, that had caused his self-negation and self-detachment from the regular life, that had restrained him from actively elevating and promoting the worthy, as admonished by Ren An, and that had been torturing him both mentally and physically at every moment. Nevertheless, what had led to such great humiliation, as carefully explained in this letter, was not a crime he committed, but the Emperor’s mistaking his

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honesty in facing the truth and his good intent to comfort the Emperor. Here, in protecting his own innocence, he once again defended Li Ling, a Han general surrendering himself to the Hun ruler Chanyu when defeated in battle. What is defended the most strongly in this letter is the choice of castration consciously made when Sima Qian facing the death penalty for the accusation of his “deceiving the Emperor” for, as he said, he could have chosen the more honorific way to commit suicide. The reason that he finally accepted the worst punishment was not his extreme devotion to filial piety emphasized in the Shiji postface, but his determination of living through the frustration, as those exemplary “extraordinary people” had achieved, to vent his resentment and to have all his sufferings repaid. The letter ends with a strong criticism upon both the imperial court and the world it governed, indicating that this was a “mad, delusional” world that did not deserve his service; that in this world he could not be understood and appreciated; and that the only reason for him to still live in this world was to see his “day of death” on which “the right and wrong be finally determined”.

Was it possible for a letter as such to be sent to a convict waiting for execution? Or could such a letter have been composed at all by a person who had just received the punishment of castration for the words he spoke and was still suffering as a consequence of that punishment?

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143 *Hanshu* “Sima Qian zhuan,” 62:2736.
The answer, I would say, is no, unless Sima Qian was ready to risk his and his family’s life. Keep in mind how Sima Qian had been accused of “deceiving the Emperor” and was originally sentenced to death. What he did, according to this letter, was no more than saying a few good words on Li Ling’s character and a speculation for the purpose of comforting the emperor that Li Ling’s surrendering could be his strategic move to “repay his debt to the Han” (bao Han 報漢) in the future. While the memory of the reason leading to his castration remaining fresh, he should have known the consequence for sure once the Emperor found out what he wrote in this letter. It is also indicated in this letter that Sima Qian cared very much about his family tradition. To risk his whole family in writing this letter contradicts the value proposed in this letter itself.

Yang Yun’s death serves as another good sample to measure the danger of epistolary writing during the Han. According to the Hanshu, Yang Yun lost all his power and the emperor’s favor for some of his inappropriate words, which were collected and held against him by his political opponents. In a reply to his friend Sun Huizong 孫會宗, who, like Ren An, wrote an admonishing letter to Yang Yun when the latter was in his political downturn, Yang Yun merely argues that he had the right to enjoy his life. Yang’s argumentation in that letter sounds similar to Sima Qian’s in the letter to Ren An, but its overtone of criticizing the court and the Emperor cannot be compared with the letter to Ren An. Nevertheless, when Yang Yun was later accused of causing solar eclipse and was investigated, his letter to Sun Huizong was found and presented to Emperor Xuan. “Emperor Xuan read it and disliked it” 宣帝見而惡之, and consequently Yang “was cut in two at the waist” 要斬 for the sentence of his “monstrous crime of


insubordination” 大逆無道, his wife and children were exiled to the border, and Sun Huizong and a number of other officials involved were removed from their official positions.¹⁴⁶

To put this concisely, there is little doubt that Sima Qian and his family could not have survived once this letter reached Emperor Wu, who, much worse than Emperor Xuan on this point, would even have his crown prince killed on learning that the latter might have cursed him.¹⁴⁷ 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 involved in a notorious political event later described as “the calamity caused by witchcraft” 巫蠱之禍, in which the crown prince was killed.¹⁴⁸ Based on this, I doubt Sima Qian would have ever composed such a letter, for, as an attendant serving the Emperor for decades, he would certainly know that the authority of the emperor was absolutely unchallengeable, and should have known the deadly consequences he would face once his writing such a letter was found out.

Moreover, even if Sima Qian did venture to write this letter, it was unlikely for him to have delivered it to Ren An without being caught. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a letter of this length (over 2000 Chinese characters) requires around one hundred bamboo or wood strips to write on. It would not be easy to deliver this letter to Ren An, had Sima Qian wanted the letter to be known only by Ren An, especially when Ren An was imprisoned as a convict to be executed. The purported author Sima Qian says clearly in this letter that, as a convict in prison

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¹⁴⁷ This was a big political event occurring in Emperor Wu’s late years. It began in 92 BCE, reached its climax in 90 BCE, and may have influenced a series of change of policies and governing in 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 “Gongsun Liu Tian Wang Yang Cai Chen Zheng,” 66:2877—2879; Hanshu “Wu wuzi zhuan,” 63: 2742—2749; Hanshu “Peng, Wu, Jiang, Xi, and Fu zhuan,” 45:2175—2179.

before, he himself knows how desperate the Han prison life was: his acquaintances and his previous colleagues “dared not to say a single word for him” 不為壹言, and he “alone had to stay with the officials of law” 獨與法吏為伍. 149 Elsewhere in the letter to Ren An he also mentions what one’s life could be like in a Han prison, albeit as a general description:

[The prisoner] crossed his hands and feet, bound with shackles and ropes; exposed his muscles and skin, paddled and whipped; and was confined within encircling walls.150

交手足，受木索，暴肌膚，受榜箠，幽於圜牆之中。

These words indicate that, similar to modern penal principle (if not worse), a convicted prisoner in the Han dynasty did not have the freedom to communicate with the world outside the prison. In the case of Ren An, since he was the Emperor’s prisoner associated with an alleged coup d’etat, as generally held, he must have been under serious court surveillance. It is imaginable that, even if Ren An was granted the right to communicate with his relatives and friends through letters when he was in prison, those letters should have been strictly checked and reported by the jailers before passing in or out of the jail. At such politically sensitive moment, it would be unimaginable that Sima Qian could not have realized the great danger and dared to deliver such a letter to Ren An.

Realizing the difficulty of delivering such a letter to the imprisoned Ren An, Lu Yaodong 逯耀東 (1933—2006 CE) suggests that this letter had never been intended to reach Ren An; instead, Sima Qian merely adopted this epistolary form to leave his posthumous writing and Ren


An serves in this letter none other than a silent character listening to Sima Qian’s monological catharsis. The reason that Sima Qian did so, according 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. In spite of all its inspiration, Lu’s argument is problematic on the following points: first, while noticing the danger of delivering such letter to Ren An, it somehow ignores the danger of writing it, as already pointed out; second, it does not explain why a letter was still needed when the Grand Historian’s self narration had been made available, for Lu believes that both the Shiji postface and the letter to Ren An serve the same purpose; and at last, the idea that Sima Qian thoughtfully left this exegetical letter to his future readers for hermeneutical purpose is somewhat anachronistic and speculative, and is impossible to validate. Epistolary writing may have emerged very early in the history of Chinese literature, as we see in the Zuozhuan, the Documents, and other early transmitted texts, but it has functioned up to the present day 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 address to the public for hermeneutical purpose is a misunderstanding about the kind of readers expected for these writings: instead of the masses or the commoners, they are rare species—sages and worthies—whom can only be singly met every five hundred years. In addition, a letter as such would be considered redundant to the sages and worthies; for them, no instruction is needed to understand the Shiji and appreciate its author.

If it was not Sima Qian, then who could have written this letter? On this point I find Lu Yaodong’s indication that the letter to Ren An is rather Sima Qian’s catharsis than a piece of

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practical writing inspiring, although his main argument that the letter to Ren An is Sima Qian’s posthumous writing is far less than substantial. Differing from Lu Yaodong’s point, however, I propose that even though this letter may to some extent reflect Sima Qian’s feelings, it is imaginative in nature. In fact, 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. That is to say, both Ren An and Sima Qian as historical figures are fictionalized in this letter, which, as a result, turns from practical into fictional writing. The function of this letter as the means of private communication is also correspondingly changed: it is meant to be written for the public. Such a clever way of manipulating the form of epistolary writing enables the real author of this letter to vent his own frustration in Sima Qian’s name, with his mouth, but at the same time it 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 aspect, the Sima Qian in the “Letter to Ren An” in relation to its invisible author somewhat resembles the Qu Yuan in the Chuci to Wang Yi, if Wang was the first person who attributed those songs in 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 through a well-known figure with whom the writer or the editor identifies himself.

But who could this hidden author of the “Letter to Ren An” be? I would start this search by considering a role possibly played by Yang Yun in this regard, because there is a letter
bearing some major similarities with the letter to Ren An attributed to him. As discussed earlier, 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 private writing between Yang Yun and his friend Sun Huizong. Since it is said that Yang Yun’s death was partly related to this letter, we may feel more confident that Yang Yun actually wrote this letter. It is interesting to note, however, that this letter was ferreted out from Yang Yun’s home instead of Sun Huizong’s. It is possible that Yang had not gotten the chance to send out this letter before his house was searched; it could also be related to other reasons, such as his personal habit of making copies of his writings; nevertheless, we cannot completely exclude the possibility that this letter, like the letter to Ren An, was not written by Yang Yun but by some unknown writer. The uncomfortable coincidence that neither the letter to Ren An nor the letter to Sun Huizong had ever been sent out somewhat leaves the conventional attribution open to question. Since I will return to this point later in this section, now we only need to focus on the similarities between this letter and the letter to Ren An.

According to the *Hanshu*, after Yang Yun lost his rank and official appointment because the words that he said and the comments that he made in various occasions were interpreted as slanders toward the Emperor, Yang retired from political life and lived luxuriously at home. Upon hearing the gossip and rumors about Yang’s living style, Sun Huizong wrote a letter to Yang, admonishing him as a close friend that instead of making profit, supporting retainers, and befriending errant knights, Yang should restrain himself from being engaged in any ostentatious activity and show his obedience to the Emperor by living in solitude and regret.152

Yang Yun’s response to Sun Huizong’s message is rather short in comparison with the letter to Ren An, but it contains several major motifs similar to the latter. Like in the letter to Ren An, in the letter to Sun Huizong, Yang Yun strongly defends his stance. It begins with a formulaic self-negation and an appreciation—that is soon proved to be ironic—of Sun Huizong’s admonition; immediately after his appreciation is a tactful implication that Sun’s admonition results from some misunderstanding and thus, deserves Yang’s explanation, and this is what this letter is for. Yang’s contention exactly follows the rationale presented in the letter to Ren An: even at the highest power and splendor of my career I did not accomplish anything, how could I still retain such ambition as you suggest when I know that now “my mistake is too big and my conduct is too defective” 過已大矣，行已虧矣 to make it?\textsuperscript{153} Now that the Emperor has taken away his titles as Marquis of Pingtong and Chamberlain for Attendants, Yang Yun argues, he should obey and follow the Emperor’s order to feel satisfied with being a commoner, living, thinking, and behaving like a commoner, and bear no moral or official obligations as a Marquis or a high official does. Therefore, after making Sun Huizong’s admonition baseless, Yang asks a rhetorical question, “Now how could you reprove me with the requirements for ministers and high officials” 今子尚安得以卿大夫之制而責僕哉?\textsuperscript{154} This letter ends with some rather pointed comments on 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 “intention” (志).\textsuperscript{155} Although we should not take all what Yang Yun says in this letter at face value, such motifs as self-defense, self-negation, misfortune caused by the spoken words, the experience of


being jailed, and most evidently, political frustration, complaint, and insinuation, can be seen in both letters. In fact, the contents of these two letters are comparable passage by passage: as shows in the following tables, most of what says in the letter to Sun Huizong can find its counterpart in the letter to Ren An not only in terms of their connotation (Table A), but also by their wordings (Table B).

Table A: “The Letter to Sun Huizong” and its paired passages of “The Letter to Ren An”

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<td>懦*材朽行穢，文質無所底， *幸</td>
<td>籈者*辱賜書，教以慎於接物，推賢進士為務， *意氣勤</td>
<td>Self-negation; appreciation of admonition; pointing out the need of explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>賴先人餘業得備宿衛，遭遇時變以獲爵位，終非其任，卒與禍會。足下哀其愚，蒙賜書，教督以所不及， <em>殷勤甚厚。然竊恨足下不深惟其終始，而流俗人之言也。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</em>略陳其愚，唯君子察焉！</td>
<td>蒙賜書，教督以所不及， <em>殷勤甚厚。然竊恨足下不深惟其終始，而流俗人之言也。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</em>略陳其愚，唯君子察焉！</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>懦家方隆盛時，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，又不能與群僚同心並力，陪輔朝廷之遺忘，已負竊位素餐之責久矣。懷祿貪勢，不能自退， *遭遇變故，橫被口語，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，復奉先人之丘墓乎？伏惟聖主之恩，不可勝量。</td>
<td>賴先人緒業，得侍罪轡轡下，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〕，有斬將搴旗之功；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</td>
<td>Self-negation; experience of being jailed; explaining why Sun Huizong’s blame was groundless.</td>
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156 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.
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。

遂，*苟合取容，無所短長之效，可見於此矣。甭，僕亦嘗下大夫之列，陪外廷末議。*不以此時引維綱，盡思慮，今*已虧形為埽除之隸，在闔茸之中，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！

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，亨羊炰羔，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，落而為萁。人生行樂耳，須富貴何時！」是日也，拂衣而喜，奮褎低卬，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，*汙辱之處，惲親行之。*下流之人，衆毁所歸，不寒而栗。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！

夫西河魏土，文侯所興，有段干木、田子方之遺風，漂然皆有節槪，知去就之分。頃者，足下離舊土，臨安定，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。書不能盡意，故*略陳固陋。
*underlined passages also appear in Table B

Table B: Part of similar wordings appearing in “The Letter to Sun Huizong” and “The Letter to Ren An”

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<tr>
<td>材朽行穢</td>
<td>身殘處穢</td>
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<tr>
<td>幸賴先人餘業</td>
<td>僕賴先人緒業</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙賜書</td>
<td>辱賜書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>殷勤甚厚</td>
<td>意氣勤勤愼愼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>猥隨俗之毀譽</td>
<td>而流俗人之言</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>略陳其愚</td>
<td>略陳固陋</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不能以此時有所建明，以宣德化</td>
<td>不以此時引維綱，盡思慮</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>負竊位素餐之責</td>
<td>苟合取容, 無所短長之效, 可見於此</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>遭遇變故，橫被口語</td>
<td>以口語遇遭此禍</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>奉先人之丘墓</td>
<td>上父母之丘墓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>行已虧</td>
<td>己虧形</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>污辱之處</td>
<td>污辱先人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下流之人，衆毀所歸，不寒而栗</td>
<td>負下未易居，下流多謗議。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“道不同，不相為謀。”今子尚安得以卿大夫之制而責僕哉！</td>
<td>今少卿乃教以推賢進士，無乃與僕之私指謬乎！</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obvious close connection between the two demands an explanation. According to Lu Yaodong’s theory, Sima Qian wanted to pass down his letter to Ren An as an exegetical piece to his Shiji so much that this letter together with the Shiji was left to his grandson Yang Yun. The frustration represented in the letter to Ren An as well as its wording, suggests Lu Yaodong, must
have deeply influenced Yang Yun, and this explains those similarities of these two letters listed above. Lu even speculates that Yang Yun grew up with Sima Qian, educated by his grandfather and knowing well the traumas brought about to him by the punishment of castration. As a result, it is not surprising at all that in Yang’s disposition the enmity toward Emperor Wu as well as the Han dynasty had been nourished in his early age. This also accounts for the loss of Emperor’s biography, Lu explains: a strong 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 the rearrangement of the imperial library started. 157

The assumption that the letter to Ren An was written and passed down to Yang Yun by Sima Qian is the sine qua non of the above type of argument. Such assumption, however, is not proved and cannot be taken to be true. If Sima Qian had 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 must be adjusted. As a result, the imaginary scene depicted by Lu Yaodong that Yang Yun’s living with and being educated by his grandfather, although not totally impossible, loses its base in his argument. In fact, 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.

Unfettered by the assumption that the letter to Ren An was an exegetical piece intended to be written by Sima Qian, I propose the following three possibilities in regard to the authorship

of the two letters under discussion. First, the similarities shown in these two letters in terms of their writing style, structure, motif, and wording, suggest to a large extent that Yang Yun is probably also the author of letter to Ren An, if he is indeed the author of the other. Moreover, 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. What led to Yang Yun writing the letter to Ren An as his grandfather may have something to do with the political situation that Yang Yun faced at that time. Nevertheless, the linkage of the textual similarities, authorial intent, as well as historical and political background in this theory, however plausible, does not fully prove that only Yang Yun could have written the letter to Ren An, even though we follow the *Hanshu* account and believe that Yang wrote the letter to Sun Huizong. After all, there exists another possibility that, 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 first, this second theory appears even more difficult to be substantialized. In fact, by assigning “The Letter to Ren An” to an unknown author, this theory avoids any further examination of the connection between these two letters as well as their authorship: it simply admits all the similarities between the two and reiterates the *Hanshu* account that “The Letter to Sun Huizong” was written by Yang Yun.

Following the *Hanshu* account that Yang Yun is the author of the letter to Sun Huizong serves as the prerequisite to both of the above two possibilities. If, as mentioned earlier, Yang Yun did not write the letter to Sun Huizong at all, the whole question raised at the beginning proposing a possible connection between Yang Yun and “The Letter to Ren An” is dismissed. What follows such dismissal, then, is the waiver of any attempt of identifying individual writers
who were responsible for the two letters in discussion. This third possibility that I propose holds
that neither Sima Qian nor Yang Yun had written those letters; nevertheless, rather than a nihilist
approach, it indicates that the identification of the authorship of these two letters must be
projected onto the background of the Han intellectual history and the function of epistolary
writing as literature in the Han dynasty.

No matter how different the above three theories appear to be, they all agree that
epistolary writing in the Han served more than a practical means of exchanging private
information of the involved parties; rather, it had been developed by the late Western Han and
early Eastern Han period as a form of literature in which fictional elements play 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 the framework that enables
him to speak out in the voice of Sima Qian as part of the created dialogue. It is true that neither
Sima Qian nor Ren An is an imaginary figure; instead, both of them are, however vaguely
recorded, nodes of historical events available in Chinese historical narratives. The historical
context, however, serves merely as a narrative device in this letter and entails neither that this
letter was actually written by Sima Qian nor that what is written in this letter represents what
actually occurred. This is a conscious manipulation, or rather, a skillful application, of both
historical knowledge and literary imagination to pass on the writer’s own feeling or opinion in
the imaginary voice of a historical figure. Such artful manipulation, on the one hand, enhances
the rhetorical or persuasive effects meant to achieve by putting the contents in an apprehensible,
meaningful historical context, and, on the other hand, enables 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.
What enabled the development of such sophisticated literary usage of epistolary writing in the Han Dynasty? To answer this question fully requires a thorough investigation of the evolution of early Chinese literary and historical writings in relation to those sociopolitical changes in which early Chinese writings were situated. One thread that is especially worth considering, at least for the purpose of this chapter, is, as touched upon elsewhere in this chapter, the changed status of the whole Han intellectual group in its relation to the emperor as the result of the quick fading of the Warring States period tradition that had allowed the predecessors of the Han intellectuals to have more freedom to choose their rulers to serve. The imperial social structure and governing model established by the First Emperor, however, abruptly terminated the environment of choice of the Warring States social and geopolitical environment. It is true that at in the early era of the Western Han dynasty a dual governing system 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 central 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 their number, and, finally, was able to subordinate those groups to the central government in order to secure the gradual formation of a unified empire in its social, geopolitical, cultural, and ideological terms. The enterprise of such consolidation was initiated from the era of Emperor Jing (r. 157—141 BCE) and was largely accomplished during Emperor Wu’s reign (141—87 BCE). 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 the primary category in text arranging and cataloging accompanying with 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 prevented by assigning authors to those previously anonymous texts, as if assisting vagabonds to find their homes, stabilizing them, bringing them meaning, and further positioning them in the imperial system. In such a new system characterized by its demand for strict order and central control, authorship not only enabled a previously rather chaotic textual tradition to be sorted and classified, but it also efficiently bound the author and the text together and made the author be responsible for the text attributed to him or written by 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 actually functioning as the means of imperial control. In my opinion, 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 his own position as the author temporarily to a historical figure, the actual author of a letter was able to hide and voice himself behind the straw man without being submitted to the coercive imperial power. Such a tactical change of the usage of epistolary writing aimed not merely at avoiding punishment, but it is also a paradoxical method of breaking through of imperial control: claiming the writer’s authorship by hiding his own identity.

It is interesting to note that, besides putting his own words in the mouth of his double, 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 frustration through writing. These figures are portrayed as a group bearing various sufferings, mostly politically related, being imprisoned, demoted, tortured, amputated, or exiled, but they are exemplary figures known for their literary achievements. Writing is viewed here as a response to misfortune, frustration, and isolation, the agent through which their voice is able to reach far into the future those who would understand, recognize, and appreciate them, and the weapon to confront and overcome the injustice, misery, and their grief. Since most of the cases on the list and especially that of Sima Qian—the purported narrator—deal with the relationship with the ruler, writing, by conveying the voice of the frustrated, immediately becomes political dissention from the ruler and it balances the overwhelming odds against the writers in the ruler-minister relationship. This is why, from the imperial point of view, writing must be held accountable under the inspection of the imperial power. The notorious “Burning of the Books” under the First Emperor’s rule and the late Western Han reorganizing and cataloging the imperial collection of texts, for instance, both resulted from such need of imperial control, albeit being carried out in different ways. The Han court control of writing was not less tight, however, and, on this point, the role that Yang Yun’s letter to Sun Huizong played in his death serves as a stunning example.

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 put in Sima Qian’s mouth in a different context by the author behind the narrative, be it Yang Yun or some unknown individual(s). The authorial

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intent indicated by this list of exemplary figures, rather than being given by Sima Qian himself, reflects the hidden author’s interpretation of the *Shiji*, and this has exerted tremendous influence on the *Shiji* hermeneutics, including on those Han scholars who took the liberty to rewrite the *Shiji* or add its sequels. Within such explanatory framework, the *Shiji* is interpreted as a text written by Sima Qian in revenge for the punishment of castration that he received. Such interpretation, while providing a meaning to this rather complex, voluminous text by simplifying it, is at odds with those issues in regard to the author(s) and sequel writers, the inconsistent parts found in the text, and the text formation and reception evolving text transmission. Nevertheless, I am not suggesting that the authorial intent approach to the *Shiji* be simply dismissed; instead, I propose a reading in which individual intent is connected with the core of Han intellectual thinking: the thinking that was deeply imbedded in their search for personal dignity, others’ recognition, and social prestige in a forever changed social and power structure. The yesterday of the Warring States that was viewed nostalgically as the heaven for travelling intellectual career seekers was gone, and the newly established imperial era would endure for the coming two millennia. As a result, the Han intellectuals’ views on merits and value, especially on such virtue as loyalty to the ruler in relation to the freedom of choice that their predecessors used to have and other motifs that attached to that sort of freedom, however limited, would have to be readjusted and reshaped in this newly established imperial system, and this is reflected in the writings of the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An.
Chapter 5 The Author as Translator: Foreign Monk, the Authoritative Author

Discussion of the origins of Buddhist belief and practice in China elicited from early on a wide array of tentative theories and debates based on related stories and scattered records. Among these theories, the “official”—and perhaps the most widely circulated—version holds that Indic Buddhist belief was introduced into China during the era of the Eastern Han Emperor Ming 漢明帝 (r. 57-75 CE). Details of the legend vary, but the basic elements consist of the emperor’s dream, an imperial mission, two (Indian or Rouzhi 月支) monks, and a translated text entitled the Sishier zhang jing 四十二章經 (The Scripture in Forty-Two Sections), disputably the first Buddhist text translated from a foreign language—Indic, Iranian, or Rouzhi, into Chinese and the one on which the theory rests.

Taking this text as an example, I will devote the current chapter to the translation of early Chinese Buddhist texts. How do we understand the texts as well as the legends built up over centuries about their translation? How are we to understand the legends surrounding the original texts? How should we approach issues pertaining to the dating of the translations as well as their authenticity? In the following I will first briefly review the studies on early Chinese translation of Buddhist texts from a methodological perspective, then provide an assessment of the methods encompassed in the studies, and finally, by examining the Sishi’er zhang jing, which has been wrapped in layers of legend in connection with the similarly legendary stories of An Shigao 安世高 and the translations attributed to him, attempt an alternative understanding of “translatorship,” a term I have coined in parallel with “authorship.”

1 According to Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary published 1913 by C. & G. Merriam Co, the word “translatorship” denote “the office or dignity of a translator.” This denotation, however, has little to do with the
redefine early Chinese Buddhist translations associated with inquiries on the origin and nature of early Chinese Buddhism in terms of their translatorship.

5.1. Sources and “Evidence”

According to the bibliographical information provided by the Southern Dynasties monk Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518 CE), dozens of Indian scriptures had already been translated into Chinese in the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 CE). Hundreds more were to come in the ensuing centuries. These early Chinese versions of Indian scriptures are important not only because they reflect how and what part of early Buddhism was introduced into early China but also because they preserve early versions of early Indian Buddhist texts that had been either lost or so altered over time as to differ substantially from the original versions. Indeed, in the case of a fair number of early Indian scriptures, the transmitted Chinese translations of those Indic texts represent the only medium through which such reconstruction may be attempted.

These texts carry specific philological significance in terms of the Chinese pronunciations of certain Buddhist terms, the vernacular elements of the language used, and the development of a specific literary style heavily influenced by the translation of Buddhist texts. Studies on the Chinese translation of Buddhist texts, albeit largely neglected by early generations of Western Buddhist scholars, have increasingly attracted attention in recent Buddhist studies.

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3 Deeg 2008, 79-82. The philological study of Chinese Buddhist translations in the past hundred years has mainly been carried on by Japanese scholars. In the West only a handful of scholars has conducted research from that
This trend is observable in the recent publication of papers presented at an international symposium, “Early Chinese Buddhist Translations,” held in Vienna in 2007 and in Jan Nattier’s *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations: Texts from the Eastern Han* 東漢 and *Three Kingdoms* 三國 *Periods* (henceforth referred to as the *Guide*).⁴ In these two volumes we can follow not only the revival of Buddhist philology spurred by the discoveries of new textual materials in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Japan, and elsewhere, but also a new enthusiasm for the study of early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts.⁵

Although more attention has been paid to the translations of Buddhist scriptures in comparison with earlier generations of Buddhist scholars, the current trend in Buddhist studies dealing with early Chinese translations has not made a significant methodological breakthrough. Reviewing the arguments made by various scholars in the above-mentioned two volumes, for example, one finds that, however elaborated, the fundamental framework and tools applied rely largely on the oversimplified understanding of translatorship to date, a method heavily influenced by early scholarship in Western Buddhist Studies, such as the works of Erik Zürcher.

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⁵ Harrison 2008, 205-249; Nattier 2008, 163-168. The word “revival,” according to Harrison, may not be accurate to describe the recent increasing scholarly interest in Buddhist philology, for he feels it can be considered neither dead nor dying given the increasing attention paid to it in recent years.
decades ago.\textsuperscript{6} Since the major methods that the \textit{Guide} adopts derive from such outdated thinking, a review of how this methodology works in Nattier’s monograph is warranted.\textsuperscript{7}

The \textit{Guide} deals exclusively with Buddhist texts translated into Chinese during the second and third centuries CE (from the late Eastern Han to the Three Kingdoms). Its main objective is to “make available, in an easily accessible form, the most current information as to which Chinese Buddhist translations can be assigned with confidence to the Han and Three Kingdoms periods.”\textsuperscript{8} To achieve the goal of making her work a handy guide, Nattier compiles three appendices based on the examination of all the translations alleged to have been made in those eras. The appendices include an index to translations dated to the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms periods by their \textit{Taishō} text numbers (Appendix 1), an index of Sanskrit and Pāli titles (Appendix 2), and a list of translations dating from these periods and arranged chronologically with clear attributions to individual translators (Appendix 3). She is at pains to provide a chronology for the “authentic” translations of early Buddhist texts, and all three appendices serve this end. For example, any text, even though ascribed to the periods under discussion in the \textit{Taishō} database, should not be considered genuine in terms of its attribution if it is excluded from Appendix 1; moreover, its Indic origin deserves questioning if this text cannot find a Sanskrit or Pāli match in Appendix 2.\textsuperscript{9} The confidence revealed in such argumentation clearly

\textsuperscript{6} Zürcher 1970, 1-80 (especially 10-17, 32-57, and passim); Zürcher 1977, 177-203. To his 1977 article, two Chinese scholars add more evidence following Zürcher’s argumentation; see Chen Xiulan 1997, 55-57 and Zhang Chunxiu 2008, 55-58. This is another example showing that current discussion on issues regarding early Chinese translation of Buddhist texts still goes on in a discourse created decades ago.

\textsuperscript{7} Nattier 2008, 30.

\textsuperscript{8} Nattier 2008, 29.

\textsuperscript{9} Nattier 2008, 29, 169-178.
originates from the chronology provided in Appendix 3, a list of translations that are considered to have been authentically produced during the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms periods.

Notwithstanding the convenience provided by these appendices, questions about how such a chronology is determined need to be asked. How do we judge a translation to be authentic or not? How is it dated? Why is it ascribed to one instead of another translator? These are among the fundamental questions demanding careful methodological consideration before such a chronology can be undertaken.

The authenticity issue is directly related to the attributions of the Chinese translations. How can we identify the translator(s) of a specific Buddhist text? Modern Buddhist scholars seem to have no choice but to follow earlier bibliographical works preserved in one form or another to the present day.10 For the study of early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures from this perspective, Dao’an’s 道安 (312-385 CE) scriptural catalogue, the Zongli zhongjing mulu 綜理眾經目錄 (Catalogue of the Comprehensively Arranged Various Scriptures) completed in 374 CE, is particularly important. As one of the earliest catalogues of this kind, Dao’an’s catalogue has usually been considered one of the most reliable sources for the issue of translatorship. Dao’an’s work, however, is no longer extant. Everything we know about this catalogue relies on another Buddhist bibliographical work, the Chu sanzang ji ji 出三藏記集 (Collection of Notes on Translated Tripitaka) completed by Sengyou 僧佑 (445-518 CE) around 515 CE. Sengyou compiled the Chu sanzang ji ji in consultation with a number of previous bibliographical works and sources available to him, including Dao’an’s catalogue carefully teased out from the notes in the extant version of the Chu sanzang ji ji: Buddhist scholars

10 Nattier 2008, 11.
typically identify such expressions as “gu lu” 古錄 (“ancient catalogue”), jiu lu 舊錄 (“previous catalogues”), or “An lu” 安錄 (“Dao’an’s catalogue”) as the Zongli zhongjing mulu. Such expressions are mainly scattered in Fascicles 2, 3, and 5 of the Chu sanzang ji ji, a fifteen-fascicle collection of catalogues, colophons, and biographies of eminent monks. However dispersed they are, it is through the Chu sanzang ji ji, the preserver and also the filter, that we are able to catch a glimpse of the major source for the Guide.

Sticking to the reconstruction of Dao’an’s catalogue based on the limited information running through the Chu sanzang ji ji, Nattier first determines attributions to a few central translators as the benchmark for other attributions. She unconditionally trusts attributions made in Dao’an’s catalogue as direct links to the actual translation activities, translated scriptures, and translator groups, historicizing them as a result. Once such a cornerstone is established, a few translators are identified, their translatorship is confirmed and their corresponding literary styles and characteristic vocabularies constructed. Thus a whole set of standards applied to categorize other works, with or without attributions, comes about. The sources—above all the Zongli zhongjing mulu, or rather, the Chu sanzang ji ji—providing the essential starting point for the Guide are dubbed “external evidence,” while the constructed literary style and vocabulary of a specific translated scripture attributed to a specific translator, the “internal evidence.” These two kinds of evidence constitute the major strength of Nattier’s method. Taking advantage of the

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11 Other phrases, such as “huo yun 或云” (some say) and “bie lu 別錄 (other catalogues) are also frequently seen in Sengyou’s commentaries; see Shi Sengyou 1995, 23-65 and passim; for a summary of the sources the Chu sanzang ji ji relies on, see Shi Sengyou 1995, 5-8.

12 For a reconstruction of Dao’an’s catalogue, see Tan Shibao 1991, 67-82.

13 Nattier 2008, 163-164, 8-13, and passim.

14 Nattier 2008, 11.
convenient word searching tools provided by digitalized Buddhist texts and previous scholarship, Nattier builds links between various translator groups and various literary styles and vocabularies and uses these links to return and check the authenticity of those attributions that enable the construction of the “internal evidence” from what she calls the “starting point.”

Since the concept of “starting point” takes on crucial significance, the question of how credible is the information it provides deserves our special attention. What prompted Dao’an to catalogue those translated sutras? What sources did he rely on when he compiled his catalogue? How do we identify and understand the information from Dao’an’s catalogue later scattered in Sengyou’s compilation? These are among those fundamental questions that need to be addressed to evaluate the above-mentioned approach which is applied not only in Nattier’s work but also widely adopted by scholars of Early Buddhism in general. The following section is designed to fulfill this need. Since the method in question uses the starting point to identify early translators and their translations from the “external evidence,” the following section will start by reviewing how related “external evidence” works in defining the starting point.

5.2. Method Examined

The “external evidence” referred to in the Guide comprises two categories: bibliographical material and biographical materials. Although a number of other catalogues are mentioned in—the Zhongjing mulu 種經目錄 (Catalogue of the Many Sacriptures) by Fajing 法經 dated 594 CE and the Lidai sanbao ji 历代三寶記 (Records of the Tripitaka of the Past Dynasties) by Fei Changfang 費長房 dated 597 CE—it is the remaining Zongli zhongjing mulu 種經目錄 preserved in the Chu sanzang ji ji that serves as the most reliable source to identify those early translators and date their translations. Once such a benchmark is established, inconsistent
information preserved in other sources must to yield to Dao’an’s authority contained in the
_Zongli zhongjing mulu_ reconstructed through Sengyou’s extant work. A particularly interesting
phenomenon is that the number of attributions to early translators of Buddhist scriptures
increases in later catalogues as compared to earlier ones. This phenomenon is not explored to
elicit meaningful information regarding those attributions in relation to the development of early
translatorship. The assumption that the earliest catalogue amounts to be the most reliable source
simply dismisses later added attributions as false attributions. The _Lidai sanbao ji_ is considered
the least reliable source because of its large number of such “false attributions.” Similarly,
attributions made in Fajing’s _Zhongjing mulu_ and other catalogues, though not accused as false
as those included in the _Lidai sanbao ji_, are also doubted and need additional “careful
consideration” when they are not found in Sengyou’s catalogue.15

Why is the _Zongli zhongjing mulu_, a partially survived catalogue, given so much
authority? Relevant comments made here and there in the _Guide_ indicate three reasons. First,
Sengyou’s (as well as Dao’an’s) work “gives the impression of being the product of a careful and
critical group of scholars;”16 and “he was an exacting scholar who treated his sources with great
care,” although inconsistencies are by no means rare in his work.17 Elsewhere the _Guide_ stresses
that Dao’an was a careful scholar: he not only listed the translated scriptures in his catalogue but
“read the texts himself, making his own decisions about the likely authorship of some previously
unattributed works.”18 Both Dao’an and Sengyou, the “two scholar-monks,” “share a well-

16 Nattier 2008, 14.
18 Nattier 2008, 11.
deserved reputation for high scholarly standards.”¹⁹ In short, these comments attempt to convey a simple, direct message: the reliability of the two sources stems from the trustworthiness of their authors, who, portrayed as serious scholars, were primarily concerned with objectivity when compiling their catalogues.

Second, the *Chu Sanzang jiji* itself is considered an archaic work. To enhance the reliability of the *Chu sanzang ji ji*, the *Guide* stresses that the *Chu sanzang ji ji* is the oldest extant catalogue of Buddhist scriptures translated into Chinese. As part of the *Zongli zhongjing mulu* has survived to the present day as a result of its inclusion in the *Chu sangzang ji ji*, the *Zongli Zhongjing mulu* must be even earlier; in fact, it is considered the earliest catalogue as such.²⁰ This notion of valuing the earlier over the later information has to do with the imagination of textual originality: the earlier a text is, the closer it is to its “original form,” and, following such reasoning, the greater its validity as testimony for the “original form” of a given text.

Finally, as stated in the *Guide*, the method guiding this project of making a chronology for the early translated Buddhist scriptures needs a starting point with authored and dated translations, and giving weight to Dao’an’s *Zongli zhongjing mulu* preserved in the *Chu sangzang ji ji* fulfills this need.²¹ Since Nattier’s study is “organized around the names of particular individuals who are said to have played a key role in the initial period of the translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese,” it requires identifying those individuals based on external

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¹⁹ Nattier 2008, 11.

²⁰ Nattier 2008, 11-13. Though stating that the date of Dao’an’s and a few others’ catalogues mentioned by Sengyou in the *Chu sanzang ji ji* is still much of an on-going scholarly debate, Nattier does bring up Tan Shibao’s theory indicating that neither the “bie lu” 別錄 ("separated catalogue") nor the “jiu lu” 舊錄 (“previous catalogue”) is older than the *Zongli zhongjing mulu*. Tan Shibao 1991, 33-52.

²¹ Nattier 2008, 11.
evidence. The Guide thus hails Dao’an’s catalogue, disputably the earliest work of this kind preserved in the oldest extant *Chu sangzang ji ji*, as the most suitable source to generate the much needed conversation between translated scriptures and their attributions.

Compared with the bibliographical source (mainly the *Chu sangzang ji ji*), the significance of biographical material—mainly the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 for this period—is downplayed and conflated with the *Chu sangzang ji ji* because of the former’s relatively later date. The *Gaoseng zhuan*, compiled by Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554 CE), is said to have been finished around 530 CE, fifteen years later than the completion of Sengyou’s catalogue.22 The opening section of the *Gaoseng zhuan* has long been held essential to the study of the early Chinese translation of Buddhist texts for its inclusion of the biographies of early translator-monks. Nevertheless, because it is dated fifteen years later than the *Chu sangzang ji ji*, the information that the *Gaoseng zhuan* contains similar to that in the *Chu sangzang ji ji* is considered in the Guide to have followed or even replicated Sengyou’s work “word by word.”23 Why must it be Huijiao who “plagiarized” Sengyou’s writings? This has to do with the dates of the two works: the *Gaoseng zhuan* is dated fifteen years later than the *Chu Sanzang ji ji*. The method adopted by the Guide requires all related sources to be clearly dated and well sorted, so that the earliest and authoritative reference can be determined and the anxiety caused by undated resources eliminated.24 In fact, although the Guide lists the *Gaoseng zhuan* and a few other bibliographical works as “external evidence,” the *Gaoseng zhuan* has never been trusted as the *Chu sangzang ji ji*, if only because it is dated fifteen years later than the latter. The Guide has remained fairly consistent in establishing the

22 Zürcher 1970, 10.

23 Nattier 2008, 13, 16.

Chu sangzang ji ji (because it contains information on the “earliest” Zongli zhongjing mulu) as the single most important source with a few minor adjustments.

Once jump-started by the attributions made in the authoritative Chu sanzang ji ji and part of the Zongli zhongjing mulu surviving in the former, the ensuing analysis of certain linguistic features of early translations of Buddhist scriptures in conjunction with their attributions becomes possible. A list of “consensus texts,” which serve as the core texts to define the translation style and the vocabulary characteristic of the translation style and in the end turn out to be “internal evidence,” is based upon both the Chu sanzang ji ji and the research of either Ui Hakuju or Erik Zürcher. In other words, the “internal evidence” is a specific database established to pair the translators and the translations according to the analysis of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and literary style of the core texts. Once this sort of database exists, a scholar can employ it to investigate the sub-groups of translations and identify their attributions. This is exactly what the Guide has achieved: it provides a chronology of those Buddhist scriptures considered to have been translated during the second and third centuries. The chronology, made strictly according to the method widely adopted in the studies of early Buddhism, is expected to join other scholars’ works—such as Ui’s, Zürcher’s, and Sengyou’s—as “external evidence” to facilitate further studies on the attributions of early translated Buddhist scriptures. In short, this method may be illustrated as a circular mechanism:

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It results from the attempt to describe the actual circulation of translated Buddhist scriptures among different social groups in early China based on certain linguistic features of the translations that have survived in the Buddhist corpus. Assuming that the translations attributed to early translators have remained basically unchanged throughout their long transmission, scholars of early Buddhism have located vernacular elements in some early translations (especially in those attributed to Lokakṣema (Zhi Loujiachen 支婁迦讖, fl. 168-189 CE)) and try to link them to a possible social, cultural, and geographical environment in which early Chinese Buddhism was fostered. On the basis of this assumption a dichotomy of “vernacular versus literary” is constructed upon limited data. According to the Guide, it reveals two distinct audiences to whom the translations were addressed: the literary style reflects the taste of Chinese literati and accordingly, the more elegant and classical translations were made by and for the literati; in contrast, the translations containing frequent vernacular expressions and transliteration of terms foreign to Chinese were received by “an audience of immigrants of various 

Moreover, the *Guide* goes so far as to speculate that the lack of a style combining vernacular speech with domesticated vocabulary in those early translations attests the absence of “the masses of uneducated, and monolingual, Chinese” among early Buddhist believers.\(^{28}\) The confidence of making a chronology for early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures based on some of their linguistic features is rooted in precisely such academic trend. It directly supports the belief that some terms and expressions found in early Chinese Buddhist translations—Buddhist names, technical terms, or even pronouns, particles, and the structure of interrogative sentences—can be used to identify the translations as well as the “specific geographical and/or social milieux” with which those translations were associated.\(^{29}\)

By applying both “external evidence” and “internal evidence” to date and analyze the texts, the *Guide* is able to bring a verity of sources together and update the scholarship on selected texts. The results, as shown in Appendix 3, suggest that the *Guide* has raised the scholarship to a more “scientific” level. Although the digitized Buddhist corpus and online searching tools are by no means new, the *Guide* has deliberately brought them into the spotlight.\(^{30}\)

One fundamental question arises, however, when we consider the logic behind this method, whose cornerstone is the starting point, a piece of external evidence with the ultimate authority of guaranteeing a list of earliest translators and the scriptures they translated. Nattier designates Dao’an’s partially surviving catalogue as the starting point because she considers the

\(^{27}\) Nattier 2008, 18.

\(^{28}\) Nattier 2008, 18.

\(^{29}\) Nattier 2008, 18-19.

\(^{30}\) Nattier 2008, 30.
catalogue an early product and its compiler, reliable. But can we simply equate a source’s antiquity with its objectivity and directly translate Dao’an’s reputation into the authority of his work? Both assumptions are questionable. In fact, even if we assume that Dao’an’s catalogue is the oldest and its parts surviving in the *Chu sanzang ji ji* belong to the original, we still cannot ascertain whether Dao’an’s attributions of the translations to those individuals reflect the truth. After all, by the time Dao’an’s catalogue was completed (dated 374 CE), the earliest translation (if the dating is reliable) had been made over two hundred years before, and even the latest of the group of translated scriptures regarded as the starting point had been in circulation for around one hundred years (dated 147-280 CE). Lacking secondary sources, written or oral, how could Dao’an know exactly who were the translators of the early translated scriptures?

The above-mentioned two assumptions become especially suspect when we consider how early Chinese texts were produced and transmitted. Textual and archaeological evidence attests that authors’ names do not appear in early Chinese texts.\(^{31}\) The same convention can be applied to the analysis of early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures. According to a passage appearing nearly identically in both Dao’an’s *Chu sanzang ji ji* biography and his *Gaoseng zhuan* biography, the names of the translators were not in fact recorded in early translated Buddhist scriptures:

> From Han to Jin, the number of imported scriptures had gradually increased, but the names of those who translated the scriptures were not recorded. Later when trying to trace the scriptures, no one could detect their dates. Dao’an then collected the lists of translated scriptures, recorded their dates and translators, differentiated the old from the new, and compiled a catalogue for...

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the translated scriptures. That the numerous translated scriptures could be identified was indeed due to his achievement.32

自漢暨晋,經來稍多,而傳經之人,名字弗記。後人追尋,莫測年代。安乃總集名目,表其時人,銓品新舊,撰爲經録。衆經有據,實由其功。

As this passage makes clear, in texts from the Han (206 BCE—221 CE) to the Jin (265—420 CE), “the names of those who translated the scriptures were not recorded.” It is Dao’an who collected and listed the translated scriptures and identified their attributions in his catalogue. Was Dao’an the first compiler of this sort of catalogue? Or did he make his own catalogue relying on earlier similar kinds? If his catalogue was the earliest, how could he identify the anonymous translators of those scriptures transmitted over centuries? We do not know the exact answers to these questions. Certain sources suggest the existence of some sort of catalogue prior to the compilation of Dao’an’s catalogue. For example, in the preface to his catalogue of translations by anonymous translators Sengyou laments that failure to preserve early catalogues directly leads to the absence of translators’ names for many translated scriptures:

Perhaps because the catalogues had long been lost after since the times of the Wei, or in the Former Qin and Western Liang periods, those who propagated Buddhism stopped at the point when their words were completed [without mentioning the translators], or perhaps because those recent translations appearing in the Jin and the Song eras have been neglected and the details omitted, the translators remain anonymous. One finds in retrospect that since the introduction of Buddhism, six generations have passed. Of the various catalogues that have been compiled and annotated, only Sir An’s has survived. For this reason, it is not surprising to find translations without attributions.33

33 Shi Sengyou 1995, 123.
The possible loss of earlier catalogues is thus considered one of the reasons leading to the absence of information on the translators of the early translated scriptures. Nevertheless, it seemed an unverifiable assumption even in Sengyou’s time because “Of the various catalogues that have been compiled and annotated, only Sir An’s has survived.” But the message conveyed here is ambivalent: before saying that only Dao’an’s catalogue survived, Sengyou unambiguously states that there had been various other kinds of catalogues besides Dao’an’s, although he does not specify whether those catalogues were earlier or later than Dao’an’s.

The passage may also imply that translating and transmitting early Buddhist scriptures without acknowledging their translators was conventional. As I mentioned in the introduction to the dissertation, authorship (in this case, translatorship) matters in interpretation rather than in composition (in this case, translation). Buddha’s words were understandably considered more important than the acknowledgment of the translators. When the translated Buddhist scriptures were preached, the priority was doubtless to elucidate the hidden meaning and interpret Buddha’s words. That this convention has remained from the beginning to the late fifth century has led to the large number of orphaned translations and this is attested by long lists of the “anonymous translations of Buddhist scriptures” (“shiyi jing” 失譯經) compiled both by Dao’an and Sengyou and preserved in the Chu sanzang ji ji.34 Sengyou lists 450 translated scriptures.

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34 Shi Sengyou 1995, 91-114, 123-216.
with attributions, which are far outnumbered by the 1306 translated scriptures without attributions.35

These two accounts present a complex picture regarding Dao’an’s identification of early translators of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese as well as the scriptures they translated. In fact, whether or not Dao’an consulted other like catalogues when compiling his own is far from clear. If he did, his catalogue can by no means be considered as the starting point for the discussion of the attributions of early translated scriptures; if he did not, we must address the issue of how he managed to make “reliable” attributions and cannot simply take for granted the credibility of those attributions and ascribe it to his scholarly pursuit of objectivity. In short, the Guide’s assumption that Dao’an’s catalogue is the oldest and the most reliable starting point to evaluate other translations and attributions may well be an oversimplification that overlooks the complexity of early Chinese text production and transmission, the context in which early Buddhist scriptures were translated and circulated. This calls into the question the validity of the whole Guide project.

5.3. Apocrypha, Foreign Monk, and Translatorship

Given the convention revealed in the above Chu Sanzang ji ji passage, if translatorship had indeed been by and large neglected in the first one to two centuries of the circulation of early translated Buddhist scriptures, we need to ask why attributions of those translated scriptures suddenly became so important in the Jin and catalogues were compiled to find the translators for the early translated scriptures. In his preface to the list of translated scriptures with discernible attributions Sengyou briefly examines the history of the Chinese translation of Buddhist

35 Shi Sengyou 1995, 56, 211.
scriptures, mentioning the gradual increase of number of translated texts since the era of Emperor Huan 桓 (r. 146-167 CE) and Emperor Ling 靈 (r. 168-189 CE) of the Eastern Han. He emphasizes Dao’an’s role in putting those translations into order by compiling a catalogue:

“The wheel of dharma” (Buddhist teaching) has reached people’s hearts, but no one was able put those [translated] scriptures in order. It was only from Sir An’s time that the names of the translators began to be recorded and transmitted, the talents of the translators were evaluated and appreciated, and the years and months of the translations discerned and listed. That the marvelous canons can be validated indeed relies upon this man.36

Although interpretations of this passage may vary, it is safe to infer that Dao’an’s catalogue was one of the earliest available to Sengyou when he made the above comments. It is also possible that Dao’an’s catalogue was indeed the earliest, at least in a sixth-century monk’s eyes, otherwise he would not have made the point that it was only from Dao’an’s time that the attributions of early translated scriptures could be “validated” 可徵, indicating that information regarding the provenance of early Buddhist scriptures had not become available until the completion of Dao’an’s catalogue.

Be that as it may, we need to return to the question asked earlier: how could Dao’an determine attributions of those translated scriptures with confidence long after those scriptures were translated. Take, for example, the translations attributed to An Shigao. If we believe that An Shigao’s biography included in the Chu sanzang ji ji contains any truth, most of the translations attributed to him would have had to have been done in the latter half of the second century.

36 Shi Sengyou 1995, 22.
century, approximately two hundred years earlier than the time Dao’an’s catalogue is dated. In a
textual tradition that did not stress the role of the writer or that of the translator (as explicitly
pointed out by Sengyou), the possible evidence collected by Dao’an to identify all those
attributions must be scanty, for authorship or translatorship had very rarely been substantiated as
it was presented later in the history of text making—for instance, to have the name of the author
or translator written or printed on a circulated work, as in our present-day printing culture. If
Dao’an was also seeking a starting point for his project similar to the Guide, the evidence, if any,
that he could find would hardly be textually verifiable. To fill the evidential void, assumptions
about the earliest translators and the dating of their translations be made on the demands made of
Dao’an’s need when compiling his catalogue.

Is it possible that information on the translatorship of early translated Buddhist scriptures
had been orally transmitted through generations of Buddhist believers? Although this assumption
is equally unverifiable, it is not unlikely, especially in a religious context in which memory of
religious teachings is supposed to last longer. Nevertheless, the Guide tends to dismiss this
probability. Nattier contends that claiming authorship or translatorship of the texts may have
been considered inappropriate both to the author (let alone translator) and to his contemporaries,
for the adherents of Buddha believed that the texts were all buddhavacana—the Buddha’s words
uttered from the Buddha’s own mouth.37 That is to say, memorization of information regarding
authorship or translatorship is not encouraged and passed down from the very beginning, and this
accords with what Sengyou’s claim that no attributions had been included in Buddhist teachings
from Han to Jin. On this point, the Guide is probably correct, but it exacerbates the dilemma that
its putative starting point faces: if Dao’an had neither textual records nor orally transmitted

37 Nattier 2008, 10.
memory regarding the translatorship of those early scriptures translated into Chinese one to two
centuries before his time, the attributions of those early translated scriptures made in his
catalogue could only be considered as his own invention. But why did he feel compelled to
invent?

Two factors lead to the need to identify the attributions of the early translated scriptures.
One is associated with the fact that a considerable amount of translated scriptures had
accumulated by Dao’an’s time without being properly categorized. Dao’an’s biography states
that the number of the translated scriptures had gradually increased from the Han to the Jin
periods. 38 This we can also observe in Dao’an’s catalogue. Based on what is explicitly
mentioned in the Chu Sanzang ji ji, where Dao’an’s catalogue is partially preserved, the
translated scriptures figuring in Dao’an’s catalogue, including translations labeled as “with
attributions,” “without attributions,” and “forged scriptures,” amount to five hundred. 39 Even
Dao’an himself admitted that “the number of various scriptures is huge” 40 Much as the
lengths of different scriptures vary, the volumes of the scriptures as a whole call for some
kind of rearrangement.

Dao’an’s biography also indicates that by the time Dao’an compiled his catalogue, there
had been inquiries for the provenance of the translated scriptures in circulation. Buddhist
disciples became anxious about when those texts were translated and tried to “trace” 追尋 their
origins. 41 In a textual tradition caring less about the authorship of its texts than the texts

38 Shi Sengyou 1995, 561.
41 Shi Sengyou 1996, 561.
themselves, the emergence of this kind of anxiety was unusual and seemed to be associated with people’s concerns about the authenticity of the texts. Dao’an’s catalogue reflects the concerns about apocryphal writings that became so influential that the Buddhist apologists felt the urgency to identify and defend the authentic against the apocryphal writings. Dao’an’s preface to the category of the “suspect scriptures” (“yijing” 疑經) strongly voiced the need to distinguish the authentic teachings from the apocryphal:

According to foreign monastic regulations, monks, when learning Buddhist scriptures, all knelt down and received the scriptures orally. For what they received from their common master, they could teach to later generations only after going it over ten to twenty times. Even if there is a single word different [from what they received from their common master], they would study and collate it together and dismiss [the variant] only after they got it right. Monastic regulations do not tolerate errors. The years when Buddhist scriptures landed in the Jin domain are not far from us, yet those busybodies mix sands with gold: they refine their writings stylistically yet fail to exclude or correct [the wrong]. How could they distinguish the authentic from the apocryphal? If a farmer had grass grow together with crops in field, Hou Ji, God of Millet, would sigh for him; if jade is sealed with stone in the same gold casket, Bian He, knowing jade the best, would feel shameful for it. I, An, dare participate in scripture learning when seeing the Jing and Wei rivers mix together and snakes and dragons move side by side—how could I not feel shameful? Now I list on the left those I do not deem authentic Buddhist scriptures and show them to future students so that we all know how far astray they have gone.42

外國僧法，學皆跪而口受。同師所受，若十、二十轉，以授後學。若有一字異者，共相推校，得便擯之，僧法無縱也。經至晉土，其年未遠，而喜事者以沙糅金，斌斌如也，而無括正，何以別眞僞乎！農者禾草倶在，后稷為之嘆息；金匱玉石同緘，卞和爲之懷恥。安敢預學次，見涇渭雜流，龍蛇並進，豈不恥之！今列意謂非佛經者如左，以示將來學士，共知鄙倍焉。

42 Shi Sengyou 1995, 221-222.
The list with this preface is credited in the *Chu sanzang ji ji* as “to the Buddhist master An” (An Fashi zao 安法師造). If the preface was indeed written by Dao’an, we can understand what prompted him to make a catalogue for the translated scriptures: it must be associated with the inquiry about authenticity of translated Buddhist scriptures at the moment Dao’an compiled his catalogue. The beginning of the preface represents more of Dao’an’s own imaginings on how strictly foreign Buddhist monks learned and transmitted Buddhist texts and how seriously they dealt with textual variants. Although they learned and transmitted their doctrines orally, the strictness and seriousness emphasized in their way of learning enabled them to control textual variation and guarantee the reliability of their doctrines. Comparing this scene with what happened soon after Buddhism was introduced into China, Dao’an felt the Chinese way of handling Buddhist scriptures disappointing: apocryphal writings crept into Buddhist teaching in no time after the latter landed in China. Condemning the “busybodies” who conflated Buddhist teachings and apocryphal writings, he considered it a shame if a Buddhist student failed to do anything about it.

The reason he compiled the apocrypha list is, thus, clear: in order to protect the true Buddhist teachings, he needed to separate the authentic from the apocryphal. The best way to locate the authentic scripture was to attribute the translated scriptures to eminent Buddhist figures. Once a text was historicized as the result of such attribution, it became immune from the contamination of apocryphal writings and thus established the authority of Buddhist teachings.

Extant Buddhist literature tells us that the efforts of weeding out the apocryphal from the authentic Buddhist writings had been constantly made at least from Dao’an’s time onward. Dao’an lists quite a few “doubtful scriptures” in his catalogue; Sengyou adds more in the *Chu
Ever since Buddhist teachings were transmitted to a corrupt age, [among those who were interested in Buddhism] those who were superficial and competing with one another have been many. Some created the apocryphal based on the authentic; others confused the substantial by embellishing the empty. In the past, Master An teased out twenty-six apocrypha; he also pointed out the example of monk Huida as a deep warning [of creating false scriptures]. Once this happened in antiquity, it is natural that it also occurs nowadays. I myself have read and collated a multitude of scriptures and broadly collected similarities and differences among them. Measured by the rules prescribed by the scriptures, many writings are found suspect.43

It is hard to pinpoint when this “corrupt age” began, but it must have predated Dao’an’s (ca. 312—385 CE) time; otherwise he would not have made his list of apocryphal writings resulting from the “corrupt age.” If it denotes the chaotic years of the Eastern Han, composing apocrypha may have occurred concomitantly with the introduction of Buddhism to China.

Monk Huida’s (if the same Huida referred to by Dao’an) biography can be found in the *Gaoseng zhuan*. He is said to have gone to the Buddhist hell when he was thirty-one years old, met the Buddhist master of his previous life, and received the Buddhist teachings from him. He became a monk afterward and had a few prodigies recorded in his biography.44 Huida’s biography contains no information relevant to Buddhist apocryphal writing; it is possible,

43 Shi Sengyou 1995, 224.

however, that Dao’an alludes to and disputes the manner in which Huida received his Buddhist teachings, a manner resembling Daoist revelation, through which many Daoist writings were produced.45 This apparently accords with Sengyou’s concerns, as we can see in his notes on the list of “miscellaneous scripture.” One of the stories told in his notes depicts a prodigy nun, Fani 法尼, who, inspired by the gods, could recite Buddhist scriptures from the age of nine. Sengyou attempted to interview her, but he was prevented from doing so by her family.46 Following this story Sengyou mentions another prodigy, a Mr. Ding’s wife, who suddenly became familiar with a certain Central Asian language and could chant and write Buddhist scriptures in it after an illness toward the end of the Jian’an 建安 era (196-219 CE). Sengyou casts doubt upon this method of making Buddhist scriptures by categorizing all the scripture attributed to Fani as “suspect scriptures.” Nevertheless, relevant to the discussion of translated Buddhist scriptures is the reason given by Sengyou to classify this type of writing as “suspect scripture:”

In seeking out what happened in the past, we do not lack examples of this kind. Nevertheless, the writings in question were not from the Buddha’s golden mouth, nor were they translated by Buddhist masters. To encompass [in my catalogue] both what should be accepted and what should be discarded, I thus attach them as the examples of suspect scriptures.47

This passage clearly stipulates the standard through which one distinguishes authentic scriptures from apocryphal writings: an authentic scripture must be either buddhavacana, the

47 Shi Sengyou 1995, 231.
words of the Buddha, or a translation by Buddhist masters from a foreign language. Since the “golden mouth” does not speak Chinese, authentic Buddhist teachings must be translated from foreign languages. The tension between Buddhist teachings and apocryphal writings, as Sengyou observes from the story of Mr. Ding’s wife, started fairly early; it served as a factor prompting Dao’an to compile his catalogue, as he states in the preface preceding the list of apocryphal writings. According to the preface, the purpose of listing apocryphal writings was to warn Buddhist believers of the existence of that type of scripture and eventually eliminate the influence of apocryphal writings. But what occurred from then on indicates a different outcome: the number of the apocryphal writings listed in the catalogues compiled afterward only increased over time. For example, twenty-six “suspect scriptures” are singled out in Dao’an’s catalogue; Sengyou adds forty-three more to the list following Dao’an’s; till the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 compiled in the Tang dynasty (618—907 CE), the listed apocryphal writings number over a thousand, a much longer list than Sengyou’s. This phenomenon suggests that the tension between the authentic and apocryphal Buddhist writings had been a continual issue in the culture of Chinese Buddhist scripture making. It also suggests that the tension increased accompanying the prosperity of Buddhism in China. Making catalogues for both the authentic and apocryphal scriptures no doubt reflects the efforts made by the Buddhist apologists to disclose the “suspect scriptures,” distinguish the authentic from the “suspect,” and eventually aim to eradicate the influence of such “false teachings.”

The number of attributions to early translators had also concomitantly increased over time. For example, the *Chu sanzang ji ji* attributes 34 scriptures (40 juan) to An Shigao; in Fei Changfang’s 費長房 catalogue, the translations attributed to An Shigao rise to 176 volumes (197

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The increase in the attributions to early translators over time also reflects the tension between the apocryphal writings and the authentic scriptures. Since the “true” Buddhist teachings must be those translated from foreign languages, as emphasized in Sengyou’s notes, to secure their authentic status means to find the attributions in one way or another associated with foreign monks and foreign connections. This phenomenon is especially interesting when we consider how eager Buddhism as a foreign religion tried to connect itself with Chinese culture at the cost of distorting Buddhist teaching by borrowing terms from a foreign tradition to translate and propagate Buddhist teaching and then, after developments during the first one or two centuries, a tendency to differentiate itself from the culture to which Buddhism transplanted itself emerged and continued to grow. This could have happened only after Buddhism had garnered enough power and authority not only to survive but to prosper following its divorce from Chinese culture. Our understanding of these painstaking efforts seen in those catalogues of Buddhist scriptures to connect early Buddhist scriptures written in Chinese language with Indic and Central Asian origins represented by foreign monks must be embedded in this context.

49 Wang Wenyan 1984, 68. Eric Zürcher also points out such tendency among those who compiled catalogues for Buddhist scriptures, but his approach to this issue is rooted in the age-old “bianwei” tradition, which prevents him from rethinking the nature of those attributions. See Zürcher 1991, 277-304.

identification of translators for early Buddhist scriptures would seem in this context a redefinition of Buddhist teaching at a changed stage, and the rethinking of textual authority by compiling catalogues of Buddhist scripture reflects such a redefinition. This is what we see in Dao’an’s *Zongli zhongjing mulu*, one of the earliest catalogues of Buddhist scriptures, and this is what we continue to see how compiling catalogues for Buddhist scriptures become a weapon to battle against apocryphal writings and maintain the authoritative status of the “authentic” scriptures. Viewed from this perspective, the establishment of translatorship of early Buddhist scriptures written in Chinese is a rethinking of textual authority of Buddhist teaching. It is by its nature a later invention and cannot be directly viewed as an effort to keep historical records regarding early translated Buddhist scriptures and their attributions, even though those attributions may have been based on evidence never or no longer verifiable.

The section that follows is a case study dealing with the translatorship of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* 四十二章經, arguably the earliest Chinese translation of Buddhist scripture. As vehemently debated topics among such leading scholars as Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962 CE) and Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1880-1971 CE) in the first half of 20th century, the authenticity and translatorship of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* are still in dispute today. Most of the discussions, however, are confined in a bianwei 辨偽 (identifying the authentic from forgery) mode that emphasizes its author or translator so that the texts may be dated and analyzed on the basis of the author’s or the translator’s biography. Its major method, as discussed in the introduction and certain other chapters here, is associated with the misunderstanding of the formation of early Chinese text and authorship. Although I intended the above discussion of the translatorship of

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early Chinese Buddhist scriptures to provide the context for relocating the discussion on this early Buddhist scripture, it may also shed light on how to approach it.

5.4. The Dream of the Emperor and the Translation of a Scripture

As its title suggests, the *Sishi’er zhang jing* is a scripture consisting of forty-two sections. According to its current form, the Buddha’s words are collected piecemeal in each section. The typical opening of a section goes with the phrase “The Buddha says” (fo yan 佛言), and the contents follow. Mostly connected to Little Vehicle 小乘 (Xiaocheng) scriptures, what is contained in this scripture accords with Eastern Han Daoist thinking in general.52 Regarding its attribution, the preface says:

[The Scripture of Forty-Two Sections was] translated by Western Region monks Jiayemoteng [reconstructed by modern scholars as Kāśyapa Mātāṅga53] together with Falun [reconstructed as Dharmaratna] in the Later Han. One night, Emperor Xiaoming of the Han dreamed of a god-man, whose body was golden and the back of whose neck bore sun-shape lights, flying to the front of his palace, his will satisfied and content. The emperor greatly liked what he had dreamed. The next day he asked his officials, “What kind of god is this?” Fu Yi, a man of broad knowledge and sound scholarship, answered, “I have heard that in India there is a man who has achieved the Way. He is called the Buddha and is so light that he can rise up and fly. What you dreamed was probably this god.” The emperor was thus enlightened, immediately sending a messenger Zhang Qian, the Leader of the Gentlemen of the Palace Guards Qin Jing, and a Student of the Erudite Wang Zun, and so

52 Tang Yongtong 2000, 33-34.

53 Nattier 2008, 35. While supposing that Kāśyapa may be the Indic sounds of Jiaye, we must keep in mind the naming tradition said to be established by Dao’an, who adopted 释, or “Sākya,” a part of the Buddha’s name, as his “family name.” (It was adopted by other monks thereafter). Early foreign monks often indicate their ethnic background in their family names. For instance, “zhu” 竺, indicates a monk from India, and “An” 安, a monk from Pathian. Therefore, “Zhu Moteng” 竺摩騰 appearing in the Chu sanzhang ji ji and “She Moteng” 摄摩騰 (the reconstructed late Han pronunciations of “攝” and “彌” are both *śap) in the Gaoseng zhuan. As we shall see in what follows, they are generally considered the names of one person. For a note on the names of Buddhist figures, see Nattier 2008, 27-28.
forth, altogether twelve members, to the Larger Rouzhi State to write and take back a Buddhist scripture with Forty-Two sections. It was kept in the fourteenth stone case, and soon a Buddhist pagoda and a temple were established. Thus was Buddhism transmitted and spread. Buddhist temples were built everywhere. Those who lived far away and wished to obey, cultivate themselves, and be subordinates of the Han were countless. All within the Han domain was peaceful and orderly. All who have senses have been receiving favors and benefits from this, and to this day it has never failed.54

The preface traces the date of the translation of the Sishi’er zhang jing to Emperor Ming (r. 57-75 CE), the second ruler of Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 CE). The emperor dreamed of the Buddha’s image one night and then sent a group of imperial envoys to visit India on behalf of the emperor. Whether or not they arrived in India is unknown, but the preface does mention the translation of this scripture, whose action took place in Larger Rouzhi, better known as the Kushan Empire in northern India. Again, whether the two monks of the Western Region translated the scripture with the help of the Han envoys or by themselves is unclear, but the translation is attributed to them. Returning to the court, the envoys brought the Sishi’er zhang jing with them. As a result, the text was included in the imperial collection, and a pagoda and a temple were erected, most probably in the Eastern Han capital city Luoyang soon after the imperial envoys brought back the scripture from the west. The preface also imagines that

54 Taishō0784, 17.0722a13-23.
Buddhist teachings (rendered as “Daofa” 道法 (The Way and the Method) soon spread throughout the Han domain with imperial patronage.

And yet this important scripture relating to the introduction of Buddhism into does not figure in Dao’an’s catalogue. Under the entry of the Sishi’er zhang jing on his list of translated scriptures arranged chronologically according to their translators, Sengyou notes:

According to a previous catalogue, [the scripture] is called “Emperor Xiaoming’s Forty-Two sections.” The catalogue compiled by the Buddhist master Dao’an does not include this scripture.55

舊録云,孝明皇帝四十二章。安法師所撰録闕此經。

Sengyou’s list of the translated scriptures was apparently an enlarged one on the basis of Dao’an’s. Nevertheless, Sengyou believes that the Sishi’er zhang jing represents the earliest remaining earliest scripture.56 Songyou also left notes on the translatorship of the scripture. They read as follows:

Emperor Xiaoming of the Han dreamed of a gold man. He then issued an imperial edict, sending a messenger Zhang Qian and the Leader of the Gentlemen of the Palace Guards to the Western Region. Only then did they meet a monk named Zhu Moteng in the state of Rouzhi, who translated the scripture and then returned to Luoyang. The scripture was collected and kept in the fourteenth room of the Orchid Pavilion stone chamber. To this day it is being transmitted throughout the world.57

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55 Shi Sengyou 1995, 23.
56 Shi Sengyou 1995, 22.
57 Shi Sengyou 1995, 23.
Though similar to the story preserved in the preface to the *Sishi’er zhang jing*, the passage differs from the former in several points. First, the “god-man” in the preface becomes the “gold man,” possibly a Buddhist statue; second, “the fourteenth stone case” in the preface becomes “the fourteenth room of the Orchid Pavilion” of the Han imperial library and archives; finally, rather than pointing out that Moteng and Falan are the translators as the preface does, Sengyou’s notes omit Falan and seem to suggest that the translation resulted from the joint efforts of the foreign monk Moteng and the Han envoys. However, in a note summarizing the Buddhist translations mentioned in Dao’an’s catalogue, Sengyou leaves out the name of Zhu Moteng, thus seeming to attribute the translation to the two Eastern Han envoys Zhang Qian and Qin Jing:

To summarize the translated scriptures listed above, their translators, from An Shigao to Fali, seventeen persons in all, are recorded in the catalogue by Sir An. Others like Zhang Qian, Qin Jing, Zhu Shuofo, Weiqinan, Zhu Jiangyan, Bai Yan, and Bo Fazu, seven in total, are newly discovered and attached to this list based on my own collation of various catalogues. Those listed from Wei Shidu down are all newly compiled by me.\(^{59}\)

總前出經，自安世高以下，至法立已上，凡十七家，並安公録所載。其張騫、秦景、竺朔佛、維祇難、竺將炎、白延、帛法祖凡七人，是祐校眾録新獲所附入。自衛士度已後，皆祐所新撰。

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\(^{58}\) This Zhang Qian is obviously considered an Eastern envoy.

\(^{59}\) Shi Sengyou 1995, 44-45.
The names of Zhang Qian and Qin Jing clearly shows the inclusion of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* in Sengyou’s list, but Zhu Moteng, though mentioned in a previous note following immediately after the title of the *Sishi’er zhang jing*, does not figure here. Also worth noting is the absence of Falan, the other monk mentioned in the preface, from either of Sengyou’s notes translated above.

How did these differences come about? What do they imply? Nattier makes three points in the *Guide*, arguing first that Sengyou attributes the *Sishi’er zhang jing* to Zhang Qian and Qin Jing instead of Zhu Moteng, because the latter’s name is not list in the above summary; second, that Sengyou reiterates that Dao’an did not know the attribution to Zhang Qian and Qin Jing; and finally, that the addition of Zhang Qian and Qin Jing into the list belongs to a later interpolation.\(^{60}\) However, none of the points may be taken for granted.

Nattier’s first point may be true, but it should not be overstated, especially considering the complex constitution of early translating groups. Even though information regarding early translating teams is scarce, it seems reasonable to assume that, at the incipient phase of translation of Buddhist scriptures there should have been more than one person participating in the translation process. Attributions and actual participants were different things entirely: it was common not to attribute a translated scripture to all but only to the leading member(s) of a translating team. We cannot therefore draw a definite conclusion that Zhu Moteng was not considered by Sengyou as one of the translators, as suggested by Nattier.

The second point may result from the misinterpretation of the sources. True, Sengyou clearly states that the *Sishi’er zhang jing* as well as Zhang Qian and Qin Jing were not recorded in Dao’an’s catalogue, but this does not imply that Dao’an did not know the story of Zhang Qian and Qin Jing. On the contrary, it is completely possible that, as Wang Weicheng 王維誠 also

\(^{60}\) Nattier 2008, 36-37.
suggests, Dao’an knew the *Sishi ‘er zhang jing* and the story of Zhang Qian and Qin Jing but chose not include it in his catalogue simply because he doubted its authenticity.⁶¹

Likewise the third point seems arbitrary: both the reasoning behind it and the conclusion deserve reconsideration. According to Nattier, the passage “suggests that Sengyou’s catalogue began with the works of An Shigao, and that the names of the other seven translators (其張騫…凡七人, ‘Of these, a total of seven people, Zhang Qian, …’ and so on) should fall between An Shigao and Fali.”⁶² Following this reasoning, Zhang Qin and Qin Jing as well as the *Sishi ‘er zhang jing* are placed later than An Shigao. “In fact, however, the text attributed to Zhang Qian and Qin Jing precedes those by An Shigao on Sengyou’s list.”⁶³ Therefore, Nattier concludes, “It may well be that this apparent disjunction is the result of a deliberately light revision on Sengyou’s part, inserting the new names but leaving the original structure of the passage intact, this encoding a hint that the change had been made under duress.”⁶⁴

I doubt that the opening sentence of the above passage means what Nattier suggests. It simply denotes, as I interpret it, that among the translators listed so far, seventeen (from An Shigao to Fali) are mentioned by Dao’an, while the other seven names are not listed in Dao’an’s list but added by Sengyou in an enlarged list also compiled by Sengyou himself. Viewed as such, Zhang Qian and Qin Jing should not necessarily fall between An Shigao and Fali in that list at all. Moreover, if we count the translators listed from An Shigao to Fali in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*, we find twenty-two names consisting of both the main translators and their assistants. Five out of the

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⁶² Nattier 2008, 37.
⁶³ Nattier 2008, 37.
⁶⁴ Nattier 2008, 37.
twenty-two translators—Zhu Shuofo, Weiqinan, Zhu Jiangyan, Bai Yan, and Bo Fazu—plus the other two—Zhang Qian and Qin Jing preceding An Shigao—constitute exactly seven men and they were added by Sengyou when he expanded the list based on Dao’an’s. The rest, indeed seventeen individuals, are mentioned by Dao’an. There is no hint “that the change had been made under duress” suggested by Nattier in this reading.

Nattier moves on to argue that the inclusion of the Sishi’er zhang jing in the Chu sanzang ji ji may have resulted from a later incursion, for, she contends, the biographies of its translators would otherwise have been included in the Chu sanzang ji ji. While none of the four (Zhang Qian, Qin Jing, Zhu Moteng, and Falan) has a biography in the Chu sanzang ji ji, in the Gaoseng zhuang, a work alleged to be completed merely fifteen or so years later than the former, both Moteng’s and Falan’s biographies are included. It seems unlikely that Sengyou did not know of them. Nevertheless, the exclusion of their biographies could have various causes and not necessarily result from an intentional decision on Sengyou’s part. Although we cannot take the current version of the Chu sanzang ji ji for granted as a work completely out of Sengyou’s hands, based on the preface to the list of the translated scriptures under discussion, I would argue that the inclusion of the Sishi’er zhang jing as well as the note immediately following it at the beginning of that list does not contradict Sengyou’s statement made in the preface:

In the past when collating the texts, Liu Xiang (77-6 BCE) had seen Buddhist scriptures in the imperial collection. Thus we know that Buddhist canons had arrived long before Emperor Cheng’s

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68 For the compilation and transmission of the Chu sanzang ji ji, see Shi Sengyou 1995, introduction, 1-32.
reign (33-7 BCE). Until the time when Emperor Xiaoming was moved by his dream [of the Buddha], Zhang Qian was sent on a diplomatic trip far westward to Rouzhi to write the scripture with Forty-Two sections, which was later collected and kept in the Orchid Pavilion with the emperor’s seal. From then on, wonderful statues of the Buddha have stood resplendently in the cities, the golden monasteries have shined in the capital city Luoyang, and the teachings of wisdom have been initiated and spread, influential and shining everywhere within the domain. I, in private, study the declines of the two Han dynasties, when chaos and separation were created in this world, when the western capital was ruined and the ancient classics dispersed scattered. When the eastern capital was fugitively moved, most of the texts went astray. The texts that Zizheng (Liu Xiang) had seen were gone. Nevertheless, the pieces that were written down during the reign of Xianzong (Emperor Ming of Han) still exist. The earliest transmission of Buddhist teachings to the east can find its evidence here. While reading and examining Buddhist scriptures, I seek to check the traces and origin [of the transmission of Buddhism to China]. Among the ancient scriptures that have survived until now, none is earlier than the Scripture of the Forty-Two Sections. As for the beginning date of transmitting and translating Buddhist scriptures, it was not earlier than the time of Zhang Qian’s diplomatic journey. From the reigns of Emperor Zhang (r. 75-88 CE) and Emperor He (r. 88-105 CE) onwards, there had been a lack of translated scriptures. This is because that even though the Indic scriptures did arrive, chance and fortune moved in a different direction: when translated, they were transmitted; when not, they were hidden. Without the right persons, the Way would not run in vain. Recently in the times of Emperor Huan (r. 147-167 CE) and Emperor Ling (r. 168-189 CE), the range of the scriptures that arrived has gradually widened. Peers like An Qing and Shuofo and fellows like Zhi Chen and Yan Tiao have translated Buddhist scriptures from Indic into Chinese. These two languages, though used in places ten thousand li away from each other, are connected by translation. The meanings conveyed by different languages meet and are brilliantly articulated.69

昔劉向校書, 已見佛經, 故知成帝之前法典久至矣。逮孝明感夢，張騫遠使，西於月支寫經四十二章，韜藏蘭臺，帝王所印。於是妙像麗於城闉，金刹曜乎京洛，慧教發揮，震照區寓矣。竊尋兩漢之季，世構亂離，西京蕩覆，墳典皆散，東都播遷，載籍多亡。子政所覩，其文雖沒，而顯宗所寫，厥篇猶存。東

69 Shi Sengyou 1995, 22.
流初法，於斯有徵。祐檢閱三藏，訪覈遺源，古經現在，莫先於四十二章；傳譯所始，靡踰張騫之使。洎章和以降，經出蓋闕。良由梵文雖至，緣運或殊，有譯乃傳，無譯則隱。苟非其人，道不虛行也。邇及桓、靈，經來稍廣。安清、朔佛之儔，支讖、嚴調之屬，翻譯轉梵，萬里一契，離文合義，炳煥相接矣。

This clearly composed passage narrates the early history of the introduction of Buddhist texts to China. If we consider that the preface was associated with Sengyou, we have no reason to view the entry of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* as a later incursion. The preface unambiguously demonstrates how Sengyou conceived the position of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* in early Chinese translation of Buddhist scriptures. “Among the ancient scriptures that have survived until now, none is earlier than the *Scripture of the Forty-Two Sections*. As for the initial date of transmitting and translating Buddhist scriptures, it was not earlier than the time of Zhang Qian’s diplomatic journey.” Besides, more than just a simple statement that the *Sishi’er zhang jing* was the currently earliest Buddhist scripture translated from an Indic language, the above passage also points out the lacuna between the introduction of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* and the later thriving of Buddhist translation toward the end of Eastern Han period. It explains that the translation of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* initiated the influence of Buddhist teachings about early China, at least in metropolitan areas, but the translation of Buddhist scriptures failed to gain popularity immediately following the introduction of one of the earliest scriptures. In short, Sengyou does not feel that it is problematic to situate the *Sishi’er zhang jing* in the early history of Buddhist translation as the earliest Buddhist scripture introduced into China.

The above passage also serves as a response to the accusation of its being anachronistic in using the Western Han envoy Zhang Qian’s name to invent a story that happened in the Eastern Han period. The lacuna of three hundred years between the two unrelated events reveals
a glaring contradiction and, as Maspero argues, the change of Zhang Qian’s name to Cai Yin\footnote{Shi Huijiao 1992, 1.} as the Eastern Han envoy to search for Buddhism in the west betrays the belated attempt to smooth such inconsistency. The entire tale of the mission to the West culminating in the translation of the *Sishi’er zhang jing*, according to Maspero’s argument, turns out to be nothing but a poorly woven web of fabrication.\footnote{Maspéro 1910, 95-130.} Here Sengyou points out that Zhang Qian’s diplomatic journey to the West and the translation of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* were Eastern Han events and had nothing to do with the Western Han envoy of the same name but traveling to the West for different purposes. It seems unlikely that a person as learned as Sengyou would follow such obvious anachronism were this Zhang Qian indeed regarded as the Western Han Zhang Qian. Viewed from this perspective, Maspero’s argumentation oversimplifies the sources. Sengyou as well as his contemporaries, I would contend, could not have been as ignorant as Maspero considers.

The change of Zhang Qian’s name to Cai Yin, nevertheless, indeed occurs in Zhu Moteng’s biography included in the *Gaoseng zhuan*:

One night in the Yongping era (58-75 CE) of the Han, Emperor Ming dreamed that a gold man, flying across the sky, arrived. He then gathered all his officials to divine what he had dreamed. Fu Yi, a personage of broad knowledge and sound scholarship, received the imperial order and answered, “I have heard that in the Western Region there is a god whose name is the Buddha. He must be what Your Majesty dreamed.” The Emperor thought that what Fu Yi said was correct. He immediately sent the Gentleman of the Interior Cai Yin, Student of the Erudite Qin Jing, and so forth, on a diplomatic mission to India to search for Buddhism. Cai Yin and others met Moteng in India and invited him to return to the Han domain with them. Moteng made an unshakable resolution to
promote and transmit Buddhism [to China], braved fatigue and bitterness, risked traveling through moving sands, and arrived in Luoyi (Luoyang) in the end. Emperor Ming rewarded him and treated him well erecting a monastery the outside the western gate of the capital city for him to reside in. From then on the Han began to have Buddhist monks. However, in the beginning when the Buddhist teachings had just been introduced to the Han, no one else was converted to Buddhism. Therefore, Moteng hid his deep understanding of the Buddhist teachings and did not preach or transmit anything. Shortly thereafter Moteng died in Luoyang. A record says that Moteng translated the *Sishi’er zhang jing*, one *juan*, which was at first sealed in the fourteenth room of the Orchid Pavilion stone chamber. The place where Moteng used to live is now the White Horse Monastery outside the western city gate—the Yong Gate.72

According to Maspero, the theory that holds Zhang Qian to be the main Messenger to the West is older, while the change of Zhang Qian to Cai Yin came later in order to cover up the historical error in the older version of the story.73 Does this change truly reflect later intentional editing efforts to smooth over the differences regarding the translation of the *Sishi’er zhang jing*? Or does it simply result from a different version of this legend with no intention to correct the supposed mistake—if people consider it a mistake at all—appearing in other versions of the same story? Comparing the version of the story in Zhu Moteng’s biography with that in the

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73 Maspero 1910, 126.
In the past Emperor Xiaoming dreamed that a god-man, with sunlight around his body, flew to the front of the palace. The emperor took delight in it. The next day he asked all his officials,
“What kind of man is this?” Fu Yi, a personage of broad knowledge and sound scholarship, answered, “I have heard that in India there is a man who has achieved the Way and is called the Buddha. He flies in empty space, his body surrounded by sunlight. What you dreamed was probably his spirit. The emperor thus enlightened, sent a Messenger Zhang Qian, the Leader of the Gentlemen of the Palace Guards Qin Jing, the Student of the Erudite Wang Zun, and others, twelve in all, to the Larger Rouzhi State to copy a Buddhist scripture with Forty-Two sections. It was kept in the fourteenth room of the Orchid Pavilion or the Stone Chamber. About the same time a Buddhist temple was erected the outside of the Yong Gate, west of Luoyang city. On the walls of the temple thousands of chariots and tens of thousands horses were drawn, forming three circles around the tower. Moreover, the Buddha’s images were drawn on the Qingliang Terrace at the Southern Palace and the Kaiyang Gate.

昔孝明皇帝夢見神人，身有日光，飛在殿前，欣然悦之。明日，博問群臣：“此爲何神？”有通人傅毅曰：“臣聞天竺有得道者，號曰佛，飛行虚空，身有日光，殆將其神也。”於是上寤，遣使者張骞、羽林郎中秦景、博士弟子王遵等十二人，於大月支寫佛經四十二章，藏在蘭臺石室第十四間。時於洛陽城西雍門外起佛寺，於其壁畫千乘萬騎，繞塔三匝，又於南宮清涼臺，及開陽城門上作佛像。

This is another source making a point of mentioning the *Sishi’er zhang jing*, its translators and the place where it was stored when brought back from the west. It also refers to the construction of a Buddhist temple and the drawing of Buddhist images on the walls of this temple, a palatial terrace, and a city gate. Unlike some other sources, in the *Hongming ji* 弘明集, upon which the *Taishō* edition of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* is based, this passage omits the Messenger Zhang Qian

74 The *Taishō* edition renders it as “中郎蔡愔” (the Interior Gentleman Cai Yin) instead. See *Taishō* 2102, 52.5a1-2; *Hong ming ji*, juan 1.

75 The *Taishō* edition renders it as “十八” (eighteen) instead. See *Taishō* 2102, 52.5a3.

76 Muzi 1981, 10.
while adding the Interior Gentleman Cai Yin to the team.\textsuperscript{77} Such variation could either be the result of the author’s deliberate cover-up of the previous anachronistic use of the historical figure Zhang Qian, or that of a later editorial effort. Suffice it to note that different versions of the same story could occur over time during transmission.

Other sources do not refer to the \textit{Sishi'er zhang jing} specifically, but they do touch upon the translation of Buddhist scriptures, construction of Buddhist temple(s), or the introduction of Buddha’s images to China, in addition to the emperor’s dream, the core of the legend. To clarify how this story was involved in the translatorship of the \textit{Sishi'er zhang jing}, I will first translate related passages and then compare the basic elements of the different versions for my conclusion.

The passage in the \textit{Hou Han ji} 后漢紀, compiled by Yuan Hong 袁宏 (328–376 CE), is considered the earliest historic work where Emperor Ming’s dream is recorded. It does not, however, provide such details as the names of the envoys, meeting with foreign monks, or the translation of any specific Buddhist text. Nevertheless, the introduction of Buddhist texts and the Buddha’s images are both mentioned. It reads as follows,

\begin{quote}
In the beginning the emperor dreamed a gold man, tall and big, with sun-and-moon lights behind his head. He asked his officials about it. One official said, “In the west there is a god whose name is the Buddha, Was not he the one about whom Your Majesty dreamed?” The emperor thus sent messengers to India to search for his methods and techniques.]\textsuperscript{78} Afterwards the image of Buddha was drawn in the Middle Kingdom. The [words of the]\textsuperscript{79} scriptures amount to dozens of millions. The scriptures hold nihility as their principle teaching, covering both the fine and the coarse, and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Taishō} 2102, 52.5a1-2.

\textsuperscript{78} Zhou Tianyou 周天游 suggests that these sentences should be added in the narrative based on the \textit{Zi zhi tongjian} 資治通鑑 and other works. See Yuan Hong 1987, 299.

\textsuperscript{79} It understandable why Zhou Tianyou add the word “言,” Otherwise the sentence means that the scriptures introduced to China’s land amounted to dozens of millions, far beyond the actual number.
nothing is not united in them. The author of the scriptures is skillful at making grand, broad, and wonderful speeches. [According to this teaching,] what one seeks is within one’s body and what one tries to illuminate is beyond one’s seeing and hearing. Common people consider it vain and absurd. However, its essence can be classified as profound, subtle, deep, and far-reaching and can hardly be measured. Therefore, when kings, dukes, and officials observed the moments of retribution among the living and the dead, none of them felt fearful or lost.80

The central part of the legend also appears in the *Hou Han shu* 后漢書 by Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445 CE), who with careful wording indicates that the account is legendary in nature. The *Hou Han shu* account starts with the word *shi chuan* 世傳, a term indicating that what follows amounts to hearsay:

From generation to generation it has been transmitted that Emperor Ming dreamed of a gold man, tall, big, and with a bright light above his head. He asked his officials about it. Someone said, “In the west there is a god called Buddha. His form is a *zhang* and six *chi* tall and he is golden.” The emperor then sent his messengers to India asking about the way and method of Buddhism. Afterwards Buddha’s images were drawn in the middle kingdom. Ying, the king of Chu began to believe its techniques. Because of this, in the middle kingdom, there had been quite a few who respectfully followed its way. Later Emperor Huan was fond of spirits and made sacrifices tithe Buddha and Laozi several times over.

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80 Yuan Hong 1987, 299.
Thereafter, there gradually appeared men among the masses who worshiped him. Soon belief in the Buddha gained in popularity.81

世傳明帝夢見金人，長大，頂有光明，以問羣臣。或曰：“西方有神，名曰佛，其形長丈六尺而黃金色。”帝於是遣使天竺問佛道法，遂於中國圖畫形像焉。楚王英始信其術，中國因此頗有奉其道者。後桓帝好神，數祀浮圖、老子，百姓稍有奉者，後遂轉盛。

The *Hou Han shu* account, however, does not mention the translation of any Buddhist texts. What the envoys brought back seems to have been mainly the Buddha’s images and statues. The passage also contains information regarding early believers and how the Buddha was worshiped. If we accept this passage as valid, members of the Han imperial house became among the most influential earliest believers. Moreover, in the early stage of the new religion the Buddha was worshiped in tandem with Laozi, the major god of Daoist belief, which indicates that at least in the reign of Emperor Huan (r. 147-167) Buddhism was not yet an independent religion but intertwined with China’s native religious.82

By comparison, the *Ming xiang ji* 冥祥記, alleged to have been compiled by Wang Yan 王琰, a Southern Qi 南齊 (479-502 CE) official and Buddhist believer, provides more details about Emperor Ming’s dream. The narrative goes as follows,

Emperor Ming of Han dreamed of a god-man, whose form was two *zhang* tall, whose body was golden, and whose head was adorned with sunlight. He asked his officials about his dream. Someone answered, “In the west there is a god whose name is the Buddha and whose form resembles what Your Majesty dreamed of. Was

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81 *Hou Han shu* “Xiyu zhuan,” 88:2922.

82 The relationship between early Chinese Daoism and Buddhism has recently attracted scholarly attention and is discussed in a number of studies. While some scholars warn that we should not overestimate the influence of Daoism over early Buddhism, there is in fact evidence in favor of the existence of such influence. See, for example, Tang Yongtong 2000, 33-46; Zürcher 1970, 33-34.
not he the god you dreamed of?” The emperor thus sent his messengers to India to copy scriptures, bring back the Buddha’s images, and show them all over China. From the Son of Heaven to princes and marquises, they all respectfully served the Buddha. Learning that people’s spirits would not perish after death, none would feel fearful and lost. Some time earlier Messenger Cai Yin had guided Western Region monks Jiaye Moteng and others to bring back Udayana’s image and Śākyamuni’s statue. The emperor thought highly of them as they resembled what he had seen in his dream. He then dispatched painters to draw several copies of Buddha’s images and provided supplies for them on the Qingliang Terrace of the Southern Palace, Gaoyang Gate, and Xianjie Mausoleum. Images of thousands of chariots and ten thousands of horses surrounding the tower’s three circles were drawn on the walls of the White Horse temple, as the various biographies record in detail.83

汉明帝夢見神人：形垂二丈，身黃金色，項佩日光。以問群臣。或對曰：“西方有神，其號曰佛，形如陛下所夢，得無是乎？”於是發使天竺，寫致經像，表之中夏。自天子王侯，咸敬事之。聞人死精神不滅，莫不懼然自失。初，使者蔡愔，將西域沙門迦葉摩騰等赍優填王畫釋迦佛像；帝重之，如夢所見。乃遣画工图之数本，于南宫清凉台及高阳门显节寿陵上供养。又于白马寺壁，画千乘万骑绕塔三匝之像，如诸传备载。

Though the above passage does not specifically mention the Sishi’er zhang jing, it does point out that the emperor sent the envoys to India to “copy scriptures” 写经 and “bring back the Buddha’s images” 致像. The Messenger whom the emperor sent to India was Cai Yin, who met and brought some Western Region monks, like Jiaye Moteng, back to the Han court. This passage seems to value the introduction of the Buddha’s images above the translation of Buddhist texts, given the detailed depiction of the images.

From as early as the Northern Zhou 北周 dynasty (557-581 CE), some began to throw the historical believability of Emperor Ming’s dream into doubt by questioning specific details. In

83 Wang Yan 1927.
his *Xiao dao lun* 笑道論 (*On Mocking Daoism*), the Buddhist proponent Zhen Luan 甄鸞 (535-566 CE) mocks the statement in the *Hua hu jing* 化胡經 (*Scripture of Cultivating Foreigners*) by denying that Emperor Ming dispatched Zhang Qian to India. He basically holds that the Zhang Qian who “exhausted the origin of the Yellow River” lived during Emperor Wu’s reign (r. 141-87 BCE) and could not still be serving in Emperor Ming’s (r. 57-75 CE) court:

On the jiazi day in the seventh year of Yongping era during the Han Emperor Ming’s reign, the Jupiter star appeared during the day and the west was bright at night. The emperor dreamed of a god-man one *zhang* and six *chi* tall with sunlight on his head. The next morning he asked his officials [about his dream]. Fu Yi said, “This was the sign showing that the western foreign prince had achieved the Way.” Emperor Ming immediately sent Zhang Qian and others [to travel westward. They] came to the source of the Yellow River, crossed thirty-six states, and arrived at Shewei. Since the Buddha had achieved nirvana, they copied scriptures of 605,000 words and returned in the eighteenth year of Yongping era.84

Zhen Luan’s inquiry may have represented an influential strain of thought of his time and thereafter. The “Shi Lao zhi” 釋老志 (*Records of the Buddha and Laozi*) chapter of the *Weishu* 魏書 compiled by Wei Shou 魏收 (505-572 CE), from the perspective of its attempt to put the elements included the story of Emperor Ming’s dream in order, can be read as a response to the accusation of the story’s anachronistic nature. It reads as follows,

84 *Guang hong ming ji*, juan 9.
During the Yuanshou era, Emperor Wu of Han dispatched Huo Qubing to attack the Huns. The Han army reached Gaolan, passed Juyan, killed many, and achieved a great victory. The king of Kunya assassinated the king of Xiutu and led 50,000 people to surrender to the Han army. The gold man of the king of Xiutu was captured. Emperor Wu considered him great god and placed him in the Ganquan Palace. The gold man was more than a zhang tall. No sacrifice was presented to him. The emperor worshiped him merely by burning incense. The spread of Buddhist teachings was just emerging. When the door to the Western Region opened, Emperor Wu dispatched Zhang Qian as an envoy to Daxia. When Zhang returned, he spread the word that among Daxia’s neighboring countries there was a country named Shendu, also named Tianzhu [India]. Only then did people begin to hear of the Buddha’s teachings. In the first year of the Yuanshou era in Emperor Ai’s reign, Student of the Erudite Qin Jing, received a wide range of Buddhist scriptures orally taught by Yicun, messenger of the king of Darouzhi. People of the Middle Kingdom heard of them but neither believed nor understood them. Later, Emperor Xiaoming dreamed one night that a gold man with sunlight behind his head had flown to the palace court. The emperor asked his officials about this. Only then did Fu Yi begin to answer his question by mentioning the Buddha. The emperor dispatched Cai Yin the Gentleman of the Interior, Qin Jing the Student of the Erudite, and others on the diplomatic journey to India to copy the rules left by the Buddha. Yin then returned eastward to Luoyang with two monks, Shemoteng and Zhu Falan. From then on, the Middle Kingdom began to have monks and kneeling worship. Moreover, Yin obtained a Buddhist scripture with Forty-Two sections as well as a statue of the Buddha standing. Emperor Ming ordered the painters to draw the Buddha’s images and put them on Qingliang Terrace and the Xianjie Mausoleum, and sealed the scripture in the stone chamber of the Orchid Pavilion. When Yin returned, he arrived with a white horse carrying the scripture on its back. The Han thus erected a White Horse Buddhist Temple to the west of the Yong Gate of Luoyang city. Moteng and Falan both died in this temple.85

賽使大夏還，傳其旁有身毒國，一名天竺，始聞有浮屠之教。哀帝元壽元年，博士弟子秦景憲受大月氏王使伊存口授浮屠經。中土聞之，未之信也。後孝明帝夜夢金人，項有日光，飛行殿庭，乃訪群臣，傅毅始以佛對。帝遣郎中蔡愔、博士弟子秦景等使於天竺，寫浮屠遺範。愔仍與沙門摩騰、竺法蘭東還洛陽。中國有沙門及跪拜之法，自此始也。愔又得佛經四十二章及釋迦立像。明帝令畫工圖佛像，置清涼臺及顯節陵上，經緘於蘭臺石室。愔之還也，以白馬負經而至，漢因立白馬寺於洛城雍門西。摩騰、法蘭咸卒於此寺。

The arrangement of the basic elements of the story regarding the introduction of Buddhism into China presented here seems determined to make itself look more plausible than other versions of the story. It not only eliminates the anachronistic charge of putting the early Western Han official Zhang Qian in the court of an Eastern Han emperor; it also carefully situates all the other elements—for instance, the gold man and the translation of Buddhist scripture—in their historical context. Whether or not all the events actually occurred is hard to prove, but the different organization of this version does try to convey information based on which the translatorship of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* can be better understood.

To give an overview of how the basic elements are arranged in different versions of the same story, I have arranged them in the following table:

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<td>C</td>
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<td>至漢明永平七年甲子，歲星晝現，西方夜明，帝夢神人，長一丈六尺，項有日光。旦問群臣。</td>
<td>寫經六十萬五千言，至永平十八年乃還。</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>四十二章經序</td>
<td>昔漢孝明皇帝，夜夢見神人。身體有金色。項有日光。飛在殿前。意中欣然。甚悦之。明日問群臣。</td>
<td>遣使者張騫羽林中郎蔡愔、羽林郎中秦景、博士弟子王遵等十二人。</td>
<td>於大月支國。寫取佛經四十二章。在第十四石函中。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>漢明帝夢見西域沙門迦葉摩騰共法蘭譯。</td>
<td>於洛陽城西雍門外起佛寺。</td>
<td>西域沙門迦</td>
<td>登起立塔寺。於辯道法流布。處處修立佛寺。</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>冥祥記</td>
<td>神人：形垂二丈，身黃金色，項佩日光。以問群臣。</td>
<td>笙，寫致經像，表之中夏。…初，使者蔡愔。</td>
<td>門迦葉摩騰等。</td>
<td>表之中夏。</td>
<td>葉摩騰等赍優填王畫釋迦佛像；帝重之，如夢所見。乃遣画工圖之數本，于南宮清凉台及高陽門顯節寿陵上供养。又于白马寺壁，画千乘万騎繞塔三匝之像，如諸传备载。</td>
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<tr>
<td>G 出三藏記集</td>
<td>漢孝明帝夢見金人。</td>
<td>詔遣使者張騫、羽林中郎將秦景到西域。</td>
<td>始於月支國遇沙門竺摩騰。</td>
<td>譯寫此經（四十二章經）還洛陽，藏在蘭臺石室第十四間中，其經今傳於世。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 高僧傳</td>
<td>漢永平中，明皇帝夜夢金人飛空而至，乃大集群臣以占所夢。</td>
<td>即遣郎中蔡愔、博士弟子秦景等，使往天竺，尋訪佛法。</td>
<td>悅等於彼遇見摩騰，乃要還漢地。</td>
<td>有記云：騰譯《四十二章經》一卷，初緘在蘭臺石室第十四間中。</td>
<td>腾所住處，今雒陽城西雍門外白馬寺是也。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| I 魏書 | 後孝明帝夜夢金人，項有日光，飛 | 帝遣郎中蔡愔、博士弟子秦 | 悅仍與沙門攝摩騰、 | 悅又得佛經四十二章及釋迦立像… | 明帝令畫工圖佛像，置清涼臺及顯 }

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行殿庭，乃訪羣臣。景等使於天竺，寫浮屠遺範。竺法蘭東還洛陽。經緘於蘭臺石室。節陵上。因立白马寺於洛城雍門西。

Two points regarding this table need to be made. First, the list of sources containing the story of Emperor Ming’s dream in connection with the introduction of Buddhism to China is less than exhaustive. However, considering that the main concern of this chapter is with the translatorship, the number of the sources is sufficient to present a general picture on how the story involved in the formation of the translatorship of the Sishi’er zhang jing. The second point is that the arrangement of the sources in the table does not follow a chronological order. I tend to believe that there is no meaningful, objective chronological order displaying how the narrative developed in an evolutionary sense; or even if there is such order, it is beyond identification. One common way to date a passage is to assume that its date is identical with that of the text containing the passage, while the text is dated according the author’s biographical information. This is the method usually followed by scholars who study the legend of Emperor Ming’s dream. However, it is insufficient to disentangle issues regarding the dating and authenticity of the passages pertaining to the authorship or translatorship of the Sishi’er zhang jing. For example, even though in later eras people’s awareness of the authorship of a work increased, many attributions, especially of the early translated Buddhist scriptures under discussion, were not based on historical records but were deeply embedded in a historical context prompting the apologists to attribute Buddhist scriptures retrospectively to early foreign monks and establish

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86 For a longer list of the source materials, see Maspéro 1910, 95-130; Kamata Shigeo 1994, 102.

thereby their textual authority and canonical status. The fact that attributions to early translators increased over time, as we observe in a number of catalogues of translated Buddhist scriptures, puts in mind the more fundamental, power-related factors behind such phenomenon.

We must also be cautious about determining which version of the story is more “original” than another when similar passages appear in more than one source. Even if we sometimes agree on the dates of certain works, we should bear in mind that the contents of each work are not homogeneous, which results in—for instance, in the case of the *Sishi’er zhang jing*—the inconsistency between the date of the source material and that of the story. Indeed, in most cases it is difficult, if not totally impossible, to determine which version of a story presented in a string of similar passages is more “original” than another. Take, for example, the passages recorded in the *Hou Han shu* (A) and the *Hou Han ji* (B). Since similarities between the wordings of A1 and B1 and between A5 and B5 are obvious, some—Maspero, for instance—would jump to the conclusion that the version in A is a variation of that in B because Fan Ye (398-445 CE) (the author of A) lived later than Yuan Hong (328-376) (the author of B). The major weakness of this theory is that it ignores the possible existence of a third source based on which Fan and Yuan respectively compiled their works. Even if we assume that it was Yuan Hong himself who wrote down the story in B, he was probably not the one who invented it. Moreover, since both A and B have been passed down to us after many generations of editing, we cannot completely exclude the possibility that the similarities between the two works are later editorial interpolation or alteration. Finally, if we agree that more sophisticated versions of a legend generally postdate less sophisticated ones, we may conclude that the passage in A is earlier than that in B because B emphasizes the introduction of scriptures while A does not.

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88 Maspéro 1910, 95-130.
Another questionable point originally made by Maspero but inherited by the Guide is that the version in the Chu sanzang ji ji (G) is no more than an abbreviation of the preface to the Sishi’er zhang jing (E). To be sure, compared with the E version, the G version is rather short. Their differences, however, are still discernible. Besides the distinctions regarding the Buddha’s figure in Emperor Ming’s dream (between G1 and E1) and the place where the Sishi’er zhang jing was kept (between G4 and E4), the biggest difference between the two is how the foreign monk(s) took a part in the story’s structure. While the two monks to whom the translation of E is attributed do not appear in the narrative of the story, only one of them is mentioned in G, and he plays a role in the story initiated by the emperor’s dream (between G2, G3 and E2, E3). The danger of the point made by Maspero essentially results from an oversimplified method for dealing with the transmission of early and early medieval Chinese texts as well as the formation of their authorship or translatorship. In fact, even a preliminary browse through the passages from G, E, D, F, and H reveals the complex textual entanglement among them. Whereas the core of the story remains basically unchanged in all these versions, no two versions are even nearly the same. Based on the above observation, I maintain that rather than searching for information to help date the source materials, we ought to view all the above versions as parts of an informative lore suggestive of the formation and translatorship of the Sishi’er zhang jing.

The story of Emperor Ming’s dream, as the table shows, includes a number of narrative building blocks, the number of which varies according to the varying analytical strategies. Even though the core of the story (Column 1), the emperor’s dream, for the most part remains unchanged in its various versions, the situation of the rest of the building blocks (Columns 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) is more intricate. Which building blocks are included? In what form? And how? These are

89 Nattier 2008, 36.
questions directly linked to our view on the relationship between the translatorship and the development of the lore of the *Sishi’er zhang jing*. The following is a classification of the listed versions highlighting their different narrative foci:

Type I: no Buddhist scripture mentioned (A);
Type II: at least one Buddhist scripture mentioned (B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I);
Type III: passages in Type II mentioning the *Sishi’er zhang jing* (D, E, G, H, I);
Type IV: passages in Type III indicating only Chinese envoys as translators (D, I);
Type V: passages in Type III indicating that the translation of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* was a joint project by both Chinese envoys and foreign monks (G);
Type VI: passages in Type III indicating only foreign monk(s) as translator (E, H).

The above classification gives us reason to assume that the story of the emperor’s dream was not specifically conceived to fit the reconstruction of the *Sishi’er zhang jing*’s translatorship. The Type I version shows that Buddhist scriptures do not always provide the legend’s focus. But even when scriptures do become the focus, they are not all exclusively related to the *Sishi’er zhang jing*, as we see in Type II. And as we see in Type III some of the versions tie the legend specifically with the translatorship of the *Sishi’er zhang jing*. The five versions listed in Type III change their focus to highlight different individuals as the text’s translators. Some of the versions (D and I) indicate that the Chinese envoys were the translators, while others (E and H) consider the foreign monks as the translators. One of Sengyou’s notes preserved in the *Chu sanzang ji ji* (G) seems to suggest that the translation of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* was a joint project carried out by both the emperor’s envoys and Zhu Moteng, a foreign monk, but according to another note in the same work, Zhu Moteng was not considered a translator. In the preface to the *Sishi’er zhang jing* and Moteng’s and Falan’s biographies we learn that the translation of the text is attributed to two foreign monks.90

90 For the attribution of the *Sishier zhang jing* and other texts to Zhu Falan, see Shi Huijiao 1992, 3.
The attribution of a translated scripture to one or more than one Buddhist monks is important to the scripture, for it was a crucial step towards establishing its authenticity and authority. Like many other translated scriptures, the *Sishi’er zhang jing* was an anonymous translation before the story of the Han emperor’s dream played a role in the process of forming its translatorship. Although the available evidence makes the initiation of the process difficult to detect, we may reasonably speculate that efforts to distinguish it from the apocryphal writings constituted a motivating factor. Attributing it to foreign monk(s) or the Han officials connected to foreign monks reflects the intention to establish its authenticity and canonical status. This accords with one of Sengyou’s notes recorded in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*: the authenticity of a Buddhist scripture depends on its translatorship—if a piece of Buddhist writing cannot be linked to “the Buddha’s golden mouth”\(^91\) or “translated by Buddhist masters,”\(^92\) it may be considered a “suspect scripture” 疑經.\(^93\)

Current evidence would indicate that the translatorship of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* had not taken shape by Dao’an’s time in a manner capable of securing its authenticity even if the *Sishi’er zhang jing* had been available then. And even if the text had in fact taken shape, Dao’an was not convinced by its attribution. For example, it is imaginable that attributions of early translated scriptures to Chinese translators did not contain enough authority as foreign monks. After all, Buddhism is a foreign religion and the original Buddhist teachings had to be written in foreign languages. Listing the earliest translation of Buddhist scriptures as having been made by Chinese

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\(^91\) Shi Sengyou 1995, 231.

\(^92\) Shi Sengyou 1995, 231.

\(^93\) Shi Sengyou 1995, 231.
translators is somewhat awkward, which is why in later versions foreign monks become a part of the narrative, a phenomenon evident in Sengyou’s note indicating the translation of the Sishi’er zhang jing as the result of joint efforts by Chinese envoys and foreign monks.

We can also infer that the text of the emperor’s dream must have been deeply embedded in the formation of the Sishi’er zhang jing’s translatorship by Sengyou’s time. Even though from early times (the sixth century, for instance, as we see in Zhen Luan’s Xiao dao lun), some details of the legend had been mocked for their absurdity, Sengyou, widely admired as a learned scholar-monk, accepts it as authentic in dealing with the translatorship of this text. One of the details under vehement attack is that Zhang Qian, an envoy sent by Emperor Ming to the west, appears anachronistically. This has been pointed out by Zhen Luan in the sixth century, by Maspero in an article published 1910, by Nattier very recently in the Guide, and many others. But as we have mentioned before, Sengyou may not have been so ignorant about Han history, and the role Zhang Qian plays in the story is not absurd to him at all. One way of explaining such seeming inconstancy is that, as Nattier would have it, the entry recorded in the Chu sangzang ji ji belongs to a later interpolation, a speculation we disproved earlier in the chapter; another way is simply that Sengyou believed that the story was true.

The use of Zhang Qian in the legend is, no doubt, evocative of the bygone contact between the Han Empire and the west, but its readers, especially those as learned as Sengyou, cannot be blind to the glaring anachronism related to the historical figure Zhang Qian. This may be a reason for some other versions of the story to employ Cai Yin to replace or avoid Zhang Qian’s name (as we see in D, F, H, I), even though we need to keep in mind that textual variations may have been more complex than expected. Most probably, in Sengyou’s mind

94 Guang hong ming ji, juan 9; Maspéro 1911, 95-130; Nattier 2008, 35-37.
Zhang Qian was a useful—because influential—name to evoke people’s memory of the past when some of the earliest contacts between China and the west occurred, yet he would certainly know enough, if asked, how to resolve so obvious an anachronism by replying that the Zhang Qian involved in the story was not the Zhang Qian serving in Emperor Wu’s court. In fact, the only account that intentionally responds to the accusation of the story’s being detectably anachronistic is the “Shi Lao zhi” chapter of the *Weishu*, an account that makes painstaking efforts to render all the elements included in the legend read meaningfully and appear reliable. For example, it separates Zhang Qian from Emperor Ming’s dream, deliberately restoring the historical event of Zhang Qian’s diplomatic journey to the Daxia as the beginning of the Han people’s acknowledgment of India and Buddhism. This account even goes further in laying out a precursor for the translation of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* and, therefore, eliminating the doubt that the Han envoys could have the translation by themselves because they did not know foreign languages.

To summarize, the above discussion enables us to draw the confident conclusion that the translatorship of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* was a later attribution in the legend of the Eastern Han Emperor Ming’s dream and his dispatch of envoys to the west in search of Buddhism. The different versions of attribution may have resulted from people’s practical needs, for instance, the need to distinguish true Buddhist teachings from apocryphal writings. The versions thus reflected their response to the critiques on the story tied to the attribution. Even though the *Sishi’er zhang jing* itself may have been available before Dao’an, the decision to attribute it to either the Han envoys or the foreign monks came later. Nevertheless, the connection between the

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95 *Weishu* “Shi Lao zhi,” 114:3025-3026.

96 *Weishu* “Shi Lao zhi,” 114:3025-3026.
translation of the scripture and the emperor’s dream together with his sending the envoys to the west must have been well established by Sengyou’s time.

Moreover, the above conclusion is not limited to the case of the *Sishi’er zhang jing*; it may extend to other early translated Buddhist scriptures. Take, for example, the attributions to An Shigao, who has long been considered the first translator in the history of Chinese Buddhist translation.97 Scholars accept these attributions mainly based on Dao’an’s catalogue.98 When consulting An Shigao’s biography for the information of his life, on the basis of which the translations are dated, attributed, and analyzed, we must resist the temptation of accepting the attributions as historical facts that can be analyzed according to An Shigao’s biography. A careful reading of the scattered information about An Shigao’s life, mainly found in a few postfaces to Buddhist scriptures and his biography preserved in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*,99 reveals that even the earliest biography is mostly a later construction consisting of stereotyped narratives and materials from various legendary sources.100 In these sources An Shigao is portrayed as a bodhisattva (菩薩) or a man with magical power and secret knowledge from a royal family in a certain Parthian state. One source claims that An Shigao translated several million of words (數百萬言) and “as a result Buddhist teachings spread throughout the Han domain” 于是漢邦敷宣佛法,101 while another maintains he understood the languages of birds and animals, knew how to interpret omens of heaven and earth, and possessed transcendent knowledge about diagnosing

97 Nattier 2008, 38.
100 Zürcher 1970, 32-34.
and curing people’s diseases. Furthermore, the narration often begins with “有…者” (Once there was …), “昔…” (In the past), or other phrases conveying the implication that the ensuing words are more hearsay than historical fact. Indeed, that concrete dates or places are usually avoided in such accounts indicates that they are legendary in nature. Finally, the hagiographic stories included in his biography further suggest that it is nothing but a potpourri of various legendary narratives using foreign monk of uncertain provenance as its center. Much as Nattier defends the idea that the material woven into these stories might actually have occurred in terms of her “principle of embarrassment”—an approach to hagiographical writings—little historical information can be gleaned from such vague narration. The defense of the historical accuracy of An Shigao’s biography is by no means convincing.

I would also argue that even the attributions of the prefaces or colophons need to be treated with caution. When were they written and in what situation? Where were they attached and by whom? How were they collected and for what reason? More often than not, early Chinese colophons or postfaces written by compilers or editors as the result of their arrangements of the texts, tend to postdate the text to which they were attached, but they were rarely circulated independently. Whether or not the colophons preserved in the Chu sanzang ji ji have similar origins is unknown. Nor is there any evidence showing who, how, and why the colophons were collected. If they were indeed written by later editors who faced the same problem as Dao’an, they can certainly no longer be used as primary sources, especially for the purpose of dating and attributing early Chinese texts.

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103 Nattier 2008, 39.
Finally, I would briefly bring up the material form of the texts, an issue that, while not intensively discussed in this chapter, is crucial to the study of early Chinese translated Buddhist scriptures. As D. F. McKenzie points out, the material form of a text is a determinate factor in both defining meaning and providing a way of reading the text. Consequently, the change of a text’s material form will bring about a change in the circulation of the text, the way it generates meaning, and the way it is received. From this perspective, the study of early Chinese translation of Buddhist text should first of all explore its form, be it on palm tree leaves, birch barks, or oral delivery, when imported into China. Scholars tend to believe that early Buddhist monks and Buddhist teachings traveled to China along with adventurous early foreign merchants. In a recent study Erik Zürcher proposes that the transmission of Buddhism to China did not move gradually from India, Central Asia, the Serindia regions and thence to the Han domain; rather, Buddhism entered the Han urban areas through a distant path starting from India and its adjacent regions. Should this postulation be valid, we may infer that the earliest Buddhist texts, if indeed delivered to China in written form, may have been on palm tree leaves or birch barks and used mainly to serve foreign merchant communities. The translation of early Buddhist teachings appeared only when there was a need on the part of the later generations of foreign merchants increasingly attuned to Han culture and Chinese language and thus beginning to forget their original language, or by Han native residents who were interested in or even converted by Buddhism. Once translation was attempted, it is reasonable to assume that the translated scriptures were arranged according to the Han Chinese textual tradition, namely written down on


106 For example, Ji Xianlin 1991, 416-538; Nattier 2008, 18.

bamboo strips (even though paper had been invented some time earlier), following Chinese editing and circulating conventions, and claiming authority not only through the Buddha’s name but also appealing to elegant Chinese literary forms. As a consequence, we find that unlike later Buddhist scriptures early translations tended to be much shorter; and as in other early Chinese texts translators’ names were not usually affixed to the translated texts. Finally, we clearly see a tendency to retranslate or reorganize earlier scriptures and translate new materials in more elegant ways.\(^{108}\)

Thus the study of early Chinese Buddhist translations must take into accent the context of their social and religious functions as well as the convention of early text making. The translatorship of early Chinese Buddhist scriptures should also be understood in this context. A translator’s name was not important to the scriptures he translated at the beginning. It was not attached to the texts he translated; it was present only when such a need as discriminating the authentic Buddha’s words from apocryphal writings arose, and could be constructed only in a retrospective, sometimes a legendary, sense, especially where early translations are concerned. Accordingly, caution must be taken when translatorship, a special from of authorship, is applied as a historical source to date a text or establish its authenticity.

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

Since its early emergence in the Neolithic societies of China’s east coast, as David N. Keightley believes, writing steadily developed along with the increasing social complexity of the Shang and Western Zhou societies, but Chinese literacy had advanced to a whole new level in the Eastern Zhou and early imperial periods. As literacy spread, it contributed to the dramatic expansion of writing for administrative, ritual, and communication purposes, but it also resulted in the development of what we now call literature 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 project has attempted to offer an in-depth study of the development of Chinese literacy as it entered this more advanced stage that witnessed the revolution and proliferation of Chinese texts

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1 Borges 1999, 95.

as literature. In particular, I have tried to examine this development by paying special attention to text formation and transmission and the evolution of the concept of authorship.

This dissertation has presented five case studies endeavoring to illustrate five different types of authorship observable in early Chinese writings: Huangdi, the author as cultural hero; Confucius, the author as the fountainhead of a teaching tradition; Liu An, the author as patron; Sima Qian, the presented author; and foreign monks, the authoritative translators of early Buddhist scriptures. Given the complexity of the inherited repository of early Chinese texts, these five examples are, needless to say, insufficient to represent fully 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 early Chinese texts—their making, reception, transmission, interpretation, and so on—we can, however, 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 dissertation, accordingly, has been to analyze the above-mentioned five types of authorship in order to expose the complexity of the issue of authorship in early China, and, whenever possible, to probe such questions as why an author was needed, how he functioned, and what he means to our understanding of those texts.

The study of the Yellow Emperor as author in Chapter One is linked to the investigation of the Huangdi myth. Among the many faces of the Yellow Emperor transmitted by different traditions, his mien as one who mastered the secrets of immortality is 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. What stands out is that a clear majority of texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor are classified as *shushu* (methods 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 ancestral 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 in 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 longevity or immortality. It 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 immortal.

This dissertation 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, immortality, or longevity 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,” the Confucian Classics alleged to be either written or edited by Confucius have survived to the present day. Among the body of Confucian writings, the Lunyu, or the Analects, 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. Chapter Two addresses how the Lunyu came into existence, how it functioned, and why it took the form and functions it did. Through a detailed survey of the Lunyu’s textual history, we are provided a new foundation for understanding how and why the Lunyu has functioned as it has since the Western Han dynasty.

In examining the textual history, we exposed the problem with the conventional account, namely, 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. The contents later included in the text called the Lunyu were
discovered in the damaged walls of Confucius’ former residence. No evidence suggests that the
discovered contents had ever been compiled into an integrated text, so it is probably no accident
that the transmission history of the *Lunyu* begins with this discovery that initiated efforts to
“reconstruct” a text.

The early known lineages transmitting the *Lunyu* were two groups consisting of scholars
of Lu and Qi, respectively. Since the members of the Lu group had greater success in their
official careers, 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. 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 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 accidentally recovered from
some walls were transformed into something soon recognized, valued, and supported by the
imperial court in perpetuity.

In Chapter Two, I argue that the contents of the *Lunyu* had been part of a body of lore
about Confucius 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’ role as author of the Confucian Classics, especially the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, that were gradually 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 Commentaries 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 needed an historically verifiable and tangible Confucius to solidify the victory, and the *Lunyu* fulfilled this need as its collection 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 mature thinker, great teacher, and the one who knew and transmitted the Mandate of Heaven in a corrupt age. Once this interpretive framework was in place, the author-oriented hermeneutics regarding the *Lunyu* and Confucius took root and would continue to dominate the reading of the *Lunyu*.

Like the Yellow Emperor and Confucius, Liu An’s status as an author is also connected to a body of lore about him; 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. Chapter Three proves that Liu An as the author of the *Huainanzi* 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 downplays Liu An’s role as a writer of the *Huainanzi*, but he still
recognizes a role for Liu An that defines his authorship of the *Huainanzi*. He takes the “Yaolüe,” the postface to the text’s twenty chapters, as a performative piece and suggests that Liu An actually performed—reading or reciting—it before the Han Emperor at court.

By carefully examining the sources these two arguments use to present Liu An as author, I find that the authorship of the *Huainanzi* is deeply rooted in the lore about Liu An that developed after his death to emphasize his literary talent. This legendary material dominates the scholarship of the *Huainanzi* and Liu An, and yet it is not present in earlier sources, such as Liu An’s *Shiji* biography, closer to the time of his death. I contend that 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 need to understand the *Huainanzi*’s authorship in the history of early Chinese text formation and transmission. The “Yaolüe” is a central piece through which the authorship of the *Huainanzi* is defined. In the “Yaolüe” there is a clear editorial voice defending the text’s comprehensiveness and employing a set of literary devices to create a sense of cohesiveness among the chapters of the *Huainanzi*. The effort to make the *Huainanzi* a comprehensive text synthesizing and unifying all knowledge 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 we have inherited, such as the Masters Writing. 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 (yangshi 養士) in both state and local 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 reasons authorship of the twenty *pian* included in the *Huainanzi* is attributed to Liu An. As a result of his patronage of the retainers engaged in the writing of the *Huainanzi*, he became the text’s owner.

While the three cases above deal with persons known for much else besides their writing, 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 a couple of pieces of 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 allegedly by Sima Qian describe how he, like others before him, uses writing to vent his political frustration. 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 lived and 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 Four finds that the Grand Historian’s self narration contains problematic passages challenging the idea that the Sima Qian wrote this piece. Issues undermining his authorship include large blocks of text disrupting the flow of the autobiographical narrative, contradictory *terminus post quos* and *terminus ante quos* appearing almost side by side in this narrative, the abnormal format of the summary of the last chapter that substantially differs from that used for the other one hundred and twenty-nine chapter summaries, and the honorific appellation “Taishigong” apparently applied to both the father and son Grand Historians.

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,” possibly Sima Qian’s grandson Yang Yun, attempting to form and maintain the *Shiji* as a cohesive whole, just as the author of the “Yaolüe” did for the *Huainanzi*, while at the same time 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 project, it was presented to the court only after Sima Qian’s death. Looking at 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 probably had a hand in rearranging the *Shiji* when making a new copy, and in composing the *Shiji* postface, which might be 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.
An examination of the letter to Ren An in light of the mid-Western-Han socio-political context suggests that Sima Qian is unlikely the author of this letter as well. On the one hand, it would have been nearly impossible for the letter to have been delivered to Ren An, and, on the other hand, it was unlikely Sima Qian would have written such a letter after being castrated for expressing himself in words. 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 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. What has led to the composition of this letter to Ren An by adopting his grandfather’s persona, although imaginary in nature, may have something to do with the political situation that Yang Yun faced at that time.

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 the historical figure as a substitute of the writer himself to address the issues and convey his voice. 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, usually some form of punishment, his words might provoke. I ascribe this phenomenon to the specific early imperial socio-political environment: it was a way for Han intellectuals to respond to, even evade, the coercive imperial power.
Compared to the first four chapters, Chapter Five looks out of place as it addresses the translation of foreign languages (Indic and Central Asian) and the concepts of a foreign religion (Buddhism) during a period several centuries after the time covered in the other chapters. Although the texts discussed are arguably dated from the first to third centuries, the dating of the translatorship of those texts range from the fourth to early sixth centuries. Nevertheless, the culture of text making discussed in this chapter is to a large extent a continuation of what has been discussed in the previous chapters. Moreover, the debates on the translatorship of translated Buddhist scriptures provide a compelling example to illuminate how authorship is intertwined with textual authority. Examining the translation of Buddhist scriptures also allows this dissertation to incorporate aspects of religious writing in order to demonstrate the representativeness of its conclusions.

This chapter begins with an examination of the widely accepted method, illustrated in Jan Nattier’s recent publication, for dating Chinese translations of early Buddhist scriptures. According to this method, authorship, more precisely translatorship, is considered the most determinative reflection of the time and circumstances under which early Buddhist scriptures were translated. Nevertheless, information about the attributions of early-translated Buddhist scriptures reveals great inconsistency undermining positive identification of those translated scriptures’ translatorship. In order to establish a chronology for the scriptures translated into Chinese from the first to the third centuries, this method requires a database containing all the known information about the translatorship of the scriptures considered to have been translated into Chinese early to provide a touchstone (namely the interior and exterior evidence) to which anonymously translated scriptures can be compared for dating and categorizing purposes. Dubbed a “starting point” in the investigation of the translated scriptures with or without
attributions, such database can only be assembled from information in arguably the earliest remaining bibliographical work complied by Dao’an, a work only partially preserved in another bibliographical work by Sengyou in the late fifth to early sixth centuries. Accepting the suppositions upon which this method relies—the remnants of Dao’an’s catalogue are accurately preserved in a work one and a half centuries later, and Dao’an’s work is one of the earliest catalogues of translated Buddhist scriptures—there still remains the troubling question of how, in a text culture that did not encourage the preservation and transmission of authorial information, Dao’an managed to determine the translatorship of Buddhist scriptures translated one to two centuries before his own time?

No extant evidence explains what sources Dao’an used to figure out who translated which scriptures. But the method in question simply accepts Dao’an’s attributions as accurate historical records to populate the database with the interior and exterior evidence needed to analyze other translated scriptures. A further examination of the writings attributed to Dao’an and Sengyou reveals, however, a purpose behind the compilation of catalogues of translated Buddhist scriptures that might undermine the historicity of those attributions of translatorship in question. Buddhist apocryphal writings accompanied the translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese and influenced early Chinese Buddhist teachings. One to two centuries after the translation and introduction of Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist apologists urgently felt the need to discriminate authentic Buddhist scriptures from the apocryphal writings. Given Buddhism’s foreign origins, corroborating the authenticity and authority of a translated scripture amounted to identifying a text’s foreign origin. The most convenient and convincing way to establish authority was by attributing the translation of a Buddhist text to one or more foreign monks or to those who had foreign connections as translators, and this is clearly mentioned in Sengyou’s
writings. The widespread use of this method is attested to by the fact that in the catalogues compiled from the Eastern Jin to the Tang the number of scriptures assigned to early foreign monks increased over time. All evidence suggests that the attributions made by Dao’an are not historical records of the translatorship of early Buddhist scriptures translated into Chinese, but rather, they are later inventions serving as the means to discriminate authentic from apocryphal writings. The case study on the attribution of the *Sishi’er zhang jing* substantiates the validity of this theory: the lore surrounding the translation of the earliest Buddhist scripture—the *Sishi’er zhang jing*—helped to establish the text’s authority by connecting it to Han China’s communication with the West Region and foreign monks during the time when Buddhism was first being introduced to China.

Finally, I would like to mention Pierre Menard, known as the “author of *Quixote*” in Jorge Luis Borges’ fiction, before I close (or leave open?) the conclusion. Menard strove to write a *Quixote* verbally identical with the *Quixote* attributed to Miguel de Cervantes yet at the same time totally new and idiosyncratically of his own. How could he do so? “If I could just be immortal, I could do it.” Menard answered.3 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.

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This is why Borges says that the destabilization 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 text 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. This dissertation rewinds the history of early Chinese texts to see their adventure as they drifted along the current of their perpetual desire to relocate meaning.
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