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Huaiqi Wu

# An Historical Sketch of Chinese Historiography



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Sponsored by Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences (本书获中华社会科学基金资助)

ISSN 2195-1853  
China Academic Library  
ISBN 978-3-662-56252-9  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56253-6>

ISSN 2195-1861 (electronic)  
ISBN 978-3-662-56253-6 (eBook)

Jointly published with Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing Co., Ltd, Beijing, PRC

The printed edition is not for sale in China Mainland. Customers from China Mainland please order the print book from Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing Co., Ltd.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017952929

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The registered company is Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany  
The registered company address is: Heidelberger Platz 3, 14197 Berlin, Germany

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1 National Culture and Ideas of History

The value and significance of studies in ideas of history should be examined from the macro perspective of scholarly growth in a certain time. The mission of studies in ideas of history is to give a hand to the rejuvenation of national culture and national historiography in particular. In more than one century, China underwent drastic changes. Accordingly, the established national culture—including *minzhu shixue* 民族史学 (national historiography)—was entirely shaken and reconstructed completely. In the cases of historiography and ideas of history, both transmorphed, *positively or passively*, from the ancient (pre-modern) *learning* to modern *scholarship* (science). Some even held that the traditional Chinese learning that was based on the four collections of classic literature—namely, *jing* 经 (Confucian classics), *shi* 史 (historical works), *zi* 子 (writings of leading figures of intellectual schools) and *ji* 集 (literary works)—had been completely reshuffled. Simply put, drastic changes taking place in the Chinese culture produced a new discipline—studies in ideas of history—in China. A retrospective examination of the birth and growth of such a new/modern discipline might be an inspiration for the science of history in the new century.

In more than one hundred years, foreign thoughts of every hue swarmed into China. The Chinese exposed themselves to such imported intellectual goods and strove for innovations on the established national culture. In the course innovatively reviving the national culture, traditional Chinese ideas of history were deeply influenced by the Western knowledge. As a consequence, the Chinese historiography was modernized by degrees. Globally, the modern Western scholarship substantially assumed the *hegemony of (theoretical) discourse*. One of results of such an academic hegemony was that in the past century the overwhelming majority of Chinese historians reinterpreted ancient Chinese historiography in strict accordance with predominant propositions and frameworks of Western historiography (see list below).

- (1) What is history?
- (2) What is the historical truth/actuality?
- (3) Can historians reconstruct the past?
- (4) What is the *history as discipline*?
- (5) Is history science? Or, is history art?
- (6) What on earth are characteristics of research methodology regarding history?

In answer to such Western-historiography-inspired questions, Chinese historians furthered their studies in discussing whether history was progressive, regressive or cyclic, whether history was cognizable, whether history could be used for reference, whether there was *raison d'être* of history, and what on earth the subject of history was. Their answers were embodied in three genres of works—i.e. the general discussions such as *shixue tonglun* 史学通论 (Introduction to history), *shixue gailun* 史学概论 (Survey of history) and *lishi zhexue* 历史哲学 (Prospectus of philosophies of history), methodological reformulations such as *lishi yanjiufa* 历史研究法 (Research methodology of history), and history of historiography.

But on the other hand, some significant theoretical questions (see list below) in the traditional Chinese historiography were downplayed and even neglected. Such an academic *abandonment* was actually an embodiment of the loss of the *right to speak* in the scholarly world.

- (1) The aspiration to explore deeply and thoroughly the relation between man and Heaven
- (2) The elaboration of general trends in history
- (3) *Tongbian* 通变 (the thorough understanding of changes) regarding the rise and fall of dynasties
- (4) The idea and implementation of *putting the people first*
- (5) The aspirations for and practices of veritably and uprightly recording history
- (6) The reformulations of stylistic rules applying to historical works.

Such traditional questions were actually related to significant issues such as the cosmologico-ontological issues of history, subject of history, movement of history, epistemology of history, primary sources of history, historiography and social roles history played, all of which were worthy of furthered and deep-going discussions. Unfortunately, concerned explorations were almost out of the question in existing hegemonic Western theoretical frameworks reigning over the Chinese academia.

In more than one hundred years, there were merely sporadic Chinese discussions regarding aforementioned basic questions. Between the Western influence and Chinese voices an astonishingly asymmetry did exist. In the face of this, the present author cannot help but ask several questions—Were not there any idea of history in China for thousands of year? Was the Chinese national historiography insignificant to the modern science of history? Was the heritage of traditional Chinese ideas of history unable to contribute to the innovative transformation of Chinese historiography in the new century? And was the Western theory the only method by which the Chinese historiography could find a way out?

The Chinese spent so much time and energy learning the West. China imported the Western Learning for more than a century. Many Chinese scholars translated Western scholarly works into Chinese for generations. The well-known and popular series of *Hanyi shijie mingzhu* 汉译世界名著 (Chinese translations of world classics) was an embodiment of such a persistent effort to *learn the West*. In the long run it would be conducive to the new growth of national historiography. In particular, since the 1980s the number of Chinese translations of Western historiography was constantly growing. Apart from translations, Chinese scholars also produced Chinese monographs or treatises themed on the history of Western/European historiography and philosophy of history. Such translations and creative works broadened the vision and knowledge of Chinese scholars at that time.

However, questions still persist even to this day. In retrospect, how many people, who translated Chinese works regarding national ideas of history and historiography and introduced them to the West, were there? How many Chinese scholars, who presented the Chinese historiography before the West, were there? How many academic celebrities, who were renowned for their *mastery* of both Western and Chinese knowledge and spared a little time to disseminate the traditional Chinese historiography in the world while wholeheartedly translating Western scholarly works, were there? Was China really a country that was known for both its abundant history and lack of ideas of history? Admittedly, it was in the modern China that the national Chinese historiography lost the *right to speak*. Such a historical phenomenon has been noticed by some Chinese scholars. For example, Sang Bing 桑兵, a renowned historian in present-day China, pointed out that the quality of historical scholarship was actually in proportion to the power of states.<sup>1</sup>

In view of this, the present-author sincerely hoped that both the Western and traditional Chinese knowledge of history should be explored and suggested that not only should the foreign historiography be imported but the traditional Chinese historiography should also be theoretically examined and (re-)interpreted. Only when the solid mastery of both the Western and Chinese historiography was really achieved would the Chinese national historiography be innovatively reconstructed. In the eyes of the present author, the value and significance of traditional Chinese ideas of history were very conspicuous and indispensable to the work reconstructing the national historiography. Key points of traditional Chinese ideas of history were as follows.

First, the *general trend* of history was intensively discussed in traditional Chinese historical writings. Such an intellectual effort—which had been made by Chinese historians through all ages—to grasp social changes from a macro perspective was very significant to the perception of development of history in the national and even global contexts.

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<sup>1</sup>Sang Bing 桑兵, “Cong yanguang xiangxia huidao lishi xianchang – Shehuixue renleixue dui jindai Zhongguo shixue de yinxiang 从眼光向下回到历史现场——社会学人类学对近代中国史学的影响” (The Top-down perspective and historical on-siteness: How the sociology and anthropology influenced the modern Chinese historiography), *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中国社会科学 (Social Sciences in China), no. 1, 2005, pp. 191–215.

Second, the deep-going exploration of *rise and fall* of dynasties was always a popular topic in the traditional Chinese historiography. Traditional Chinese historians tried their best to shed light on the constant changeability of history, interconnection of historical rise and fall and how the rise and fall of a certain country/nation and vicissitude of neighboring countries/nations and even the world acted on each other. In doing so, they developed the idea of *tongbian* (the thorough understanding of change) and applied it to entire movement of history. Chinese historians also emphasized that if history was used for reference the historical conditions and realistic changes in particular must be taken into consideration.

Third, the ideal *putting the people first* was the penetrating thread in the traditional Chinese historiography. Ancient sages clearly stated that “minwei bangben 民为邦本”—“The people are the root of a country”<sup>2</sup> and “mingui junqing 民贵君轻”—“The people are the most important element in a nation [and] the sovereign is the lightest.”<sup>3</sup> Such brilliant political ideas deeply influenced the ancient Chinese historiography.

Fourth, traditional Chinese historians paid great attention to social customs and the will of the people. In the eyes of Chinese historians, the social customs were quite a significant thing on the grounds that it was, to a certain extent, the signpost of social harmony.

Fifth, a strong sense of crisis permeated through entire historical writings in the ancient China. Conscientious Chinese historians through all ages always cared for the fate of their nation and possessed a respectable sense of responsibility.

Sixth, the interconnection of Heaven and man was highlighted in ancient historical writings. Traditional Chinese historians held that the development of history could by no means be completely independent of the natural environment; and that if a society paid no attention to *nature* in pursuit of social growth, *nature* would definitely take vengeance on it in return.

Seventh, historiographical theories, such as those discoursed by Liu Zhiji 刘知几 in *Shitong* 史通 (Perspectives on the Chinese historiography) and by Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚 in *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通义 (All-embracing delineations of literature and history), still matter in present-day historical circles. In addition, the classical methods/methodologies applying to the textual criticism in sorting out existing historical literature, historical philology, and theories regarding historical literary works and historical education are all still relevant to present-day readers and researchers.

Four issues in close relation to the ancient Chinese historiography would be discussed in detail in this book.

#### (1) The relationship existing between Heaven and man

It was the most fundamental issue with respect to history. It involved the basic cosmological and historical views. A better answer to the most basic historiographical

<sup>2</sup>*Shangshu* 尚书, or *Book of History*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/songs-of-the-five-sons/ens>.

<sup>3</sup>*Mengzi* 孟子, or *Mencius*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/mengzi/jin-xin-ii/ens>.

question—*what is history*—lay in explorations of the relationship of Heaven and man, taking into consideration the fact that such an in-depth exploration greatly broadened the scholarly vision. It was, however, almost impossible for scholars who abandoned the cognizance and exploration of genesis of cosmology and had their historical research remained in the confines of *human affair*, to accurately grasp the *universal history*. Thus, such tunnel-visioned historians had to *perpetrate a fraud*; that is to say, they stealthily replaced the question of “what is history” with those of “what is the human history” or “what is the history embodying writing systems.” In their discussions, the logic *law of identity* was completely abandoned. On the contrary, the traditional Chinese exploration of Heaven-man relationship convincingly demonstrated that the human and natural history were inseparable and natural elements such as ecology, environment, resources and geographical conditions definitely influenced the development of a people, state and even the globe. As early as the Former Han dynasty (206 BC–25 AD), Sima Qian 司马迁 (145–86 BC), one of the greatest historians in the ancient China, had unambiguously pointed out that one of the most significant missions of historians was to fathom the relationship of Heaven and man. In view of this, the present author cannot help but ask, “Why some Westerners made groundless accusations against the traditional/national Chinese historiography in alleging that there was neither the idea of history nor historical consciousness?”

### (2) The rise and fall in the historiographical perspective

Among traditional Chinese historians it was almost unanimously held that history was no other than the course of constant rise and fall (of dynasties). The historical rise and fall were mutually inclusive; that is to say, the rise embodied fall, and vice versa. It was an invaluable dynamic thinking the traditional Chinese historiography contributed to the scholarly world. Regardless of differences existing among differing genres of history, contributors of such historical works attentively and diligently observed the ups and downs *in between* Heaven and earth, from which they produced the useful knowledge and drew clear conclusions.

### (3) The creative spirit of traditional Chinese historiography

In the traditional Chinese scholarship the effort to develop *yijia zhiyan*—家之言 (independent thoughts) and found *duduan zhixue* 独断之学 (an independent school) was really encouraged. It even shed light on how to make innovations on the established scholarship. For example, in the discussion of predominant six intellectual schools in his indelible magnum opus—*Shiji*, or *The Grand Scribe's Historical Records*, Sima Qian pointed out that although the ultimate goal of differing intellectual schools were not fundamentally different from each other they grew independently in accordance with their own ways. It was in such a free, independent and creative academic environment that the traditional Chinese historiography grew more prominent. For this reason, we might say that some Western scholars' allegation that the traditional Chinese historiography had neither idea of history nor historical consciousness resulted from the complete ignorance of

classical Chinese historical writings, as well as from the deep-rooted prejudice against Chinese culture/scholarship.

(4) The sense of crisis among traditional Chinese historians

It was on the Chinese nation's clear consciousness that the national development was premised. Moreover, not only was the *consciousness* an embodiment of historians' senses of contemporaneity and responsibility but it was also the starting point of all types of historical work.

Since the late Qing (1644–1912), being equipped with a strong national sentiment, Chinese historians aspired to rehabilitate the national historiography. For example, in 1902, Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929) penned *Xin shixue* 新史学 (The new Chinese historiography), in which the great thinker concluded the shortcomings of traditional Chinese historiography and pointed out that without the revolution in the Chinese historical writing the country could by no means be saved. He went further, suggesting that in order to create the *nationalism* whereby the four hundred million Chinese could remain invincible in the keenly competing world, China did need to create a new history, about which the old and the young, men and women, the intelligent and the stupid and the virtuous and the depraved, were all eager to read. Thus, the creation of *new history* was, Liang summarized, not a personal preference but the given historic mission. Outwardly, Liang was advocating the abandonment of old (traditional) Chinese historiography; in fact, his true goal was to create a new national history, or an innovatively resuscitated Chinese historiography, which could be used as one of the tools of reviving the nation.

He Bingsong 何炳松 (1890–1946), a renowned modern historian, shed light on the value of traditional Chinese methodologies regarding historical studies in his “Preface” to *Lishi yanjiu fa* 历史研究法 (Historical research methodologies).<sup>4</sup> He first pointed out that Western historians spent slightly more than two centuries researching into methodologies applying to history and produced only two influential concerned monographs in the 1880s and 1890s. In comparison with the West, as early as the Jinglong 景龙 reign (707–710 AD), or more than one thousand and two hundred years ago, China had already produced a groundbreaking historiographical monograph entitled *Shitong* (Perspectives on the Chinese historiography) and then in the Qianlong reign (1736–1796) Zhang Xuecheng finished *Wenshi tongyi* (All-embracing delineations of literature and history), a magnum opus delineating basic doctrines and methodologies of history and literature. The two towering figures—Liu Zhiji and Zhang Xuecheng who authored *Shitong* and *Wenshi tongyi* respectively—among traditional Chinese historians were second to none in the historiographical study, even compared with Western modern historians.<sup>5</sup> In the forewords he penned for *Tongshi xinyi* 通史新义 (New significance of general history), He indicated that a “contention of a hundred schools of thought” in

<sup>4</sup>He Bingsong 何炳松, *He Bingsong wenji* 何炳松文集 [Collected writings of He Bingsong] (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1966), vol. 4, pp. 4–5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

historical studies had emerged and it might herald the rejuvenation of Chinese historiography.<sup>6</sup> It was in the Sino-Western cultural conflicts that he visioned the coming of a rejuvenated Chinese *history*. He sincerely hoped that several years later when the country was stabilized he and fellow professors and young students could sit down and discuss historiographical issues while leisurely drinking tea or light wine.<sup>7</sup>

Li Zegang 李则纲, one of contemporaries of He Bingsong, contended that history should accommodate itself to the changing society through an effort to recreate itself. In one of pieces of his writings,<sup>8</sup> Li furthered that although retrospectively *history* had been the puppet of God and clergies, handmaid of kings and aristocrats and talisman worn by the imperialism it now would change and transform itself into an academic vanguard shouldering the greatest mission of mankind. In the same vein, Qian Mu 钱穆, one of the most famous modern scholars devoting himself to the revival of *national learning*, in the “Introduction” he penned for his well-known *Guoshi dagang* 国史大纲 (China: An historical sketch), asserted,

If we want to have the people deeply love the country, we must, above all, help them profoundly understand the history of the country. Similarly, if we want to have the people substantially improve the country, we must, first of all, enable them to grasp the actuality of the past of the country. The knowledge of history that we need today lies in the two missions.<sup>9</sup>

Generally speaking, despite differences existing among varying historical schools, the creative resuscitation of Chinese historiography had already been a consensus in the established historical circles.

In the meantime, some Chinese scholars, who had studied abroad, tried their utmost to argue against some Western scholars who distorted and denigrated the Chinese national historiography. The Western denigration of Chinese history was intensively embodied in the allegation that China was abundant in history but lack of idea of history. Such a groundless accusation against Chinese historiography infuriated Chinese historians. A few Chinese scholars stood up and fought back. Among them, there was Du Weiyun 杜维运, (1928–2012), who had studied in Cambridge University in the 1960s. In 1981, Du published *Yu xifang shijia lun Zhongguo shixue* 与西方史家论中国史学 (Discussing the Chinese historiography with Western historians), in which a systematic transnational dialogue regarding the (traditional) Chinese historiography could be found. In the light of their attitudes towards the Chinese historiography, Du divided Western historians into three groups.

The first group consisted predominantly of *orthodox* historians who was notoriously known for their narrow-mindedness and shallow vision. In the eyes of such

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 704–705.

<sup>8</sup>Li Zegang 李则纲, *Shixue tonglun* 史学通论 [A general delineation of historiography] (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1935), pp. 1–2.

<sup>9</sup>Qian Mu 钱穆, *Guoshi dagang* 国史大纲 [China: An Historical Sketch], rev. ed. (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1996), vol. 1, p. 3.

historiographical fundamentalists history other than the European history was insignificant. Thus they belittled so much the Chinese history.<sup>10</sup> The second group embodied *unorthodox* historians, who usually worked in non-European fields such as Asian, (Latin) American and African history. They were renowned for their enlightened mind and broadened vision in comparison with their orthodox counterparts. Nevertheless, they know very little about the Chinese history. Last but not least, a group of sinologists could be found in the West. Du held that inasmuch as such China-themed scholars<sup>11</sup> enjoyed an academic tolerance and had the basic knowledge about China they could now and then comment on the Chinese history in an inspiring and respectable way.

Du pointed out that Western scholars had a very strong prejudice against the Chinese historiography. In order to support his assertion, Du cited two pieces of Western allegations belittling the Chinese history. “Throughout their [i.e. Chinese] history the masses of Chinese have been occupied with agriculture and handicrafts. Their lives have been essentially simple and it is from this standpoint that we may understand their attitudes to history. ... The Chinese attitude to history may be called Quietist.”<sup>12</sup> Such words implied that the Chinese historiography was neither vibrant nor thoughtful. Even the creativity of modern Chinese historians were ridiculed. “There are hundreds of books on Chinese history written by Europeans, Americans, Australians, Japanese and even Africans. There are very few indeed authoritative studies in Western history by Chinese on the university or research level.”<sup>13</sup>

In the “Conclusion” of third volume of *Zhongguo shixue shi* 中国史学史 (History of Chinese historiography), Du illuminated again his aspirations. He said,

To be honest, the Chinese historiography has shortcomings. But, it was true that prior to the nineteenth century the Chinese history so greatly outshone its counterpart in the West. After the nineteenth century, while the Western historiography was assuming predominance, the traditional Chinese history was at a low ebb. It was the general trend of development of history. At present, being equipped with the broad mind and magnificent vision, Chinese historians syncretizes the Western and Chinese historiography by taking their essence and discarding their dregs. Consequently, a transcendental macroscopic view (of history) and the history of the good and the beautiful will be created. It is an indelible mission and

<sup>10</sup>In the dirty laundry list of such myopic Europocentric historians, there were J. W. Thompson, Alan Richardson, G. R. Elton, John Lukacs, J. H. Plumb, Michael Grant, Arthur Marwick, Herbert Butterfield, and so on.

<sup>11</sup>For example, there were Edward Chavannes (沙畹), Edwin G. Pulleyblank (浦立本), William G. Beasley (毕斯利), Piet van der Loon (房德龙), Anthony F. P. Hulsewé (何四维), Wolfgang Franke (傅吾康), Herbert Franke (福赫伯), Denis. C. Twitchett (杜希德), Paul Demiéville (戴密微), J. Gray (哥芮), E. Balazs (白乐日), Arthur F. Wright (瑞特), and so on.

<sup>12</sup>Alban. G. Widgery, *Interpretations of History: Confucius to Toynbee* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), pp. 15, 18.

<sup>13</sup>Du Weiyun 杜维运, *Yu Xifang shijia lun Zhongguo shixue* 与西方史家论中国史学 [Discussing the Chinese historiography with Western historians] (Taipei: San Min Book Co., 1981), p. 135. (Translator’s note: Source of English original is unknown.)



makes a great contribution to the national development. Let us encourage each other in our endeavors!<sup>14</sup>

Apart from Du, Wang Yong-tsu 汪荣祖, who had studied in the United States and taught at a leading American university, did a solid comparative study of the Western and Chinese historiography in the 1980s. Wang published *Shizhuan tongshuo* 史传通说 (A comprehensive discussion of “Shizhuan”), in which he compared the Chinese and Western ideas of history on the basis of a detailed analysis of “Shizhuan 史传” (history and biographies), the sixteenth chapter of *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙 (The literary mind and the carving of dragon) authored by Liu Xiu 刘勰 (465—520 AD). In *Shizhuan tongshuo*, Wang made a groundbreaking effort to employ the *national discourse* to comparatively analyze the Chinese and Western historical writings.

In 2002, Wang’s *Shixue jiu Zhang* 史学九章 (Nine treatises on historiography) was printed out. In the fifth chapter, which was entitled “Western historians’ perception and misperception of traditional Chinese historiography,” Wang comprehensively explored Western distortions of traditional Chinese history from the perspective of innate characteristics of historical study.<sup>15</sup> He sharply pointed out that Western scholars biasedly, simplistically and arbitrarily asserted that the traditional Chinese history was merely a “Confucian history,” which was subject to the politics, used merely as a moral tool, and entirely devoid of independent character. In short, the Chinese historical writing was completely ignorant of the *historical consciousness* in the eyes of some Western historians. In view of this, Wang ironically criticized that in the scholarly world the West was the self-style Heavenly Dynasty and fanatically believed that all types of modern scholarship unexceptionally originated from the West and entire non-Western scholarship was pre-modern. As a result, many Western historians, Wang revealed, self-complacently alleged that the *historical-mindedness* or *historical consciousness* was uniquely possessed by the West and all genres of historiography must have derived from the Greco-Judeo tradition; and moreover, they concluded that non-Western civilizations such as the ancient India and China were *ahistorical* accordingly. Wang indicated that quite a few Western historians believed that it was as late as the modern time that the Asian and African civilizations began to acquire the modern *historical consciousness* in the course embracing the modern Western science and technology and arbitrarily employed the Western historical concepts and terminologies to reconstruct the Asian and African history.

In the eyes of the present author, as a whole the West’s reckless distortions of and groundless accusations against the Chinese historiography were nothing but ideologico-scholarly embodiments of the Western hegemony reigning over the globe. In the case of historiography, Wang’s sharp-minded criticism that the

<sup>14</sup>Du Weiyun, *Zhongguo shixue shi* 中国史学史 [History of Chinese historiography] (Taipei: San Min Book Co., 2004), p. 529.

<sup>15</sup>Wang Rongzu 汪荣祖 (Wang Yong-tsu), *Shixue jiu Zhang* 史学九章 [Nine treatises on historiography] (Taipei: Rye Field Publishing Co., 2002), pp. 136–137.

Western intelligentsia ridiculously regarded itself as the *Cultural Heavenly Dynasty* brought to light the particular cultural hegemonism in the garb of historical discourse. Where the Western distortion of Chinese national historiography was concerned, it involved three aspects. Specifically, Western historians alleged (1) that the Chinese history was against the objective law in subjectively evaluating historical events and figures; (2) that imperial historians were actually in the service of the politics and consequently distorted the truth; and (3) that the Chinese history was like a scrapbook and notoriously dry and boring. Wang repudiated such groundless accusations one by one. He shone a searchlight on the most fundamental mistake—inappropriately applying the criteria of modern science of history to the ancient Chinese historiography—committed by such ignorance-prejudice-soaked Western historians.<sup>16</sup> The ultimate reason of the Western distortion of Chinese history could be analogically explained by one piece of classical Chinese poetry —“But if I just can’t recognize Thatch-Hut Mountain’s true face, here’s why: I am myself at the very center of this mountain!”<sup>17</sup>

## 2 Ideas of History and History of Ideas of History

Despite the interconnection existing between the ancient *shi* 史 (literally, *history*) and modern *shixue* 史学 (the modern science of history), the two concepts could by no means be identical with each other. In the same vein, the traditional Chinese idea of history was not the same as the modern historical theory. Where the Western and Chinese historical thinking was concerned, there was the similarity but not the homogeneity between them. In some aspects, both fundamentally differed from each other. In fact, the effort to employ concepts and categories formulated by the Western philosophy of history to (re-)interpret the Chinese idea of history proved to be double-edged. On the one hand, some inspiring ideas were indeed created. But on the other hand, such a kind of (re-)interpretation was like the allegorical stupid act of *cutting one’s feet to fit the shoes*. Simply put, it was *procrustean*. One of appallingly wrong conclusions of such a procrustean treatment of traditional Chinese idea of history was a groundless accusation that the traditional Chinese history was entirely devoid of ideas of history. Only when modern Western historians could successfully force ancient Chinese historians to think in the same way as modern Western philosophers of history did would such a totally ungrounded allegation be tenable. It was sheer nonsense.

As mentioned above, the present author strongly suggests instead that on the basis of national historiography, Chinese historians try their best to explore the rich ideas of national history and grasp the distinguished characteristics of national

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>17</sup>*Classical Chinese Poetry: An Anthology*, trans. and ed. David Hinton (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), p. 379.

historiography. In doing so, the comparative studies of the Chinese and Western historiography will be carried out in a more refined way and the status of Chinese history be more objectively appraised in the global academia. A furthered research into the Chinese idea of history will clearly show that how significant the fusion of Chinese and Western historiography is to the development of contemporary science of history.

The study in Chinese ideas of history is also part and parcel of the work creating the Marxist history with Chinese characteristics. In order to resuscitate the national history, Marxism must be the guiding theory and the fusion of guiding theory, national history and national historiography be integrated. Key points of such a creative work lie in the Sinicization of Marxism and Sinicized Marxist history. In fact, the traditional Chinese historiography was indispensable to the creation of Sinicized Marxist history. For example, towering Chinese Marxist historians such as Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), Fan Wenlan 范文澜 (1893–1969) and Hou Wailu 侯外庐 (1903–1987) all did excellent traditional studies in Chinese history and classics.

Specifically, Guo inspiringly and solidly interpreted *Book of Changes* and *Guanzi* (The master Guan) and sincerely extended thanks to Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉 and Wang Guowei 王国维, who were the two gurus of traditional Chinese learning and influenced Guo's groundbreaking studies in the ancient Chinese society. Fan researched into Chinese classics and produced the indelible *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龙注 (Annotated *Wenxin diaolong*, or *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragon*). Hou had explored the thinking of Laozi for four times and spent, in total, more than twenty years working in this field.<sup>18</sup> Hou trichotomized the influence that worked on him into achievements of traditional Chinese scholars in reigns of Qianlong (1736–1796) and Jiaqing (1796–1820), Wang Guowei's modern research methods and, most importantly, methodologies used by Karl Marx in his monumental work—*Capital: Critique of Political Economy*.<sup>19</sup> The life experience of the three brilliant Chinese Marxist historians demonstrated that the fusion of materialistic dialects and traditional Chinese historical ideas and methods is very significant to the Sinicization of Marxism.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Bai Shouyi 白寿彝 (1909–2000), one of the leading Chinese Marxist historians, discussed in detail heritages of traditional Chinese historiography and shed light on the significance of such heritages to the reconstruction of national history in a series of treatises and works. Bai held that heritages consisted mainly of traditional ideas of history, historiography, historical literary works, historical philology and historical education. Most importantly, Bai put into effect his ideas in the production of the highly acclaimed twenty-two-volume *Zhongguo tongshi* 中国通史 (General history of China). In such a gigantic research

<sup>18</sup>Hou Wailu 侯外庐, *Ren de zhuiqiu* 韧的追求 [Pursuing with an indomitable spirit] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1985), pp. 276, 277.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

project, not only did Bai critically summarize entire heritages of traditional Chinese history but he also elaborated the *national* characteristics of Chinese history.

The history of traditional Chinese history demonstrated that the tradition of national history was given a new life in the new historical period. Meanwhile, only when the science of history in the new historical period fully absorbed the essence of traditional national history could it be able to meet the need of the new period. The Chinese history should be (re-)examined from the grand perspective of social and philosophical development. The status of Chinese national history in entire world should be reappraised. The goals of such persistent efforts lay in inheriting the excellent tradition of national history, improving the national confidence, creating the new history with national characteristics, and enabling history to play a significant role in building the socialist spiritual civilization.

Some Chinese Marxist historians (re-)examined history from the perspective of cultural history. For example, Lü Zhenyu 吕振羽 (1900–1980), one of the founders of the early Chinese Marxist history, had pointed out that China should abandon both the totalistic cultural Westernization and the exclusive cultural conservatism. Rather, the country should culturally *catch up forthwith*. Invoking Sun Yat-sen's 孙中山 (1866–1925) assertion that China should not repeat what the Europe and America had experienced, Lü suggested that China create a new culture exceeding the capitalist culture prevailing in European countries, the United States and Japan.<sup>20</sup> Such a cultural outperformance was exactly what the strategy of *catch up forthwith* implied. Lü inspiringly brought the importance of the fusion of open and advanced characters of a certain culture into the spotlight.

Chinese Marxist historians paid attention to the national character of history and created their own new history. Bai Shouyi had pointed out that Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1889–1927), Guo Moruo and Hou Wailu were the leading pioneers of the Chinese Marxist history. Bai placed particular emphasis on Hou Wailu's distinctive contribution to the Sinicization of Marxist theories of history.<sup>21</sup> He suggested that Hou's groundbreaking work Sinicizing Marxist theories of history be carried forward.<sup>22</sup> In one of treatises devoted to the Chinese historiography, Bai furthered his ideas, saying,

If we aspire to create the Marxist history with Chinese national characters and play a leading role in the global academic community, we shall not produce the history in general. Rather, we shall create something that really carry weight. Our China proudly has the longest history in the world. History in this country had always fully developed. For this

<sup>20</sup>Lü Zhenyu 吕振羽, “Chuangzao minzu xinwenhua yu wenhua yichan de jicheng wenti 创造民族新文化与文化遗产的继承问题” (Issues of creating a new national culture and inheriting cultural heritages), in Lü Zhenyu, *Zhongguo shehuishi zhu wenti* 中国社会史诸问题 [Questions with respect to the social history of China] (Shanghai: Huadong renmin chubanshe, 1954), p. 162.

<sup>21</sup>Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, *Bai Shouyi shixue lunji* 白寿彝史学论集 [Bai Shouyi's treatises on history] (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1994), vol. 1, p. 415.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 416.

reason, we have no reason to fall behind others in terms of history, but instead make huge strides forward.<sup>23</sup>

The absorption of the essence of foreign history was indispensable to the creation of new history in China. In the first half of the twentieth century, the history of Soviet Union exerted both the positive and negative influence on the Chinese history. In the meantime, due to complicated reasons, the Sino-Western exchange in the field of historiography broke. In the Reform and Opening-up era, the situation changed drastically. The new vitality was injected into the Chinese history. Despite this, how to fuse the national history with vital thoughts all over the world is still an important task for Chinese historical circles. Besides the creative absorption of foreign essence of history, Chinese historians shall pay greater attention to the study in ancient Chinese ideas of history and work harder on exploring the national spirit embedded in the traditional history. In an era wherein the globalization is sweeping, both the absorption of the essence of world culture and adherence to the national character of culture—including history—are imperative and immediate.

At present, Chinese historians must take into consideration the national character and the zeitgeist of history, both of which will exert deep influence on the growth of history in the new millennium, in their reconstruction work. Globally, China (the Chinese history) and the world (the world history) act on each other. For this reason, Chinese historians shall interconnect the Chinese and world history and then discuss the progress of Chinese history in an interlinked context. In doing so, the general trend of (Chinese) history will be grasped. The history of *history* has indicated that the innovations on ideas of history will definitely bring about a great development of history. In order to accomplish the mission creating the Marxist history with Chinese national characters, Chinese historians shall rival the world's best history. In this regard, the present author strongly holds that Chinese historians are actually able to create scientific and national historical theories that can meet the need of the time by virtue of the national language, invaluable intellectual heritages of national history and productive historical theories from the globe. It is exactly the present author's conclusion.

The study in idea of history consists of the perception of the objective history and understanding of the (professional) work in history.

#### (1) The perception of the objective history

It is further dichotomized into the cognizance of historical society/process and dynamics of history. Historians can observe the historical society and progress from perspectives of evolutionism, degenerationism, historicism, stagnancy and so on. Meanwhile, historians contend that the dynamics of history may consist of Heaven's Intention and Divine Power and neither the heroism nor economic/geographic determinism is ungrounded. It should be pointed out that the two types of cognizance are actually interlinked. In practice, the ideas of historians can by no

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<sup>23</sup>Bai Shouyi, *Zhongguo shixueshi lunji* 中国史学史论集 [Collected treatises on historiography] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), pp. 394–395.

means be completely simple and uniform but instead complicated and constantly changing due to their exposure to and participation of differing scholarly and political activities.

(2) The understanding of the (professional) work in history

It is also dichotomized into *how to work in history* and *what is the purpose of working in history*. In answer to the first question, historians shall display their research methodologies and ideas regarding primary sources, historiography and historico-literary works. The answers may greatly differed from each other. Answers in regard to the second question lie in elaborations of the value of history and social roles history can play. Digging into Chinese ideas of history, the present author finds that some Chinese historians and thinkers took history as a tool preaching sermon; some, writings in aid of governance; some, a learning of statecraft; and some, an outlet of patriotic feeling.

In retrospect, it was Li Dazhao who proposed the *history of ideas of history* as an independent subject and laid the foundation of future growth of the subject. In 1920, Li printed and distributed *Shixue shixiang jiangyi* 史学思想讲义 (Lecture notes to the ideas of history) in several Beijing-based universities. In which, Li briefly discussed historical ideas of Jean Bodin, Montesquieu, Vico, Condorcet, Saint Simon, Karl Marx and so on, all of whom were great European thinkers who lived in the periods spanning from the Renaissance to the dawn of the twentieth century. Li's discussions also touched upon European philosophers such as Kant, Herder and Hegel. Li even did a tentatively comparative study of European and Chinese ideas of history.

It should be particularly pointed out that Hou Wailu regarded traditional Chinese ideas of history as part and parcel of the Chinese thought in his masterwork entitled *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中国思想通史 (General history of Chinese thoughts), which had influenced generations of Chinese scholars and still matters to present-day Chinese scholarship. In the giant six-volume magnum opus, Hou and his assistants discussed intensively historical thinking and theories of leading ancient Chinese historians and thinkers (see table below).

Historians/Thinkers	Chapter/Volume number	Concerned segments
Sima Qian 司马迁	Chapter 4, vol. 2	"The Thinking of Sima Qian and His Historiography" (司马迁的思想及其史学)
Ban Gu 班固	Chapter 6, vol. 2	"The Vulgar Thinking of Ban Gu and His Humanistic Thoughts" (班固的庸俗思想及其人文思想)
Liu Zhiji 刘知几	Chapter 5, vol. 4	"Liu Zhiji and His Progressive Ideas of History" (刘知几的进步的史学思想)
Ma Duanlin 马端临	Chapter 9, vol. 4 (Part Two)	"Ma Duanlin and His Progressive Ideas of History in the Yuan

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Historians/Thinkers	Chapter/Volume number	Concerned segments
		Dynasty” (元代马端临的进步的史学思想)
Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚	Chapter 13, vol. 5	“The Thinking of Zhang Xuecheng” (章学诚的思想)
Confucius	Chapter 6, vol. 1	
Wang Fuzhi 王夫之	Chapter 2, vol. 5	
Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲	Chapter 3, vol. 5	
Gu Yanwu 顾炎武	Chapter 4, vol. 5	

In fact, it was Bai Shouyi who penned the segments delineating Liu Zhiji and Ma Duanlin’s progressive ideas of history in Hou’s giant book devoted to Chinese thoughts. In the two highly inspiring pieces of writing, Bai explicitly delineated what the *ideas of history* actually connoted and shed light on how to research the *idea of history* and *history of ideas of history* as well. Since the founding of the People’s Republic, the prominent historian furthered his understanding of the significance and mission of *ideas of history* and exploration of relationship existing between studies in history of ideas of history and historiographical studies in a series of monographs and treatises. Bai did a brilliant research into the past scholarship in his works.

In recent two decades, the number of monographs and research papers devoted to history of ideas of history is ever growing. The quality of studies in the history of ideas of history has already been greatly improved. Despite this, historians still need to make a furthered effort to (re-)construct the *history of ideas of history* into an independent discipline. The present author does believe that such a vibrantly-growing time definitely benefits the founding and growth of the history of ideas of history, a new albeit *traditional* discipline in the Chinese academia.

Finally, the present author proposed several points regarding the research methodology applying to studies in the historiography and history of ideas of history.

First, historians shall deeply explore the interconnection of ideas of history and the social reality. A certain idea of history certainly gives expression to a certain socio-economic conditions in a certain society. When the society is undergoing transformation, the idea of history changes accordingly. Being completely independent of concrete social conditions, the (studies in) idea of history will be turned into the *fata morgana Sicily*. In other words, such a fantasied (study in) idea of history is entirely devoid of substantiality. Nevertheless, the idea of history does not merely play a totally passive role in the reaction to the society. Instead, it can exert influence on the society by means of historical works and education. The relationship of idea of history and society is actually interactive rather than one-dimensionally predominant.

Second, analyses of relationship of idea of history and philosophy is indispensable to the discipline. Indeed, there is an extremely close relationship between

the idea of history and philosophical trend. The philosophical thinking in a certain time more or less influences the emergence and growth of a certain idea of history. The objective cognizance of history and research methods applying to history are actually related to the predominant philosophy. Meanwhile ideas and theories of history are part and parcel of the philosophy.

Third, historians shall investigate the origin and evolution of ideas of history. There was quite a good tradition exploring the origin of a certain scholarship in the ancient Chinese academia. Generally, *an* idea of history can by no means be produced suddenly and unexpectedly. Rather, it always inherits the previous thinking and carries it forward. Even though the primary topic is the same, the concerned thinking in different times definitely differs from each other. Overall, the inheritance, development and recreation of ideas of history must be reexamined dialectically.

Fourth, researchers shall pay attention to the dialectic relationship existing between the two aspects of idea of history. The *idea of history* consists predominantly of historians' perceptions of objective history and their understanding of historical work. Each aspect can be further dichotomized. The two predominant aspects of *idea of history* interlink with and mutually act on each other while differing from each other. Usually, the historian's historical thinking plays a predominant role in the edifice of idea of history and exerted great influence on the historical work. Meanwhile, the historian's understanding of historical work, which is embodied in the historical writing and historiographical practice, will directly affect his or her performance in accurately giving expression to the perception of objective history.

Fifth, the study in ideas of history shall be based on the national historiography. Scholars in this field shall aspire to explore the characteristics of national historiography and the national historical thinking in particular. In doing so, the basic characters of national history will be discovered. It is not a historical work in general. The comparative thinking and practice are indispensable to such an aspirational effort. In fact, it is in the comparative context that the *Chinese characteristics* are found. In practice, the comparative study can be done in differing ways. Additionally, Chinese scholars who devote themselves to the discovery of Chinese characteristics of history shall be intellectually and methodologically open to the Western historiography, which in many cases is inspiring.

Sixth, researchers shall work hard on original writings of Chinese historians and thinkers and try their best to shed light on some *hidden* ideas. In the traditional Chinese history, many historians chose to fuse their own understanding of history with history into which they were inquiring rather than to straightly expound their opinions and theories. In this case, researchers need to dig into apparent writings and unearth deeply embedded profound thoughts of original authors. Not only shall a researcher know what a historian says but she or he also needs to illuminate why the historian says that. In most cases, the true thinking of a historian lies in the innermost part of the mind. In order to grasp it, researchers must spend much more time and energy *combing* existing writings ascribed to the historian.



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## Chapter 2

# Research Questions

Ideas of history are abundant and profound in China. Nevertheless, some scholars in the world are unwilling to recognize it. They contend instead that there are actually very few valuable things in Chinese ideas of history though the country is renowned for the an abundance of historiography. In view of such a ridiculous denial, the present author feels that it is necessary to illuminate several key points of Chinese ideas of history. Before the work, it should be pointed out that the *Chinese ideas of history* in this book consist of both historians and thinkers' viewpoints regarding history and historiography. Admittedly, in the past scholarship the thinkers' ideas of history were paid much less attention.

In the ancient China, *shiguan* (imperial officials in charge of the compilation of history) were professional historians, among whom there were many top-notch theory-builders. But on the other hand, quite a few professional historians obstinately clung to established ideas and rules and merely produced much less inspiring works. If the present author's discussion of Chinese ideas of history was exclusively based on works that were conventionally categorized into the imperial-government-sanctioned *shibu* 史部 (history section), the conclusion that the Chinese history suffered a paucity of *idea of history* would be unavoidably drawn. In the light of such a potential misunderstanding of Chinese ideas of history, the present author suggest that researchers pay greater attention instead to Chinese thinkers' interpretations of history. The concerned scholars shall always bear in mind that many thinkers' understanding of history was not in conformity with the established orthodoxy and thus denounced by the ruling elites as *heresay*. As a consequence, a great number of independent historical works that were renowned for unconventional ideas were excluded from *shibu*. Such an orthodox exclusion contributed to the unfair conclusion that the Chinese history was notoriously renowned for the lack of *ideas of history*.

Resorting to a two-pronged method, the present author explores both Chinese historians and thinkers' ideas of history and distilled their inspiring ideas into four points—namely, the idea of *tongbian* (通变, the thorough understanding of changes

in entire history), the idea that history affords present-day people lessons worthy of attention, the idea that history can be used to better the statecraft, and the idea that the Chinese historiography is of dual nature.

## 1 *Tongbian*, or Thorough Understanding of Changes in Entire History

Chinese historians and thinkers fused *tong* (通, thorough understanding) and *bian* (變, changes in entire history) into an all-embracing concept—*tongbian* (the thorough understanding of changes in entire history). The concept of *tongbian* was one of the greatest contributions that Chinese historians and thinkers made to historiography. In the conception of *tongbian*, *tong* played a bridging role and *bian* penetrated entire process (history). Where the relation of *tong* and *bian* was concerned, *bian* was the basis of *tong* and *tong* the embodiment of *bian*. Inasmuch as *bian* (change) was multifarious—for example, there were great, minor, drastic, incremental, quantitative and qualitative changes, *tong* greatly diversified accordingly. In the history of *history*, there were indeed good/poor or deep/shallow *tong* (understanding) of *bian* (historical changes). In view of this, the present author holds that the Chinese idea of history be (re-)examined concurrently from the perspectives of *tong* and *bian*. In doing so, the fused concept of *tongbian* will be fully grasped.

*What is history* Such a fundamental question always perplexes Chinese and overseas historians. In the context of *tongbian*, history is no other than *change*. Without *change*, there will not be history at all. Thus, the most fundamental role the idea of *tongbian* played in the Chinese historical thinking was to illuminate what history was on earth. There were three points of the *tongbian*-inspired answer to *what is history*.

First, change is inevitable. Take the *Book of Changes* for example. The theme of the great Book lay exactly in *tong* and *bian*. Observing deeply natural and human phenomena, the author(s) of the *Book* implied the inevitability of change. Through the prism of *tongbian* people could see such a world wherein all things incessantly changed, grew and perished. Such an enlightening perception of the ever changing world was embodied in the relation existing between differing *yao* 爻 (stacked horizontal lines) and *gua* 卦 (hexagrams), both of which were the basic units of the *Book*. Without *tong*, differing *yao* would be incommunicable; nor could differing *yao* and *gua* reciprocally transform if there was not *bian*. In this sense, *yao* and *gua* in the *Book of Changes* were actually the abstraction and generalization of penetrating and universal changes taking place in the myriad things. The author(s) of the first part of “Great Treatise” dedicated to the *Book* explained this point. They said,

The sage was able to survey all the complex phenomena under the sky. He then considered in his mind how they could be figured, and (by means of the diagrams) represented their

material forms and their character. Hence these (diagrams) are denominated Semblances (or emblematic figures, the Hsiang [i.e. Xiang 象]). A (later) sage was able to survey the motive influences working all under the sky. He contemplated them in their common action and special nature, in order to bring out the standard and proper tendency of each. He then appended his explanation (to each line of the diagrams), to determine the good or evil indicated by it. Hence those (lines with their explanations) are denominated Imitations (the Yao).<sup>1</sup>

Simply put, ancient Chinese sage(s) summarized the ever changing world by means of *gua* (hexagrams) and *yao* (stacked horizontal lines).

In the meantime, the idea of “*tongbian*” could be used as an ideological guidance for reform. In the “Great Treatise,” the author(s) stated,

Hence that which is antecedent to the material form exists, we say, as an ideal method, and that which is subsequent to the material form exists, we say, as a definite thing. Transformation and shaping is what we call change [i.e. bian 变]; carrying this out and operating with it is what we call generalizing the method [i.e. tong 通]; taking the result and setting it forth for all the people under heaven is, we say, (securing the success of) the business of life.

...

The greatest stimulus to movement in adaptation to all affairs under the sky is obtained from the explanations. The transformations and shaping that take place are obtained from the changes (of the lines) [i.e. bian 变]; the carrying this out and operating with it is obtained from the general method (that has been established) [i.e. tong 通.] The seeing their spirit-like intimations and understanding them depended on their being the proper men; and the completing (the study of) them by silent meditation, and securing the faith of others without the use of words, depended on their virtuous conduct.<sup>2</sup>

The key point of above two pieces of quotations was that only those who could accurately understand things and had been intellectually enlightened were able to act in accordance with principle of *tongbian*. Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897), an eminent reform-minded thinker in the late Qing dynasty, echoed this point in one piece of his writing.<sup>3</sup> Wang even criticized that Westerners were actually ignorant of China’s aspirations for and practices of reform through all ages.<sup>4</sup> In fact, in the long history of China the idea of *tongbian* was not only an abstract epistemology of history but also a practical theory of reforming history.

The idea of *tongbian* could be further dichotomized into the economic-material determinism advocated by Sima Qian and Confucius’s concept of historical reduction/addition. In “*Huozhi liezhuan* 货殖列传” (Biographies of merchants), one of the chapters of *Shiji* 史记, or *The Grand Scribe’s Historical Records*, Sima Qian demonstrated that the general trend of change in history was actually

<sup>1</sup>*Zhouyi* 周易, or *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/ens>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Wang Tao 王韜, “Bianfa zhong 变法中” (On Reform: Part Two), *Taoyuan wenlu waibian* 弢园文集外编 [A supplement to *Taoyuan wenlu* (Selected writings of Wang Tao)].

<sup>4</sup>Wang Tao, “Bianfa shang 变法上” (On Reform: Part One), *ibid.*

inevitable. In the eyes of the greatest historian of ancient China, the decline and prosperity of dynasties, rise and fall of hegemony and transformation of social customs were all unexceptionally embodiments of economic change. In comparison with Sima Qian's explicit economic-material determinism, the Confucian idea of historical reduction/addition was worthy of furthered discussions.

In the second chapter of *Lunyu* 论语, or *The Confucian Analects*, we read,

Zi Zhang 子张 asked whether the affairs of ten ages after could be known. Confucius said, "The Yin dynasty followed the regulations of the Xia; wherein it took from or added to them may be known. The Zhou dynasty has followed the regulations of Yin; wherein it took from or added to them may be known. Some other may follow the Zhou, but though it should be at the distance of a hundred ages, its affairs may be known."<sup>5</sup>

Here Confucius displayed a differing understanding of "tongbian." In the Master's mind Xia 夏 (2100–1600 BC), Shang 商 (1600–1100 BC) and (the Western) Zhou 周 (1100–771 BC) were the most prosperous dynasties. Indeed, there were changes between the three successive dynasties. Thus, could we say that Confucius gave the nod to the quantitative rather than to qualitative change in history? According to *Lunyu*, the Western Zhou and the era of the Duke of Zhou in particular were embodiments of the golden days of ancient China. The Master even unambiguously stated, "The virtue of the house of Zhou may be said to have reached the highest point indeed."<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Confucius acknowledged that he could not fully grasp institutions of Xia and Shang dynasties due to the lack of literature. Wang Guowei 王国维 (1877–1927), one of leading scholars in the late Qing, had demonstrated that there was a huge institutional change during the Shang-Zhou transition.<sup>7</sup> Confucius was, however, not completely ignorant of such an epoch-making institutional change. Rather, he clearly realized that Zhou was fundamentally different from previous Xia and Shang dynasties in terms of basic laws and proprieties. Thus the present author concludes that not only did Confucius correctly grasp the drastic change taking place in the era of Three Dynasties (i.e. Xia, Shang and Zhou) but he also incisively asserted that as a consequence (the Western) Zhou politically and culturally outshone the previous dynasties. The key of the success of Zhou's politics lay in the propriety-centered statecraft proposed by the Duke of Zhou. Overall, Confucius's concept of historical reduction/addition embodied some evolutionist elements and thus could be regarded as an institutional idea of *tongbian*.

Zheng Qiao 郑樵 (1104–1162), one of the most renowned historians in the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), proposed the idea of "huitong 会通" (the thorough understanding based on a comprehensive study). Zheng placed

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<sup>5</sup>*Lunyu* 论语, or *The Confucian Analects*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/analects/wei-zheng/ens>.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/analects/tai-bo/ens>.

<sup>7</sup>Wang Guowei 王国维, "Yinzhou zhidu lun 殷周制度论" (On institutions of Shang and Zhou dynasties), in *Guantang jilin 观堂集林* (Collected writings of Wang Guantang [i.e. Guowei]).

emphases on the interconnection and interdependence in history and conceptually highlighted the idea of *tong* rather than the idea of *bian* (change). He had analogically said,

Although rivers differ from each other, they all unexceptionally finally flow to the sea. For this reason, entire country will be ultimately freed from floods. In the same vein, entire country will be finally smoothly interlinked on the grounds that differing states are bound to converge on the Chinese institution, though they do have diverse origins. (“Zongxu 总序” [The general preface], *Tongzhi* 通志 [General treatises on history])

In this quotation Zheng Qiao emphatically talked about the interrelation of nature and human society and the inseparability of past and present. Nevertheless, the leading historian in the Southern Song did not pay enough attention to the basic question that how *bian* or change took place and worked in the process (history). To put it another way, Zhen did not intellectually inherit the invaluable *idea of change* in the *Book of Changes*, which was actually the origin of his conception of *huitong*. Even in the critical eyes of Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚 (1738–1801), who was one of the leading Qing scholars and the author of highly influential *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通义 (All-embracing delineations of literature and history), the basic difference existing between Zheng’s idea of *huitong* and prime intellectual constituent of *Book of Changes* was neglected.

Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC) formulated a different idea of *tongbian*, which actually ran against the original concept of Sima Qian. Dong asserted,

In ancient times those who created writing took three horizontal lines and connected them through the center to designate the king. The three horizontal lines represent Heaven, Earth and humankind while the vertical line that connects them through the center represents comprehending the Way. As for the one who appropriates the mean of Heaven, Earth, and humankind and takes this as the thread that joints and connects them, if it is not one who acts as a king then who can be equal to this [task]?... Heaven shelters and nourishes the myriad things. It transforms and generates them. It nourishes and completes them. Heaven’s affairs and achievements are endless. They end and begin again, and all that Heaven raises up it returns to serve humankind. If you examine Heaven’s will you will surely see that Heavens humaneness is inexhaustible and limitless.<sup>8</sup> (“Wangdao tongshan 王道通三” [The way of the king penetrates three], Chapter 11, *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 [Luxuriant gems of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*])

In Dong’s (re-)formulation, the so-called *bian* and *tong* were all embodiments of Heaven’s intention and *tongbian* was no other than the effort made by the king, who grasped the Heaven’s intention, to interconnect Heaven, Earth and humankind. In other words, the originally positive idea of *tongbian* was turned into a concept that was subject to the intention of Heaven in Dong’s theoretical reconstruction. Thus, we might say that the intellectual essence of *Book of Changes* had already been replaced with the idea of *tianren ganying* 天人感应 (the mystical correlative resonance between Heaven and humans) in the Dong-styled Confucian discourses.

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<sup>8</sup>Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 300–301.

Second, the idea of “*tongbian*” emphasized that the historical change must be premised on certain conditions. According to the traditional idea of *tongbian*, those who aspired to reform must pay attention to certain ex/internal conditions. *Bian* or change could by no means be willfully brought about. Rather, change and the political change in particular must be done under certain conditions. In this regard, the historical idea of *tongbian* was actually the essence of Chinese ideas of reform through all ages. For example, Ma Duanlin 马端临 (1254–1323), an eminent historian who was active in the late Southern Song and early Yuan dynasties, had employed the idea of “*tongbian*” to criticize that the program solving social crises by means of the restoration of archaic systems of enfeoffment and land distribution was totally impractical due to entirely different social conditions.<sup>9</sup> In the light of the case of Ma Duanlin, the present author concludes that the significance of idea of *tongbian* was twofold. To be specific, the idea not only shed light on the fact that change was inevitable but also convincingly demonstrated that change was conditioned. Historically, such an enlightening idea could be used to observe the history, and rethink the social reform in China.

Third, the idea of *tongbian* implied that the opposite sides could be mutually inclusive. For example, in his discussions of historical prosperity and decline, Sima Qian pointed out that in the *prosperity* there were elements of *decline* and vice versa. Moreover, the elements of prosperity and decline, Sima contended, could reciprocally transform. Such a type of change was absolutely not simplistically cyclical but profoundly transformative. It was in accordance with the idea of *tongbian* that some Chinese historians issued warning words in an apparently prosperous era.

Thanks to the idea of *tongbian*, history could be divided into differing phases. Resorting exclusively to either the concept of *tong* or the idea of *bian*, the division of historical period and stage would be out of the question. The popular divisions—i.e. the ancient, medieval, late ancient and modern times—regarding history shed light not only on the penetrating thread but also on differing changes in history. Some scholars inspiringly contended that separately the concepts of *tong* and *bian* gave expression to the contradictory sides of a question and in contrast the combined concept of *tongbian* revealed the unity of opposites. To put it another way, the essence of the idea of *tongbian* lay precisely in the fusion of inheritance and innovation.<sup>10</sup> Where the significance of idea of *tongbian* to history was concerned, the idea could be employed to innovate on historiography. For example, in Zhang Xuecheng’s *Wenshi tongyi* (All-embracing delineations of literature and history), *tongbian* was actually a code word for the historiographical transformation (Chapter 1, “*Neipian* 内篇” (Inner part), *Wenshi tongyi*). It should also be pointed out that the

<sup>9</sup>For Ma’s detailed discussions and analyses, please see Chapters 180 and 275 in his masterpiece entitled *Wenxian tongkao* 文献通考 (A comprehensive examination of existing literature).

<sup>10</sup>Ma Maoyuan 马茂元, “Shuo ‘*tongbian*’ 说《通变》,” [Treatise on Chapter of “Inevitable Changes” in *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙 (The literary mind and the carving of dragon)], in *Wanzhaolou wenji* 晚照楼文集 [Writings in the Pavilion of Twilight] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981).

idea of “*tongbian*,” which was produced by historians’ intellectual effort to observe natural and social movements, had exerted substantive influence on almost all branches of scholarship. Thus, the mission of history was to grasp the historical movement by a two-pronged means consisting predominantly of the concepts of *tong* and *bian*.

## 2 The Idea That History Teaches Present-Day People Lessons Worthy of Attention

First of all, the present author explains the possibility and necessity of historical lessons. On the one hand, indeed there were something repeatable and constant in the historical development; and on the other hand, the history itself could not be repeated. If people absolutely held that history could not be repeated, the historical lesson would be ungrounded. In contrast, if people obstinately believed that history could only be repeated, neither the progressive history nor historical lesson was possible. In some cases, the so-called *historical lesson* was no more than the indiscriminate imitation of something done previously. The present author discusses the question from the perspective of Chinese history. The historical repeatability was based on the historical fact that the development of human history depended on the growth of material production. Historically, the social stability and development was premised on the constant implementation of material production and extended reproduction. In order to fulfil the material production and extended reproduction, there were four must-do jobs.

First, the basic necessities for producers or laborers must be effectively ensured. Whenever the basic conditions, whereby the people could live barely above the level of subsistence, was broken, the society would be immediately *tong* thrown into chaos. In the pre-Capitalist society, the living condition of laborers was the mark of social in/stability on the grounds that the social production was predominantly labor-intensive. For this reason, Sima Qian incisively concluded that usually rulers through all ages mercilessly put the people to excessive work. The immediate collapse of the powerful Qin 秦 Empire corroborated this point.<sup>11</sup> Sima’s inspiring conclusion was inherited by almost all later historians.

Second, producers/laborers and means of production must be fused together. In the feudal China, the land ownership was the most basic issue in relation to the stability and development of all dynasties. Once peasants and land were separated, the rural laborers were immediately turned into *vagabonds*. As a result, the social production would be destroyed; nor could the social order be maintained. Ancient Chinese historians and thinkers paid much greater attention to the issue of land (ownership).

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<sup>11</sup>Part one of “*Shihuo zhi* 食货志” (Treatise on the economy), in Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 汉书 [History of the Former Han dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962).



Their discussions focused on the im/practicability of archaic systems of *fengjian* (封建, enfeoffment) and *jingtian* (井田, the well-fielded distribution of land). The goal of the historians and thinkers' exploration of history was to make sure that land and laborers would not be separated and the social production could thus be maintained. For example, both Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 AD), the author of *Hanshu* 汉书 (History of the Former Han dynasty), and Du You 杜佑 (735–812 AD), who authored the monumental *Tongdian* 通典 (The encyclopedic collections of imperial institutions), elaborated this point in their works.<sup>12</sup> Ancient Chinese historians unexceptionally bore in mind that in the feudal China the rise and fall of dynasties were always related to the problem of land (distribution).

Third, the ruling elites must be good at disciplining themselves. In the feudal China, ruling elites' aspiration for incorruptness was not merely moral. Many far-sighted emperors sincerely and earnestly admonished their heirs to grasp the people's true living conditions as far as possible and do their best to ensure the people's survival. For example, Li Shimin 李世民 (598–649 AD), who was the second emperor of Tang dynasty and one of the most enlightened sovereigns in the ancient China, had told his ministers that the way of being a true sovereign lay primarily in the sincere effort to save and protect the people. And moreover, he analogically said that if a ruler satisfied his desires at the cost of the basic living of the people, it would be like such a crazy and ridiculous act that one stuffed himself by cutting off the flesh from his own thigh.<sup>13</sup>

Fourth, the social order and environment that were conducive to the social production must be created and maintained. In the feudal China, *lizhi* 礼治 or the statecraft based on (Confucian) proprieties was one of the parts of superstructure that was used to defend the established social hierarchy. The role *lizhi* played under the circumstances of ancient China proved to be double-edged. On the one hand, it contributed decisively to the maintenance of social order. On the other hand, it could be too conservative to embrace the furthered innovation on or adjustment of relation of production when the social productive forces grew to a new level. Where the *social environment* was concerned, it was multifarious. It at least included the general mood of society, human ethics and moralities and relations with neighboring peoples. It should be particularly pointed out that whether the relations with neighboring people could be appropriately handled would directly influence the social order and production.

Additionally, the military affairs went together with the social order and environment. Undoubtedly, the armed force was the method employed by ruling elites to consolidate their rule. Roles that the force played in a dynasty were twofold. To be specific, not only was it the violent means used in putting down class-based rebellions but it also was an effective tool against foreign invasions. Therefore,

<sup>12</sup>For both great historians' related discussions, please see Ban Gu's "Shihuo zhi" (Treatise on the economy) in *Hanshu* and Chapter One of Du You's *Tongdian*.

<sup>13</sup>"Jundao 君道" (The art of rulership), in Wu Jing 吴兢, *Zhenguan zhengyao* 贞观政要 (The essence of the politics in the Zhenguan Reign (627–649)).

rulers through all ages attached great importance to military affairs in their (re-) examinations of rise and fall of past dynasties. Nevertheless, whether a dynasty survived and became prosperous did not rely exclusively on the *force*. For example, although Ban Gu, who exhaustively researched into the history of the Former Han dynasty (202 BC–8 AD), strongly held that one of the key contributors of the rapid collapse of Qin Empire was the slackened armed force after the unification war, Ma Duanlin, who did an encyclopedic study in Chinese institutions through all ages, inspiringly pointed out that it was the excessive corvee imposed by the Qin administration on the people and consequent lack of popular support that determined the powerful but coercive Empire's inevitable doom (“Bingkao yi 兵考—” [Part one of reexamination of military affairs], Chapter 149, in *Wenxian tongkao*).

Aforementioned points repeatedly influenced the rise and fall of dynasties in the long history of China. Historians and thinkers through all ages intensively discussed these points and tried their utmost to find something valuable buried under the ruins of history. Nevertheless, historical phenomena could by no means be repeated literally. Historians and thinkers must always bear in mind that a certain historical phenomenon depended on certain conditions. For this reason, when people were using history for reference, they must take into consideration the *conditions* under which the history took place. Li Han 李翰, a Tang poet and Confucian scholar, shed light on this point in his “Preface” to *Tongdian* (The encyclopedic collections of imperial institutions). According to Li’s illumination, the key of the work using history for reference lay in *suishi* 随时 (the fully understanding and appraising differences existing between ancient and contemporary times). To put it another way, Chinese historians and thinkers profoundly fused the effort to draw lessons from history with the idea of *tongbian*.

Chinese historians strongly objected to the obstinate adherence to a certain historical experience. For example, while some imperial officials advocated that the social crises disturbing the country could be solved by means of old systems such as *fengjian* and *jingtian*, both of which were prevalent and worked effectively in the Three Dynasties (i.e. the archaic Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties), enlightened historians such as Ma Duanlian criticized that such a pedantic suggestion was completely ignorant of historical changes. Echoing Ma’s criticism against the stubborn adherence to outworn systems, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692), who was one of the three towering philosophers during the Ming-Qing transition in the early seventeenth century, incisively pointed out that a person who was really good at learning from history would analogically examine the history and creatively (re-) apply it to the reality (“Han Gaodi 汉高帝” (Liu Bang, the founding emperor of Former Han dynasty), Chapter 2, in *Du Tongjian lun* 读通鉴论 (Reading notes to *Zizhi tongjian* [Comprehensive historical records in aid of governance])). Wang furthered this point in “Introduction” to his well-known magnum opus entitled *Du Tongjian lun*. He said,

In *Du Tongjian lun*, I try my best to find the fundamental reason of success and failure of dynasties through all ages and aspire to illuminate it in accordance with the Sages’ grand principles of governance. Where the historical experience and institutions are concerned, they are (re-)examined according to concrete conditions of a certain time and in doing so

the degree of appropriateness of a certain experience or institution in a certain time will be discovered. In practice, each dynasty would (re-)work on established institutions with an eye to making them be in accord with the times. An objective observer prefers to explicitly acknowledge the uncertainty regarding the applicability of established institutions in previous ages rather than to blindly advocate the universality of the institutions even at the cost of the Right Way (of Governance). Unfortunately, indeed there were people who arbitrarily applied the alleged universal institutions to all under heaven. For example, a few stubborn Confucian thinkers strongly suggested that the outworn systems such as *fengjian* (enfeoffment) and *jingtian* (the well-fielded distribution of land), *xiangju* 乡举 (the institutionalized practice recommending talents in the countryside), *lixuan* 里选 (the institutionalized selection of talents living in the grass-roots society), *yubing yunong* 寓兵于农 (an archaic practice wherein conscripts labored as farmers in times of peace and fought as soldiers in case of war) and abolishment of certain corporal punishments be put into effect again. But, in reality, the Yuwen 宇文 family, who ran the Northern Zhou dynasty (557–581 AD) in accordance with the rites of Western Zhou, was actually the perpetrator of barbarian acts; and Li Zhongchang 李仲昌, an imperial official in the Northern Song dynasty, exacerbated the existing flood due to his obstinate adherence to the archaic geographical treatise entitled *Yugong* 禹贡 (The Tribute of Yu) in digging canals. Neglecting the basic law, such stubborn men in power, who aspired for the *literal* restoration of archaic systems, arbitrarily attempted to implement their ideas. I really cannot imagine what on earth their efforts would bring about! (“Xulun si 叙论四” [Part Four of the Introduction], *Du Tongjian lun*)

Here, Wang, a brilliant enlightened thinker in the late feudal China, profoundly revealed that horrible results would be brought about by the stubborn adherence to the outworn systems and the complete ignorance of the changing reality.

In Chinese historical works, not only successful but also failed experience could be used for reference. For enlightened and far-sighted emperors, they could profoundly learn from the collapse of past dynasties and make necessary changes in their new dynasties. For example, the Emperor Gao (256–195 BC) and Emperor Wu (157–87 BC) in the Former Han dynasty and Emperor Tai (598–649 AD) of Tang Empire did earnestly examine the history and draw useful lessons, all of which were employed to improve their governance. Even rulers from the non-Han ethnic groups—for example, the Emperor Sheng of Liao (916–1125, a Khitan regime) and Emperor Shi of Jin (1115–1234, a Jurchen regime)—critically observed the rise and fall of Han and Tang dynasties. The Jin’s Emperor Shi (1123–1189) incisively pointed out that the respectable Emperor Tai of Tang Empire actually did not sincerely learn the history throughout his reign. Undoubtedly, his objective observation of the history of Emperor Tai’s Zhenguan reign (627–649 AD) made a great contribution to the reputable peace and prosperity of his Da’ding 大定 reign (1161–1189).

It should be pointed out that in some cases the Chinese idea that history affords lessons worthy of attention did bring about something unsatisfying. First, some ridiculously used alleged embodiments of *tianren ganying* (the mystical correlative resonance between Heaven and humans) as historical lessons and discussed the rise of fall of dynasties by means of superficial analogies. Second, the role that science and technology played in the social development was unconsciously or consciously neglected by almost all ancient Chinese historians. Third, the significance of established (Confucian) cardinal moral guides and principles were attached

excessive importance. Fourth, there was the lack of idea of *tongbian* in some historians' exploration of vicissitudes of past dynasties.

Historically, the growth of Chinese idea that history affords lesson worthy of attention could be divided into several phases. The first phase was embodied in *Shangshu* 尚书 (*Book of History*). Drawing lessons from the violent collapse of Shang, author(s) of *Shangshu* intellectually fused historical lessons with the idea of venerating Heaven. In the second phase, author(s) of *Book of Changes* and renowned Han historians such as Sima Qian and Jia Yi 贾谊 (200–168 BC) highlighted the significance of *tongbian* in their analyses of rise and fall of kingdoms and dynasties in previous ages. Sima Guang's 司马光 (1019–1086) two monumental works—*Zizhi tongjian* and *Ji'gu lu* 稽古录 (A comprehensive reexamination of things past)—epitomized the third phase, in which the paradigm of *lei* 类 (category) was employed to discuss the fate of past dynasties. It was in this phase that the idea that history affords lessons witnessed a philosophical growth thanks to the emergence and development of *lixue* 理学 (the Learning of Principle), a new height of Confucian philosophy. In the modern phase, not only was there a holistic exploration of vicissitudes of China and the world but historians also paid due attention to the role science and technology played in the rise and fall of a certain country.

### 3 The Idea That History Can Be Used to Better the Statecraft

Chinese historians almost unanimously agreed that history could be employed to improve the statecraft. In this regard, roles that history could play in bettering the state politics were manifold. For example, it could morally educate the people by means of exposition of historical examples, just as Xun Yue 荀悦 (148–209 AD), a historian and Confucian thinker in the late later Han dynasty, explicitly stated that one of the five most primary goals of writings history lay in the fullest illumination of moral and righteous principles (“Biographies dedicated to Xun Yue,” Chapter 62, in *Houhan shu* 后汉书 [History of the Later Han Dynasty]). In addition, history was a method whereby the (Confucian) classics and Heavenly Principle could be explained. Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the towering figure of *lixue* in the Southern Song dynasty, powerfully contended that the effort to examine historical figures through all ages would shed light on the grand principles regarding right and wrong and good and evil (“Dushufa shang 读书法上” [Part one of the reading methodology], *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子语类 (Themed collection of speeches by the Master Zhu [i.e. Zhu Xi])). Indeed, there were principles buried under historical events and figures. Thus, Confucian gurus of *lixue* dream such an enlightening history, through which the grand principles and uprightness of

Heavenly Principle could be thrust into the limelight and interest the masses as many as possible.

In the history of Chinese scholarship, there were very few cases in which historians paid no attention to practical roles history played in the society in their explorations of history. In Chinese discourses, the assertion that history played practical roles in social development had several particular meanings. First, the practical history laid emphases on the improvement of people's livelihood and the increase in the state's wealth and power. Nevertheless, such practically oriented history did not totally reject *principles*. Rather, it emphasized that the principles should not be completely independent of the people and state's practical needs. This point was perfectly embodied in the theoretical debate over *righteousness* and *profit* between Zhu Xi and Chen Liang 陈亮 (1143–1194), a prominent innovative Confucian thinker in the Southern Song dynasty. Zhu held that *righteousness* and *profit* could not coexist and admonished that if the *profit* was attached to greater importance the *righteousness* would be sacrificed accordingly. On the contrary, Chen asserted that both were not totally incompatible at all but instead could coexist peacefully. In his "Shang Xiaozong huangdi diyi shu 上孝宗皇帝第一书" (The first memorial to the Emperor Xiao), Chen ironically called some *lixue* gurus, who blindly devoted themselves to the rectification of the mind and completely ignored the realistic aspirations for the country's wealth and power, the "living dead." Overall, the idea that history can be used to better the statecraft and the thinking that history affords lessons worthy of attention were intellectually interlinked on the grounds that both paid greater attention to elements contributing to the rise and fall of a dynasty. The difference existing between the two ideas of history merely lay in the former's particular emphasis on the people's livelihood and the revival of the nation.

Second, the practical history laid stress on the role institution played in a dynasty and strongly held that the history's function bettering statecraft could be brought into full play by means of innovative (re-)creation of institutions, laws, regulations and measures in a new dynasty. For example, the Yongjia 永嘉 School in the Southern Song dynasty particularly placed emphasis on the utilitarian aspiration of Confucian scholarship. In his famous *Song Yuan xue'an* 宋元学案 (Survey of Confucian scholars in Song and Yuan dynasties), Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲 (1610–1695), one of the most prominent thinkers during the Ming-Qing transition, pointed out that the essence of teaching of Yongjia School lay in the practicability of scholarly explorations (Chapter 52). Like scholars from Yongjia School, Lü Zuqian 吕祖谦 (1137–1181), an eminent Confucian in the Southern Song dynasty, advocated that scholars aspire to grasp the practical learning (Chapter 5, in *Zuoshi zhuan shuo* 左氏传说 [Interpretations of *Zuozhuan*, or *Master Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*]). In Qing, the last feudal dynasty of China, Zhang Xuecheng theoretically concluded that all Confucian classics were actually historical works in accordance with the assertion that both *jing* (classics) and *shi* (history) were practical learning regarding the improvement of the people's livelihood. Additionally, those who enthusiastically promoted the history's

aspiration for and practice of betterment of the statecraft were usually enlightened thinkers advocating social reforms.

Third, scholars who advocated the idea that history could be used to better the statecraft were usually pragmatic. For example, Gu Yanwu 顾炎武 (1613–1682), one of leading philosophers during the Ming-Qing transition, was fond of intellectual explorations of statecraft and placed emphasis on the on-the-spot investigation. In one of pieces of his writings Gu mentioned that he had travelled around the country with two horses and two mules (“Yu Pan Cigeng 与潘次耕” [Letter to Pan Cigeng], Chapter 6, in *Tinglin wenji* 亭林文集 [Collected writings of Gu Tinglin]). Pan Cigeng, whose original name was Pan Lei 潘耒, confirmed this point in his “Preface” to Gu’s masterpiece entitled *Rizhi lu* 日知录 (*Record of Daily Knowledge*). In fact, the fusion of textual research and on-the-spot investigation was the common feature shared by thinkers renowned for their advocacy of practical history. Generally speaking, such pragmatic thinkers were so well-learned and open-minded that they had a good command of varying knowledge such as classical Confucianism, history, astronomy, geography, calendar and mathematics. Taken as a whole, the characteristic of (ancient) Chinese *jingshi shixue* 经世史学, or historical studies devoted to the betterment of statecraft, was characterized by the equal importance attached to both history and reality.

Fourth, practical historians respected both *jing* (Confucian classics) and *shi* (historical works). *History* was attached great importance among them. For example, the practical implications of Lü Zuqian’s idea that “applying the accumulated virtue to the reality” and Gu Yanwu’s assertion that “studies in (Confucian) classics are no other than the Learning of Principle” lay exactly in *history*. Some thinkers illuminated this point in a more direct manner. Zhang Xuecheng explicitly stated that the six most basic Confucian classics were all historical works; and Gong Zizhen 龚自珍 (1792–1841), an enlightened thinker in the late Qing dynasty, unambiguously advocated the idea of venerating history.

Fifth, one of key aspirations of the practical history was to revive the nation. Such an ambitious aspiration could be directly incorporated into the modern patriotism in China. The present author holds that the history of Chinese *jingshi shixue* (historical studies devoted to the betterment of statecraft) be traced back to *Tongdian* authored by Du You. This point was worthy of furthered discussion. In the “Preface” he penned for “Shihuo dian 食货典” (Institutions in relation to economic affairs) of *Tongdian*, Du clearly stated that the ultimate goal of his work was to make the giant book conducive to the politics. In the seventeenth year of Zhenyuan (801 AD), when he presented the book before the emperor, Du restated his great aspiration (“Du You zhuan 杜佑传” [The life of Du You], Chapter 97, in *Jiu Tang shu* 新唐书 [The old history of Tang dynasty]). Wang Mingsheng 王鸣盛 (1722–1799), an early Qing scholar renowned for meticulous studies in Confucian classics and history, incisively shed light on Du You’s scholarly characteristic, asserting that it exactly lay in the greater importance attached to varying institutions and their practical significance rather than to Confucian classics, even though he actually criticized Du from the perspective of veneration of classics (“Du You zuo *Tongdian* 杜佑作通典” [How did Du You compile *Tongdian*?], Chapter 90, in

*Shiqi shi shangque* 十七史商榷 [Critically reexamining the seventeen official history books]). Even the Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (1711–1799), whose reign marked the peak of late feudal China, provided an in-depth analysis of Du’s grand ideal of finding detailed plans in search of a much bettered statecraft and concluded that Du actually aspired to formulate a refined and effective pattern of governance in his “Preface” to the reprinted *Tongdian*. In this regard, the present author asserts that *Tongdian* be the earliest embodiment of the established Chinese *jingshi shixue* (historical studies devoted to the betterment of statecraft).

In the two Song dynasties (960–1279), the Chinese *jingshi shixue* witnessed embraced a furthered growth, which was embodied in the emergence of Yongkang 永康 School represented by Chen Longchuan 陈龙川 (i.e. Chen Liang) and Lü Zuqian’s School of Eastern Zhejiang. Lü even radically held that the investigation of history be fused with the everyday life. In the Ming-Qing period (1368–1912), the *jingshi shixue* was turned into *shixue* 实学 (the Practical Learning). It was particularly worth mentioning that Zhang Xuecheng theoretically concluded entire *jingshi shixue*. In the Republican China (1912–1949), the pragmatic/practical pulse of history was embodied in the popularity of historical studies in Chinese frontiers and geography. For example, *Yugong* 禹贡 (The Tribute of Yu), the flagship journal of frontier- and geography-centered historical studies, declared that scholars in this field were setting off the second wave of historico-geographical exploration of China since the First Opium War (1840–1842) and the ultimate goal of their academic efforts was to encourage the people to save the country by means of historico-geographical studies.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4 The Dual Nature of Chinese Historiography

The dual nature of historiography gave expression to the dual need of feudal sovereigns in the ancient China. As we know, only when the history in a certain time was put into the context of a certain politico-economy would be its basic characteristics well illuminated. In order to consolidate their rule, the feudal Chinese sovereigns paid great attention to drawing lessons from the rise and fall of past dynasties. Such enlightening lessons could only be drawn from the true—albeit reconstructed—history. Faced with the irresistible historical force that brought about rise and fall of dynasties, feudal sovereigns could by no means neglect nor *play with* history. Otherwise, they would definitely be punished by *history*. Wang Fuzhi had pointed out that the righteous way of governance, practice of sagacious kings, teachings of sages, creation and abolishment of varying institutions and emergence of rebellions could all be found in history (“Song Wendi 宋文帝” (The Emperor

<sup>14</sup>Please see: *Yugong xuehui yanjiu bianjiang jihuashu* 禹贡学会研究边疆计划书 (Yugong Society’s prospectus for research into Chinese frontiers); “Benhui ci sanian zhong gongzuo jihuashu 本会此三年中工作计划” (The three-year working plan), *Yugong* 禹贡 (The Tribute of Yu), issue 7, nos. 1, 2, 3 (1937).

Wen of Song of Southern Dynasties), Chapter 15, in *Du Tongjian lun*). In other words, the *true history* was in authentic historical works. For this reason, Chinese feudal sovereigns required that history be written in a veritable and upright way.

The present author does not hold that in the ancient China the aspiration for the *veritable record of history* was an abstract moral ideal but instead it was an intellectual embodiment of ruling elites' desperate need of consolidated political order. Historically, founding emperors paid much greater attention to the history brimming with revealing cases of rise and fall of dynasties. As a consequence, they placed emphasis on the *veritable and upright* (re-)creation of history. For example, in the light of the fact that some imperial historians wrote in an intentionally obscure manner in order to avoid infuriating the incumbent sovereigns, Li Shimin, or the great Emperor Tai of Tang, suggested that it be much better for historians to candidly and straightforwardly do creative work ("Wenshi 文史" (Literature and history), Chapter 7, in *Zhenguan zhengyao*). The Emperor Tai even asked Wei Zheng 魏征 (580–643 AD), one of the most reputable prime ministers in the ancient China, to pen a veritable record entitled *Zigu zhuhouwang shan'e lu* 自古诸侯王善恶录 (Good and evil works done by enfeoffed kings through all ages), which was used to morally educate ruling aristocrats in the Tang Empire ("Jiaojie taizi zhuwang 教戒太子诸王" (The education applied to the Crown Prince and enfeoffed kings), Chapter 4, in *Zhenguan zhengyao*). Apart from enlightened and far-sighted emperors in a rising empire, even sovereigns in declining dynasties clearly grasped the significance work drawing lessons from history. For instance, the Emperor Chongzhen 崇祯 (1611–1644), or the last emperor of Ming Empire, inspiringly pointed out that the key of the work writing history lay exclusively in veritably recording what really took place in history and the goal of historical works was to authentically illuminate right and wrong in his reply to one piece of memorial sent by Li Mingrui, an imperial official ("Sanchao yaodian 三朝要典" [Comments on *Essence of History of Three Previous Reigns*], Chapter 18, in *Rizhi lu*).

But on the other hand, sovereigns through all ages must justify the rule they imposed on the country. In this regard, they invoked the mystical *Tianming* 天命, or the Mandate of Heaven. Dong Zhongshu theoretically approved this point in his writings ("Dong Zhongshu zhuan 董仲舒传" [The life of Dong Zhongshu], Chapter 56, in *Hanshu*). The aforementioned *tianren ganying* (the mystical correlative resonance between Heaven and humans) was actually an embodiment of the theory of Mandate of Heaven. Not only did it justify the rise of a certain sovereign by means of mysterious power of Heaven but it could also be used to admonish emperors not to commit evil deeds. Indeed, the mysterious power of Heaven could place moral restrictions on sovereigns and prevent their dynasties from collapsing rapidly. Dong Zhongshu explained this point in detail. He said<sup>15</sup>,

Concerning the source of natural disasters and bizarre events, ultimately they are caused by the faults of the ruling family of the state. When the faults of the ruling family of the state

<sup>15</sup>Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露, or *Luxuriant Gems of The Spring and Autumn*, trans. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major (New York, NY: Columbia Press University, 2016), p. 322.



have just begun to become apparent, Heaven sends disaster and destruction to warn and inform them. If after being warned and informed, [the ruling family of the state] does not know to change, then Heaven manifests uncanny and bizarre events to startle and terrify them. If after being startled and terrified, [the ruling family of the state] still does not know to fear and dread [Heaven], only then will death and extinction overtake them.

Besides the mysterious idea of Mandate of Heaven, Dong also theoretically formulated the historicist “santong 三统” (tri-orthodoxy) and the stratification of a person’s status and corresponding social duties.

In the light of above discussions, the present author concludes that the *dual nature* of ancient Chinese historiography lay in two aspects. On the one hand, in order to learn lessons from history Chinese elites sought for the historical truth and aspired to produce authentic historical works. On the other hand, feudal sovereigns tried their best to prove that their rule was in conformity with the Heavenly Intention by means of reconstructing history in accordance with their own needs. Undoubtedly, the second effort unavoidably brought about the distortion of true history in search of the sovereign’s divine power. In this sense, the so-called *dual nature* of feudal Chinese historiography referred no other than to the entangled historical actuality and illusion in *history*. History with such a *dual nature* did meet the political need of feudal sovereigns. As we know, it was in historical works that the mystical *Tianren ganying* and historical facts were fused into one. Admittedly, such an intellectual compound was much more convincing than the purely abstract and hollow preaching in support of the established feudal hierarchy. The *dual nature* was not a simple combination but a complex, organic whole. In other words, the veritable record of history and the historical reinterpretation meeting feudal sovereigns’ need were not done separately; rather, both simultaneously, collaboratively constituted the Chinese historiography. In the practice of historical writing, the aspiration for learning lessons from the true history and the effort to meet ruling elites’ need dual nature interlinked with and interacted on each other. As a result, neither did feudal elites in ancient China pay no attention to the historical actuality nor could historians carry out the goal of veritably and uprightly writing history to the end. It should also be pointed out that the *dual nature* did not enjoy the full freedom from being changed, but instead embraced transformations in accordance with the general growth of Chinese historiography. The dynamics of the *dual nature* was multifaceted.

First, the growth of social productive force spearheaded by the development of science and technology seriously challenged traditional Chinese ideas of Mandate of Heaven and Heavenly Intention. In reality, while historical interpretations based on the idea of Mandate of Heaven were increasingly full of loopholes, the traditional Chinese theology was actually not replaced with an innovative one. Consequently, neither could the conventional idea of *tianren ganying* be abandoned nor was the theoretical crisis prevented from taking place. Since Song dynasties, the intellectual situation with respect to historiography grew worse. For example, Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 (1007–1072), a senior politician and leading man of letters in the Northern Song dynasty, realized that there were serious contradictions existing in historical interpretations based on the traditional assertions regarding in/auspicious phenomena and their implications for the fate of a dynasty (“Wuxing zhi

yi 五行志一” [Part one of Treatise on Five Elements], *Xin Tang shu* 新唐书 [The new history of Tang dynasty]). Inasmuch as the traditional historiography could by no means be immediately replaced with a novel theory, Ouyang had to invent instead the idea of *dual existence*. He said,

Sages never attempt to cut off the communication between Heaven and humans; nor do they examine the human society by means of Heaven. They clearly grasp that if the communication between Heaven and humans was cut off, the Heavenly Way would be abolished and if the human society was examined through the prism of Heaven human affairs be misled. In view of this, they choose to leave both Heaven and human affairs untouched. (“Sitian kao er 司天考二” [Part two of Treatise on astronomy], *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史 [The new history of Five Dynasties])

Nevertheless, Ouyang’s theoretical compromise, by which the interconnection and separability of Heaven and humans were recognized, was an embodiment of the deepening historiographical crisis. Finally, Ouyang Xiu had to theoretically rest in the traditional idea of *tianren ganying*, though he personally showed very strong discontent with it. Later, Ouyang’s *helpless* attitude towards the traditional historiography was adopted by author(s) of *Songshi* 宋史 (The history of Song dynasty), *Yuanshi* 元史 (The history of Yuan dynasty) and *Mingshi* 明史 (The history of Ming dynasty).

Second, the feudal state’s tight control over the work compiling history greatly influenced the Chinese historiography. In most cases the private historical works were illegal in the feudal China. Practically, writing the complete *state history* was a mission impossible for an individual historian. In fact, some did try to privately write the *state history*. Ban Gu, for instance, had attempted to pen a book exploring the history of the immediate past dynasty without the imperial endorsement. But, such a bold attempt almost killed him on the grounds that it infuriated the imperial government so much. Putting strict ban on private historical works was a regular practice in the feudal China. The Emperor Wen of Sui dynasty (581–618 AD) in one of his edicts stated clearly that unauthorized works regarding the *state history* and historical figures be strictly forbidden, though he himself was a very enlightened national leader. Even Zheng Qiao, a leading historian living in the Southern Song dynasty, did worry that his work *state history* would not be tolerated by the imperial government.<sup>16</sup> Historically, legal cases involving thinkers, historians and scholars who penned history in defiance of imperial bans were actually embodiments of ruling elites’ absolute monopoly on the (historical) ideology. In this sense, the objection to the imperially-sanctioned collected effort to write history, as advocated fervently by Liu Zhiji 刘知几 (661–721 AD), the leading historiographer in Tang, was an intellectual act against the feudalistic monopoly on the historical knowledge.

We shall always bear in mind that some ancient Chinese historians did choose not to bow to some high-handed feudal rulers in the matter of writing history. In

<sup>16</sup>Zheng Qiao 郑樵, “Shang Zaixiang shu 上宰相书” (A memorial to the Prime Minister), in Wu Huaqi 吴怀祺 ed., *Zheng Qiao wenji; Zheng Qiao nianpu gao* 郑樵文集·郑樵年谱稿 [Collected writings of Zheng Qiao; The chronicle of Zheng Qiao’s life] (Beijing: Wenxian chubanshe, 1992), p. 39.

spite of the fact that feudal dynasties did successfully control the compilation and publication of official history, private works dedicated to historical figures and events actually came out in an unending flow. Pouring their hearts out to readers, a few historians produced praiseworthy private works, wherein they objectively and deeply examined history and reality. Apart from such brave private historians, candid historians working for the imperial institute boldly wrote veritable records of history. The fight between candid and distorted history constituted the dynamics of historiographical growth. In the late stage of feudal China, the private history became almost prosperous thanks to the social progress, cultural development and betterment of printing in particular.

Changes taking place in the *dual nature* of conventional Chinese historiography corresponded with the general growth of traditional Chinese thinking. Digging into the Chinese intellectual history, one could find that the world of Chinese thoughts began with the unity of humans and supernatural beings and then proceeded to the separation of mundane and immortal beings due to the epistemic growth embodied in the secularization of thoughts. Thus, we might say that the medieval Chinese *interrelation of Heaven and man* served as an intermediate link in the history of Chinese thought. The edifice of interrelation of Heaven and man itself underwent changes as well in the medieval China. Generally speaking, in pace with the social growth, the idea of Mandate of Heaven grew increasingly insignificant in confrontations between aspirations for candid or distorted history and between efforts to attach greater importance to Mandate of Heaven or human affairs.

The *dual nature* of Chinese historiography perfectly displayed the coexistence of essence and dregs of the heritage of traditional Chinese history. Indeed, China has an abundant but complex heritage with respect to the historical writing. On the whole ideas regarding the Mandate of Heaven, orthodoxy and personal status and corresponding social duties and historicism were mixed together in quite a few traditional Chinese historical works. Interestingly, some gave insight into the significance of human elements to the rise and fall of dynasties in analyses in the garb of Mandate of Heaven; some advocated the veritable record of history while distorting the history to be in accord with the Mandate of Heaven; some embodied elements of theory of evolution in dealing with a certain history, though overall they were greatly influenced by the historicism; and some put on masks of deities or magicians and misrepresented history as the journey arranged by Heavenly Intention in spite of the fact they were rightly praised for the veritable record of history. It should be pointed out that historical studies were too complex to be simplistically dichotomized into the materialistic and idealistic genres. The *materialism-idealism dichotomy* was actually not in conformity with the fact of historiographical growth in the ancient China.

Due to the perception of *dual nature* of Chinese historiography, we can assume an *appropriate* attitude towards the existing traditional historical works. For example, it was true that the widely used—albeit debatable—Twenty-Four Histories paid excessive attention to roles kings, emperors, generals and ministers had played; but it was also true that they were not merely genealogies of royal families. In fact,

not only did the gigantic Twenty-Four Histories provide abundant and basically reliable primary sources for historical studies but they were also intellectually valuable. Additionally, the *dual nature* could be used as a principle whereby ancient Chinese historians could appraise historical works produced in previous ages. Ban Gu, for instance, reviewed Sima Qian's *Shiji* (The Grand Scribe's historical records) in accordance with the *dual nature*. To be specific, Ban appreciated very much the veritableness of Sima's magnum opus while criticizing his basic idea of history ("Sima Qian zhuan 司马迁传" [The life of Sima Qian], Chapter 62, in *Hanshu*). Despite varying criteria reigning over the historical critique, the *dual nature* played a prime role in evaluating previous historical works among ancient Chinese historians.

History always plays two roles in the epistemic creation. First, it records what really took place in history and prepares abundant primary sources. Second, it reviews and interprets historical facts and historical processes in particular and in doing so it tries to shed light on the causal relationship applying to entire history. Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1889–1927), one of the most brilliant Chinese communists in the early Republican China, had concluded the mission of history into two points, viz., that history aspired to sort out historical facts in search of genuine proofs and illuminate the facts in search of the progressive truth.<sup>17</sup> Li furthered this point in his *Shixue yaolun* 史学要论 (The essence of history).<sup>18</sup>

The abovementioned point gives expression to contradictions existing between the subject and object of historical study and between the relative and absolute cognizance of history. Changes and growth of the contradictions brought about the development of history. In the traditional Chinese historiography, the two aspects interdependent on and interacted with each other. In other words, both—that is, the history as veritable record and history as subjective interpretation—were actually the unity of opposites. Nevertheless, in the global context, some historians held that the *annals/chronicles* were the veritable narrative of history and creative (historical) works the artistic (re-)creation of history; some contended that sorting out historical facts was a scientific method and the interpretation and appraisal of history an artistic or cultural aspiration; and some believed that history be penned in accordance with present-day needs. Despite the apparent diversity in such historiographical arguments, they all arbitrarily had history dichotomized and epistemologically abolished the intrinsic *inseparability* of two types of history. In contrast, ancient Chinese historians and thinkers always handled history in a holistic way.

In the feudal China, the *dual nature* of historiography exerted two types of influence on the historical writing. On the one hand, historians were required to pen veritable records; and on the other hand, they had to interpret or review the past and

<sup>17</sup>Li Dazhao 李大钊, "Yanjjiu lishi de renwu 研究历史的任务" (The mission of historical studies), f. k. a. "Shixue gailun 史学概论" (Introduction to the historical science), in *Li Dazhao wenji* 李大钊文集 [Collected writings of Li Dazhao] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999), vol. 3, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup>See: Li Shouchang 李守常 (i.e. Li Dazhao), *Shixue yaolun* 史学要论 [The essence of history] (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1924).

the replacement of dynasty in particular from perspectives of divine will and mystical *tianren ganying*. Besides, they were also required to judge historical events and figures in strict accordance with established (Confucian) cardinal moral principles. Otherwise, they would be criticized as being irreconcilable with the orthodoxy. Digging into the Chinese historiography through all ages, the present author finds that the overwhelming majority of traditional Chinese historians concurrently placed emphases on the straightforward writing, veritable record and significance of human elements to rise and fall of dynasties in their creative work. To put it another way, the aspiration for veritable history was actually the primary, constituting force of the growth of Chinese idea of history. The Chinese historiography with *dual nature* was not the fifty-fifty eclecticism. In this regard, the Chinese idea of history differed fundamentally from its counterparts in the medieval Europe.

It should be pointed out that ancient Chinese historians' aspiration for veritable record of history usually referred to the indomitable spirit in the face of men in power and the unshakable adherence to the impartial law of writing history rather than to the literal reconstruction of what really took place in history. Such an unbending spirit and adherence was embodied in two reputable ancient historians—i.e. Dong Hu 董狐 and Nan Shi 南史 (a historiographer in the south). The story of Dong Hu could be found in the second year of Lord Xuan (606 BC) of *Zuo zhuan* (The Master Zuo's commentary on *Spring and Autumn Annals*). It read,

On [the day of Yichou 乙丑], [Zhao Chuan 赵穿] attacked [and killed] duke Ling 灵 in the peach garden, and [Xuan 宣, i.e. Zhao Dun 赵盾, who was Zhao Chuan's elder male cousin], who was flying from the State, but had not yet left its hills behind him, returned to the capital. The grand historiographer wrote this entry,—“[Zhao Dun] murdered his ruler,” and showed it in the court. [Xuan] said to him, “It was not so;” but he replied, “You are the highest minister. Flying from the State, you did not cross its borders; since you returned, you have not punished the villain. If it was not you who murdered the marquis, who was it?” [Xuan] said, “Ah! the words, ‘The object of my anxiety Has brought on me this sorrow,’ are applicable to me.” Confucius said “[Dong Hu 董狐] was a good historiographer of old time:—his rule for writing was not to conceal. [Zhao Xuan 赵宣] was a good great officer of old time:—in accordance with that law he accepted the charge of such wickedness. Alas! if he had crossed the border, he would have escaped it.”<sup>19</sup>

According to the quotations, inasmuch as Xuan or Zhao Dun, the leading minister of the Jin State, did not make any effort to put down the armed insurgency led by Zhao Chuan, who was one of the younger male cousins of Zhao Dun and committed the unpardonable regicide, Dong Hu, the chief historian of the court of Jin, strongly held that Zhao Dun be responsible for such a horrible crime. Even Confucius thought very highly of Dong's uprightness and adherence to the *rule* reigning over historical narratives. Thrusting Dong's fearless behavior into the limelight, Confucius and the author of *Zuo zhuan* encouraged officials to make

<sup>19</sup>*Zuo zhuan* 左传 (The Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen), trans. James Legge, in *The Chinese Classics* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1991), vol. 5, pp. 290–291.

positive efforts to prevent the established social order from collapsing rapidly. Like Dong Hu, Nan Shi did a similar work in the twenty-fifth year of Lord Xiang (547 BC). *Zuozhuan* recorded,

The grand historiographer wrote [in his tablets] – “[Cui Shu] murdered his ruler;”—for which [Cui] put him to death. Two of his brothers did the same after him, and were also put to death. A third wrote the same, and was let alone. The historiographer in the south, hearing that the grand historiographer and his brothers had died in this way, took his tablets and set out [for the court]; but learning on his way that the record was made, he returned.<sup>20</sup>

From the perspective of traditional Chinese historiography, what both Dong Hu and Nan Shi bravely did epistemologically gave expression to the *dual nature* of ancient Chinese historical works.

The interrelationships of two types of history—i.e. the history as veritable record and the history as subjective interpretation—were multifaceted. The first aspect was about the record of historical facts. Depending on a certain point of view, ancient Chinese historians decided what be recorded and what be given up. Sima Qian pointed out that in *Chunqiu* or *Spring and Autumn Annals* Confucius selected and discarded so authoritatively that even eminent disciples such as Zi Xia 子夏 could not make the slightest change to the Master’s decision (“Kongzi shijia 孔子世家” [The hereditary house of Confucius], *Shiji*). In “Shi’er zhuhou nianbia 十二诸侯年表” (Chronological tables devoted to twelve enfeoffed lords) of *Shiji*, Sima Qian also illuminated that Confucius discussed thoroughly the Kingly Way and human affairs by exploring the past history and making a necessary reduction in the number of myriad historical facts. In traditional Chinese history, even the apparently simple selection of time implied something complicated and significant. For example, quite a few traditional Chinese scholars strongly held that *Chunqiu*’s commencement—“[It was the Lord Yin’s] the first year, the spring, The King’s first month”—actually had much deeper meanings. But meanwhile, some—Gu Yanwu, for instance—disagreed with this point (“Wang zhengyue 王正月” [The King’s first month], Chapter 4, in *Rizhi lu*) and some—Ouyang Xiu, for instance—objected to ungroundedly and excessively interpret the beginning time of *Chunqiu* (“Chunqiu huowen 春秋或问” [Questions regarding *Chunqiu*], Chapter 18, in *Jushi ji* 居士集 [Writings of a Buddhist layman]). Despite such contrary contentions, the present author holds that the selection of *historical* time must be based on a certain *idea of history*.

Generally speaking, when a traditional Chinese historian made his choice of history, she or she primarily took into consideration the historical actuality. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances certain *ideas* or *viewpoints* would definitely influence the historian’s choice. In the ancient China, the Sage’s principle regarding right and wrong—and the concerned principles in the Six (Confucian) Classics in particular—exerted the most authoritative influence on traditional Chinese historians. For example, in the matter of the selection of historical accounts

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 514–515.

Sima Qian's principle lay primarily in the degree of approximation existing between such accounts and ancient classics and the appropriateness of writing accounts in the light of classics ("Wudi benji 五帝本纪" [The basic annals of Five Emperors], *Shiji*). Among renowned historians in the Northern and Southern Song dynasties they decided the authenticity of historical facts in strict accordance with the Heavenly Principle, which was principally based on the classical Confucian teaching.

It should be pointed out that in ancient Chinese historical writings the historian must have reviewed historical events and figures from a certain perspective. Driven by their own interest, differing classes and groups in the ancient Chinese society created a certain history that deviated from the historical actuality. Such an almost unavoidable deviation was, however, objectively and subjectively determined. *Objectively*, the textual primary sources could only reflect the history in a limited and incomplete manner. In other words, writing history was nothing but such an act, in which the *living* history had to be condensed—or reconstructed—in a *limited* spatiotemporal dimension. Consequently, the reconstructed history would be definitely different from what really took place in history. Subjectively, those who wrote history greatly differed from each other in terms of talent and quality. As a result, the *history* that they produced varied wildly. Put plainly, the second-handed history was far from the true history. Ancient Chinese historians must be helplessly faced with such an embarrassing situation, wherein they had to *reconstruct* the history before reexamining it. In other words, while historians were trying to produce veritable historical records they, *more often than not*, distorted the history in their cognizance and reexamination of history. We shall always bear in mind that the cognizance of history will constantly be revised and improved due to the discovery of new primary sources, the improvement of method applying to historical materials and the general growth of human knowledge.

Finally, the Chinese historians' interpretation of historical course and rise and fall of different dynasties also gave expression to the conflicting roles historiography had to play in the ancient China. On the one hand, historians were required to produce veritable historical records, whereby the reasons for the vicissitudes of past dynasties could be revealingly examined; but on the other hand, they had to distastefully allege that the rule of existing dynasty had been approved by Heaven and perfectly in accord with the Heavenly Principle. Such a self-conflicting type of historical interpretation was actually an intensive embodiment of the *dual nature* of Chinese historiography. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the aspiration for and practice of veritable history did place a certain restriction on the distortion of history. Generally, due to the social progress and the growth of human knowledge, the cognizance of history was constantly deepened and perfected. In this sense, the *history* would be infinitely close to what actually took place in history. Of course, such an intellectual exploration could by no means be substantially exhausted. Li Dazhao concluded this point in saying that both history and historical

interpretations were ever *living* and the incessantly revised historical works would grow closer to the actual history.<sup>21</sup>

## 5 The Historical Scholarship and Methodology Pertaining to Chinese Historians

The traditional Chinese perception of historical scholarship and methodology was part and parcel of Chinese idea of history. It had quite a long history and was worthy of furthered discussions. The present author concludes several points in the hope that the achievements of Chinese national historiography will be inspiring to present-day Chinese historians.

First, where did the aspiration of traditional Chinese history lie in? Ancient Chinese historians regarded history as something very significant to the nation's rise and fall and people's livelihood. Conucius, for instance, shared his understanding of the general trend in *Chunqiu* or *Spring and Autumn Annals*; Sima Qian asserted that his *Shiji* or *The Grand Scribe's Historical Records* was a sequel to *Chunqiu* and an introduction to the fully enlightened world; and Zhang Zai 张载 (1020–1077), an eminent Song philosopher, explicitly stated that the purpose [of exploring history] be to consolidate the will of Heaven and Earth, fathom the Great Way for the people, resume the irreplaceable teaching developed by past sages, and create an eternal peace for entire humankind. Gu Yanwu expounded this point in detail in proposing the idea that [historical] writings must be conducive to the administration of the country (Chapter 19, in *Rizhilu*). Similar ideas could be found everywhere in the historical works produced in the ancient China. Among Chinese historians through all ages almost all reputable ones researched into history from the perspective of saving and reviving the nation. In the early modern China, driven not only by the patriotic feeling but also by the concern over the fate of humankind, students of history explored and (re-)interpreted the past. The present author holds that present-day Chinese historians inherit such deep and broadened perspective, feeling and concern.

Second, traditional Chinese historians consciously studied history in an innovative manner. For example, Sima Qian explicitly stated that he aspired to create a brand-new history. Bai Shouyi 白寿彝 (1909–2000), one of leading Marxist historians in China, recognized Sima's achievement and went further, pointing out that historiographically Sima's *Shiji* marked the substantive growth of traditional Chinese history. Bai even furthered his comments in optimistically saying that in present-day China, which was trying to create a solid socialist spiritual civilization, the young generation of Chinese historians should act like Sima Qian in creating a

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<sup>21</sup>Li Dazhao, *Shixue yaolun* 史学要论 [The essence of history], in *Li Dazhao wenji*, vol. 4, pp. 381–382, 383–384.



new history.<sup>22</sup> In fact, ancient Chinese historians had similar viewpoints with respect to the historical writing. Zheng Qiao, for instance, said those who devoted themselves to writing history must make a groundbreaking contribution in historiography, though historical works produced in previous ages had already prepared some inspirations for them (“Zongxu” [The general preface], in *Tongzhi*). Qian Daxin 钱大昕 (1728–1804), one of leading historians in the Qing dynasty, quoted Zhang Zai’s poem entitled *A Eulogy to Chinese Banana Tree*—in which Zhang, a renowned philosopher, analogically implied that the epistemic growth was much like the sprouting leaves—to justify his aspiration to nourish something new in doing creative work (“Zixu 自序” [Author’s Preface], in *Shijia Zhai yangxin lu 十驾斋养新录* [Accounts devoted to the effort nourishing the fresh elements in the Assiduous-Inferior-Horse Study]). Zhang Xuecheng, who might be the greatest scholar exploring the traditional Chinese historiography in the late feudal China, furthered this point in asserting that historians inherit the style of general history and the spirit of creatively writing history and that the decline of history be exactly the direct result of the lack of creative thinking in historical studies. Employing the creative thinking as the primary criterion, Qian hierarchized existing historical works. Simply put, he strongly held that the overwhelming majority of works were merely much less creative compilation, examination, selection or evaluation of historical materials and highly inspiring works such as those produced by very ancient historians were seldom seen.<sup>23</sup>

Where Chinese historians were concerned, they should, just as many expected, constantly further their studies by doing creative work. Wang Guowei perfectly shed light on this point in his widely cited trichotomization of traditional scholarly aspiration. In his *Renjian cihua 人间词话* (Treatises on Chinese poems), Wang put together several verses taken from famous Song poems. Wang’s highly inspiring and revealing assemblage read,

Last night green leaves falling while a west wind blowing.  
 Sadly and alone, I came to a tall building.  
 Where, I did expect to meet you, though I actually saw all incoming roads disappearing.  
 Never will I give up despite the senility and emaciation that are ever growing.  
 Thousands of times I look for you in vain; but I am still trying.  
 Suddenly turning my head, I see over there you standing  
 Being completely enveloped in the lights flickering and dimming.

Applying such beautiful verses to the effort to do creative work, Wang explained that without the creative thinking there would be no desire to climb the “tall building” (that is, to write better works); nor would there be enough patience and persistence in the scholarly exploration; nor the consequential discoveries and joyfulness. Undoubtedly, writing history is a kind of creative work. For this reason,

<sup>22</sup>Bai Shouyi, “Shuo ‘cheng yijia zhiyan’ 说‘成一家之言’” (Exploring Sima Qian’s aspiration for the creation of a new history), in *Zhongguo shixueshi lunji 中国史学史论集* [Treatises on the history of Chinese historiography] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), p. 107.

<sup>23</sup>Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚, *Zhang Xuecheng yishu 章学诚遗书* [The posthumous collection of writings of Zhang Xuecheng] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), p. 612.

Wang Guowei's trichotomized realm of creative aspiration is applicable to the creation of historical works. Historically, brilliant works produced by ancient Chinese historians were all in close relation to the writers' conscious effort to creatively (re-)think and (re-)interpret the history.

Third, extensively integrating ideas from differing intellectual schools was a common practice among ancient Chinese historians. Such an extensive and creative syncretism was also an embodiment of the effort to creatively (re-)write history. The history of Chinese historiography indicated that only when a historian was open to diverse ideas would he be able to write a groundbreaking history. Sima Qian, for instance, made a historic contribution to the Chinese historiography thanks to his scholarly broad-mindedness and intellectual syncretism. To be specific, due to his family background, the most brilliant ancient Chinese historian pluralistically exposed himself to the archaic astronomy, Daoist thinking and ideas embedded in *Book of Changes* and consequently he successfully achieved the fusion of humanistic and natural knowledge. And moreover, inspired by the all-embracing idea elaborated in interpretive treatises devoted to *Book of Changes*, Sima concluded the six predominant intellectual schools in his well-known *Shiji*.

Many ancient Chinese historians did not work exclusively on history. Rather, they preferred to diversify their studies. Zheng Qiao, for instance, paid great attention to the phonological study, though he was renowned for the historical criticism. Zhou Zumo 周祖谟 (1914–1995), one of the leading phonologists in the modern China, even held that Zheng made quite a distinguished contribution to the study of *Er'ya* 尔雅, one of the most archaic Chinese dictionaries. And moreover, Zhou thought very highly of Zheng's abandonment of the excessive exploration of abstract principle(s) and alternative devotion to the more substantial textual criticism.<sup>24</sup> In the same vein, 戴震 (1724–1777), a leading scholar in the early Qing, elaborated profound principles on the basis of the phonological studies and textual criticism and fairly and objectively examined ideas of differing intellectual schools.<sup>25</sup> Neither should scholars, Dai Zhen himself suggested, obstinately adhere to the established knowledge; nor be wild about creating ungrounded novel ideas.<sup>26</sup> In view of this, Wang Chang 王昶 (1724–1806), a famous mid-Qing scholar, concluded that Dai Zhen's scholarly aspiration and practice actually had an open and comprehensive nature.<sup>27</sup> All such prominent scholars spoke the same thing; that is to say, whether a historian could achieve something remarkable in their studies

<sup>24</sup>Zhou Zumo 周祖谟, "Shu Zheng Qiao Er'ya zhu hou 书郑樵尔雅注后" (Postscript to Zheng Qiao's *Annotated Er'ya*), in *Wenxue ji 问学集* [Records of scholarly explorations] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), vol. 2, p. 687.

<sup>25</sup>Qian Daxin 钱大昕, "Dai xiansheng zhen zhuan 戴先生震传" (The life of Monsieur Dai Zhen), in *Dai Zhen wenji 戴震文集* [Collected writings of Dai Zhen] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), p. 264.

<sup>26</sup>Dai Zhen 戴震, "Chunqiu yizhuan xu 春秋遗传序" (Preface to *Unfinished Spring and Autumn Annals*), *ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>27</sup>Wang Chang 王昶, "Dai Dongyuan xiansheng muzhiming 戴东原先生墓志铭" (The epitaph dedicated to Dai Dongyuan (i.e. Dai Zhen)), *ibid.*, p. 260.

was dependent on how far they could free themselves from the arrogance, bigotry and parochialism. In present-day China, historians shall be open not only to traditional Chinese learning but also to the foreign scholarship in their effort to promote the development of Chinese national historiography.

Fourth, the methodology—which was analogically discoursed as *copper mining*—was actually very inspiring. The terminology (i.e. *copper mining*) was coined by Gu Yanwu. Gu had said,

[Some] hold that present-day effort to write books is just like present-day mintage. As we know, the copper was mined in ancient times. Nowadays, the outworn coins were purchased as waste copper and then recast into new money. As a consequence, the coins were astonishingly qualitatively poor. On the other hand, the precious coins produced in ancient times were completely destroyed. Does not such an effort actually bring about *dual losses*? How is going my own work entitled *Rizhi lu* or *Record of Daily Knowledge*? By and large, it is made of waste copper. Examining it day and night, I find that in it there are merely ten or so pieces of writing can be regarded as the *mined copper*.<sup>28</sup>

Simply put, Gu's words suggested that the scientific historical study lay particular stress on the exploration of the *origin* of history. The second-handed materials could only, Gu implied, lay an unsolidified foundation of the creative work. Nevertheless, the exploration of origin(s) of history was quite a hard job. Wang Mingsheng, one of the towering figures in the early Qing intellectual community, shed light on this point in his "Preface" to his magnum opus entitled *Shiqi shi shangque* (Critically reexamining the seventeen official history books).

As far as the *origin* was concerned, one of Zhu Xi's famous poems—*Guanshu yougan* 观书有感 (The Sudden enlightenment in reading books)—gave an answer. It read,

The Half-*mu* Pond is as clear as a mirror.  
Through which I see the daylight and cloud wandering one after another.  
I can't help asking why so clear the water?  
The secret lies in the fact that there is running water forever.

Zhu Xi furthered the poem's implication in the treatise entitled "Dushu fa 读书法" (Reading methods), in which the greatest Confucian guru in the Southern Song placed emphasis on the effort to grasp the most basic *principle(s)* in examining the historical origin(s) (Chapters. 5, 11, in *Zhuzi yulei*). Consequently, the well-known poem could be used to shed light on both the practical handling of historical materials and the metaphysical analysis of profound principles. The present author holds that the *origin* of historical scholarship lies both in primary sources and theories in perfect conformity with the times. In this sense, Gu Yanwu's *copper-mining* analogy can be creatively reinterpreted.

Fifth, the research method was attached greater importance in the traditional Chinese history. In fact, ancient Chinese historians had developed a complete methodology applying to the historical study. The present author concludes several

<sup>28</sup>Gu, Yanwu 顾炎武. *Gu Tinglin shiwen ji* 顾亭林诗文集 [Collected poems and essays of Gu Tinglin (Yanwu)] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 93.

points. For example, ancient Chinese historians emphasized that those who aspired to write history explore primary sources as many as possible. They also suggested that researchers should not have an ungrounded belief in established records but instead have a skeptical spirit, just as Zhu Xi asserted in one of his writings (Chapter 11, in *Zhuzi yulei*).

In addition, the veritable recording and textual criticism were indispensable to the traditional Chinese history. Zheng Qiao, for instance, explicitly objected to the arbitrary subjective evaluation of history; nor would the interpretation of history through the divine prism be allowed in his dreamed history. He boldly asserted that thanks to the established rules reigning over historical writings neither the human talent nor stupidity could affect the history (“Zongxu” [The general preface], in *Tongzhi*). Zheng even confidently said that if he was given opportunity to rectify the existing history no historical figures would be treated unfairly.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, traditional Chinese historians had developed a complete set of method whereby the existing historical literature could be well examined. For example, Hu Yinglin 胡应麟 (1551–1602), a reputable scholar in the late Ming dynasty, had made distinguished achievements in the textual criticism. Methods employed by leading scholars in the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns (1736–1820) in their effort to examine existing literature were also recognized by Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929) in his famous historiographical work entitled *Zhongguo lishi yanjiufa* 中国历史研究法 (Research methods applying to the Chinese history).

Where the method processing historical materials was concerned, traditional Chinese historians usually employed the *categorization*. Zheng Qiao had pointed out that the work categorizing primary sources was like (re-)organizing the armed force. The well-designed *categorization* Zheng held, could be used to handle as many historical materials as possible. Otherwise, the history would be disorderly even if the number of primary sources was very small (Chapter 71, in *Tongzhi*).

The method of writing history was another key constituent of the ancient Chinese idea of history. One of the predominant methods was *editor-in-chief-centered*. For example, Sima Guang as the editor-in-chief played a pivotal role in producing *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive historical records in aid of governance), one of the indelible classics of Chinese history. In one of his memorials recommending his own *Xu Zizhi tongjian* 续资治通鉴 (A sequel to *Zizhi tongjian*) to the throne, Li Tao 李焘 (1115–1184), a renowned historian in the Southern Song, recalled that Sima Guang spent much time and energy tailoring and polishing Fan Zuyu’s 范祖禹 long annals covering the three-hundred-year history of Tang dynasty. Li Xizhong 刘羲仲, a famous history scholar in the Northern Song, also shed light on Sima’s predominance in the work compiling *Zizhi tongjian* in his *Tongjian wenyi* 通鉴问疑 (Questions regarding *Zizhi tongjian*). Admittedly, the *editor-in-chief-centered* method was sometimes arbitrary. Despite this, the method

<sup>29</sup>Zheng Qiao, “You yu Jingwei xiong tou Yuwen Shumi shu 又与景韦兄投宇文枢密书” (A letter, which was prepared in collaboration with Jingyu, to Yuwen, who was an imperial Palace Secretary), in *Zheng Qiao wenji*, vol. 3, p. 49.

was overall much better and reliable than the regular practice prevailing in the imperial history studios. In addition, the narrative method of traditional Chinese history was greatly diversified. For example, there were *combined* biographies dedicated to historical figures who shared the same characteristics and *appendent* biographies penned for some less significant figures.

Last but not least, traditional Chinese historians paid greater attention to the methodological significance of the *general idea of history* to the work writing history. The comparative reading might be helpful for us to understand this point. James Harvey Robinson had mentioned the concept of “historical mindedness.” He said,

It would seem as if this discovery of the incalculable value of genetic reasoning should have come from the historians, but, curiously enough, instead of being the first to appreciate the full significance of historical mindedness, they left it to be brought forward by the zoologists, botanists, and geologists. Worse yet, it is safe to say that, although the natural scientists have fully developed it, the historian has hitherto made only occasional use of the discovery...<sup>30</sup>

In view of this, we can say that the modern Western history is usually lack of the significant “historical mindedness.” On the contrary, the traditional Chinese history had particularly abundant “historical mindedness,” through which Chinese historians profoundly explored the rise and fall of dynasties and tried their best to grasp the most fundamental reasons causing drastic social changes. In this regard, the traditional Chinese idea of history—*tongbian* (the thorough understanding of changes through all ages)—is much more methodologically significant to the work writing history.

## 6 What Is History? An Answer Given by the Chinese National History

*What is history* is the most significant question in modern theories of history. In the past century Western discourses on history assumed an unchallengeable predominance and the Chinese national history was sadly deprived of the right to speak. Under such circumstances, the overwhelming majority of Chinese historians had to discuss history in the light of the Western historiography. Nevertheless, the consensus on the nature of history is still far from being reached among historians and even the *raison d'être* of history is constantly questioned, though scholars with greatly diversified backgrounds have spent more than one hundred years discussing *what is history*. The answer to such a basic question will directly influence other theoretical issues regarding history. According to existing debates and discussions, the present author concludes several points.

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<sup>30</sup>James Harvey Robinson, *The New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), p. 77.

First, what is history/the human history/the written history? Second, what is the nature of history? In other words, whether history is *a* science? It also includes several furthered questions—for example, whether history can be cognized? What are the characteristics of historical facts? And what was the function of ancient Chinese officials in charge of the work writing history? Third, what are the value of history and the social role history plays? To put it another way, whether history can be used for reference? Fourth, what are the characteristics of the traditional Chinese history?

Answers to such basic questions differ greatly from each other in differing times. In the ancient China, the subject of history—that is, historians—was in close and special relation to the politics. Apart from imperial officials in charge of the work writing history, quite a few historians were officials in the service of the central or local governments. For this reason, the ancient Chinese understanding of history was usually correlated with the role *historian-officials* played. In these conditions, the predominant form of history was the officially compiled historical works; the discussions regarding history focused on how to compile the (official) history; the value of history was directly dependent on whether it could be used for reference; the significance of history to the consolidation of political rule was paid much greater attention; the role history primarily played lay in the interpretation of rise and fall of past dynasties; and, most importantly, history was politically employed to justify the incumbent administration by means of the divine power or Heavenly Intention.

Since the late Qing dynasty the Western ideas of history swarmed into China and seriously impacted on the traditional Chinese history. The Chinese historical scholarship had to be reshuffled entirely. It was in accordance with the criteria of Western historiography that the modern Chinese history was formulated. The modern and traditional Chinese history were sharply different from each other. First, the predominant form of history was not the officially compiled historical works anymore but (scientific) research papers. Second, unlike traditional historians who aspired to have some achievements in their official careers, modern Chinese historians embraced almost exclusively the professionalism. In short, history had been transformed into a professional discipline.

Due to the powerful influence exerted by the Western positivism, questions regarding primary constituents of history, historiography and nature of history were put forwarded. The methodological question with respect to the criticism of historical literature grew much more prominent in the modern China. The so-called *research method* applying to history exactly answered how to sort out and critically examine historical materials, as well as partly shedding light on how to write history. In some radical cases, historians asserted that history was no more than primary sources and as soon as historical materials were made clear the true history would be reconstructed immediately. The assertion that history was a science echoed this point.

In the light of the Western philosophy of history, historians proposed highly diversified theories of history in their effort to interpret historical texts and analyze historical courses and changes. Despite such an attractive diversity, historians usually committed a common mistake; that is to say, they seldom gave straight answers to the most basic question—*what is history* Digging into archaic Chinese

dictionaries such as *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字 (Expounding graphs and interpreting characters), the much more archaic oracle bone script in the Shang dynasty, and foreign words, some attempted to explain what on earth *shi* 史 (history) was. However, such an effort did not go to the heart of the question, even though etymological explorations were sometimes inspiring. It should be pointed out that such an etymological exploration of the most primary constituents of history was obviously driven by the textual-criticism aspiration that was prevalent in the remote Han dynasties (202–220 AD). In fact, the word *shi* in ancient Chinese and foreign languages was not directly related to the modern historiographical question—*what is history*—at all, taking into consideration the fact that the meaning of a certain word must be pertained to a certain time. The explanation of a word could by no means answer the most basic historiographical question.

In addition, some attempted to answer the question by making a distinction between the *written* and *objective* history; some explored the question from the perspective of roles *shi* (officials in charge of the work writing history)—which could be divided into the Grand, Minor, Left, Right and Imperial ones—played in the ancient China. Just like the etymological interpretation of *history*, such functional explanations missed the target, too. Some arbitrary assertions—all types of history are history of thought; history is no more than an endless dialogue between historian and historical facts; history is memory, and so on—could also be found among historians. Such assertions were, however, confined to the *human* history. In the case of history prior to the emergence of mankind, the so-called *thought*, *memory* and *dialogue* would all be ungrounded. The present author does not think that they can answer the most basic question—*what is history*

Even the seemingly convincing idea that *history is the objective growth of human society* did not work on the grounds that it was unable to explain what the history of living beings other than humans, non-living beings and entire universe actually was. Similar inability also haunted the effort to dichotomize history into the *generalized* and *restricted* ones. In the (second half of) twentieth century, postmodernism swept the Western scholarship of history. Inspired by the postmodernist thinking, many historians attempted to interpret history from spiritual, psychological and functional perspectives.

In recent decades, the question—*what is history?*—attracted historians again. For example, postmodern historians such as Hayden White strongly held that history could by no means be found by humans on the grounds that all things past were actually impossible to be recreated or reconstructed. In their eyes, only historical narratives were available; that is to say, what the history that humans acquired is merely something (re-)interpreted or reorganized. Such influential postmodern thinkers/historians did not hold that there was any history that could tell us what actually took place in the past. But meanwhile, they recognized the existence and importance of *historical consciousness*. They generally asserted that if there was a history, it could only be consciously approved. As a consequence, history could by no means be single. In other words, there were as many types of history as there were theoretical interpretations of history. In these conditions, people would only choose the *interpreted* history that had been identified by

themselves. An American scholar sharp-mindedly pointed out that the “New Historicism” destroyed itself while having the history ruined.<sup>31</sup>

In view of such an embarrassing situation, the present author suggests historians discuss the nature of history before answering *what is history*. History that is discoursed in this book shall not be confined to the human history; nor will it be only applied to the living beings. Rather, it shall embody entire universe. In this sense, the answer to the question—what is history?—lies in the elaboration of nature of history, which is actually trichotomized into the history of human, living beings and nonliving beings.

The idea in one piece of writing pertaining to *Yiwei* 易纬 ([Mystical] interpretations of the *Book of Changes*) might be able to inspire us to find an answer to the most basic and perplexing historiographical question. In Chinese, the idea is called “*Yi zhi sanyi* 易之三义,” or the trichotomization of [the most profound] meaning of *Book of Changes*. It was proposed in the treatise entitled “*Qian zaodu* 乾凿度” (In-depth interpretations of the hexagram of Qian [Heaven]) in *Yiwei*. The present author contends that such a mystical treatise was very significant to the traditional Chinese historiography. There were two points in terms of its historiographical value. First, the author(s) of the treatise successfully grasped the universe and mankind in a holistic manner. Concerned words read,

If the *form* was born in the *formless*, where did the Heaven and Earth originate from? Thus, there must have been the most primordial *change*, *origin*, *commencement* and *constituent*. The most primordial *origin* generated *qi* (or the vital breath); the *commencement*, the form; and the *constituent*, the matter. When *qi*, form and matter were all created and could not be separated, they fused together and formed the *chaos* [the precursor of the existing universe].

In light of the cited words, it is safe to say that the creation of universe was actually a *process*. Such an idea—universe *as* process—was a perfect metaphorical interpretation of the nature of history. Second, the author(s) of the treatise trichotomized *change*, which was the cornerstone of *Book of Changes*, into the changed, unchanged and simplified ones.

Inspired by the trichotomized *change*, Zheng Xuan 郑玄 (127–200 A), the towering figure in the Confucian community in the Later Han dynasty, penned his *Yizan* 易赞 (An interpretive eulogy to the *Book of Changes*) and *Yilun* 易论 (Treatise on *Book of Changes*). In the same vein, Kong Yingda 孔颖达 (574–648 A), the leading scholar of Confucian hermeneutics in the Tang dynasty, elaborated the trichotomized *change* at the very beginning of his monumental work entitled *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正义 (Rectified interpretations of the *Book of Changes*). Besides, Kong also employed dual concepts such as *qi*/principle, ideal method/definite thing, metaphysics/concreteness and essence/function to discuss the creation of universe, social history, material production, everyday living, institutions, ethics, and so on. Historically, the philosophical exploration of *change* marked the growth of human civilization. In this sense, employing the trichotomized concept of *change* to interpret history was an amazing contribution the Chinese national historiography made to entire mankind.

<sup>31</sup>Carolyn Porter, “History and Literature: After the New Historicism,” *New Literary History*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Winter, 1990), pp. 253–272.



Zhang Xuecheng thought very highly of the trichotomized *change* and Kong Yingda's furthered elaboration ("Yijiao zhong 易教中" [The second part of teaching of the *Book of Changes*], in *Wenshi tongyi*). Zhang asserted that Kong's interpretation of *Book of Changes* had surpassed all those done by scholars in previous ages; and moreover, he believed that on the basis of Kong's work one could further concluded that the *Book* actually served as the grandest principle whereby kings and emperors could better the politics. In fact, in the course modernizing traditional Chinese history, some historians had already paid attention to the significance of the *Book of Changes* to the modern theories of history. For example, Liu Xianxin 刘咸忻 (1896–1932), a reputable modern historian from Sichuan, analyzed the significance of history by means of the idea of change in *Laozi* or *Tao Te Ching* and intellectually interconnected the *Book of Changes* and the Western philosophy of history in his writings.<sup>32</sup> In the light of foregoing discussions, the present author boldly contends that only when the trichotomized *change*—i.e. the changed, unchanged and simplified *changes*—are effectively employed to discuss history will the nature of history be really grasped. A detailed analysis of the trichotomized *change* is as follows.

First, the *changed change* referred to the most fundamental nature of change. Thus, it denoted the most intrinsic attribute of *history*. There was the change or transformation of the myriad things, there was the history of entire universe. If there was not the change or transformation, there would definitely not be the history. The meanings of concept of change in this context were twofold. One was the literal change and the other was the transcendental transformation. The internal change begot history; meanwhile, the external change pertaining the form or position of a certain thing begot history, too. In the past scholarship regarding the *Book of Changes*, in order to justify the permanence of social hierarchy some argued that constant changes actually denoted the unchangeability and the *position* was unchangeable. It was, however, a misunderstanding. In fact, both *position* and *time* could change or be changed. Apart from the *change*, there was the *transformation*, which usually referred to the change of internal elements. Such an internal *transformation* went beyond the simple spatiotemporal *change*.

Second, the meaning of the *unchanged change* lay in *Zhouyi*'s statements. For example, the author(s) of "Xici shang 系辞上" (The first part of Great Treatise) of the *Book of Changes* said,

Heaven is lofty and honorable; earth is low. (Their symbols), Qian and Kun, (with their respective meanings), were determined (in accordance with this). Things low and high appear displayed in a similar relation. The (upper and lower trigrams, and the relative position of individual lines, as) noble and mean, had their places assigned accordingly.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Liu Xianxin 刘咸忻, *Tuishi shu* 推十书 [Writings aspiring to perfection] (Chengdu: Chengdu guji shudian, 1996), vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>33</sup>*Zhouyi* 周易, or *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/ens>.

Besides, Dong Zhongshu's assertion—*Heaven will not be changed; nor will the Great Way be altered*—also intensively gave expression to this point. It should be pointed out that the changed and unchanged *changes* did not exclude each other. The philosophy of the *Book of Changes* stipulated that *change* must be subject to certain *qualitative provisions*. It was such philosophically stipulated *qualitative provisions* that constituted the unchanged *change*. On the other hand, the unchanged *change* was not absolute but relative. In other words, it denoted the relative stability of the form and property of a thing. If there was only change, all things would be thrown into an eternal instability, from which nothing could originate. Even the *history* could not be immune.

Third, the *simplified change* interconnected the *changed* and *unchanged* changes. The integral attribute of a thing lay in the *simplified change*. In this context, the *simplification* was actually an effort to sublime *xiang* 象 (the appearance) of a thing. To put it another way, *jian* 简 or the simplification was *yi*—, or the One. In reality, there were so many changes and phenomena in relation to such changes. But, it was the *simplification* or the One that had the changes and non-changes fused together. The *historical* nature of a certain social change could only be defined in accordance with the One. The fact that changes could all be simplified to be the One indicated that changes taking place among things were interlinked. The fusion of the [simplified] One, changed changes and unchanged changes shed light on the most primary constituent of the Great Way. Thanks to the *simplified change* (the historical) contingency and necessity were interconnected.

The interrelation of the trichotomized changes created the history of universe, nature and human society. It was the most fundamental nature of history. If there was not the *change*, history could by no means be created; not the *non-change*, all things—history included—fell into incessant instability; and, not the *simplification*, lines drawn between differing types of history were erased and the differing history as a whole consequently disappeared. In terms of the creation of history, the trichotomized changes communicated with and acted on each other. Unsurprisingly, one piece of classical Chinese wisdom—the trichotomization of foundational concept of change in the *Book of Changes*—almost decisively enlightens us to grasp the nature of history. In this sense, the Chinese has already found an answer to the most basic historiographical question—*what is history* Undoubtedly, such an inspiring answer is an indelible contribution to the philosophy of history in the world.

## 7 The Scientific Nature of History

### 1. The empirical and experimental sciences

Whether is history a science? It is a perplexing question that has been debated for centuries among both Chinese and Western historians/thinkers. Some straightly stated that history was exactly a science; some confidently said that history could be as precise and accurate as biology; some held that historical materials could be

scientifically examined and reorganized while history itself was an art; some boldly asserted that history could by no means be a science; some arbitrarily denied the significance of historical material/literature to the cognizance of history; and some did not think that the research into texts could lay the foundation of understanding of the objective history.<sup>34</sup> Answers to the question were greatly diversified.

The present author holds that the answer to the question—*Whether is history a science?*—should be premised on the correct understanding of what the *science* is. Science is the law-like cognizance of true things. With the help of such a law-like cognizance, humans can facilitate the social growth. In terms of the creation of science, there are two types of science. One is the empirical science and the other is the experimental science.

The *experience* in general sense is not science. The empirical science refers to the epistemic fruit that has been induced from the true and long experience. Such an epistemic growth will be finally established in the social practice. In short, science is the knowledge that has been concluded from experience and approved by practice. The science that is primarily based on experience is called the *empirical science*. Historically, the earliest science in the human society was undoubtedly empirical, taking into consideration the fact that people in ancient times gradually formulated some laws regarding the cognizance of nature and society. Specifically, the ancient Chinese agriculture, animal husbandry, astronomy, calendar, medicine and so on were all empirical sciences. Unlike the empirical science, the *experimental science* is based on certain methods and devices, by which certain things will repeatedly occur. Observing and analyzing the repeated courses of occurrence, the observers (i.e. scientists) acquire reliable results and data. On the basis of the acquired data, certain knowledge is concluded. Then, the knowledge will be tested in the social practice. The experimental science is predominantly a modern epistemic product, though indeed there were scientific experiments in ancient times.

The empirical and experimental sciences are interrelated and interdependent. It is in the (social) practice that both are fused. Generally, the empirical science is the precursor of experimental science. Due to the empirical science, the propositions of experimental science and methods and patterns of scientific experiment are conceived. The result—social result in particular—of experimental science must be tested by experience. Usually, the scientific experiment is carried out in the man-made ideal conditions. Thus, what on earth the effect of scientific experiment is and how the results of experiment influence the society in the long term can by no means be examined in the lab. The ultimate goal of science is to facilitate the growth of humankind. In this regard, science shall not be completely separated from the social experience, even though in present-day world sciences are predominantly experimental.

Relatively speaking, the result of empirical science is established in quite a long time. The cognizance that was created on the basis of experience can be rapidly

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<sup>34</sup>For more detailed discussions, see: Jiang Dachun 蒋大椿, *Shixue tanyuan* 史学探源 [The exploration of origin of history] (Changchun: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991).

established with the help of scientific experiments and the established empirical cognizance be (re-)generalized in accordance with the higher (scientific) reason. The empirical science is not inferior to the experimental science; nor does the experimental science assume superiority over the empirical science. The clear distinction between the two sciences has never been made at all. Rather, both are closely interlinked. Some types of learning even are in possession of characteristics of both empirical and experimental sciences. In fact, the empirical and experimental sciences are all premised on the precise, logical and innovative thinking.

## 2. History is a science

History is a science of empirical nature. The reasons are fivefold. First, history is based on historical facts that are strictly examined. History is made of the law-like historical cognizance that is empirically generalized from historical facts comprised of true events and figures. Second, the historical cognizance is empirical and cannot be obtained by so-called experiments. Third, the cognizance pertaining to the science of history is actually created by the experience that humans socially accumulated in quite a long time. To be specific, humans rethink the vicissitude of past societies and conclude something from the rise and fall of past dynasties. Later, such conclusions will be revised and enriched and finally used to influence the social growth. Fourth, the historical cognizance differs itself from the general experience in its innovative nature and law-like role. The most primary task that history must finish is to reveal the most fundamental things underneath the social development. In the case of Chinese historiography, some ideas—the interconnection between rise and fall, putting the people first, for instance—were usually regarded as the grand principles, to which sovereigns must pay enough attention. Fifth, scientific methods—induction, quantification, and so on—can be employed to process historical materials. As a consequence, there are many research methods in historical studies. One of the basic requirements for historians is that they are not allowed to change historical materials at will. Besides, the historical study is neither an abstract nor an imaginary but a concrete thinking. History as an empirical science has a distinct way of thinking.

The present author goes further, arguing that the empirical science of history actually has some characteristics exclusively pertaining to itself. First, the consciousness and experience of the historical subject (i.e. historian) directly works on the cognizance of historical object (i.e. history). The *experience* itself is the fusion of subjective feeling and objective existence. In an empirical science, the subjectivity of consciousness and objectivity of experience form a unity of opposites. What a historian does is one of the parts of an objective history; meanwhile, the historian himself serves as the prime interpreter of historical acts. Such a subjective-objective fusion determines that the empirical science of history does has some distinct features.

Second, the characteristics of historical texts and how to interpret the texts exerts direct influence on the cognizance of history. It was the historian who recorded the history. Thus, subjective elements would be unavoidably blended into the produced history. In view of this, it is safe to say that the historical records/literature truly—

albeit *incompletely*—reflect what actually took place in history. Moreover, when the later generations of historians researched into the history produced by their counterparts in previous ages, they would apply re-interpretation, de-codification and re-consideration to it. In this process, something subjective did infiltrate into the so-called objective history. In this regard, present-day Chinese historians shall object to two acts. On the one hand, historians should ridicule those who denied the cognizability of history merely because of the subjectivity of historical text; on the other hand, they should give up such an idealism that as soon as the historical literature is well examined the true history will be immediately and perfectly reconstructed. History is a science dealing with the specific experience of humankind. Therefore, not only does it possess the general character pertaining to all empirical sciences but it was also endowed with some distinct features.

Third, historians live in a certain society. Their social experience exerts particular influence on their understanding of history. Meanwhile, as members of a special group that plays a concrete role in the society, they raise special claims on the history. As a result, their experience in relation to history is highly subjective. For this reason, we might say that the empirical science of history is very different from empirical sciences that are based on the purely objective experience. Historian is also the subject of history. His thinking can be either realistic or historical. Thus, the present author does not think that the assertion that history is exactly a pure science is well-grounded.

Fourth, history definitely has the national character, which is explicitly embodied in historians' efforts to choose topic, research, (re-)think and write. Exposing themselves to differing historical, geographical and cultural environments, historians develop greatly diversified ways of thinking. Accordingly, their interpretations of history differ from each other. Overall, the Sino-Western ideas of history are different from each other while being interrelated to each other. Both the difference and interconnection can be attributed to the diverse ways of *thinking*. Therefore, Li Ji 李济 (or Li Chi), a reputable Harvard-educated Chinese archaeologist, had inspiringly suggested that the origin and growth of all types of human thinking be explored in a deeper and more profound way.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Li Ji 李济 (Li Chi), *Zhongguo wenming de kaishi* 中国文明的开始 [The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization] (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2011), p. 141.

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# Chapter 3

## Ideas of History in Pre-imperial China

### 1 The Intellectual Growth from Primitive Historical Consciousness to Idea of History

#### (1) Primitive historical consciousness: The totemic and ancestor worship

The most primordial form of idea of history was the primitive historical consciousness. Bai Shouyi 白寿彝 said that the history of idea of history in China could be traced back to the far remote eras when there were not any written systems with the exception of prevailing mythologies and legends; and moreover, he shed light on the truth that the origin of history be explored *over there* even though the historical writing could not be possible at that time.<sup>1</sup> The earliest history of idea of history lay in the birth and growth of the historical consciousness. According to archaeological materials, in roughly one million and seven hundred thousand years ago human beings appeared in China and consequently groups of primitive men emerged. They were forefathers of present-day Chinese. They suffered great hardship in living in caves and even in wilderness. Not only did the forefathers have to use primitive stone implements but they also tried their best to reproduce and improve such rude tools. Friedrich Engels had reviewed the primitive life and pointed to the foremost thing of idea of history. He said,

[M]en must be in a position to live in order to be able to “make history.” But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be

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<sup>1</sup>Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, *Zhongguo shixue shi* 中国史学史 [History of the Chinese historiography] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1986), vol. 1, p. 197.

fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life. ...Therefore in any interpretation of history one has first of all to observe this fundamental fact in all its significance and all its implications and to accord it its due importance.<sup>2</sup>

Engels's assertion required that we examine the birth and characteristics of the primitive historical consciousness from perspectives of the material production and life of primitive men.

It was in labor that language and consciousness were created. The most primordial historical consciousness lay exclusively in the "first historical act" embodied in the humans' effort to fight with nature and their production activities. The primitive men had aspirations not only for survival but also for development. If humans merely adapted themselves to nature in a passive manner and took no action in propelling the development, they would never enjoyed the freedom from being enslaved to the state of animal. In their varying activities, the primitive men gradually thought over and concluded their failures and successes. In doing so, they accumulated valuable experience. The conclusion of lessons and accumulation of experience were embodied in the historical consciousness of humans.

The accumulation of experience of life and production was inevitable and necessary. The historical consciousness, which was an embodiment of accumulation of experience of life and production, in turn, enabled primitive men to consciously further their accumulations of experience. In their constant efforts, primitive men grasped the knowledge applying to the fight with nature, improved their ability to explore nature, diversified the material production, and greatly extended the sphere wherein they could obtain the means of production and subsistence. As a consequence, their understanding of nature was deepened; tools of production, bettered; and survival ability, strengthened. Thus, it is true that the primitive historical consciousness was created in the process of labor and production; it is also true that such a newly-created consciousness was a great impetus to the development of production and improvement of life and played a positive role in freeing primitive men from being entrapped in the state of animal and accelerating their growth into men taking a more advanced shape. In view of this, it is safe to say that from the start the historical consciousness intrinsically included the awareness of development and the breakthrough of history itself.

The search for origins of humans themselves and their own tribes and clans also gave expression to the historical consciousness. First of all, such an aspiration to shed light on the origin blended with the totemic thinking. In the clan society, an individual could not fight alone with nature and obtain by himself means of production. At that time the social productive force was so low that primitive men had to act in group. In a certain area a certain active group of primitive men searched for their origin. Exposed to the influence exerted by a certain production, life and environment, as well as by prevalent legends, forefathers created a totem out of the worship of natural and supernatural things and venerated it as something sacred in such a root-searching

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<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx, *Frederick Engels: Collected works* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), vol. 5, pp. 41–42.



work. Historically, in China there were totems embodied in plants, animals, natural phenomena and natural things such as mountains, rivers, sun and moon.

The historical consciousness in the totemic worship was a blend of illusion and reality. Creating a founding ancestor, for whom primitive men held veneration, and deducing an unbroken genealogy centered on a sharing emblem of clan, forefathers had the real blood relationship and illusory earliest ancestor seamlessly fused together. As groups of primitive men underwent from the group marriage to paring family and finally to monogamy, the genealogy based on blood relationship became increasingly obvious and the significance of historical consciousness grew more and more prominent. The primitive historical consciousness was comprised of legends/mythologies regarding the founding ancestors and the sacred genealogy of clan was marked by totems, so that both produced a cohesive force, whereby the entire clan could be held together while fighting with nature and associating with or combating against neighboring tribes. Bai Shouyi had concluded archaic legends in saying available sources showed that the clan-hero-centric tradition was dichotomized into narratives of fighting with nature and accomplishing in production and stories of primitive war involving opponent tribes.<sup>3</sup>

The primitive historical consciousness had a dual character. On the one hand, it played a great role in holding together the clan, improving production, and satisfying needs of members, as well as embracing the real genealogy in its ritualistic embodiments such as sacrificing to remote ancestors; on the other hand, with the help of legends of totem and virtual founding ancestors, it developed into a kind of convention, cohesive force and restriction, all of which contributed to the work increasing the confidence of members and restrictively instructing them to follow the clan head's regulation in production activities and the everyday life. For example, in the archaic Chinese mythologies, heroes such as Pangu 盘古, Nüwa 女娲, Fuxi 伏羲, Shennong 神农 (The Divine Farmer), Huangdi 皇帝 (The Yellow Emperor), Yao 尧, Shun 舜 and Yu 禹 were all concurrently of the human and divine nature, perfectly embodying the characteristic of primitive historical consciousness.

The next stage of totemic worship was no other than the worship of remote and immediate ancestors. Some historico-cultural investigations conducted in areas habituated by ethnic groups shed light on this point. For example, in a book devoted to the history of culture of the Yi 彝 People, scholars concluded that economically the group grew from the gathering/hunting economy to the planting economy and culturally evolved from the totemic worship to the ancestor worship. The evolution of the totemic worship into the ancestor ship was brought about by the development of the social productive force, social progress and growth of human knowledge. When the patriarchy was established and the private property appeared, the bloodline must be ascertained and consolidated with a view to safeguarding the right of inheritance. Thanks to such fundamental changes the totemic worship was gradually turned into the ancestor worship, in which the worship of objectified human spirit was replaced with the worship of human (ancestral) spirit. It was in the

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<sup>3</sup>Bai Shouyi, *Zhongguo shixue shi*, vol. 1, p. 197.

transition from the matrilineal clan society to the predominance of paring family appertaining to the patrilineal clan society that the ancestor worship emerged among the Yi People. The ancestor worship underwent the development from the veneration of remote ancestors to the adoration of immediate ancestors. For a certain clan of Yi People, in incidents in relation to the blood feud, if a person could successfully wreak vengeance on hostile tribes that had murdered his or her own clan's remoter ancestor, the revenger would be regarded as being far more heroic. Nevertheless, in order to adapt itself to the disintegration of the patrilineal clan and the growing prevalence of the individual family, the religious practice of Yi People transformed itself from the worship of remote ancestors into the worship of immediate ancestors appertaining to individual families.<sup>4</sup>

It should be pointed out that the development from the totemic worship to the worship of remote and immediate ancestors was a *process*, wherein the original consciousness of worship might remain or take new shape in conflating itself with new genres of worship. Implicitly, the growth of the idea of history was dialectic and could not be explained by the metaphysical concept of vanishment. Even in very late ages, the trace of totemic worship was still not indiscernible.

The development from the totemic worship to the worship of remote and immediate ancestors was actually an embodiment of the growth of historical consciousness. Specifically, the historical consciousness began with the fusion of illusory founding ancestors and real genealogy and then develop into the true and sincere feeling projected onto ancestors in funerals and sacrificial activities. Such a growth per se was the long and struggling process against the backdrop of entire chaos. In the totemic worship, the fictional remarkable achievements made by founding ancestors were used to inspire clan members. In contrast, the true feats of forefathers were remembered and turned into the source of wisdom and power in the ancestor worship. For example, "Gongliu 公刘," one of pieces of *Shijing* 诗经 (*Book of Odes*), showed that Gongliu, one of founding fathers of the Zhou 周 People, underwent countless hardships and finally led his people to be the region of Bin 邠, where they brought wastelands under cultivation and grew by degrees stronger and more prosperous. Due to his splendid contribution he made to the people, Gongliu was venerated as one of Zhou's lords and founding patriarchs. Additionally, unlike the totemic worship, in which the object of worship was the personified totem, the ancestor worship venerate instead the genuine human with true history. Last but not least, in contrast with the totemic worship that was lack of the genuine interconnection with the reality, the ancestor worship was in possession of the true founding and remote ancestors, the *living* continuation of family by descendants, and the clear and correct genealogy existing in legends. The consciousness of ancestor played quite a significant role in reducing the illusion of totemic worship and adding true human affairs into the devotional practice. Despite this, we should realize that the primitive ancestor worship was not the same as its

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<sup>4</sup>Ma Xueliang 马学良 et al., *Yizu wenhua shi* 彝族文化史 [History of the culture of the Yi People] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1989), pp. 228, 230, 269.

counterparts in late eras inasmuch as it did not cut off the connection with the consciousness of supernatural beings but instead characteristically and indiscriminately blended with gods and deities.

Where the characteristic of the (primitive) historical consciousness was concerned, there were three points worth being mentioned here. First, the concept of history mingled with other types of consciousness. The blend was embodied in both the experience of production and the life and knowledge generated by the observation of nature. Obviously, the primitive historical consciousness and primitive religious ideas were mixed up. In fact, the historical consciousness of primitive men immersed itself in the strong illusory idea of supernatural beings. Second, the primitive historical consciousness, by degrees, left the chaotic state and embraced the reality. Third, it was of a dual nature.

In summary, the purpose of remembrance of things past and recollection of the dead was to inspire clan members to fight with nature and improve the production; the accumulation of experience of production and life called forth the renovation and breakthrough of social productive force; contradictions existing in the historical consciousness brought about renewals of the consciousness itself; and the historical consciousness played a positive role in the social development while firmly taking root in the changes of real production and society. Additionally, the primitive historical consciousness was none other than the embodiment of the maintenance of blood relationship. Salomon Reinach, a French anthropologist, shed light on this point in his elaboration of the nature of totem. He had said, “The totem animal protects and gives warning to members of its clan[;] [t]he totem animal foretells the future to the loyal members of its clan and serves them as guide[;] [and] [t]he members of the totemic clan often believe that they are related to the totem animal by the bond of a common ancestry.”<sup>5</sup> Such a strong totemic belief was actually a cohesive force binding entire tribes together. It should also be pointed out that the primitive historical consciousness played an active role in the integrated process creating the primitive social cohesion and applying coercive restrictions and taboos to clans and tribes.

## (2) The growth of historical consciousness: The oral and written history

There was man; and there was the history of hu mankind. Unfortunately, it was impossible for the primitive men to historically record anything without the writing system. Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936), had said although there were definitely creative writings in eras prior to the emergence of writing system, primitive men had no idea of how to record and preserve them.<sup>6</sup> What Lu Xun, a renowned modern Chinese essayist and novelist, talked about could be applied to the birth and growth of literature. Even so, it still shed light on the truth that there could by no means be written records among primitive men. Before the writing system the narration of splendid

<sup>5</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 118.




<sup>6</sup>Lu Xun 鲁迅, “Menwai wentan 门外文谈” (An amateur talk about the writing system), in *Qiejie ting zawen 且介亭杂文* (Essays of Half-Concession Pavilion), in *Luxun quanji 鲁迅全集* [Complete works of Lu Xun] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005), vol. 6, p. 93.

work done by forefathers was almost exclusively monopolized by senior members of a clan. Those who were adept at narration had an extremely good memory and great speaking skills. In their narratives of ancestors' remarkable achievements, there were hardships in fighting with nature, lessons of failure and successful experience. When mythologies were fused with the true human experience, they could more effectively inspire clan members. For this reason, the narrative of ancestor became part and parcel of—or even indispensable to—the primitive production and life. Gradually, the narrators were professionalized and transmorphed into an intermediary bridging human and supernatural beings and interconnecting the terrestrial and heavenly worlds. Although it was said that humans and gods were separated, both mingled with each other in cases of narrators. In reality, the act of sacrificing to supernatural beings and ancestral spirits and effort to embolden clan members in their production and life were combined into one thanks to the work of narrators.

Those who devoted themselves to such a devotional work were professional *wu* 巫 (men or women in possession of magic power). In the age when the level of social productive force was extreme low, all persons who were able to labor must participate in gathering and hunting activities. Consequently, those who were aged and weak-eyed were the ideal candidates for *wu*. In ancient Chinese literature, an old man with poor vision was usually called *gu* 瞽 (an aged blind man). Contextually, the two words—*wu* and *gu*—were frequently interlinked in archaic textual sources. Guan Yifu 观射父, a senior minister of the State of Chu in the pre-imperial China, had discussed this point.<sup>7</sup> The minister pointed to the ancient fact that although officials in charge of the civil affairs differed from those who administered affairs in relation to supernatural beings, *wu* integrated the two types of work. In his words, there was a trace of the role *wu* played in historical narratives. Guan Yifu also mentioned that *wu* consisted of males (*xi* 覡) and females (*wu* 巫). *Zhouli* 周礼 (Books of rites of the Western Zhou), one of the most influential Confucian classics, echoed this point and meanwhile it asserted that sometimes males were also called *wu*. *Wu* as an official position was concurrently divine and secular. It was necessary for the work ordering tablets dedicated to supernatural beings. It was also indispensable to the act sacrificing to ancestral spirits. Besides, it played a role in the administration of regional affairs. Overall, apart from the regular work narrating history, *wu* was the pivotal player in sacrificial affairs. As a result, *wu* became the linchpin interconnecting heaven, gods, humans and ghosts. Vestiges of *wu* were still discernable in very late eras in China.

Some scholars had said that both persons in charge of sacrificial ceremonies and *wu* lived a real life and they were first of all members of the clan and human beings in general sense. Consequently, they and other clan members were like flesh and bone; that is to say, there was a blood tie between them. But meanwhile, they professed that they were able to contact supernatural being, speak with them, negotiate with them on behalf of humans, help divine words get across to all people,

<sup>7</sup>See: "Chapter 18," in *Guoyu* 国语 [Discourses of the states] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), pp. 559–560.

perform healing, deliver the soul of the dead, and carry out religious activities by means of the magic, sacrifices and instruments. For example, when shamans—i.e. Dongba 东巴—of Naxi 纳西 People in the southwest China were dispelling evil spirits, they put almost everything related to exorcism on themselves and performed war dance. In this regard, persons practicing magic and sacrificial rites served as the bridge between humans and ghosts and thus assumed the nature of demigod. Among symbols devised by the Gaoshan 高山 People living in Taiwan, human was depicted as “”; ghost, “”; and shaman, “” (read as *huqiu* 胡求). Obviously, the Gaoshan shaman positioned himself exactly in between humans and ghosts. Due to the prestigious status of *wu*, their narration of history was so authoritative that it intellectually dominated entire clan.<sup>8</sup>

In order to make the transmission of historical narratives more convenient and more effective, related stories were usually narrated rhythmically with neat words. As a consequence, listeners found that it was very easy to remember and spread such articulable legends. In reality, the earliest history of many nations were all preserved in epics. Epics were handed down generation after generation; and moreover, they were processed and polished and finally became the gem of literature and history in the treasury of national culture. For example, there were *Homer's Epic*, *Shijing* or *Book of Odes*, the *Tibetan Epic of King Gesar*, *Genesis*, and so on. Digging into these epics, wherein hardships that afflicted forefathers were in the garb of mythologies and totemic legends, we see ancestors personifying mountains, rivers, sun, moon, stars, birds and beasts, remembering things past, and dreaming a better future. The subject or *wu*'s personal understanding was mixed into epics; and later, the learned people furthered the procession of existing epics and added more plots, fulfilling the aspiration to to (re-)create history. In short, the oral history and epics gave expression to the primitive historical consciousness among ancestors. Where the significance of the two genres of history was concerned, there were several points worthy of furthered discussions.

First, the importance was attached to history. Each piece of epics and oral history predominantly consisted of admirations of splendid work done by founding and remote ancestors. Among other things, there were stories depicting the origin of clans and highlighting the idea of an unbroken blood relationship. For example, the verses entitled “Xuanniao 玄鸟” (Swallow) in *Shijing* showed that it was the sacred black bird that gave birth to the Shang 商 People; and “Shengmin 生民” (The People) vividly told the story of Jiang Yuan 姜嫄, who trod on the footprint of the supreme god and then was delivered of Ji 稷, the remotest ancestor of the Zhou People. Modern scholars shed light on the genealogy that was orally passed down among the Yi People.<sup>9</sup> The key of the Yi-style genealogy was the combination of names of father and son. Individual families constituting a subdivided greater

<sup>8</sup>Song Zhaolin 宋兆麟, Li Jiafang 黎家芳 and Du Yaoxi 杜耀西, *Zhongguo yuanshi shehui shi* 中国原始社会史 [History of the Chinese primitive society] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1983), pp. 496–497.

<sup>9</sup>Ma Xueliang et al., *Yizu wenhua shi*, p. 371.

family in both the black and white groups of Yi People unexceptionally attached great importance to the genealogy, which concurrently played a constituent role in a greater family and a predominant role in an individual family. Such a genealogical practice continued to exist in very late periods. Overall, the oral genealogy was of a paradigmatic nature in the tradition of oral history.

Second, the indispensability of cohesion of clan was stressed. It was actually part and parcel of the primitive historical consciousness. Only when clan members were combined into one could the clan survive, grow and prosper. In the early days of any nation, it developed a clear group identity, by which the nation continued to exist in history, survived hardships, and made constant growth. Among its members, there were sages and men of virtues, all of whom were capable and had led his people to perform miracles. They were proud representatives of the group and protagonists of epics and oral history. Such historical narratives, in turn, reflected ideas of sages and heroes. Foregoing discussions might explain that why the ancient people laid stress on epics and oral history.

Third, the knowledge of an empirical nature was disseminated in the oral history. Such an orally-disseminated knowledge included ideas with respect to the fight with nature, wars against rival and the experience holding together entire clan. Concerned evidences could be found in chapters depicting the history of primitive clans and tribes in Confucian classics such as *Shangshu* 尚书 (*Book of History*), *Shijing* and *Zhouyi* 周易 (*Book of Changes*). For example, the abovementioned “Shengmin” (The People) recounted the Zhou People’s experience in the exploration and agricultural work done by Ji, the remotest ancestor of Zhou. In the same vein, “Xici 系辞” (The Great Treatise) in *Zhouyi* delineated amazing achievements in eras of Fuxi, Shennong, Huangdi, Yao and Shun and proposed an idea in the course explaining the formation of eight trigrams. According to “Xici,” the achievement of Huangdi was based on his adaptive treatment of the common aspiration of the people and the creative understanding of changes in the past (“The Great Treatise I,” in *Book of Changes*). Such an oral tradition also inspired Sima Qian 司马迁 (145–86 BC), who authored the monumental *Shiji* 史记 (*The Grand Scribe’s Historical Records*). In Sima’s reconstruction of Huangdi’s successful battle against Yandi 炎帝 (The Flame Emperor) in Banquan, he laid stress on the winner’s efforts to act morally, pacify the people, develop the agriculture, and so on (“Wudi benji 五帝本纪” (Annals of Five Emperors), in *Shiji*).

In view of above analyses, it is safe to say that the primitive historical consciousness had already been a belief prevailing among clan members and a spiritual force emboldening the people to conquer nature, protect the clan and even claim new territories. Overall, the knowledge, consciousness and idea of history played a positive role in the social development, even though in certain conditions such an intellectual faculty was so inactive, nostalgic and conservative that it could cause people to refuse new things. It should be pointed out that inasmuch as the development of productive force could by no means be broken and there were always contradictions existing in the historical consciousness itself, the history per se was the point where old and new things and present and past were interconnecting. To put it another way, the history itself intrinsically contained the idea of development.

The inertness included in history would definitely be wiped out; so that the historical consciousness could predominantly play a positive role. In this sense, the conclusion drawn from the present author's inquiry into the historical consciousness tally with the facts.

Due to the lack of the writing system, the oral history had a very limited ability to include information as much as possible and what it ideologically expressed would differ accordingly if the narrator changed. In addition, the growing portions of fiction and human-divine hybridity in the oral history further weakened the positive role it could played. As the society advanced uninterruptedly, the narrative mode adopted by the oral tradition was becoming increasingly obsolete. Thus, the birth of writing system was inevitable. Not only did the newly-created writing system embody the advancement of method of recording history; but it also was a great impetus to the improvement of historical consciousness. Xu Shen 许慎 (c. 58–147 A) illuminated this point in saying that with the help of the writing system predecessors were able to show something for their descendants and likewise descendants could understand the past thanks to the writing system. But, if there was not the writing system at all, Xu's assertion would be totally ungrounded.

Where the relationship existing between *wu* and history was concerned, Lu Xun had said (the writing of) history began when *wu*, apart from his or her traditional role in contacting supernatural beings, felt that it was necessary to record important events such as hunting, war and sacrificial ceremonies.<sup>10</sup> Such an influential man of letter furthered his argument, saying that in later eras there were even officials whose work exclusively focused on writing history. Lu finally concluded that there was an interesting relation of history and writing system. In view of this, the present author holds that *wu*, the officials devoting themselves to historical writings, and the birth of writing system, were closely interconnected. The earliest textual sources were produced by such *historical* officials. In China, both literature and classics originated from history. Chinese historians grasped this point very early. In legends, Cangjie 仓颉, Jusong 沮诵, Kongjia 孔甲, Zhonggu 终古 and Xiangzhi 向挚, all of whom were responsible for writing history, were related to the invention of writing system, the account of significant events, the preservation of literature, and so on. Besides, some even engaged in the divination and observation of celestial phenomena.

The formation of writing system took quite a long time. At first, forefathers usually recorded significant events by tying knots and carving wood. The two methods of recording history were frequently mentioned in various legends. Both even could be found in Chinese ethnic groups such as Dulong 独龙, Jingpo 景颇族, Wa 佤 and Nu 怒 in modern times. For example, among Wa People, the knot-tying and wood-carving methods were employed at the same time. The carved pieces of wood indicated intentions of clan members. Meanwhile, the low-rise tied knots showed the chronological order and their size told the reader the importance

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<sup>10</sup>Lu Xun, "Menwai wentan," in *Luxun quanji*, vol. 6, p. 86.



of events. In some cases, articles were attached to a knot; and in doing so, the knoter manifested a certain content of an event. In this way, the tied knot *plus* carved wood became the vehicle of history. In the annual ceremony enjoying the newly-produced rice, residents of entire village gathered together and listened to their clan's history narrated by a senior villager with one piece of carved wood that had been passed down for generations. There were many scotches on the two sides of the wood. Each scotch represented an event. If the scotch was deep, it meant that the event was significant; shallow, less significant. Depending on the carved wood, the senior narrator told all villagers when and which village became the enemy and whether the revenge had been done. The purpose of retelling old scores was to remind clan members to wreak vengeance on foes. Apart from affairs in relation to feuds, other events could be recorded and passed down in this way. Therefore, the carved wood should be regarded as an embodiment of the transition from the oral tradition to the written history. It was in scores on the wood that what took place in the past, where the significance and lessons of events lay in, and what lay ahead for the clan, could be found. The study in the growth of writing system should be furthered. So far what is clear is that every success in the advancement of writing system and improvement of historical record marked the gradual progress of humans' cognizance of their own growth.

Confucian said that it was the ancestor of the Yin 殷 People who produced the written archives and statutes. The appearance of written documents announced the maturity of the writing system. In the Yin (i.e. Shang 商) dynasty (1600–1100 BC), the oracle bone script was the unique embodiment of the mature writing system and historical record. According to the Part One of *Yinxu shuqi* 殷墟书契 (Scripts discovered in Yinxu), the oracle bone script was used to record gathering and hunting sessions (Chapter 4: 4-2; Chapter 2: 33-2), the livestock-raising work (Chapter 6: 23-5), the agricultural production (Chapter 3: 30-3; Chapter 3: 29-3) and the handicraft and rewards (Chapter 5: 10-4). Besides, records also focus on sacrificial ceremonies, prayer sessions in expectation of the good harvest, and wars. In recent years, there are remarkable achievements in studies in the genealogy concerned with the Shang kings in the inscriptions on oracle bones and the periodization of the script itself. Such scholarly breakthroughs contributed greatly to our understanding of the value of oracle bone script.

Despite the primitive nature of historical records written in the oracle bone script, the historical consciousness had already made great progress. First, the ideas of time and genealogy were improved. Hou Wailu 侯外庐 asserted that the Yin People's title of genealogy was the most distinct symbol of the production of consciousness and the idea of time was the earliest production of consciousness.<sup>11</sup> His analysis demonstrated that the clear consciousness of history emerged in the wake of the idea of time. Guo Moruo 郭沫若 pointed out, "In the early days of the Yin dynasty it was

<sup>11</sup>Hou Wailu 侯外庐, Zhao Jibin 赵纪彬 and Du Guoxiang 杜国庠, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中国思想通史 [General history of Chinese thought] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 59, 61.



in the reign of Shangjiawei 上甲微 (one of the Shang kings) that the written history appeared and in periods prior to it there were merely mythologies and legends. Such a dichotomized periodization does work, taking into consideration the difference existing between the sacrificial ceremonies in the two periods.”<sup>12</sup>

Second, quite a few records were devoted to the real production, everyday life, inter-clan/tribe exchange and even tribal wars. The purpose of recording real activities was to predict what would lie ahead for the clan or tribe. In fact, the primitive religious thinking still played a predominant role in the intellectual world of the Yin People. In these conditions, the idea of history at that time was merely the reflection of the Supreme Lord's dominance of human activities. The king in the world was nothing but the son of *Di* 帝 (the Supreme Lord or the Lord Above), who punished or rewarded terrestrial kings in strict accordance with their acts and virtues and determined the rise and fall of a sovereign. Therein lay a growth of the dual character of the historical consciousness. Explanatorily, on the one hand, kings of Shang employed the imagined *Di* to justify their rule; on the other hand, they paid greater attention to real problems and the future. In the entire course of history, *Di* was the unique and irreplaceable arbiter of past, present and future.

In comparison with the records written in the oracle bone script, the historical accounts in inscriptions on bronze vessels were more mature. For example, inscriptions on *Zhougong gui* 周公簋 (the bronze food-holding vessel dedicated to the Duke of Zhou) recorded the event wherein a marquis whose surname was Jing was conquered; and words inscribed on *Liyoucong ding* 鬲攸从鼎 (the three-legged bronze cauldron dedicated to Liyoucong) concisely retold the story of Liyoucong, who brought a suit against an official because the latter refused to pay after receiving pieces of farmland from the plaintiff.

Combing through extant records written in the oracle bone script and inscriptions on bronze vessels, the present author finds that the work recording history was professionalized by degrees. *Historical* professionals at that time referred to “*zhen zhen*” (diviners/scribes) who authored oracle bone inscriptions and were producers of inscriptions on bronze vessels. The birth of professional historians indicated that people had realized the importance of historical record. The present author elaborates this point. First, the content of concerned records became increasingly more embracive and accurate. In such upgraded historical records, the consciousness of subject of history was reflected in a bettered way. Second, the purpose of recording history was to help descendants remember forever hopes cherished by their ancestors. Clan members of later generations should, the history expected, inherit, consolidate and carry forward predecessors' cause. Third, the chronological concept was clear in these records. In some cases, the process of an event was concisely delineated. Where an event was concerned, the protagonist, beginning, closure and writer's evaluation were all included in inscriptions on bronze vessels. Of course, neither records written in the oracle bone script nor inscriptions on bronze vessels

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<sup>12</sup>Guo Moruo 郭沫若, *Buci tongzuan* 卜辞通纂 [A comprehensive investigation of inscriptions on the oracle bones] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1983), p. 362.

were the full-fledged history by far. In the meantime, although the historical consciousness grew increasingly explicit, the human-divine hybridity in records did not vanish yet. In view of this, it is safe to say that the historical consciousness at that time was still of a (reduced) primitive nature.

## 2 The Historical Consciousness Buried Beneath the Assertion that *All Six Confucian Classics Are Unexceptionally History*

### (1) Six Confucian classics and history

In fact, the traditional terminology of Six Classics referred only to five Confucian classics—i.e. *Zhouyi*, *Shijing*, *Shangshu*, *Li* 礼 (Book of Rites) and *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals). Among ancient scholars, there were heated debates on whether such Confucian classics were all by nature historical writings. Sima Qian had said he resolved to form a school of his own by means of the historical narratives. Obviously, his school was of a historical nature and based on the fusion of the ideas embedded in Confucian classics. Before him, Qian's father had spoken out his aspiration to introduce the enlightened world to the people, carry forward the spirit embodied in Confucius's work compiling *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and adhere to principles stipulated by Confucian classics. Father's words impressed the son so much that Sima Qian explicitly stated that he would definitely inherit the cause of his father and never give it up in the well-known "Taishigong zixu 太史公自序" (Author's preface to *Shiji*). His resolution also served to the most basic guiding ideology applying to his creative writing in history.

Writing history was an integral part of the undertaking to grow Confucian classics; and meanwhile, Confucian classics melted in historical writings. In this sense, classics and history had already been combined into one and could by no means be completely separated. For example, in "Yiwen zhi 艺文志" (Treatise on literature) of *Hanshu* 汉书 (History of the Former Han dynasty) authored by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 AD) there was not the category of *shi* 史 (history). Rather, writings devoted to history were included into the category of *Chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals). It must be pointed out that the categorization of historical writings into the genre of *Chunqiu*, one of the Six Classics, did not mean that history was despised by leading scholars such as Sima Qian and Ban Gu. In particular for Sima Qian, who could be called the father of Chinese history, attached the equal importance to Confucian classics and historical writings, even though he did state that the prime principle reigning over the historical writing be based on Six Classics. In fact, Qian did not favor classics more than history but incorporated ideas contained in Confucian classics into the intellectual core of his historical writings. In contrast, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC), who was the most ardent promoter of unchallengeable predominance of Confucianism in the intellectual world, typically implemented the depreciation of history in suggesting that

all writings other than the Six Classics be restricted. Among gurus of the Learning of Principle in Song dynasties, the belittlement of history was furthered, embodying in their intellectual practice of meticulously working on classics rather than on history and their assertion that classics were the root while history being merely the cap. Besides them, quite a few scholars discussed the homogeneity of classics and history from differing perspectives. For example, Wang Tong 王通 (584–617 A), the leading Confucian in Sui dynasty, Wang Yangming 王阳明 (1472–1529) and Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚 (1738–1801) had all proposed unique ideas regarding this topic. It was particularly worth mentioning that Zhang Xuecheng's proposition that *all six Confucian classics are unexceptionally history* exerted great influence on the growth of Chinese historiography.

There were two key points in regard to the widely-discussed Zhang-style proposition. First, in fact, there were similar propositions in differing eras; but meanwhile, what they meant differed from each other. Wang Yangming had said Five Classics were all history from the perspective of *xinxue* 心学, or the Learning of Mind, implying that the five most basic Confucian writings were all devoted to the mind. Unlike Wang, Zhang Xuecheng pragmatically analyzed that Confucian classics could be conducive to better the state administration and improve the livelihood and history a tool perfecting the management of state affairs. It was in light of the common aspiration of classics and history that Zhang assertively stated that “all six Confucian classics are unexceptionally history.” Second, although Zhang innovatively interpreted the homogeneity of Confucian classics and history, he never attempted to depreciate Six Classics. Rather, he just wanted to shed light on the fact that the Six Classics as a whole actually served as the most authoritative political code, by which the administration of state was carried out. In this sense, the *history* referred to the truth of the times of past sovereigns. Some held that Zhang's universal history dethroned Six Classics in the orthodox intellectual world, ridiculously deviating from his original intention. Some even went diametrically against Zhang, arbitrarily alleging that he treated Six Classics merely as the primary sources of history. Indeed, Zhang Xuecheng had asserted that writings all over the country were nothing but history. Inasmuch as Six Classics were written materials, they were unexceptionally *history*. *History* in this perspective denoted historical materials and differed fundamentally from the history in Zhang's proposition.

Were Six Classics history? Was the Confucian classic identical with the historical writing? The present author proposes his own ideas. From the historiographical perspective, Confucian classics—with the exception of *Shangshu* and *Chunqiu*—were not history in the strict sense. But, it should be pointed out that Zhang's assertion that classics were history and even the origin of history was not made in the perspectives of historiography and historical materials but in the perspectives of the historical consciousness and idea of history. In truth, all major threads of Chinese ideas of history could be traced back to the Six Classics. Where Six Classics were concerned, each of them intensively—albeit relatively—gave expression to a certain understanding or view of history, though it actually did not

simplicistically and isolatedly reflected the historical consciousness. It was only in this sense that we could say Six Classics were all history.

There were two types of difficulties in the effort to explore the Six Classics in a holistic perspective. First, the explorer must clearly differentiate between the authentic and false contents in the Six Classics. Second, the explorer must take into consideration the fact that the Six Classics covered quite a long historical period consisting of the three dynasties—Xia (2100–1600 BC), Shang (1600–1100 BC) and the Western Zhou (1100–771 BC). It is generally held that Six Classics were textually produced in the eras of Spring and Autumn and Warring States. With the help of written narratives, such Confucian classics gave expression to the view of history that was prevalent at that time. Thus, Six Classics as a whole were an embodiment of the mature idea and consciousness of history. According to legends, it was Confucius who revised and finalized *Shijing*, *Shangshu*, *Li* and *Yue* 乐 (Classic of Music). It sounds reasonable, if we regard Confucius as the epitome of a time. Therefore, the present author concludes that the Six Classics were systematically and completely produced in the time of Confucius and the classics as a whole reflected the maturity of historical consciousness in the pre-imperial China. Specifically and summarily, *Shangshu* ideologically explored the rise and fall of dynasties in history; *Zhouyi* explicitly illuminated the idea of thoroughly understanding changes; *Zhouli* 周礼 (Book of rites of Western Zhou dynasty) laid stress on the significance of etiquettes and moralization; *Shijing* intellectually (re-) examined the history of culture and custom while eulogizing past kings and emperors and concluding the history; and *Chunqiu* was noted for its unique historiographical thinking. Where *Chunqiu* was concerned, Confucius's basic way and principles of writing history, together with the method of compiling chronicles were all incorporated into this book, if we do not place overemphasis on a certain aspect. Confucius had said that a history consisted of writings, events and significance (of events), all of which were combined into the written literature. For this reason, *Chunqiu*, one piece of work giving expression to the subject's, i.e. Historian's, intellectual reconstruction of the object, that is, history, marked the growing maturity of Chinese history at that time. Furthered discussions of Six Classics from the historical perspective are as follows.

(2) *Shangshu*: A conclusion of the rise and fall of dynasties in history

The authenticity of *Shangshu* and the historical background that the book reflected were inevitable and quite complex questions in the scholarly world. Even the discussion of historical consciousness in the pre-imperial China must be faced with them. There were fierce debates on the authenticity of *Shangshu* written in old and new scripts in Han dynasties. In the early Former Han dynasty, Fu Sheng 伏生 presented a *New-Text Shangshu* consisting of twenty-nine (actually twenty-eight) chapters. Later, an *Old-Text Shangshu* was discovered in one of the walls when the enfeoffed Duke Gong 恭 of Lu was demolishing the ancestral house of Confucius. It was said that Kong Anguo 孔安国 (156–74 BC) reordered the *Old-Text Shangshu* and transcribed it in *liguding* 隶古定 (a pre-imperial Chinese script rewritten in *lishu* [the official script] of Han dynasty). Apart from the twenty-nine

constituent chapters, the *Old-Text* one had sixteen *lost* articles. Therefore, in total, there were forty-five essays in the *Old-Text Shangshu*. Besides, Zhang Ba 张霸 was in possession of a special edition of *Shangshu* that included two hundred chapters; and Du Lin 杜林, the edition written in varnish. Unfortunately, in the Southern and Northern Dynasties, both *Old-Text* and *New-Text Shangshu* were lost. In the ending years of Wei dynasty, there was a false *Shangshu zhuan* 尚书传 (Interpretations of *Shangshu*) in Kong Anguo's name. In the reign of Emperor Yuan (r. 276–323 A) of Eastern Jin dynasty, Mei Ze 梅賾, a senior officer in charge of the work administering commoners in an enfeoffed kingdom, presented the *Old-Text Shangshu*. Lu Deming 陆德明 (c. 550–630 A) and Kong Yingda 孔颖达 (574–648 A) in particular annotated and reorganized Mei's *Old-Text Shangshu*. Thanks to their efforts, there was *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚书正义 (The rectified interpretations of *Shangshu*), which was later venerated as the standard edition of *Shangshu*, a Confucian classic. The standardized *Shangshu* had fifty-eight chapters, among which the forged ones had been uncovered due to works done by scholars in Tang and Song dynasties and in particular by Mei Wu 梅鷟 in Ming and Yan Ruoqu 阎若璩, Hui Dong 惠栋 and Ding Yan 丁宴 in Qing. With the exception of the alleged false ones, left chapters were *grosso modo* reliable. It is particularly worth mentioning that the records in relation to Shang and Zhou dynasties in *Shangshu* were credible to researchers.

The value of *Shangshu* as primary source had been discussed intensively and extensively. Historians through all ages usually used *Shangshu* as the major primary source in their work reconstructing the history of the pre-imperial China. In his well-known *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通义 (All-embracing delineations of literature and history), Zhang Xuecheng pointed to the perfected and intelligent spirit appertaining to the historiography embodied in *Shangshu* and the value of *Shangshu* in the history of Chinese historiography. In modern times, scholars tried to shed light on ideas of heaven, man and virtue in such an archaic book of history. Nevertheless, the exploration of significance of *Shangshu* in the idea of history is still far from adequate and does need to be furthered. The core of historical thinking embodied in *Shangshu* lay in its conclusion of the rise and fall of dynasties in history, as well as in the emphasis it placed on the investigation of things past and lessons of Yin (i.e. Shang) dynasty. In the long history of idea of history in China, *Shangshu* was the earliest work in which the rise and fall of dynasties was systematically elaborated.

The idea of *jigu* 稽古 (investigation of the antiquity) in *Shangshu*, first of all, justified changes taking place in history. Digging into the history of Xia, Shang, Zhou, as well as into the far more remote eras of Yao and Shun, authors of *Shangshu* found a series of changes in several thousand years and demonstrated that such constant changes were in accord with the Heavenly Intention. The justification of historical change in the beginning chapter, i.e. “Yaodian 尧典” (Canon of Yao), was one of the core intellectual constituents of *Shangshu*. In fact, modern research works focusing on the textual criticism had shown that records in “Yaodian” were not completely incorrect; and therefore, the chapter as a whole should not be denounced as being inauthentic. At the very beginning of “Yaodian” the author(s) put forward the idea of investigation of the antiquity. The main body of the chapter

painstakingly demonstrated that the democratic *shanrang* 禅让 (the peaceful process of abdicating and handing over the crown to a person of proven ability) practiced by kings in the remote antiquity was in conformity with the intention of Heaven and the will of the people. In spite of being probably blended in with the grand-unification idea that began prevailing in the Warring States era, the chapter left us an invaluable ancient consciousness of democracy. In the eyes of many people of the later generations, such a democratic practice was inconceivable but it did take place in very ancient times. What the chapter portrayed was the ideal type of administrative methods adopted by sages and the prototype of a flourishing age that was dreamed by politicians through all ages.

There were similar cases in other chapters of *Shangshu*. In the chapter of “Ganshi 甘誓” (Speech at Gan), the effort made by Qi 启, the founding king of Xia dynasty, to put down the rebellion of Hu 扈 tribe was sanctioned by Heaven. According to the chapter, the King Qi solemnly said Heaven decided to destroy the leader of Hu and he himself was appointed by Heaven to execute the punishment. In the same vein, in the chapter of “Tangshi 汤誓” (Speech of Tang), Tang 汤, the founding sovereign of Shang dynasty, justly and severely condemned Xia’s sovereigns who act rebelliously against Heaven and confidently declared that he was committed by Heaven to annihilate the administration of Xia. The reason why Tang, who was actually one of the vassals of the king of Xia, could justify his mission overthrowing the established sovereignty lay in the facts that Xia’s sovereign had committed so many crimes that Heaven ordered Tang to destroy the corrupt Xia. The King Wu 武, who founded the Western Zhou dynasty, in the chapter of “Mushi 牧誓” (Speech at Mu), spoke in a manner same as that of Tang. He professed that his effort to terminate the life of Shang was to enforce justice on behalf of Heaven. The King Wu’s speech read,

Now Shou, the king of Shang, follows only the words of his wife. In his blindness he has neglected the sacrifices which he ought to offer, and makes no response (for the favors that he has received); he has also cast off his paternal and maternal relations, not treating them properly. They are only the vagabonds from all quarters, loaded with crimes, whom he honors and exalts, whom he employs and trusts, making them great officers and high nobles, so that they can tyrannize over the people, and exercise their villainies in the cities of Shang. Now, I, Fa [i.e. the name of King Wu], am simply executing, respectfully the punishment appointed by Heaven.<sup>13</sup>

Obviously, the rising leader of the Zhou People had his rebellious acts justified by Heaven’s appointment and the last Shang ruler’s vices. To sum up, author(s) of *Shangshu* tried their best to put historical changes in the garb of Heaven’s intention. In doing so, the *change* assumed a Heaven-sanctioned legitimacy.

In the meantime, in addition to “Yaodian,” chapters such as “Shaogao 召诰” (Announcement of the Duke of Shao) and “Jiugao 酒诰” (Announcement about drunkenness) in the *Zhoushu* 周书 (Book of Zhou) section of *Shangshu* also laid

<sup>13</sup>*Shangshu* 尚书, or *Book of History*, trans., James Legge, <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/speech-at-mu/ens>.

stress on the significance of using lessons of Yin (Shang) dynasty as a mirror—that is to say, concluding what caused the rise and fall of dynasties in history. For example, the King in the chapter of “Jiugao,” said, “‘Let not men look into water; let them look into the glass of other people.’ Now that Yin has lost its appointment, ought we not to look much to it as our glass, (and learn) how to secure the repose of our time?’”<sup>14</sup> “Jiugao” pointed to the cruelty of historical lessons and implied that the new generation draw the regularity from the past and then use it to better the administration.

Carefully examining the writings of *Shangshu* and rethinking its own perspective, the present author finds that the conclusion of the rise and fall of dynasties in this ancient book was very inspiring. Not only did authors of the book draw lessons from the vicissitude of dynasties but they also insightfully examined the reason causing historical changes. For example, the author of “Duoshi 多士” (Numerous officers) pointed out that in the Shang dynasty every successful sovereign “sought to make his virtue illustrious [and] duly attended to the sacrifices” and those failed kings could not receive protection from Heaven nor could be freed from great ruin due to their indulgence in the “dissolute idleness” and their ignorance of “bright principles of Heaven.”<sup>15</sup> Simply put, the progress of society in the period spanning from Tang, the founder of Shang, to Di Yi 帝乙, the thirtieth king of Shang, depended on the Supreme Lord’s help and protection resulted from the sovereigns’ aspiration for and fulfillment of illustrious virtue and attentive sacrifice. It was exactly the conclusion of lessons from the Shang’s history.

Additionally, the chapter of “Wuyi 无逸” (Against luxurious ease) rethought what Shang sovereigns—the King Zhong 中, King Gao 高, Zu Jia 祖甲, for instance—and the Zhou kings—Gugong Danfu 古公亶父, Wang Ji 王季, King Wen, and King Wu—did in their administration of the kingdom. In the chapter of “Junshi” 君奭 (Prince Shi), the history, wherein the Shang rulers must be faced with the destruction appointed by Heaven, was reexamined and the successful experience in appointing persons of virtue among the Shang kings such as Tang, Tai Wu 太戊, Zu Yi 祖乙 and Wu Ding 武丁 and Zhou sovereigns such as the King Wen was concluded. Generally, the conclusion of history in *Shangshu* did not focus on the deeds of a single emperor or king but on lessons concerned with the rise and fall of multiple sovereigns or kingdoms. Inheriting such a good narrative tradition, Chinese historians in later ages constantly summarized and reconstructed history.

There were two points worth being mentioned as regards the conclusion of history in *Shangshu*. One was the veneration of Heaven and the other was the protection of the people. From Shang down to Zhou, the idea of venerating Heaven grew into by degrees the suspicion of Heaven, and finally into the virtue of reverence. Such an epistemological growth showed that the conclusion of history had been deepened and the historical consciousness had gradually gotten rid of the fetter imposed by the so-called divine intention and enjoyed the freedom from the human-divine hybridity. The fusion of the virtue of reverence and the protection of

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/announcement-about-drunkenness/ens>.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/numerous-officers/ens>.

the people marked that *Shangshu* had begun to touch certain aspects of the historical change and conclude history from the human rather than from the divine perspective. For example, in the chapter of “Kanggao 康诰” (Announcement of the Prince of Kang), the author said the King Wen successfully laid the foundation of the Kingdom of Zhou in his efforts to make his own virtue illustrious, carefully execute punishments, appropriately employ suitable talented people, and so on. The chapter of “Shaogao” echoed this point, saying that the Zhou king never paid no attention to the lessons of Xia and Shang dynasties but instead realized that the life of the kingdom would be prematurely terminated if the king chose not to perfect his own virtue.<sup>16</sup> Besides the two chapters, “Zicai 梓材” (Timber of the Rottlera) asserted that the “present sovereign [displayed his] virtue [and effected] a gentle harmony among the deluded people.”<sup>17</sup>

In the rise and fall of Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties there were both common and specific reasons explaining drastic changes that had taken place in such antique kingdoms. Simply put, it was the prime elements such as virtue and the people that played a predominant role in bringing about changes. Nevertheless, chapters of *Shangshu* unexceptionally did nothing to entirely deny the Celestial Lord. Generally, in *Shangshu*'s conclusion of the rise and fall of dynasties in history, the Celestial Lord was still the driving force of social changes; the pivot point of change lay in secular kings' virtuous politics that was centered on the protection of the people; and the cautious perfection of virtue could result in a perpetual life of the kingdom. “Shaogao” shed light on this point, saying that “[the king] must maintain the virtue of reverence [and when] he is all-devoted to this virtue, he may pray to Heaven for a long-abiding decree in his favor;” and moreover, it warned that if the king did not venerate the virtue and even abandoned it he would definitely be punished by Heaven.<sup>18</sup> When Zhou reigned over the country, the virtue of reverence was pragmatically implemented and in contrast Heaven and fate grew more illusory. In fact, the meaning of the virtue of reverence was very extensive. But, it should be pointed out that in “Book of Zhou” of *Shangshu* the *virtue* focused on the work “tranquillizing and protecting the people.”<sup>19</sup>

The core of the idea of protecting the people was the sovereign's understanding of how hard the farming was. The author of “Wuyi” discussed this point in the light of history of Shang and Zhou and the successful experience of several sagacious kings in particular. The King Zong of Shang, “Wuyi” said, was “grave, humble, reverential, and timorously cautious. He measured himself with reference to the decree of Heaven, and cherished a reverent apprehension in governing the people, not daring to indulge in useless ease. It was thus that he enjoyed the throne seventy and five years.”<sup>20</sup> In the case of King Gao of Shang, the King “toiled at first away

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/announcement-of-the-duke-of-shao/ens>.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/timber-of-the-rotlera/ens>.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/announcement-of-the-duke-of-shao/ens>.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/announcement-to-the-prince-of-kang/ens>.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/against-luxurious-ease/ens>.



from the court, and was among the lower people. ...He did not dare to indulge in useless ease, but admirably and tranquilly presided over the regions of Yin, till throughout them all, small and great, there was not a single murmur. It was thus that he enjoyed the throne fifty and nine years.”<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Zu Jia, one of the virtuous Shang Kings, “knew on what they must depend (for their support), and was able to exercise a protecting kindness towards their masses, and did not dare to treat with contempt the wifeless men and widows,” so that he “enjoyed the throne thirty and three years.”<sup>22</sup> After analyzing the successful experience of Shang kings, “Wuyi” went further, illuminating the reason why the Shang dynasty was later on the wane. What brought about Shang’s decline was that the kings after Zu Jia indulged themselves in soft living and excessive pleasure and were completely ignorant of the hardship of agricultural work.<sup>23</sup> It was exactly the lesson drawn by the author of “Wuyi” from the rise and fall of Shang dynasty.

Where the Zhou dynasty was concerned, the first four kings were all enlightened politicians. The four kings—Gugong Danfu, Wang Ji, King Wen and King Wu—were renowned for their sagaciousness and great virtues. Take the King Wen for example. He remained humble and reverential; kept a low profile; labored himself; protected the commoners; took care of widows and widowers; worked diligently without leisurely having foods; abstained himself from going hunting, and so on. As a consequence, he “enjoyed the throne for fifty years.”<sup>24</sup> Inspired by lessons drawn from the history of Shang and Zhou, in his work instructing the young king the Duke of Zhou said,

Oh! from this time forward, do you who have succeeded to the throne imitate Wen’s avoiding of excess in his sight-seeing, his indulgence in ease, his excursions, his hunting; and from the myriads of the people receive only the correct amount of contribution. ... Oh! those kings of Yin, Zhong Zong [i.e. King Zhong] Gao Zong [i.e. King Gao], and Zu-jia [i.e. Zu Jia], with king Wen of our Zhou, these four men carried their knowledge into practice... Oh! let the king, who has succeeded to the throne, make a study of these things.<sup>25</sup>

Another important aspect of the *Shangshu*-style conclusion of history lay in the discussion of the selection and employment of talented people. Whether a sovereign employed persons of proven ability and whether the ministers did help the sovereign govern the kingdom did directly influence the rise and fall of a dynasty. In the cases of enlightened kings, Tang was assisted by Yiyin 伊尹; Tai Jia 太甲 (one of the Shang kings), by Baoheng 保衡; Tai Wu, by Yizhi 伊陟, Chenhu 臣扈 and Wuxian 巫咸; Zu Yi, by Wu Xian; and Wu Ding, by Ganpan 甘盘. In the political practice, only when an enlightened sovereign enjoyed the substantial and effectual help from his senior ministers and top assistants would there be the age of peace and prosperity. Furthermore, the author of chapter of “Junshi” proposed another

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

question—how to achieve the full freedom in the work selecting and employing the talented people? Analyzing the background of aforementioned notable ministers assisting enlightened Shang and Zhou kings, the present author finds that only a small number of them were from aristocratic families. Rather, most of them were merely from the lower echelons of the society and some were even slaves. *Shangshu* implied that whether a person was talented depended on the ability rather than on the familial background. The criterion of appointment was lay exactly in what a person was able to do. For this reason, those who penned “Junshi” said inasmuch as Heaven endowed the Shang people with virtues and consequently the kingdom was replenished with capable ministers and officials of all origins, whatever the king did was thus as authoritative and reliable as the divination by means of shells or stalks in the eyes of the people.<sup>26</sup> Such an inspiring point was repeated over and over again in later historians’ conclusion of history.

In the chapter of “Lizheng 立政” (Establishment of Government), there was a criterion whereby whether a minister was virtuous or vicious could be measured. In practice, the sovereign appointed a candidate to a senior post and by doing so the candidate’s true ability and whether he truly devoted himself to the practice of Nine Virtues could be tested. Specifically, “[l]et (such an one) occupy one of your high offices[;] [l]et (such an one) be one of your pastors[;] [and let] (such an one) be one of your officers of justice. By such appointments you will fulfil your duty as sovereign. If you judge by the face only, and therefrom deem men well schooled in virtue, and appoint them, then those three positions will all be occupied by unrighteous individuals.”<sup>27</sup> In contrast, “[t]he way of Jie [i.e. the last king of Shang], however, was act to observe this precedent. Those whom he employed were cruel men; and he left no successor.”<sup>28</sup> Some interpreted that the “three positions” were directly relevant to Heaven, Earth and humans. In the light of “Lizheng,” among other things the selection of candidates with political merits was a task of the first importance in the effort to have the state politics well established. In addition to the “three positions” of Zhou, in the reign of King Tang of Shang, there was a measuring method based on “the three kinds of ability.”<sup>29</sup> Such archaic methods of measurement were actually the origin of the selection system that prevailed in later ages.

The chapter of “Pangeng 盤庚” developed several systematic thoughts regarding the selection of talented people. For example, the chapter’s author metaphorically said, “In men we seek those of old families; in vessels, we do not seek old ones, but new.”<sup>30</sup> In the same vein, Pangeng, one of kings of the mid-Shang, stated, “Of old, our former kings planned like me how to employ the men of old families to share in (the labors of) government.”<sup>31</sup> The reason that why the Shang king paid greater

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/prince-shi/ens>.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/establishment-of-government/ens>.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/pan-geng-i/ens>.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

attention to the talented people of “old families” was threefold. The first reason lay in the aspiration for the continuity of governance. In this regard, Pangeng explained,

Of old, my royal predecessors made your ancestors and fathers toil (only for their good). You are equally the people whom I (wish to) cherish. But your conduct is injurious; – it is cherished in your hearts. Whereas my royal predecessors made your ancestors and fathers happy, they, your ancestors and fathers, will (now) cut you off and abandon you, and not save you from death.<sup>32</sup>

Simply put, although the past and late dynasties did not fundamentally differ from each other, quite a few sovereigns in their twilight years acted so foolishly and ruthlessly that the interconnection of forefathers and descendants was broken.

The second reason lay in the aspiration for the tranquilization of governance. Pangeng asked a question and answered it himself;—“[D]o I force you by the terrors of my power? My object is to support and nourish you all.”<sup>33</sup> Of course, if some acted rebelliously, the king would threaten instead that he would “cut off their noses,” “exterminate them,” “leave none of their children,” and prohibit them from perpetuating “their seed in this new city.”<sup>34</sup> In an attempt to strike a balance between justice and mercy, the employment of “old ones” and men of “old families” was a successful method.

The third reason lay in the aspiration for the recruitment of talented people. “Old ones” and men of “old families” had remarkable experience, knowledge and ability that were very conducive to the management of state affairs. But in many cases, they had no opportunity to play a role in the state politics. Thus, they felt extremely frustrated. Fortunately, new kings thought highly of them and absorbed them into the royal administrative team, through which the “old ones” made contributions to the newly-founded kingdom. In later ages, historians proposed the idea that those who crossed over to the new kingdom should not be rejected entirely. It was actually a furthered elaboration of the *Shangshu*-style understanding of the rise and fall of dynasties in history. In practice, the Zhou people inherited and implemented the idea. For example, in the chapter of “Dagao 大诰” (Great announcement) the Duke of Zhou shed light on the early Zhou’s successful experience in recruiting “old ones” from the overthrown Shang dynasty. It was said that the stabilization of new dynasty was dependent on the ten virtuous high officials, among whom there were ministers who had been in the service of Shang kings. Foregoing discussions explained why sovereigns through all ages almost unexceptionally paid attention to *Shangshu*.

In *Shangshu*, the moral cultivation of sovereign was directly related to the rise and fall of dynasties in history. It was an important aspect of historians’ conclusion of historical vicissitudes. According to *Shangshu*, a sovereign should work diligently to such an extent that he even did not have time to eat leisurely. Nay, the sovereign should not wallow in any luxurious and dissolute acts; nor should he be

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/pan-geng-ii/ens>.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

allowed to indulge in sex and wine; nor should he pursue excessive pleasure in going hunting. Such a self-imposed abstinence was one of the prerequisites for the implementation of moral politics. In this regard, the author of “*Jiugao*” suggested kings use history as a mirror. In this chapter there was even one piece of record in which the King Wen admonished his children and grandchildren. The Sage Wen said the royal offsprings “should not ordinarily use spirits;” and further required that throughout all the states “such should drink spirits only on occasion of sacrifices, and that then virtue should preside so that there might be no drunkenness.”<sup>35</sup> In contrast with Ying kings, he furthered, who indulged in sex and wine and lived an extremely corrupt life and finally were overthrown, the rising Zhou People under his leadership abstained “from excess in the use of spirits” so strictly that they have received “the appointment which belonged to Yin.”<sup>36</sup> In ancient times, the sovereign played an indispensable role in the protection of the people and implementation of moral politics. To put it another way, the sovereign’s poor or good performance in the moral cultivation was directly relevant to the social stability. In view of this, it is safe to say that the issue of moral cultivation in *Shangshu* would always be significant to sovereigns of later dynasties.

Last but not least, authors of *Shangshu* did not pay no attention to the border area. Rather, they took the issue of border area as something relevant to the rise and fall of dynasties in history. Undoubtedly, it was a great forethought regarding the cause determining the fate of a certain dynasty. *Shangshu* pointed out that only when border areas were truly stabilized and a myriad of ethnic groups brought into line would there be an age of peace and prosperity.

*Shangshu* was a mirror whereby sovereigns could examine positive and negative sides of history and lessons drawn from historical changes. Although *Shangshu zhuan* (Interpretations of *Shangshu*) in Kong Anguo’s name was denounced as *fake*, it did shed light on the reason that why sovereigns through all ages attached great importance to *Shangshu*. The author of *Shangshu zhuan* pointed out,

[*Shangshu*] intellectually reconstructs and carries forward the highest Way, as well as showing sovereigns the prime criteria [regarding the management of state affairs.] [Before present-day emperors the *Book*] fully and clearly displays [the sage sovereigns’] basic institutions, all of which can be adopted and put into effect.

The conclusion based on the deep intellectual reexamination of the rise and fall of dynasties in history was invaluable. Not only was *Shangshu* a history but it also was a *classic*. Only when the *Book* was interpreted in the perspective of historical consciousnesses would the dual role it played be revealed at the same. In fact, *Shangshu* could be read from multiple perspectives. Among diverse interpretations of *Shangshu*, there were two points worthy of furthered discussions. First, the *Book* always observed historical changes with the intention to conclude the rise and fall

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

of dynasties. Chinese historians through all ages inherited the *Shangshu*-initiated narrative tradition; and moreover, they always reexamined and reconstructed history against the backdrop of social reality, having their worries about the world, expectation of history and confidence in future melted in the effort to profoundly rethink the historical prosperity and decline. Second, many observations of history in *Shangshu* were proved correct by later historical facts. History was constantly changeable. But on the other hand, some *common* elements repeatedly played a role in the historical growth. Historically, quite a few sovereigns read *Shangshu* and knew well those prime principles. Despite this, very few of them sincerely paid attention to the principles and finally had to be faced with punishments appointed by Heaven. In this way, *history* always stood upon its dignity. In a word, the characteristics of historical consciousness that were embodied in *Shangshu* lay exactly in the effort to conclude the rise and fall of dynasties with a view to clearing the way for the epistemic growth.

### (3) The idea of thoroughly understanding changes in *Zhouyi* or *Book of Changes*

It took quite a long time to finish producing the complete *Zhouyi* or the *Book of Changes*. The *Book* gave expression to people's understanding of history at that time. The present author discusses first the authorship of *Zhouyi* and when the *Book* was precisely produced. There was a continuous debate on the two issues among ancient Chinese scholars. Concerned scholarly opinions greatly differed from each other. Quite a few scholars held that parts of diagrams and explanations of diagrams were formulated in the early Western Zhou dynasty; and "Yizhuan" (Treatises), in the early—or mid-, or late—Warring States. Scholar furthered their discussions of the time when specific portions of "Yizhuan"—i.e. "Ten Wings" consisting of two-part "Tuan 彖" (The King Wen's interpretations of entire hexagrams), two-part "Xiang 象" (The Duke of Zhou's interpretations of the symbolism of hexagrams), "Wenyan 文言" (Interpretative texts devoted to trigrams of "Qian" and "Kun"), two-part "Xici 系辞" (Great treaties), "Shuogua 说卦" (Interpretations of trigrams), "Xugua 序卦" (Interpretations of the order of trigrams), and "Zagua 杂卦" (Interpretations of relationships existing between trigrams)—were penned. Concerned conclusions regarding the time varied greatly. It was generally held that diagrams and related direct interpretations were created in the early Western Zhou dynasty and those who authored "Yizhuan" were from the Warring States era. Additionally, established contents of *Zhouyi* were constantly revised in later ages. Even as late as the Former Han dynasty, Sima Qian attempted to rectify the "Yizhuan." Obviously, in Sima's time, *Zhouyi* had not been fully finalized yet. Even so, it is safe to say that the *Book's* main part had already been completed in the pre-imperial China.

There were drastic changes during the Shang-Zhou transition. Wang Guowei 王国维, one of the leading scholars in the early modern China, had analyzed this point in his writings. In comparison with the Shang-Zhou transition, the eras of Spring

and Autumn and Warring States were characterized by much more vehement changes, wherein established institutions of ancient China were entirely reconstructed. Author(s) of “Xici” (Great Treatise) shed light on this point. They said,

Was it not in the middle period of antiquity that the Yi [i.e. *Book of Changes*] began to flourish? Was not he who made it familiar with anxiety and calamity? ... Was it not in the last age of Yin [i.e. Shang], when the virtue of Zhou had reached its highest point, and during the troubles between king Wen and (the tyrant) Zhou [i.e. the last Shang king], that the (study of the Yi) began to flourish?<sup>37</sup>

It was under such circumstances that *Zhouyi* was produced. Therefore, it was understandable that the *Book* reflected the characteristics of an *changing* era.

Who did author the *Book of Changes*? Answers varied so greatly. Traditionally, it was said that three sages made the *Book*. Specifically, Fuxi drew the diagrams; the King Wen penned Great Treatises; and Confucius produced the Ten Wings. In addition to the three sages, Divine Farmer, Yu and the Duke of Zhou were all included into the laundry list of authors of *Zhouyi*. The present author holds that, first, if we regard these sages as someone epitomizing their times, the alleged authorship of *Zhouyi* is entirely plausible to us, especially taking into consideration the impossibility of single authorship that was embodied in the intellectual and narrative difference existing among portions of *Zhouyi*; and second, we have every reason to believe that the main part of *Zhouyi* was obviously the product of historians and officials in charge of the historical writings.

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) said that *Zhouyi* was originally a book of divination. It was true that in the pre-imperial China the official in charge of the historical writings was also responsible for the work of divination. Supporting evidences could be found in two pieces of records of *Zuozhuan* 左传, or *The Master Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals* (“The 4th Year of the Reign of the Duke Ding of Lu,” and “The 18th Year of the Reign of the Duke Zhao of Lu,” in *Zuozhuan*). In the two pieces of record, *shi* 史 (officials in charge of the historical writings) was always textually combined with *bu* 卜 (diviner) and *zhu* 祝 (diviner). Such a textual combination was actually a regular practice in the pre-imperial China. It indicated that there was indeed a common role shared and played by both historian and diviner. The common role might shed light on the evolution of diviners since very ancient times.

Not only did officials in charge of the historical writings understand very well *Zhouyi* but they were also responsible for the preservation of the *Book*. According to *Zuozhuan*, in the second year of the reign of the Duke Zhao of Lu, Han Xuanzi 韩宣子 (the Lord Xuan from the State of Han) visited the State of Lu, where he read *Yixiang* 易象 (The vision of *Book of Changes*) and *Chunqiu* (the *Spring and Autumn Annals*) in the library under the supervision of the royal official in charge of the historical writings. Besides, in the twenty-second year of the reign of the Duke Zhuang 庄 of Lu, the imperial *shi* in the service of the Zhou King, who was then the

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<sup>37</sup>*Zhouyi* 周易 or *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-xia/ens>.

Son of Heaven in name, called on the Marquis of the State of Chen and presented *Zhouyi* before the sovereign. Functionally differing from diviners, *shi* or officials in charge of the historical writings were responsible for recording speeches and acts taking place in the state and tried their best to write down the truth. But on the other hand, *shi* was functionally the same as diviners in terms of the divination work. In fact, the mastery of *Zhouyi* was functionally necessary to *shi*, who interconnect history and social changes and showed their own understanding of historical trend by interpreting diagrams, explanations of diagrams, relationships existing among trigrams and positions of component lines of trigrams. Gradually, *shi* had the idea of thoroughly understanding changes and the idea, in turn, conveniently perfected their apprehension of *Zhouyi*. If Confucius and Laozi had all been in the post of *shi*, it would be safe to say that the overwhelming majority of contents of *Zhouyi* were produced by historian(s). Overall, there were the insightful understanding of history in the *Book*. In other words, *Zhouyi* enriched our intellectual reexamination of the rise and fall of dynasties in history; and moreover, it had an invaluable dialectic idea of thoroughly understanding changes. In this sense, *Zhouyi* should be taken as the cream of the Chinese national historiography.

The featured idea embodied in *Zhouyi* was exactly the idea of thoroughly understanding changes. Those who authored the second part of “Xici” typically gave expression to this idea. The author(s) said,

After the death of Shen-nong [i.e. Divine Farmer], there arose Huang Di [i.e. Yellow Emperor], Yao, and Shun. They carried through the (necessarily occurring) changes, so that the people did (what was required of them) without being wearied; yea, they exerted such a spirit-like transformation, that the people felt constrained to approve their (ordinances) as right. When a series of changes has run all its course, another change ensues. When it obtains free course, it will continue long. Hence it was that “these (sovereigns) were helped by Heaven; they had good fortune, and their every movement was advantageous.”<sup>38</sup>

In the context of *Zhouyi*, *yi* 易 (change) was a concept with threefold meanings—that is, the *changeable change*, *unchangeable change* and *simplified change*. As indicated above, the core of *Zhouyi* lay in the *change* and subsequent “free course.” In this regard, Sima Qian in his preface to *Shiji* had pointed out that *Zhouyi* explored heaven, earth, forces of *Yin* and *Yang*, four seasons and Five Elements and he was consequently good at elaborating the *change*. Zhang Xuecheng thought very highly of Kong Yingda’s definition of *Zhouyi*. According to Kong, *Zhouyi* was exactly a general denomination applying to changes and the specific designation of transformation. Zhang held that Kong’s elaboration of the significance of *Zhouyi* was far superior to others.<sup>39</sup> Many scholars agreed with Zhang’s assertion.

*Zhouyi* showed us a constantly changing scenario wherein changes and transformations permeated. It defined what *qian* 乾 (heaven), *kun* 坤 (earth), *bian* 變 (change) and *tong* 通 (free course) were. Concerned texts in *Zhouyi* read,

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚, *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通义 [All-embracing delineations of literature and history] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), vol. 1, p. 11.

[A] door shut may be pronounced (analogous to) Kun (or the inactive condition), and the opening of the door (analogous to) Qian (or the active condition). The opening succeeding the being shut may be pronounced (analogous to what we call) a change; and the passing from one of these states to the other may be called the constant course (of things).<sup>40</sup>

In changes taking place in nature and celestial phenomena there was a fluctuation embodied in the waxing and waning (of things). For example, “When the sun has reached the meridian height, it begins to decline. When the moon has become full, it begins to wane. The (interaction of) heaven and earth is now vigorous and abundant, now dull and scanty, growing and diminishing according to the seasons. How much more must it be so with (the operations of) men! How much more also with the spiritual agency!”<sup>41</sup> Another piece of text in *Zhouyi* echoed this point, saying “while there is no state of peace that is not liable to be disturbed ... [t]here is no going away so that there shall not be a return.”<sup>42</sup> It was what nature was like. Most importantly, human affairs in the society did not differ from it at all. The replacement of an old dynasty was such a typical case. The Ge 革 hexagram said, “Heaven and earth undergo their changes, and the four seasons complete their functions. Tang changed the appointment (of the line of Xia to the throne), and Wu (that of the line of Shang), in accordance with (the will of) Heaven, and in response to (the wishes of) men.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, the socio-historical change was embodied in the oscillation between prosperity and decline and the rise and fall of dynasties. Historically, there was the time of prosperity, just as the Tai 泰 hexagram said “the little [has] gone and the great come”—which implied that the undertaking was to grow prosperous. In the same vein, there was the time of decline, which was embodied in the insightful words that “the great [has] gone and the little come” in the Pi 否 hexagram—that is to say, the undertaking was to decline. Simply put, the *Zhouyi*-style observation of the historical prosperity and decline was actually an inspiring intellectual source of the idea of thoroughly understanding changes among historians of later ages.

Obviously, in the *Zhouyi*-style idea of thoroughly understanding (ancient) changes there was of an evolutionist nature. For example, the author(s) of second part of “Xici” reconstructed the origin of humans and the evolution of the early human society spanning from the far remote era of Fuxi down to the periods of Yao and Shun.<sup>44</sup> In the light of the delineation in *Zhouyi*, the early human society, economically, developed from the hunting to planting economy and then to primitive agriculture; socially, abandoned the way of living in caves or wilderness and lived instead in permanently constructed houses; culturally, had barbarism gradually replaced with civilization and even embraced the writing system; administratively, gave up the primitive method of control and adopted the organ of

<sup>40</sup>*Zhouyi*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/ens>.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/feng1/ens>.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/tai/ens>.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/ge1/ens>.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-xia/ens>.



violence; and geographically, strengthened the inter-regional connection thanks to the advancement of transportation. Undoubtedly, the delineation in “Xici” was of an evolutionist nature. It explicitly stated that the remote antiquity was not the golden age at all and it was exactly under the circumstance of extreme hardship that ancestors developed the production and improved the living conditions. There were various productive, material and cultural embodiments of the social progress in the remote antiquity. Both social economy and administration were substantially improved. When the development reached a certain stage, the social exchange, writing system and institution of social power emerged one after another. “Xugua” echoed “Xici” in delineating the birth and growth of human society. The author of “Xugua” said,

Heaven and earth existing, all (material) things then got their existence. All (material) things having existence, afterwards there came male and female. From the existence of male and female there came afterwards husband and wife. From husband and wife there came father and son. From father and son there came ruler and minister. From ruler and minister there came high and low. When (the distinction of) high and low had existence, afterwards came the arrangements of propriety and righteousness.<sup>45</sup>

Here the ancient author(s) asserted that humans were from the nature and the social hierarchy was not something heaven-born and eternal at all but merely a historical product.

It must be pointed out that the cosmology and worldview in *Zhouyi* should not be simplistically denounced as being cyclical. For example, the author(s) of “Xugua” took the sixty-four hexagrams as a whole and examined them in a holistic way. The sixty-four hexagrams actually formed an open system. Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) shed light on this point, asserting that the beginning hexagrams of *Qian* and *Kun* laid the foundation of the vertical growth of the system while the ending hexagrams of *Jiji* 既济 and *Weiji* 未济 finishing the system’s horizontal expansion (Chapter 7, in *Zhouyi waizhuan* 周易外传 [Divergent explanations of *Book of Changes*]). Overall, Wang held, such an open system, which was perfectly formed and operated unlimitedly, embodied the true thusness and ever-changing principle, as well as convincingly demonstrating the infinity of Great Ultimate and *Yin-Yang* force. According to *Zhouyi*’s view of history, the movement of things was neither closed nor cyclical. Even in the case, wherein the *yang* force was reincarnated in a force of the same nature, the old one was not duplicated as something intact. Thus, Wang Fuzhi’s descriptions of the open system—viz., that it was perfectly formed and operated unlimitedly—were also applicable to the movement of things. Likewise, Wang’s assertion that the Great Ultimate and *Yin-Yang* force were of an infinite nature precisely illuminated the openness of *Zhouyi*’s intellectual system. Foregoing discussions were based on the system consisting of sixty-four hexagrams.

Besides, discussions based on the individual hexagram also drew the same conclusion. An individual hexagram was comprised of six pieces of *yao* 爻 (single and divided lines). From the first *yao* to the sixth *yao*, there was a process of

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xu-gua/ens>.

development. The top (sixth) *yao* marked that a thing had reached to its fullest extent and a reverse progress would immediately begin. But, such a reverse process did not mean that the top *yao* simply returned to the original state of the first *yao*. In order to demonstrate changes of things, *Zhouyi* made use of the alternations of four seasons, whereby humans could be affected the most. Authors of the *Book* said that the greatness was correlated with heaven and earth and the change with four seasons; and that the influence of change could not be greater than that of four seasons. Of course, their discussions were actually intuitive and limited due to the lack of the advanced natural science and experimental method. Indeed, *Zhouyi*'s explanation of changes taking place in the world sounded almost cyclical. But meanwhile, authors of the *Book* explicitly showed a (limited) evolutionist understanding of history in its eulogy to new things. They even boldly stated that the greater virtue lay exactly in the aspiration for and practice of the daily renovation.

Those who penned *Zhouyi* did not systematically delineate historical changes that took place in eras after Yao and Shun. Despite this, there were fragmented pieces of records, through which a broad outline of the post-Yao/Shun history could be produced. After being textually criticized, some records were proven reliable. Such reliable records are as follows.

He lost his ram[.]<sup>46</sup>

[The hexagram reminds us of] Di Yi's (rule about the) marriage of his younger sister. By such a course there is happiness and there will be great good fortune<sup>47</sup>

[T]his is advantageous for the use of legal constraints.<sup>48</sup>

He wears the cangue and is deprived of his ears.<sup>49</sup>

[The hexagram shows] the caldron with its feet broken; and its contents, designed for the ruler's use, overturned and spilt. Its Subject will be made to blush for shame.<sup>50</sup>

Digging into above fragmented historical records, we at least realized that the Three Dynasties—i.e. Xia, Shang and Zhou—were not brimming with benevolence and righteousness at all. Rather, none of them refrained from committing crimes such as plunder, repression and fraudulence. It was worth mentioning that authors of *Zhouyi* never attempted to reconstruct the history of Three Dynasties in to something excessively ornate style. In their eyes, the Three Dynasties were not the eras when the Heavenly Principle predominantly prevailed. In view of this, it is safe to conclude that the Principle-dominated Three Dynasties were totally fabricated by scholars of later ages.

Putting records in relation to the ancient history in *Zhouyi* together, the history—or, the course of progress—would be intellectually reconstructed. The *Book* clearly

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/da-zhuang/ens>.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/tai/ens>.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/shi-he1/ens>.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/shi-he/ens>.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/ding/ens>.

demonstrated that it was from the foreworld, wherein human ancestors and wild animals mingled, that the human society gradually emerged. The ancient times could by no means be the golden age. Were there many counterparts of such a progressive view of history in the rest of the world at that time? Do scholars who despise the historical thinking in China carefully think about the question? For those who think exclusively highly of Western thinkers' effort to debunk the myth in which the ancient times were praised as the golden age, they are actually completely ignorant of the fact that quite a long time ago authors of *Zhouyi* had explicitly abandoned such a fabricated myth. Such innovative authors employed instead the idea of thoroughly understanding changes to illuminate the transformation and trend of history; and moreover, they advocated the idea that humans act in accordance with the historical trend. They, for instance, said,

Heaven and earth show that docile obedience in connexion with movement, and hence the sun and moon make no error (in time), and the four seasons do not deviate (from their order).<sup>51</sup> ... A (later) sage was able to survey the motive influences working all under the sky. He contemplated them in their common action and special nature, in order to bring out the standard and proper tendency of each.<sup>52</sup> ... Thereby the sages ... would give their proper course to the aims of all under the sky [and] determine their doubts.<sup>53</sup>

On the basis of the historical understanding embodied in above-cited texts historians of later ages expounded and verified the inevitability of change of history and finally created a systematic theory of historical change.

In the pre-imperial China, *Zhouyi* served as the basis, on which officials in charge of the historical writings evaluated historical changes and predicted what would lie ahead for the dynasty. For example, an imperial *shi* responsible for historical records from the royal family of Zhou discussed the story of the Duke of Li 厉 of the State of Chen 陈 and his son named Jingzhong 敬仲 and in doing so he showed his own understanding of the historical trend ("The 22rd Year of the Reign of Duke Zhuang of Lu," in *Zuozhuan*). In another piece of record, availing himself of the divination ascribed to the *Book of Changes*, a *shi* named Mo 墨 made wonderful comments on historical events that took place in the State of Lu ("The 32rd Year of the Reign of Duke Zhao of Lu," in *Zuozhuan*). The common character of the two pieces of record lay in the narrators' idea of thoroughly understanding changes. There are two points worthy of furthered discussion.

First, employing the method of mutual interpretation in the same context, narrators analyzed the original hexagram and its subsequent transformed form and by doing so they expounded what would historically lie ahead for a state from the perspective of *Book of Changes*. Most importantly, the naïve dialectics of an interconnecting and developmental nature was applied to the prediction about history. For example, the imperial *shi* of Zhou Kingdom concluded that in future the Master Cheng, one of the offsprings of Chen, would be in power in the light of

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/yu/ens>.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/ens>.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

the dialectical principle that the two opposite things could by no means peacefully coexist while growing powerful at the same time. In addition, the *shi*'s conclusion indicated that the historian had a clear idea about the true political situation in the State of Qi. Apart from the inspiring system consisting of entire sixty-four hexagrams, the individual hexagram, which was a specific subsystem and functionally placed restrictions on the role each piece of *yao* played in the hexagram, was conducive to the historical understanding. In the history of studies in *Zhouyi*, there were differing theoretical explanations of the position and function of constituents of hexagram. Some arguments sounded reasonable inasmuch as they attempted to shed light on the development of and mutual action between things by analyzing the relationship of upper and lower pieces of *yao* from an interconnecting perspective. In the case of the *shi* named Mo, the historian observed the situation through the prism of changing antagonism between opposites and then concluded general characteristics of a historical period. He insightfully pointed out that quite a few descendants of the three noble families had already become commoners. In the face of nature and history, both of which were the living textbooks of historical methodology, historians such as Mo not only used both as the source of intellectual inspirations but also interpreted history and predicted what would lie ahead in the light of the acquired knowledge.

Second, combining the idea of thoroughly understanding changes and deep and correct analyses of the reality into one, narrators (re-)examined the history. For example, Mo, a historian, precisely grasped the fact that the powerful lords of Ji's 季 family tried their best to win the popular support while sovereigns of the State of Lu abandoning the people and drew the conclusion that the established royal family of Lu lost the power exactly due to the hereditary sovereigns' continuous error and the rising lords' contrastively unbroken effort. In Mo's eyes, the historical change was an unalterable principle and the Way of greatness and righteousness. Of course, *shi*'s interpretations were, to some extent, mystical. Despite this, *shi* from differing ages did make great contributions to the growth of the idea of thoroughly understanding changes and laid a realistic foundation of the idea in particular. In the light of above discussions, the present author concludes that *shi*, or officials in charge of the historical writings, played an indispensable role in the work producing, perfecting, and preserving the *Book of Changes*, as well as in the practice of the teaching of the *Book*.

In reality, *shi* was not a senior post with political significance. Few historians were able to play a significant role in the state politics as done by Shi Yi 史佚 (an imperial *shi* named Yi) in the early Western Zhou dynasty. Nevertheless, *shi* was the master of historical knowledge, the elaborator of teachings of *Zhouyi*, the insider of the reality, and the recorder of speeches and acts, so that they played a very positive role in a state's political, military and cultural affairs. Some renowned *shi* officers— Yi, Mo, Zhao 赵, Yu 鱼, for instance—were both historians and political activists. Where *shi*'s practice was concerned, they, on the one hand, recorded historical events; on the other hand, they employed ideas embodied in *Zhouyi* to interpret history, as well as predicting what would lie ahead in future and positively influencing the real life through their own activities. In the light of

this, the present author suggests that studies in the Chinese ideas of history be carried out from the perspectives of how the ideas of history were created and what positive roles such ideas did played.

There were common and differing characteristics in *Shangshu* and *Zhouyi*'s analyses of the rise and fall of dynasties in history. It should be pointed out that authors of *Zhouyi* paid greater attention to discussing the historical prosperity and decline in the perspective of dynamic movement. For example, the author of "Xici" said, "If acts of goodness be not accumulated, they are not sufficient to give its finish to one's name; if acts of evil be not accumulated, they are not sufficient to destroy one's life."<sup>54</sup> Obviously, the author examined the rise and fall with the idea that the development of history was *a process*. Additionally, *Zhouyi* carried forward *Shangshu*'s idea of protection of the people. Two pieces of text shed light on *Zhouyi*'s furthered work. The texts were as follows.

The superior man, in accordance with this, has his purposes of instruction that are inexhaustible, and nourishes and supports the people without limit.<sup>55</sup>

Dui 兑 has the meaning of pleased satisfaction. ... When (such) pleasure goes before the people, (and leads them on), they forget their toils; when it animates them in encountering difficulties, they forget (the risk of) death. How great is (the power of) this pleased satisfaction, stimulating in such a way the people!<sup>56</sup>

Simply put, only when the people enjoyed the "pleased satisfaction" would the rule be consolidated. Such a historical understanding was reiterated many a time by historians in later ages.

Overall, in the history of Chinese historiography the idea of thoroughly understanding changes was an invaluable intellectual heritage. It was a basic theory whereby people could rethink history, observe the reality, and discuss reforms. The penetrating *Zhouyi*-style idea of thoroughly understanding changes was applied not only to the interpretation of natural movement but also to the rise and fall of societies. In this regard, Yang Wang 杨万里 (1127–1206), a renowned man of letter in the Southern Song, in his "Yuanxu 原序" (Original preface) to *Chengzhai Yizhuan 诚斋易传* (Yang Chengzhai's [i.e. Yang Wanli] interpretations of *Book of Changes*) said,

What on earth is *Zhouyi*, or the *Book of Changes*? It is a book devoted to *changes*; and moreover, it serves as the prism through which sages thoroughly understand all changes. What does the *change* refer to? Specifically, the changes ascribed to Great Ultimate are embodied in the forces of *yin* and *yang*; the changes ascribed to forces of *yin* and *yang*, in Five Elements; the changes ascribed to Five Elements, in [the great diversity of] humans and the myriads things; and the changes ascribed to humans and things, in multifarious affairs. From time immemorial down to the present, multifarious affairs never stop changing. The manifestation of *change* includes both gains and losses. Digging into the *change*, there are both prosperity and decline. In the face of changes, sages fear. Thus, in order to thoroughly

<sup>54</sup>*Zhouyi*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-xia/ens>.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/lin/ens>.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/dui/ens>.

understand changes, sages profoundly fathom changes and meticulously represented changes in a diagrammatic way. In doing so, they produce the *Book of Changes*.

#### (4) Three classics of rites and the idea of adjusting ritual codes

The three classics included *Yili* 仪礼 (Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial), *Liji* 礼记 (Book of Rites) and *Zhouli* 周礼 (Book of rites of the Western Zhou dynasty). Originally, *Yili* was entitled *Shili* 士礼 (Etiquettes of literati) in the early Han dynasty. It was in the (Western) Jin dynasty that it was renamed *Yili*. *Liji* was the classic among writings devoted to rites. It interpreted, illustrated, and supplemented the existing *Yili*. *Zhouli* was actually known as *Zhouguan* 周官 (Designations of official positions in the Western Zhou dynasty) in the early days of the Han dynasty. Later, Liu Xin 刘歆 (50 BC–23 AD), one of the leading scholars in the early Han, renamed it *Zhouli*. Focusing on political institutions, *Zhouli* gave expression to the Confucian ideal politics. As a consequence, in the book there were portions that were created in much later ages. Where annotations to *Yili* were concerned, the most influential works were penned by Dai De 戴德 and his nephew—Dai Sheng 戴圣—in the Former Han dynasty. Usually, *Liji* referred to the edition annotated by Dai Sheng. In “Yiwen zhi” of *Hanshu*, Ban Gu pointed out that among the thirteen schools devoting themselves to the dissemination of rite-themed writings, only Gaotang Sheng 高堂生 and Dai De and Dai Sheng, both of whom were the fifth-generation disciples of Gaotang, were the noted ones. So far scholars have not reached a consensus about the exact time when the three classics of rites were produced. The present author agrees with the opinion of Pi Xirui 皮锡瑞 (1850–1908), a renowned Qing scholar who did an excellent work in studies in the Confucian classics. Pi opined that the three classics unexceptionally focused on rites of the Western Zhou dynasty in terms of their main contents and their main thrust in particular; that the concerned scholars pay attention to in-depth explorations of existing texts rather than to the side issues; and that, most importantly, the understanding of the three classics be based on the basic spirit and mindset of the writing.

Generally speaking, the three classics as a whole elaborated the particular significance of the hierarchized proprieties to the maintenance of the feudal rule; illuminated the basic spirit of the functions of a feudal dynasty; and explained the basis on which the properties were (re-)formulated. In the three classics of rites, right and wrong, the conservative spirit and innovative aspirations, and rule of man and rule of law, mingled. Sovereigns through all ages almost unexceptionally used them as the grand codes that could be applied to the state administration. Likewise, ministers took them as the prime criterion whereby they could stabilize the society. Even historians regarded them as the authoritative writings in their narratives. Thus, it is unsurprising that both the political conservatives and innovators could find something useful in the three classics. Especially for the pragmatic political scholars, they attached particular importance to the exploration of the history and contents of coded proprieties.

Authors of the three classics treated the system of proprieties as a historical phenomenon; that is to say, the system must have emerged in a certain stage of social development. The well-known treatise entitled “liyun 礼运” (Ceremonial usages: Their origins, development, and intention) in *Liji* demonstrated this point. According to the treatise, due to the extremely hard life, neither could the ancient times be an ideal state; nor were there any systems of proprieties at that time. Rather, only when the fire was invented so that the special wine and cheese for the ritual use could be produced and the linen and silken fabrics were made so that “the spirits of the departed”<sup>57</sup> were catered would the system of proprieties be established. Simply put, in no way could the system of proprieties be created without the solid material foundation.

Additionally, the author of “Liyun” held that the system of proprieties was not only the brain child of sages but also a restriction placed on the excessive human feelings. “Liyuan” pointed out that, fundamentally, wealth and sex were the great desires of men; and poverty and death, the great abominations. Such great desires and abominations constituted the core of the human mind. The embodiments of human feelings included sensibilities, righteousness, advantages and disasters that were related to humans. The treatise finally concluded that only when humans acted in strict accordance with proprieties could human feelings be regulated; great virtues, cultivated; the “truthfulness of speech,” promoted; the harmony, maintained; and “quarrelling and plundering,” abandoned.<sup>58</sup> The author of “Liyun” demonstrated the coexistence of good and evil in the mind and especially the growing intention of being evil in the dual perspective of desire and abomination. He also implied that the social stability and maintenance of social order depended on the establishment of the system of proprieties. To sum up, the emergence of institutionalized proprieties was actually required by the society that had already witnessed a certain development.

“Liyun” also delineated the historical growth spanning from the Great Union down to Small Tranquility.<sup>59</sup> In the era of Great Union, the Grand Course was practiced; and then in the era of Small Tranquility, the Grand Course grew indiscernible, so that the institutionalized politics, proprieties and punishments were created by degrees. Such a profound change was natural and inevitable. Even in the cases of sages such as the Emperor Yu, King Tang, King Wen, King Wu, King Cheng and the Duke of Zhou, they could by no means be able to alter the course but to adopt themselves to the historical trend and avail themselves of the institutionalized proprieties to better their governance. Such a clear understanding of the ancient history helped the idea of history in the ancient China reach new heights. In view of this, the present author holds that the opinion that the ancient Confucians’ elaboration of institutionalized proprieties was merely a retrogressive idea of history was entirely incorrect. It was true that in their elaborations there were the Confucian

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<sup>57</sup>*Liji 礼记 (Book of Rites)*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/liji/li-yun/ens>.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

idealistic elements; but it was also true that there was the cognizance of the historical necessity/inevitability. In fact, brilliant ancient thinkers such as Mencius and Xunzi 荀子 (313–238 BC) echoed the main thrust of the three classics of rites in the elaborations of their own thoughts from differing perspectives. The question that whether such great thinkers carried forward the ideas embodied in the classics of rites or conversely it was the classics that incorporated the ideas of the great thinkers is worthy of furthered discussions.

Overall, the pre-imperial Confucians' idea of ancient history should be attached greater importance. Take the treatise of "Liyun" for example. It embodied eclectic ideas, among which there were intellectual threads of Confucianism, Legalism and Daoism and even some traces of the School of Logicians. For example, in "Liyun", wherein one of the basic Confucian ideas—*ren* 仁, or benevolence—was emphasized, authors of the ancient book also laid stress on the concept of *shun* 順 (the state of harmony). They said, "[T]he ancient kings were able to fashion their ceremonial usages so as to convey the underlying ideas of right, and embody their truthfulness so as to secure the universal and mutual harmony."<sup>60</sup> It, however, sounded more Daoist. Thus, the intellectual elements constituting classics of rites were actually very complex. Such an eclectic complexity required that the rite-themed classics be intellectually grasped from the holistic perspective. Among other things, the treatise laid particular stress on the role (the institutionalized) proprieties played in the missions stabilizing the society and saving the state from extinction. Simply put, the value of proprieties was thrust into the limelight against the backdrop of the state administration, just as the treatise said, "Therefore to govern a state without the rules of propriety would be to plough a field without a share."<sup>61</sup>

The hierarchy played a fundamental role in the work maintaining the social system at that time. "Liyun" shed light on this point, saying,

When there is generous affection between father and son, harmony between brothers, and happy union between husband and wife, the family is in good condition. When the great ministers are observant of the laws, the smaller ministers pure, officers and their duties kept in their regular relations and the ruler and his ministers are correctly helpful to one another, the state is in good condition.<sup>62</sup>

What the above-cited text described exactly was what sovereigns through all ages wanted to find in the classics of rites. In their practice, such administrative-method-thirsty sovereigns had proprieties, righteousness, study, benevolence and music mixed and by doing so they created a system indispensable to the state politics. The author of "Liyun" had confirmed this point saying, "Therefore to govern a state without the rules of propriety would be to plough a field without a share. To make those rules without laying their foundation in right would be to plough the ground and not sow the seed."<sup>63</sup> In reality, the system of proprieties was actually a

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.



compound of established institutions and ideological cultivation, giving expression to the Confucian thinking. It should be pointed out that the Confucian thinking ideologically laid the foundation of the system of proprieties. Thus, the system of proprieties that was being ruined was the harbinger of social instability. Some even warned that if rites applying to the wedding ceremony, funeral, sacrifice and formal visit were destroyed, the existing social hierarchy would definitely be broken and the entire society grow decayed. It explained that why the author of “Liyun” concluded that “the sages knew that the rules of ceremony could not be dispensed with, while the ruin of states, the destruction of families, and the perishing of individuals are always preceded by their abandonment of the rules of propriety.”<sup>64</sup>

Authors of the classics of rites tried their best to demonstrate that while ensuring the significance of established social hierarchy to the state the system of rites changed in accordance with the change of times. In other words all established institutions should be adjusted to be in accord with the changed circumstances. The treatise entitled “Liqi 礼器” (Rites in the formation of character) shed light on this point, The author of “Liqi” had saying, “The usages of the three dynasties had one and the same object, and the people all observed them. In such matters as colour, whether it should be white or dark, Xia [dynasty] instituted and Yin [dynasty] adopted (its choice, or did not do so).”<sup>65</sup> In another piece of treatise entitled “Biaoji 表记” (The record on example), the author delineated in detail the changes of prime proprieties in three successive dynasties—Xia, Yin (Shang) and (the Western) Zhou.<sup>66</sup> According to the treatise, the established proprieties in the three dynasties were not perfect; and moreover, they had their own characteristics and differed from each other in terms of the simplicity or complexity of rites. The rite-system of Xia, Shang and Zhou would unexceptionally and definitely show shortcomings or disadvantages in a certain phase of growth. In the Three Dynasties’ systems of rites rewards and punishments mutually intensified each other and the aspirations for inheritance and innovation mingled. Overall, changes taking place in established proprieties embodied the growing or reduced simplicity and complexity. In the case of Three Dynasties, the matter of loyalty was included into the change of proprieties. In fact, the intellectual exploration of changes in proprieties was another form of idea of thoroughly understanding changes. Historians of later ages furthered the rite-themed idea of thorough change from greatly differing perspectives. Such a furthered idea became pluralistic in historian’s interpretative efforts to place emphasis on the reform-mindedness, conservatism or obstinate adherence to old conventions.

The significance of the classics of rites was embodied in their authors’ work creating a primary mode of hierarchized proprieties, illuminating the basis and value of such a primary mode, and explaining the necessity of inheritance and reform of the established proprieties. In the three classics, the established proprieties consisted of a great variety of rites applying to wedding ceremonies, funerals,

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/liji/li-qi/ens>.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/liji/biao-ji/ens>.

military ceremonials, state-level receptions and rewarding ceremonies, designations and functions of official positions, and institutions of education. It was true that the system of rites had already spiritually and physically permeated the entire political and everyday lives. Among other things, the idea of the necessary inheritance and reform of established proprieties significantly influenced the growth and change of historical thinking of later ages. Such an idea of history that was influenced by the intellectual elaborations of rites, in turn, regulated the human ways of behavior and thinking in an invisible manner and even affected how persons would participate in the politics and conduct academic inquiries. The ideas of history and historical viewpoints could by no means be passive; on the contrary, both would play an active role in the social production and then positively or negatively influenced the political life. For example, ancient Chinese politicians such as Wang Mang 王莽 (46 BC–23 AD), emperors of the Northern Zhou dynasty (557–581 AD) and Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), one of the prime ministers of the Northern Song dynasty, unexceptionally initiated political reforms in the name of *Zhouli*, from which they found the political basis of their reformative efforts. Even in the modern China, thinkers such as Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927), Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) and Guo Moruo all attached great importance to the intellectual heritage of “Liyun,” one of the most renowned treatises of *Liji*. In view of this, the present author strongly disagrees with the opinion that the studies in the ideas of history be organizationally confined to the community of historians and epistemically limited to the pure academic explorations.

(5) The significance of *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the historical perspective and the *Book*'s historiographical practice

The author of treatise entitled “Jingjie 经解” (The different teaching of different classics) in *Liji* had illuminated the intrinsic values of Confucian classics. He said,

If they [i.e. subjects of a state] show themselves men who are mild and gentle, sincere and good, and yet free from that simple stupidity, their comprehension of the *Book of Poetry* is deep. If they have a wide comprehension (of things), and know what is remote and old, and yet are free from duplicity, their understanding of the *Book of History* [i.e. *Shangshu*] is deep. If they are large-hearted and generous, bland and honest, and yet have no tendency to extravagance, their knowledge of *Music* [i.e. *Yuejing*, or Classic of Music] is deep. If they are pure and still, refined and subtle, and yet do not violate (reason), they have made great attainments in the *Yi* [i.e. *Zhouyi*, or *Book of Changes*.] If they are courteous and modest, grave and reverent, and yet not fussy, their acquaintance with the *Book of Rites and Ceremonies* [i.e. *Liji* and *Yili*] is deep. If they suitably adapt their language to the things of which they speak, and yet have no disposition to be insubordinate, their knowledge of the *Chun Qiu* [i.e. *Chunqiu*, or *Spring and Autumn Annals*] is deep.<sup>67</sup>

According to the above-cited text, the profundity of *Chunqiu* lay exactly in the assertion that the *Book* was able to adapt its language to the things of which it spoke. In comparison with other elaborations of the significance of *Shangshu* and *Chunqiu*, what the author of “Jingjie” illuminated was much more deep-going,

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/liji/jing-jie/ens>.

taking into consideration the fact that it was in the treatise that the unity of historical idea and writing in *Chunqiu* was inspiringly expounded by the assertion regarding the *Book's* deepest and subtlest meaning. Simply put, the treatise's concluding assertion accentuated the value of *Chunqiu* in the history of traditional Chinese historical writing. Besides the treatise of "Jingjie," Kong Yingda's *Zuozhuan Zhengyi* 左传正义 (Rectified interpretations of *The Master Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*) also made a similar assertion. Kong said,

What *Chunqiu* teaches us is the adaption of the language to the things of which it speaks. Specifically, the *adaption* refers to both the combination (of relevant languages) and analogy (between similar things). In *Chunqiu*, speeches at princes' formal visit to the sovereign are combined together, embodying the aspiration to adapt the language; and moreover, historical events of a similar nature are arranged in a specific order and then appraised disparagingly or complimentarily, implementing the proposal of analogically interconnecting the adapted language and certain types of thing.

In the eras of Spring and Autumn and Warring States, there were a great number of history books, among which many were entitled *So-and-so Chunqiu*. For example, works penned by Yanzi 晏子 (The Master Yan, who was active in the mid sixth century B.C. in the State of Qi), Yu Qing 虞卿 (a senior minister surnamed Yu in the reign of King Xiaocheng (266–245 BC) of the State of Zhao), Lü Buwei 吕不韦 (292–235 BC), a man of power in the State of Qin, and Lu Jia 陆贾 (c. 240–170 BC), a thinker-cum-politician in the early Former Han dynasty, were all called *Chunqiu*. Mozi 墨子, one of the greatest thinkers in the Warring States era, even asserted that he himself had seen *Chunqiu* of one hundred states. The present author contends that Mozi's assertion should not be far from the truth. The overwhelming majority of such *Chunqiu*-style works focused on or were directly related to historical records. Admittedly, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* devoted to the history of the State of Lu was the most representative work and, most importantly, the embodiment of the full-fledged maturity of historical writing in the pre-imperial China. Where the authorship of *Chunqiu* was concerned, the conclusion that Confucius exclusively produced the Book was obviously incorrect. But meanwhile, an indisputable fact was that Confucius played an indispensable role in the production of *Chunqiu*, just as a renowned modern Chinese scholar affirmed that Confucius was indeed in extremely close relation to the Six Classics, including the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.<sup>68</sup>

The narrative of *Chunqiu* began from the first year of the reign of the Duke Yin 隐 of Lu (722 BC) and ended in the fourteenth year of the reign of the Duke Ai 哀 of Lu (481 BC), when *Qilin* 麒麟 (a legendary animal symbolizing auspiciousness in the traditional Chinese culture) was captured in one of the Duke's hunting sessions and the alleged Confucius's reconstruction of history stopped here. Generally, a history book must take a certain historical period out of the infinite course of history and

<sup>68</sup>Zhou Yutong 周予同, "'Liu jing' yu Kongzi de guanxi '六经' 与孔子的关系" (The relationship existing between Six Classics and Confucius), *Fudan xuebao* 复旦学报 (Journal of Fudan University), no. 1 (1979), p. 54.

reconstruct the *intercepted* one into a history that has accumulated events and clear times for start and end. In practice, no matter what the *history* is—the general history or the history devoted to a certain dynasty, it must start at and end in a specific time. In such a finite history *in* the infinite historical course, events take place chronologically and thus are (re-)ordered sequentially. In doing so, the annalistic reconstruction of history will be implemented. It was in such a reconstructing effort that the philosophical value of the *Chunqiu*-style adaption of the language to the things of which it speaks exactly lies. In the case of *Chunqiu*, it strictly abided by the basic principles of historical writing. Historiographically, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was, to a certain extent, an embodiment of the cognizance of the fusion of the finity and infinity of historical course.

Apart from the annalistic style, *Chunqiu* was compiled in strict accordance with the sequence of four seasons. For example, at the very beginning of the *Book*, author (s) solemnly stated that “it was the first month of the spring [of the first year of the reign of] Duke [Yin of the State of Lu.]” In other words, the producers of *Spring and Autumn Annals* granted the issue of time a predominant position in entire book. Overall, the chronological narratives of events in *Chunqiu* was extremely rigid. *Shangshu*, by contrast, obviously suffered from the lack of such a pervasive rigidity. In this regard, it was unfair to treat *Chunqiu* merely as an assemblage of broken official reports. It must be pointed out that *Chunqiu*'s writing style was characterized not only by the concision but also by the completeness. Take records regarding the war that broke out in Pu 濮 in the twenty-eighth year of the Duke Xi of Lu (631 BC) for example. Such a succinct piece of record, which had slightly more than two hundred and twenty words, was actually full and detailed. It began with the Marquis Jin's 晋 invasion of Cao 曹, a small state. Then, compilers of the record did not end the narrative until the King of Zhou, who was the Son of Heaven and the highest sovereign of entire China in name, held a ritualistic hunting session in the south bank of the Yellow River. At the end of the story, the Earl Xiang 襄 of Cao was returned to his home country, where he resumed his governance and led princely states to work collaboratively in the mission besieging Xu 许, another small state. It was in the *Chunqiu*-style brevity that the ever-changing interstate situation and ups and downs of state politics were all vividly and dramatically depicted.

Additionally, *Chunqiu* as a single text perfectly syncretized records, textual representations and elaborations of the significance of historical events. The syncretic role *Chunqiu* played had been elaborated in *Mencius*. According to the second part of Chapter of “Lilou 离娄,” Mencius said,

The traces of sovereign rule were extinguished, and the royal odes [i.e. *Shijing*, or *Book of Odes*] ceased to be made. When those odes ceased to be made, then the Chun Qiu [i.e. *Chunqiu*] was produced. The Sheng [乘, a type of historical writing] of Jin, the Tao Wu [Taowu 柁机, a type of historical writing] of Chu 楚, and the Chun Qiu of Lu were books of the same character. The subject of the Chun Qiu was the affairs of [Duke] Huan 桓 of Qi 齐 and [Duke] Wen 文 of Jin, and its style was the historical. Confucius said, “Its righteous decisions I ventured to make.”<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup>Mengzi 孟子, or *Mencius*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/mengzi/li-lou-ii/ens>.

In the light of above citations, it might be concluded that the “subject” (specific historical events), “style” (textual representations) and “righteous decisions” (elaborations of the significance of historical events) were indispensable elements constituting a history book. Thus, the present author tries, in a broader perspective, to further the discussion of the *Chunqiu*-style “righteous decisions,” with which scholars have not reached an agreement in terms of the conceptual structure and intellectual composition.

It was people of the later ages who concluded that *Chunqiu* created a general knowledge of the Spring and Autumn era. Therefore, we might say that the penetrating insight of *Chunqiu* was actually *invented*. Despite this, the general knowledge resulted from historical delineations of *Chunqiu* could by no means be totally fictional. Evidences in support of this point could be find in *Mencius*. In this regard, Mencius had profoundly asserted,

Again the world fell into decay, and principles faded away. Perverse speakings and oppressive deeds waxed rife again. There were instances of ministers who murdered their sovereigns, and of sons who murdered their fathers. Confucius was afraid, and made the *Spring and Autumn*.<sup>70</sup>

Overall, in its delineations of the history that lasted 242 years, *Chunqiu* panoramically depicted a trichotomized declining era, wherein the state politics grew worse and worse as the ritual, political and military power proceeded downward from the established sovereigns to princes and even to great officers. Inspired by *Chunqiu*, the present author draws a conclusion that all history books regardless of their forms create a general knowledge of a certain historical period and then epistemically analyze the primary changes in this period.

The author(s) of *Chunqiu* assumed very clear attitude towards historical events and figures and appraised them in accordance with the grand criteria of right and wrong. Such a historiographical practice was also known as *Chunqiu bifa* 春秋笔法 (the *Chunqiu*-style elaboration of profound meaning through subtle historical narratives) or *Chunqiu yili* 春秋义例 (the application of prime purport and principles adopted by *Chunqiu* to historical narratives), both of which had been intensively debated in the ancient China. There are two points worthy of furthered discussions.

First, *Chunqiu* was basically a book devoted true historical facts. It was particularly worth mentioning that *Zuozhuan*, or *The Master Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*, inherited and carried forward the *Chunqiu*-style tradition of impartially and accurately recording what happened and was happening. Unlike some who attempted to describe *Chunqiu* as a sage's classic exclusively in honor of the established social status by avoiding mentioning the *Book's* exposure of corruptions of ruling oligarchy, Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, or the Master Zuo, bravely followed *Chunqiu's* writing style. For example, digging into the Master's *Commentary*, the present author finds that in “The 1st Year of the Reign of the Duke Yin of Lu” members of the family of Duke Zhuang 庄 of the State of Zheng

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., <http://text.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-ii/ens>.

邾 despicably fought each other for power; in “The 2nd Year,” the King of Zhou and the Duke of Zheng exchanged hostages, revealing that the foundation of ostensibly harmonious relationship existing between the Son of Heaven and regional princes had already been extremely unstable and the maintenance of hierarchized social status nothing but an embodiment of the narrow balance in fierce economic conflicts; in “The 5th Year,” the Duke went to see fishermen capturing fishes in Tang 棠, implying that the ruling oligarch actually led a luxurious and dissipated life; and in “The 2nd Year of Duke Huan 桓 of Lu,” a senior minister in the State of Song not only committed regicide but also slew the king’s prime assistant, vividly showing the bloody struggle in the court.

Apart from brutal political struggles, scandals involving top male and female aristocrats who acted licentiously were recorded in *Chunqiu*. Such impartial records, which uncovered the impudicity of dukes and hypocrisy of established proprieties, accounted a considerable proportion of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. For example, where the case, in which an aristocratic lady surnamed Jiang 姜 interfered in the politics of the State of Lu through immorally having the Duke infatuated with herself, was concerned, related records could be found in the “3rd” and “18th” years of the Duke Huan and the “2nd,” “4th,” “5th,” “15th” and “21st” years of the Duke Zhuang. The author(s) of *Chunqiu* never attempted to cover the fact in order to vindicate the image of ruling aristocrats. In addition, in the *Book* there were bloodstained hands of renowned kings such as the Duke Huan of Qi and the Duke Wen of Jin, both of whom committed fratricidal crimes in their accession to the throne. Immersing ourselves in the world of *Chunqiu*, we will find that our ears are full of discordant music of bloody power struggles between dukes, between ministers, and between father and sons. Rather than pouring eulogies to the so-called established moralities and proprieties, *Chunqiu* fully and vividly displayed the appalling inhumanity consisting in numerous patricides and regicides in more than two centuries in the pre-imperial China. If *Chunqiu* was not viciously distorted, it must be admitted that the *Book* did truthfully reflected an authentic history. If the subjective judgment of *Chunqiu* must be acknowledged, the greater attention should be paid to the general orientation of historical narratives in the *Book* rather than to the farfetched interpretations of events and the invention of grand principles.

Second, methodologically, *Chunqiu* embodied the unity of impartiality of record and ambiguity of narrative. In their efforts to adapt the language, the author(s) of *Chunqiu* did try to defend the fame of superiors and the honorable. For example, in order not to reveal the embarrassing truth that princes summoned the King of Zhou, or the titular highest sovereign of entire China, those who penned *Chunqiu* tactfully said the King went hunting at the south bank of the River. Such a painstaking euphemism had a profound meaning. Penning a history book in the service of the betterment of the state politics, producers of *Chunqiu*, on the one hand, had to face the cruel reality and draw lessons from it; and on the other hand, they must give expression to the true intention of the ruling hierarchy, as well as justifying the Son of Heaven. In order to successfully finish the tasks, they not only invoked Heaven and supernatural beings but also euphemistically retold stories that went against the

existing sovereigns. Such a *Chunqiu*-style method of writings history exactly epitomized the special character of history books at that time.

In this regard, the assertion that each word in *Chunqiu* was of a judgmental nature could hardly be tenable and it had been criticized by the enlightened scholars through all ages. Apart from the universal judgmental nature, in the history of Chinese historiography, some held that on the whole *Chunqiu* was exclusively complimentary while some contending that the *Book* embodied neither commendatory nor derogatory meanings at all. The present author holds that the alleged universal judgmental nature of *Chunqiu* is ungrounded. But on the other hand, it must be pointed out that the *Book*'s producers did try their utmost to adapt its languages to reflect their ideologies and intentions. Gu Donggao 顾栋高 (1679–1759), a Qing Confucian scholar, had discussed this point in detail in his *Du Chunqiu oubi* 读春秋偶笔 (Essays occasionally penned for the *Spring and Autumn Annals*). One of Gu's assertions read,

In *Chunqiu*, words such as *chu* 初 (for the first time), *you* 犹 (still) and *sui* 遂 (thereupon) played a great role in the work polishing the narratives to be more remarkably profound. For example, the sage who produced *Chunqiu* said that *for the first time* the Duke had six rows of pantomimes displayed in the shrine, implying that the similar rituals that had done before were actually not in accord with established proprieties. Besides, the record that *for the first time* taxes were collected in strict accordance with the number of farmland that was privately possessed by individuals suggested that the ruthless taxation had been adopted by sovereigns.

Although Gu's interpretations as a whole sound reasonable, we shall always bear in mind that he could by no means enjoy the full freedom from overreading the text. The present author contends that as regards the writing style of *Chunqiu*, its authors spent much energy and time selecting words and building sentences and in doing so they gave expression to their true ideological intentions. Textually, the brevity and ambiguity of *Chunqiu* played a special role in the representation of the authors' thoughts. Such a painstaking adaption of language was actually a great (historiographical) creation that was fully and perfectly embodied in the narratives of *Chunqiu*. In the light of foregoing discussions, the present author concludes that the idea that *Chunqiu* was a work of purely plain narratives and completely devoid of ideologico-intellectual elements can neither be solidly grounded nor be conducive to our understanding of the ancient *Book*. It should be pointed out that the reason why some emphatically talked that *Chunqiu* was merely a book of historical facts lay exactly in their aspiration to deny the historiographical practice of subjectively judging the history.

The elaboration of the significance of historical events could be found in the organization, textual representations and historical narratives of *Chunqiu*. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* as a single book proudly embodied the trinity of historical events, textual representations and the elaboration of significance (of historical events). As a consequence, it marked that the traditional Chinese historiography had entered a brand new stage of development. In other words, the (science of) history had sprouted and the historical consciousness and historiography begun fusing together. Nevertheless, Pi Xirui, a Qing scholar, thought very

differently and arbitrarily separated *classics* from *history* in his *Jingxue tonglun* 经学通论 (A comprehensive investigation of studies in Confucian classics). In the case of *Chunqiu*, Pi alleged that it focused on the significance of historical events rather on the history itself; and moreover, he categorically asserted that although *classics* originated from *history* the latter could by no means be equated with the former and likewise even though *history* could transmorph into *classic* the latter was impossibly synonymous with the former. Pi's opinion was, however, specious. It was true that *classics* and *history* differed from each other; but it was also true that the producers of history did have the aspiration to elaborate the significance of historical events. As we know, the *history* devoid of the aspiration for exploration of significance of historical events was merely a journal account of what had happened and was happening. Contrary to Pi's arbitrary conclusion, *Chunqiu*'s authors' effort to adapt the language in the *Book* to the things of which it spoke clearly showed where the historiographical value of *Chunqiu* exactly lay in.

There was another aspect ascribed to *Chunqiu* that was worthy of furthered discussion. Not only were human affairs such as war, alliance and formal state visits recorded but natural phenomena—landslide, drought, earthquake, solar eclipse, and so on—were noted down in the *Book*. To put it another way, the hard and fast line drawn between heaven and man was entirely foreign to producers of *Chunqiu*. Rather, a unity of heaven and man was clearly discernable in the *Book*. Such a historiographical fusion gave expression to another genre of idea of history, from which scholars of later ages deduced the enduring teaching of *tianren ganying* 天人感应 (which referred to a mystical mutual response taking place between Heaven and humans). Confucians who devoted themselves to the *ganying* teaching represented a special intellectual school of *Chunqiu* studies.

Of course, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was a book with specific aspirations. Nevertheless, the *Book* never manifested this point. Even so, social consequences ascribed to *Chunqiu* certainly showed us what the *Book* aspired to do. Sima Qian had inspiringly shed light on the true purpose of the production of *Chunqiu*. In his "Preface" to *Shiji*, the great historian penned,

The High Minister Hu Sui 壶遂 once asked, "For what reason was it that Confucius in ancient times made the *Spring and Autumn Annals*?" The Grand Historian replied, "I have heard Master Tung [Dong] say, when Confucius was Chief Minister of Justice in Lu, the ways of the Chou [Zhou] had declined and fallen into disuse. The feudal lords abused him and the high officials obstructed his plans. Confucius realized that his words were not being heeded, nor his doctrines put into practice. So he made a critical judgment of the rights and wrongs of a period of two hundred and forty-two years in order to provide a standard of rules and ceremonies for the world. He criticized the emperors, reprimanded the feudal lords, and condemned the high officials in order to make known the business of a true ruler and that was all."<sup>71</sup>

In "Kongzi shijia 孔子世家" (The hereditary house of Confucius) of *Shiji*, Sima Qian furthered his explanation of the judgmental nature of *Chunqiu*. He wrote,

<sup>71</sup>Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 50–51.



The master [i.e. Confucius] said, “Alas! Alas! What a gentleman dreads is to die before his name is known. My way is not popular. How shall I make myself known to later ages?” Then he compiled the *Spring and Autumn Annals* based on the historical records of twelve reigns, from that of Duke Yin down to the fourteenth year of the reign of Duke Ai. In this book Lu is given the predominant position, Zhou is considered worthy of respect, Shang is relegated to the past, and the spirit of the Three Dynasties is used as a guiding principle. The language is concise, the content profound. Though the rulers of Wu 吳 and Chu had styled themselves kings, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* criticized them by calling them barons. Although the duke of Jin actually summoned the king of Zhou to a meeting at Jiantu 踐土, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* records that “the Great King went to hunt at Heyang 河阳.” These examples can be used as criteria in any age to criticize or condemn men’s actions, and later princes should uphold this tradition and broaden its application. When the principles of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* are carried out, all traitors and evil-doers in the world must tremble.<sup>72</sup>

In terms of the real influence that *Chunqiu* had exerted, it really mattered to the Chinese state, though it must be faced with severe criticisms and even disparagements. Generally speaking, apart from teaching people the lessons drawn from history, historical writings could play an irreplaceable admonishing role in a society. Being equipped with enlightening lessons, sovereigns would be able to better the political administration; and at the same time, being exposed to moral admonishments, lords, ministers, fathers and sons would know how to make their everyday behaviors be in accord with the established etiquettes. Therein lay the heritage of *Spring and Autumn Annals*, no matter whether the *Book’s* producers realized it or not. Simply put, *Chunqiu* demonstrated that historians in the society could play a dual role in, on the one hand, preparing historical lessons of rise and fall that could be used for reference, and on the other hand, admonishing people not to do evil things. It inspired historians of later ages to consciously perform their social functions by writing history.

Thanks to the historiographical growth marked by *Chunqiu*, the historical consciousness reached a new level. Most importantly, with the help of historical works, the idea of history had played a positive role in the work promoting the social production. In China, a country renowned for profound thoughts, the (science of) history was inseparably related with realistic needs. By now a vibrant growth of creative Chinese historical writings had been on the horizon.

### 3 Contentions in Historical Perspective Among Variegated Intellectual Schools in Pre-imperial China

Contentions among intellectual schools in the pre-imperial China gave expression to the devastating social instability at that time. Their contentions in the historical perspective was undoubtedly part and parcel of the Chinese idea of history and

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<sup>72</sup>Sima Qian 司马迁, *Selections from Records of The Historian* 史记选, trans. Yang Xianyi 杨宪益 and Gladys Yang 戴乃迭 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2008), vol. 1, pp. 279, 281.

exerted a great influence on later-generation historians' creative historical thinking and writing. In this regard, the present author proposes several questions.

First, what did intellectual schools include? From the perspective of idea of history, Six Classics were all historical writings. In the same vein, the classics could be included into the epistemic inventory of intellectual schools. According to the Chinese scholarly tradition, *zixue* 子学 (studies in the teachings of intellectual schools) had long been clearly defined. Specifically, those that could be found in the Six Schools designated by Sima Tan 司马谈, who fathered Sima Qian, as well as in the laundry list of scholarly communities that was selected by Ban Gu in "Yiwen zhi" (Treatise on literature) of his *Hanshu*, were all constituents of intellectual schools. Now the question was, whether (Confucian) classics could be categorized into the genre of *zixue*? Historically, the number of classics constantly kept growing from Five Classics to Six Classics, and finally to Thirteen Classics. By the time of Thirteen Classics, the array of Confucian classics had already formed a complete system. The system of classics was trichotomized in due order into the elementary philological study, the intermediate moral teaching and the highest literature shaping the mind. It was, however, huge and multifarious. For example, ideas of *Shangshu* and *Zhouyi* differed from each other; and the forced combination of the three genres of commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* looked, to some extent, whimsical. Due to the intrinsic differences existing among classics and the imposed reconstruction of them, at last the late-generation Confucians had no alternative but to depend on the annotations on and furthered explanations of original texts in their efforts to transform such Confucian classics into authoritative books propagandizing the cardinal feudal moralities and ethics and legitimizing the feudal hierarchy. It was in the Confucian Six Classics that the basic intellectual elements constituting the traditional Chinese idea of history were bred. Besides, portions of Thirteen Classics were included into works ascribed to the leading thinkers of varying intellectual schools and the imported intellectual threads, in turn, contributed to the creation of historical concepts and even served as source materials and ideological prototypes of the future growth of idea of history in the ancient China.

Second, how did masters of intellectual schools articulate their own ideas of history by means of the historical knowledge? Objectively speaking, the historical knowledge used by thinkers at that time were basically authentic, with the exception of some pieces that were indeed fabricated by them. In this regard, Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚, a renowned historian in the modern China, had proposed a radical idea that the so-called history of antiquity was actually incrementally *forged* by later generations. In fact, in some cases thinkers did reconstruct what had taken place in the past into something adaptable to their discourses on the view of history. Even so, it must be admitted that there were still traces of the true history in the reconstructed history. The true history was, however, passed on in the form of oral tradition or something else. In the intellectual world at that time, a totally imagined history was entirely ungrounded and, most importantly, useless to the scholarly debate, wherein thinkers of variegated intellectual schools fervently participated. In view of this, the present author holds that thinkers added idealistic elements into the ambiguous

history on the premise that such subjective additives would be restricted by the historical actuality. Put plainly, it was in the masters' reconstructed historical world that the past, present and future mixed together. Thanks to such an intellectual reconstruction of history in fierce debates in the historical perspective the pre-imperial Chinese thinkers created a controlled room for maneuver, wherein they clearly and fully articulated their own historical thinking that holistically shed light on the history, reality and dreams.

Third, what on earth did thinkers from varying intellectual schools want to say? Later generations should know their words; but, most importantly, they should grasp the true meaning behind the words. For example, at first sight some thinkers eulogized past kings; but actually, they did not have a regressive view of history at all.

### (1) The concept of antiquity

Masters of intellectual schools in the pre-imperial China and early Former Han dynasty discussed the origin and history and mankind. Some assertions were even close to the truth—the abovementioned delineations of remote ancient society in “Xici” of the *Book of Changes* for example. In the same vein, Han Fei 韓非, who epitomized the School of Legalists in the Warring States era, convincingly and vividly depicted the antiquity and divided it into four successive phases—the remote antiquity, mid-antiquity, recent antiquity and the present—in his well-known treatise entitled “Wudu 五蠹” (Five vermin). The thinker pointed out that changes in history were inevitable. And such an inevitability, Han Fei furthered, required that the administration of state must be adaptable to the changed situation. In practice, the governance in the four phases of historical development would definitely be adjusted in accordance with changes taking place in each phase. Han Fei even explicitly stated that if a present-day sovereign could immediately and effectively adapt himself to the changing circumstances his achievement might outshine those of legendary Five Emperors and Three Kings. Nevertheless, he did not categorically assert that the present must be superior to the ancient. The leading and the most influential philosopher of School of Legalists merely concluded that in the remote antiquity people endeavored to outdo their opponents in morality; in the mid-antiquity, wisdom; and in the present, power. His conclusion was similar to that drawn by later sovereigns who held that in the Three Dynasties the state was governed by means of moral education and now by the political strength. The value and significance of such a Han-style idea of history lay in his assertion that history will inevitably change. Such a bold and inspiring assertion actually laid the theoretical foundation of future reforms. In addition, Han Fei placed emphasis on the role sages played in the historical changes while attaching importance to the *happiness of the people*, which embodied the *people's will* fundamentally steering the course of history.

In the case of Xunzi 荀子, who was the towering figure in the community of Confucians in the late Warring States era, his understanding of history was twofold. On the one hand, Xunzi tried his best to demonstrate that the social hierarchy embodied in the dichotomies between sovereign and minister, between father and

son, between elder and younger brothers, and between husband and wife was the heavenly principle and could only be implemented by *junzi* 君子, or Superior Men. On the other hand, he employed the conceptual clusters such as *qi* 气 (breath/ether), *zhi* 知 (knowledge/epistemic growth) and *yi* 义 (righteousness) to illuminate the origin of mankind and emphasized that it was in the course of struggle that humans accomplished in separating themselves from beasts (“Wangzhi 王制” [Sovereign’s regulations], in *Xunzi* 荀子). It is particularly worth pointing out that Xunzi contended that the proprieties originated from (human) desires. In other words, the thinker regarded proprieties as the *controller* of desires. According to the chapter of “Lilun 礼论” (Discourse on Ritual Principles), the epitome of late Warring-State Confucianism said,

How did ritual principles arise? I say that men are born with desires which, if not satisfied, cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires men observe no measure and apportion things without limits, then it would be impossible for them not to contend over the means to satisfy their desires. Such contention leads to disorder. Disorder leads to poverty. The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder; so they established the regulations contained within ritual and moral principles in order to apportion things, to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction. They so fashioned their regulations that desires should not want for the things which satisfy them and goods would not be exhausted by the desires. In this way the two of them, desires and goods, sustained each other over the course of time. This is the origin of ritual principles.<sup>73</sup>

Where one of the most fundamental historical questions—that is, the origin of mankind—was concerned, Xunzi contributed to the work solving such a perplexing conundrum in his innovative proposal for and theoretical elaboration of basic concepts such as *qi*, *fen* 分 (apportion), *qun* 群 (grouping) and *yu* 欲 (desire).

The author(s) of *Liezi* 列子 (The Master Lie) also exerted substantial influence on the growth of idea of antiquity. Employing the concept of *qi*, they discoursed on the creation of heaven, earth and man. Such Daoism-oriented thinkers said,

Hence we say, there is a great Principle of Change, a great Origin, a great Beginning, [and] a great Primordial Simplicity. In the great Change substance is not yet manifest. In the great Origin lies the beginning of substance. In the great Beginning, lies the beginning of material form. In the great Simplicity lies the beginning of essential qualities. ... The purer and lighter elements, tending upwards, made the Heavens; the grosser and heavier elements, tending downwards, made the Earth. Substance, harmoniously proportioned, became Man; and, Heaven and Earth containing thus a spiritual element, all things were evolved and produced.<sup>74</sup>

Simply put, the myriads things in entire universe were born in changes of *qi*. Thanks to their intellectual efforts, the Laozi-Zhuangzian idea that the existence originated from nonexistence was concretized into a view of history, offsetting the lack of idea of history in the Daoism formulated by Laozi 老子 and Zhuangzi 庄子.

<sup>73</sup>John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), vol. 3, p. 55.

<sup>74</sup>*Taoist Teachings from Book of Lieh Tzū*, trans. Lionel Giles (London: John Murray, 1912), pp. 19–20.

In the light of this, it is safe to say that in the fierce debates on history in the pre-imperial China not only were thinkers theoretically against each other but they also mutually absorbed ideological elements from each other.

It is worth mentioning the idea of antiquity in *Lüshi Chunqiu* 吕氏春秋 (*The Annals of Lü Buwei* [吕不韦, 292–235 BC]). For example, in the treatise entitled “Shijun 恃君” (Relying on Rulers), the compilers said,

Long ago, in great antiquity, there were no rulers, but people lived together in societies. They knew their mothers but not their fathers. There were no distinctions made between close and distant relatives, older and younger brothers, husbands and wives, and male and female; no Dao for dealing with superiors or older and younger; no rituals governing advancing and withdrawing in court or bowing and yielding; nor any such conveniences as clothing, shoes, belts, houses, and storehouses; nor any such facilities as tools and utensils, boats and carts, inner and outer city walls, or border fortifications.<sup>75</sup>

The above-cited text actually gave expression to the idea of antiquity that was ascribed to the Eclectics during the Qin-Han transition. In the early Former Han dynasty, authors of *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (The Master Huainan), a book renowned for its eclectic intellectual assemblage, furthered the Daoist idea of antiquity in particular. Invoking the two most fundamental concepts—*Dao*, or the Way, and *qi*, they illuminated how the universe and mankind were created. In the chapter of “Tianwen 天文” (Celestial Patterns), the authors said,

Thus it is said, “The Way begins with one.” One [alone], however, does not give birth. Therefore it divided into yin and yang. From the harmonious union of yin and yang, the myriad things were produced. Thus it is said, “One produced two, two produced three, [and] three produced the myriad things.”<sup>76</sup>

They went further, explaining the origin of mankind in the chapter of “Jingshen 精神” (Quintessential Spirit). The assertion of such pro-Daoist compilers read,

Of old, in the time before there was Heaven and Earth: There were only images and no forms. All was obscure and dark, vague and unclear, shapeless and formless, and no one knows its gateway. There were two spirits, born in murkiness, one that established Heaven and the other that constructed Earth. So vast! No one knows where they ultimately end. So broad! No one knows where they finally stop. Thereupon they differentiated into the yin and the yang and separated into the eight cardinal directions. The firm and the yielding formed each other; the myriad things thereupon took shape. The turbid vital energy become creatures; the refined vital energy became humans.<sup>77</sup>

The ideas of antiquity in the Mysterious Learning in the Wei and Jin dynasties and the Learning of Principle in the Northern and Southern Song dynasties could actually be traced back to writings in *Liezi* and *Huainanzi*. For example, obviously, Luo Bi 罗泌 (1131–1189) in his *Lushi* 路史 (The grand history) and Su Zhe 苏辙

<sup>75</sup>*The Annals of Lü Buwei*, trans. John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 511.

<sup>76</sup>Liu An 刘安, *The Huainanzi*, trans. John S. Major et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 133.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 240–241.

(1039–1112) in *Gushi* 古史 (The antiquity) discussed the antiquity in the light of ideas embodied in *Liezi* and *Huainanzi*. In addition, the delineations of history wherein remote ancestors in the antiquity arduously fought with nature for survival were worthy of furthered discussions. Unfortunately, past scholars who studied the ideas of history focused almost exclusively on the Confucian classics while paying little attention to source materials from the schools of Daoists, Eclecticists and Yin-Yangists. To be frank, there were very few intellectual threads regarding the idea of antiquity in the Confucian classics, with the exception of the *Book of Changes*. By contrast, the schools of Daoists, Eclecticists and Yin-Yangists proudly developed abundant ideas of antiquity. Even Dong Zhongshu, the leading Confucian thinker who aspired to establish the unchallengeable Confucian orthodoxy in the Former Han dynasty, had to ask for help from Yin-Yangists in order to enrich the Confucian views of history and make them more convincing. In the case of the gurus of Learning of Principle in the two Song dynasties, they reasonably attempted to find an ideological resource in the Daoist sources in their efforts to (re-)construct the ancient history. Apart from Confucians, Daoists, Eclecticists and Ying-Yangists, Mohists also shaped their own understanding of antiquity. The Mohists, for instance, mentioned the times when the people knew neither how to build houses nor how to make clothes (“Ciguo 辞过” [On abandonment of faults], in *Mozi* 墨子). The Mohist view of history was used to contradict the tyranny of later rulers and lay the historical foundation of the political idea that sovereigns should reduce expenditure as far as possible. Nevertheless, the Mohist ideas as a whole were not deep-going.

## (2) Conceptual representations of ancient and later sovereigns

(Sagacious) ancient sovereigns usually referred to Fuxi, Divine Farmer, Yellow Emperor, Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, King Wen, King Wu and the Duke of Zhou in writings produced by the masters of intellectual schools. For Confucius and Mencius, ancient sage-like sovereigns exclusively included the three legendary emperors—that is, Yao, Shun and Yu—in the antiquity, Tang, the founder of Shang dynasty, and the King Wen and King Wu, both of whom founded the Western Zhou. Confucius thought very highly of the five brilliant ancient kings. Some pieces of his compliments to them in Confucian classics are as follows.

[Confucius] handed down the doctrines of Yao and Shun, as if they had been his ancestors, and elegantly displayed the regulations of Wen and Wu taking them as his model.<sup>78</sup>

The Master [i.e. Confucius] said, “Great indeed was Yao as a sovereign! How majestic was he! It is only Heaven that is grand, and only Yao corresponded to it. How vast was his virtue! The people could find no name for it. How majestic was he in the works which he accomplished! How glorious in the elegant regulations which he instituted!”<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup>Liji, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong/ens>.

<sup>79</sup>Lunyu 论语, or *The Confucian Analects*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/analects/tai-bo/ens>.

Shun had five ministers, and the empire was well governed.<sup>80</sup> Shun, being in possession of the kingdom, selected from among all the people, and employed Gao Yao [i.e. Gaoyao 皋陶], on which all who were devoid of virtue disappeared.<sup>81</sup>

The Master said, “I can find no flaw in the character of Yu. He used himself coarse food and drink, but displayed the utmost filial piety towards the spirits. His ordinary garments were poor, but he displayed the utmost elegance in his sacrificial cap and apron. He lived in a low, mean house, but expended all his strength on the ditches and water channels. I can find nothing like a flaw in Yu.”<sup>82</sup>

Most importantly, Confucius unswervingly held that the proprieties that prevailed in the Three Dynasties served as the irreplaceable paradigm for future politics. The master asserted that the specific institutions regarding proprieties could be revised; but meanwhile the basic constituents of ancient proprieties could by no means be changed nor abandoned. Such an unchangeable core would be known to the people living even “at the distance of a hundred ages.”<sup>83</sup> It was the starting point of Confucius’s promotion of the alleged perfect politics of ancient sovereigns in the Three Dynasties. Nevertheless, the Master’s confident words sounded, to some extent, empty. In the post-Master era, Confucians furthered the Master’s discourse on the ancient politics and innovatively prepared a blueprint for a good society based on a sovereign’s benevolent politics.

Apparently Confucius did not pay attention to later sovereigns. In this regard, Mencius even asserted, “There were none of the disciples of Zhong Ni [i.e. Confucius] who spoke about the affairs of [Duke] Huan [of Qi] and [Duke] Wen [of Jin].”<sup>84</sup> The present author does not agree with the Second Sage. Digging into extant Confucian classics, he finds that not only did Confucius mention the historical fact that it was Guan Zhong 管仲, a prominent prime minister of the State of Qi, who made decisive contributions to the Duke Huan’s work transforming Qi into a leading hegemon but the Master even fully affirmed Guan’s efforts. According to the *Analects*, Confucius had eulogized,

Guan Zhong acted as prime minister to the duke Huan, made him leader of all the princes, and united and rectified the whole kingdom. Down to the present day, the people enjoy the gifts which he conferred. But for Guan Zhong, we should now be wearing our hair unbound, and the lappets of our coats buttoning on the left side.<sup>85</sup>

It was true that such fair words devoted to Guan Zhong, a senior minister playing a decisive role in the mission fulfilling the hegemony of a princely state, were really not to the taste of later *orthodox* Confucians. Consequently, some Confucians in the post-Confucius era even (re-)interpreted the Master’s words in a farfetched way. But, it must be admitted that in practice Confucius though highly not only of

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/analects/yan-yuan/ens>.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/analects/tai-bo/ens>.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/analects/wei-zheng/ens>.

<sup>84</sup>*Mengzi*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/mengzi/liang-hui-wang-i/ens>.

<sup>85</sup>*Lunyu*, <http://ctext.org/analects/xian-wen/ens>.

sage-like kings in the antiquity but also of later sovereigns who made remarkable achievements.

Mencius carried forward Confucius's idea of sage-like kings in the antiquity. He explicitly stated, "I do not dare to set forth before the king any but the ways of Yao and Shun."<sup>86</sup> Thus, what did the "ways of Yao and Shun" mean? First, the "ways" were embodied in the most basic economic effort to demarcate the farmland. For example, the Duke Wen 文 of Teng 滕, a small state, was informed that Mencius was one of great promoters of the idea that humans were all inherently good and the criteria formulated by ancient sage-like kings and thus he asked for advices regarding governance from the thinker. The Second Sage showed the Duke *jingtian* 井田 (the well-field system). In accordance with the *jingtian* criterion, "the first thing towards a benevolent government must be to lay down the boundaries" of farmland.<sup>87</sup> On the basis of the *jingtian*-centered economic system, Mencius created his own ideal type of state. It should be pointed out that *jingtian* was merely a theoretical foundation of the Mencian dream polis and it did not mean that there must have been an economic system characterized by *jingtian*-style division of land. Second, the success of ancient sage-like kings lay exactly in their benevolent politics. Mencius pointed out, "It was by benevolence that the three dynasties gained the throne, and by not being benevolent that they lost it."<sup>88</sup> Apart from the "benevolence," the *hearts* of the people played a key role in the rise and fall of a dynasty. Mencius said,

Jie and Zhou's losing the throne, arose from their losing the people, and to lose the people means to lose their hearts. There is a way to get the kingdom: get the people, and the kingdom is got. There is a way to get the people: get their hearts, and the people are got. There is a way to get their hearts: it is simply to collect for them what they like, and not to lay on them what they dislike.<sup>89</sup> [Translator's note: Jie was a notorious tyrant of Xia dynasty and Zhou was Jie's counterpart in the Shang dynasty.]

Third, in a successful state good sovereigns and regents would always be thrifty and diligently work to benefit the people. Ancient sage-like kings and regents set a good example to later generations. Mencius delineated,

Yu hated the pleasant wine, and loved good words. Tang held fast the Mean, and employed men of talents and virtue without regard to where they came from. King Wen looked on the people as he would on a man who was wounded, and he looked towards the right path as if he could not see it. King Wu did not slight the near, and did not forget the distant. The duke of Zhou desired to unite in himself the virtues of those kings, those founders of the three dynasties, that he might display in his practice the four things which they did. If he saw any thing in them not suited to his time, he looked up and thought about it, from daytime into the night, and when he was fortunate enough to master the difficulty, he sat waiting for the morning.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup>Mengzi, <http://ctext.org/mengzi/gong-sun-chou-ii/ens>.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-i/ens>.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/mengzi/li-lou-i/ens>.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/mengzi/li-lou-ii/ens>.



Fourth, the filial piety would definitely universally practiced in the state with good governance. In this regard, Shun was considered to be a paragon of filiality in the second part of Chapter of “Lilou 离娄” and first part of “Wanzhang 万章” in *Mencius*. Fifth, there was an open spirit in the good governance, which could also be carried out by sovereigns of a barbarian origin. For example, Mencius said despite the fact that Shun was from the “wild tribes on the east” and King Wen from the “wild tribes on the west,” the two widely-praised sovereigns put grand principles of governance into effect throughout entire country and consequently successively obtained the sagehood.<sup>91</sup>

The historical knowledge that Mencius invoked embodied both falsity and authenticity. His conception of the ideal governance implemented by sagacious kings in Three Dynasties was actually an embodiment of his aspiration for the innovative recreation of the social reality wherein he was living. Simply put, the greatest Confucian thinker after the death of Confucius subtly had his blueprint for a future good society garbed in the antiquity. In view of this, it is unfair to criticize that the Mencian view of history is regressive. In no way was Mencius a thinker obstinately adhering to the established tradition. In the philosopher’s eyes, if a sovereign did not adaptively confront changes, he would probably be dethroned. Mencius said, “Although a prince, pursuing the path of the present day, and not changing its practices, were to have the throne given to him, he could not retain it for a single morning.”<sup>92</sup> But meanwhile, the Mencian ideal type of good governance was something impractical. In this sense, a critic’s harsh words that Confucians such as Mencius were “very broad in their interests but [did] not deal with much that [was] essential”<sup>93</sup> were not merely the groundless accusation.

Like his peers, Mozi 墨子, an eminent thinker who founded a prominent intellectual school on par with that of Confucians in the Warring States era, attached importance to sagacious sovereigns in the antiquity. He had stated, “King Cheng of Zhou’s rule of all under Heaven was not like that of King Wu. King Wu’s rule of all under heaven was not like that of Cheng Tang 成汤 [i.e. King Tang of Shang.] Cheng Tang’s rule of all under Heaven was not like that of Yao and Shun.”<sup>94</sup> Here, Mozi evaluated and hierarchized the governance performed by five sovereigns in terms of the relationship between the creation of music and the establishment of order. Sun Yirang 孙诒让 (1848–1908), one of the most renowned scholars in the late Qing, held that what Mozi discoursed here be a complement to the trichotomized chapter of “Feiyue 非乐” (Condemning Music). Where the state politics was concerned, Mozi admired so much the ways of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen and Wu. He also pointed out that the effort to select worthies and then appoint them

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/mengzi/gaozi-ii/ens>.

<sup>93</sup>Theodore de Bary et al. eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 206.

<sup>94</sup>*The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, trans. Ian Johnston (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 51.

to important positions played quite a significant role in the mission fulfilling the ways of sagacious kings in the antiquity. In this regard, the thinker said,

This being so, for what reason did I previously regard as honourable the Way of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen and Wu? It was because they were in touch with the multitude in issuing their decrees and bringing order to the populace, which meant that those in the world who were good could be encouraged and those who were evil could to be stopped. It is in such a manner that exalting worthiness is identical with the Way of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tag, Wen and Wu.<sup>95</sup> ... If the wish is to follow the Way of Yao, Shun, Yu and Tang, it is impossible not to exalt worthiness. Indeed, “exalting worthiness” is the foundation of government.<sup>96</sup>

In comparison with Confucians, Mohists did not make any breakthroughs in the form of discoursing on the politics; that is to say, both schools elaborated their ideas of social governance and reform by extolling the ways of ancient sagacious sovereigns. But on the other hand, the detailed contents that they propagandized differed from each other. In addition, researchers shall always bear in mind that even though the early Mohists were intellectually different from the late Mohists, the two groups could not be completely separated from each other.

It is particularly worth mentioning that Mozi paid greater attention to the reality in their conceptual representations of ancient sovereigns. His disciples carried this idea forward and emphatically talked about the inseparability of ways of ancient sovereigns from the social reality. For example, compliers of *Mozi* quoted a wise man to speak of their reality-oriented idea that “[t]o set aside men of present and praise former kings is to praise old bones.”<sup>97</sup> Mozi himself had explained the reason that why he praised ancient sovereigns lay in the fact that the ways of ancient sagacious kings were substantively relevant to the value of present-day people. In other words, the importance attached to the antiquity and its kings did not contradict that to the present and its sovereigns. Thus, the thinker said,

Now to praise the former kings is to praise the means whereby the world survives. Not to praise what may be praised is not benevolent.<sup>98</sup> ... I think nothing equals understanding the Way of former kings and seeking their concepts; understanding the words of the sages and examining their statements. Nothing equals spreading these words among kings, dukes, and great officers above, and next among the ordinary people. If kings, dukes and great officers make use of my words, countries will certainly be well ordered. If the ordinary people make use of my words, conduct will certainly be regulated.<sup>99</sup>

Therein lay another question—how to judge speeches and actions of ancient sovereigns? Mozi proposed the “three criteria” in answer to the question and explained them in detail. He said,

What are the three criteria? ... There is the foundation; there is the source; there is the application. In what is the foundation? The foundation is in the actions of ancient sage

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., pp. 82–83.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 647.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 711.

kings above. In what is the source? The source is in the truth of the evidence of the eyes and ears of the common people below. In what is the application? It emanates from government policy and is seen in the benefit to the ordinary people of the state. These are what are termed the “three criteria.”<sup>100</sup>

Mozi went further in proposing another set of “three criteria,” which was applied to the work testing and verifying the statements about the deeds of ancient sovereigns. He stated,

This is why, for a statement, there are three criteria. What are the three criteria? I say there is examining it, there is determining its origin, and there is putting it to use. How do you examine it? You examine the affairs of the first sages and great kings. How do you determine its origin? You look at the evidence from the ears and eyes of the multitude. How do you put it to use? You set it out and use it in governing the state, considering its effects on the ten thousand people. These are called the “three criteria.”<sup>101</sup>

Apart from the two sets of “three criteria,” Mozi even had Heaven, ghosts and the people included into his laundry list of criteria. He expounded,

Any statements, any actions that are beneficial to Heaven, to ghosts, or to the ordinary people should be put into effect. Any statements, any actions that are harmful to Heaven, to ghosts, or the ordinary people should be set aside. Any statements, any actions that are in accord with the sage kings of the Three Dynasties, Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen and Wu should be put into effect. Any statements, any actions that are in accord with the tyrannical kings of the Three Dynasties, Jie, Zhou, You 幽 [a king of the Western Zhou] and Li 厉 [a king of the Western Zhou] should be set aside.<sup>102</sup>

In the light of above-cited Mohist writings, the present author concludes that in the Mohist discourses on ancient sovereigns those who lived in both the antiquity and later ages were praised so long as they were sagacious and made an effort to benefit Heaven, ghosts and the people and a greater attention was paid to the relevance of the ancient sovereigns to the reality. In the eyes of Mozi, a great thinker, the *history* was something significant. His elaborations regarding this point even shed light on the birth of history and the role history played. The thinker’s words read,

The sage kings of ancient times wished to hand down their Way to later generations. For this reason, they recorded it on bamboo and silk and carved it on metal and stone to transmit and hand it down to their descendants of later generations, wishing these descendants to use it as a model.<sup>103</sup>

It should be pointed out that the thinker attached importance to the *historical function*—that is, history could be used for reference—rather than to the *history* itself. In his own words, the role that the Mohism-defined history played was the

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., pp. 663–664.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 667.

same as that done by *Shangshu*, or the *Book of History*. To be specific, it was to make “a ‘mirror’ near at hand and that was the Yin [i.e. Shang] kings.”<sup>104</sup>

In comparison with aforementioned thinkers, Xunzi added more positive elements into the representations of ancient and later sovereigns. His intellectual efforts embodied the unity of the judgment of later kings and the emulation of ancient kings. In this regard, he explained,

The beginnings of Heaven and Earth are still present today. And the way of all True Kings is in that of the Later Kings. The gentleman carefully scrutinized the way of the Later Kings before arranging in their proper grades the various kings of earlier times, as though he were deliberating in court robes with arms folded in formal stance.<sup>105</sup>

Where the emulation of ancient sovereigns was concerned, Xunzi admired so much Yao and Shun, categorically asserting, that the Way of ancient sagacious kings was exactly embodied in the governance implemented by Yao and Shun. Epistemically, the knowledge, the thinker held, basically originated from the words of ancient sovereigns. Xunzi metaphorically said, “Truly if you do not climb a high mountain, you will be unaware of the height of the sky. If you do not look down into a deep gorge, you will be unaware of the thickness of the earth. If you have not heard the words inherited from Ancient Kings, you will be unaware of the greatness of learning and inquiry.”<sup>106</sup> From which, he even concluded, “Every doctrine that is neither consistent with Ancient Kings nor in accord with the requirements of ritual and moral principles is properly described as a ‘treacherous doctrine.’ Although they may be the product of a discrimination, the gentlemen will not heed it.”<sup>107</sup>

Nevertheless, there was a problem in the emulation of “Ancient Kings”—that is to say, the Way of sovereigns in the antiquity was actually not handed down in a complete form. It, however, did not mean that the later generations could by no means emulate Ancient Kings. Rather, they could follow instead “Later Kings” on the grounds that the ancient and later kings shared the same Way. Simply put, the emulation of Later Kings did not contradict that done to the Ancient Kings. In this regard, Xunzi had made an assertion that the ancient and modern times did not fundamentally differ from each other because of the existence of the Way penetrating entire history. It was by such a penetrating and unifying Way that the thinker justified the homogeneity of emulation of ancient and later kings. Furthermore, Xunzi subtly differentiated the ancient kings’ heritage—grand principles—from the more concrete and detailed embodiments of the heritage in efforts made by the later kings. Thus, the later generations, the thinker implied, pay greater attention to the emulation of later kings. Finally, Xunzi concluded,

[One] asks: There are a hundred sage kings, which one ought I to use as my model? ...  
Hence I say: If you want to observe the footprints of the sage kings, you must look where

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>105</sup>John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Work*, vol. 1, p. 179.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 136.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

they are most clearly preserved – that is, with the Later Kings. These Later Kings were lords over the whole world. To put them aside and to discuss instead extreme antiquity is like giving up your own lord and serving another. Hence I say: If you want to observe a millennium, you must look at today. ... There is an ancient saying: Use the near to know the remote.<sup>108</sup>

In view of this, the present author contends that the core of the Xunzian idea of Ancient Kings actually lay in the Later Kings rather than in those who lived in the extreme antiquity and moreover the thinker laid stress on the importance of the present and suggested that in order to better the governance the present sovereigns pay much greater attention to the institutions of *ming* 名 (names), *fen* (apportion) and proprieties, all of which were the key constituents of the Way of Ancient Kings. It should also be pointed out that Xunzi himself was strongly against such a type of practice that some talked glibly about the emulation of Ancient Kings while being entirely ignorant of the social reality. For example, he had ridiculed Zi Si 子思, who was the grandson of Confucius and an eminent thinker in the late Spring and Autumn era, and Mencius, saying,

Some men follow the model of the Ancient Kings in a fragmentary way, but they do not understand its guiding principles. Still their abilities are manifold, their memory great, and their experience and knowledge both varies and broad. They have initiated a theory for which the claim great antiquity, calling it the Five Processes theory. Peculiar and unreasonable in the extreme, it lacks proper logical categories. Mysterious and enigmatic, it lacks a satisfactory theoretical basis. Esoteric and laconic in its statements, it lacks adequate explanations.<sup>109</sup>

More radically, Xunzi denounced that what Zi Si and Mencius passed on ran counter to the basic spirit of Confucius. Obviously, there were a huge difference between the Zi Si-Mencian and Xunzian representations of ancient and later kings, though both groups were all of an indisputable Confucian nature.

In the Xunzian theory, the Way played a predominant role in the communities of ancient and later kings. Xunzi held that only when humans grasped the Way would they be able to holistically understand the world. In his eyes, the Way was like a “connecting thread.” In this regard, he said,

What has remained unchanged through the Hundred Kings is sufficient to be regarded as the connecting thread of the Way. With each rise and fall, respond with this connecting thread; apply the connecting thread with reason, and there will be no disorder.<sup>110</sup> ... The myriad things constitute one aspect of the Way, and a single thing constitutes one aspect of the myriad things. The stupid who act on the basis of one aspect of one thing, considering that therein they know the Way, are ignorant.<sup>111</sup>

Thanks to the thinker’s effort to have the Way span from the extreme antiquity down to the very present and combine the ancient and later kings together, the

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., pp. 206–207.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, p. 21.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

pre-imperial Chinese representations of ancient and later kings were systematically theorized. Additionally, Xunzi shed light on the Way of Hundred Kings, which was the *oneness* embodied in Confucian classics such as *Book of Poetry*, *Book of History*, *Book of Rites* and *Classic of Music*. Unfortunately, the masters of varying intellectual schools did not realize this point and were consequently blinded by wrong discourses. For this reason, Xunzi admonished,

The world does not have two Ways, and the sage is not of two minds. Now, since the feudal lords employ different principles of government and the Hundred Schools offer different explanations, of necessity some will be right and others wrong, some will produce order and other disorder.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, as stated above, the thinker particularly placed emphasis on the priority of the present.

Therein Xunzi furthered his discussion. How could the enlightened sage help others avoid being blinded by wrong ideas? The thinker answered,

The sage knows the flaws of the mind's operation and perceives the misfortunes of blindness and being closed to the truth. This is why he is without desires and aversions, without beginnings and ends of things, without the remote or near, without broadness or shallowness, without antiquity or modernity. He lays out all the myriad things and causes himself to exactly match how each settles on the suspended balance. This is why for the sage, the multitude of different reactions to things cannot produce obsession by one thing's beclouding another and so disturbing their proper position.<sup>113</sup>

It must be pointed out that the Xunzian theory advocating the abolishment of differences existing among the myriad things, however, greatly weakened his ideological elaboration of *change* in the perspective of the idea of thoroughly understanding all changes in entire history. Put plainly, *change* was strangled by the alleged invariability in the Xunzian discourse.

Last but not least, on the basis of his theoretical representation of ancient and later kings, Xunzi put forward a theory regarding the dichotomy of king and "lord-protector." His discourses on this subject were, however, to some extent, reluctant. On the one hand, the thinker explicitly stated, "Even an immature lad from the gate of Confucius would be ashamed to praise the Five Lords-Protector in his discourse."<sup>114</sup> But on the other hand, he complimentarily commented that the Duke Huan of Qi, who was one of the Five Lords-Protectors, "had the talent to take advantage of the world's greatest opportunities."<sup>115</sup> Here Xunzi was so theoretically flexible that he justified the effort to put the ways of being a king or a lord-protector into effect so long as it met the needs of the administration of the state. But meanwhile, he pinpointed the huge difference existing among differing aspirations for governance, saying, "[O]ne who uses the state to establish justice will be king;

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., vol. 2., p. 57.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

one who establishes trust will be a lord-protector; and one who establishes a record of expediency and opportunism will perish.”<sup>116</sup>

In the late Warring States era, thinkers from varying intellectual schools carried the conceptual representation of ancient and later kings forward and even achieved some theoretical breakthroughs such as the ideological freedom from the perpetual Way and proprieties. Some reform-minded philosopher-*cum*-politicians strove to justify political innovations by means of the bold ideological reinterpretations. For example, in face of the powerful conservatism embodied in such an assertion that “[f]ollow the old and you commit no error; abide by ritual and you are without fault,”<sup>117</sup> Shang Yang 商鞅, the leading theory-builder and pusher of an all-embracing reform that fundamentally changed the State of Qin and reconstructed the state in the remote western frontier into the greatest power at that time, sharply replied, “The Three Dynasties were not alike in their rites, yet their rulers were all kings. The Five Hegemons did not observe the same laws, yet all were *ba* [the leading and most powerful country.]”<sup>118</sup> Then he furthered,

To govern the age one need not adopt a single course, to benefit the state one need not follow the old. Tang and Wu did not follow the old, yet they became kings. The Xia and Yin dynasties did not alter the rites and yet they perished. Going against old ways is not necessarily to be condemned, and abiding by rites is not necessarily deserving of praise.<sup>119</sup>

In Lord Shang’s discourse, the history of Three Dynasties was not the same as that discoursed by Confucius, Mozi, Mencius and Xunzi. Shang contended that the Way, proprieties and laws of the extremely antique Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties were all created according to circumstances and successful sovereigns shared the same experience in giving up obstinately adhering to established institutions. More convincingly, he showed that although last kings of remote dynasties did not change established proprieties, they could not prevent his kingdom from collapsing at all.

Apart from Shang Yang, the King Wuling 武灵 of the State of Zhao 赵 innovatively reinterpreted the history since the extreme antiquity and pushed a radical military reform, whereby soldiers put on more efficient barbarian-style uniform and mastered the skill of shooting on horse. In a conversation to one of his ministers, the King eloquently justified his reform, saying,

The ways of the past are not the ways of today[.] ... [W]hy then should our laws be those of antiquity? The Emperors and the Kings did not copy one another. In what way did they retain the same proprieties? Fu-hsi [i.e. Fuxi] and Shen-nung [i.e. Divine Farmer] taught but did not punish; Huang-ti [i.e. Yellow Emperor], Yao and Shun punished but never in anger. When it came to the Three Kings they made laws as the times demanded and established

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>117</sup>Sima Qian 司马迁, *Records of The Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong; New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 92.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

proprieties as situations required. Regulations and orders were given when they were beneficial, clothes and implements were all proper to their use. This is why there was no single way for all the world and why what is good for one state may not lie in copying the ancients. During the rise of the sages none of them copied the others yet all ruled as kings. The fall of Hsia [i.e. Xia] and Yin [i.e. Shang] witnessed no change in proprieties just before their destruction. . . . There is also a saying: “Choose a charioteer for his penmanship and he’ll never understand your team.” Similarly, someone who would shape today by the lessons of yesterday will never understand a revolutionary idea. A talent for following the ways of yesterday is not sufficient to improve the world of today, and the study of bygone ways will never bring about control of the present.<sup>120</sup>

In a word, the King Wuling Zhao had quite a radical idea advocating the emulation of Later Kings.

It should be pointed out that although such epoch-making sovereigns and thinkers did acknowledge the inevitability of changes in history and adaptation of established proprieties and laws to changing circumstances, they were still ignorant of some significant questions—such as how differing genres of history were interconnected, what the significance of the rites of Three Dynasties to princely states such as Qin and Zhao was, how the rites of Three Dynasties were related to each other, and so on, let alone answering them. But instead, they boldly launched groundbreaking reforms in the light of their own view of history and made remarkable achievements. For example, the State of Qin benefited so much from Lord Shang’s all-embracing reform, so that it finally unified entire China. After the founding of the Qin Empire, the situation changed completely. Nevertheless, the new empire did not change the basic politics and institutions accordingly while refusing to draw lessons from the past. As a consequence, such an overweeningly arrogant power was historically punished and overthrown. In reality, not only did historians pay attention to ideas and views of history but politicians and thinkers also rethink past and present according to a certain historical thinking. The role the idea of history played in the social development and the influence it exerted on a certain society could never be neglected.

### (3) Treatise entitled *Hongfan* 洪范 (Great Plan) and discourses on Five Elements

The history of theory of *wuxing* 五行 (Five Elements) could be traced backed to the Xia dynasty. For example, in the chapter of “Ganshi 甘誓” (Speech at Gan), which might be a document from Xia, there were records of Water, Fire, Wood, Metal and Earth. But, so far the exact date of the creation of “Ganshi” is still open to discussion. Some scholars said they had textually found records in relation to Five Elements in the extant oracle bone script. Nevertheless, the present author holds that such a textual discovery be further examined. *Zuozhuan* might be much more reliable. Combing through *The Master Zuo’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, the present author finds that as late as the late Western Zhou dynasty, officials in charge of the historical writings—Shi Bo 史伯, Shi Mo, for instance—had already been able to employed the theory of Five Elements to discuss

<sup>120</sup>Chan-Kuo Ts’ e 战国策, trans. J. I. Crump, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 303.



the politics. One point is beyond all doubt. The Five-Element theory that was discoursed by Zou Yan 邹衍, a pre-imperial Chinese thinker from the State of Qi, and was embodied in “Hongfan 洪范” (Great Plan), one of the most significant treatises in *Shangshu*, exerted a lasting and far-reaching influence on the traditional Chinese culture and everyday life of the Chinese. Historiographically, the *Great Plan* was the source of “Wuxing zhi” 五行志 (Treatise on Five Elements), which was an indispensable chapter of the overwhelming majority of official history books in the ancient China.

Ban Gu, the leading historian in the Later Han dynasty, had discussed the significance of *Great Plan* in the “Wuxing zhi” of his *Hanshu*. He said,

When the Way of Shang dynasty was collapsing, the King Wen creatively elaborated the *Book of Changes*. Likewise, when the Way of Zhou was growing decadent, Confucius revealingly produced the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. [In the two *Books*,] the grandest Ways of Heaven and man are explicitly displayed in the light of the *yin-yang* changes revealed by the hexagrams of *Qian* (Heaven) and *Kun* (Earth) and signs [of verification] in the *Great Plan*.

The historian also did a textual investigation involving the *Great Plan*, stating,

[The Empire of] Qin, a dynasty that had almost all genres of learning perished, was replaced with the Great Han. In the reigns of the Emperors Jing 景 and Wu 武, Dong Zhongshu spent much time and energy studying *Gongyang Chunqiu* 公羊春秋 (The Master Gongyang’s commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*). [In his scholarly effort,] Dong began profoundly investigating the *yin-yang* changes and gradually established the Confucian orthodoxy. After the reigns of the Emperors Xuan 宣 and Yuan 元, Liu Xiang 刘向 (c. 77– 6 BC) intensively worked on *Guliang Chunqiu* 谷梁春秋 (The Master Guliang’s commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*). Liu deeply probed into [the reasons of] blessings and disasters and passed on the [abstruse] knowledge inspired by the *Great Plan*, epistemologically interlacing the teaching of Dong Zhongshu with his own epistemic discoveries. In the time of Liu Xin, who was Liu Xiang’s son and a leading guru of *Zuozhuan*, the interpretations of the meaning of *Spring and Autumn Annals* had deviated from the orthodoxy. Besides, his interpretive effort applied to Five Elements looked very different [from those had been done.]

Where the influence the *Great Plan* exerted on the traditional Chinese idea of history is concerned, there are two points worth being mentioned. First, the treatise was the most direct source shedding light on the operation of Five Elements; and second, it could be regarded as the matrix from which the theory of *tianren ganying* (a mystical mutual response taking place between Heaven and humans), which had so greatly influenced the Chinese society, was developed. Of course, the teaching of Five Elements had its own history, which was generally described as a process beginning with the mix of Heaven and humans and then growing by degrees into the mutual overcoming between Heaven and humans and the transmutation involving all Five Elements. Specifically, there was first the primitive idea of Five Elements; then, the Zou Yan-style broad and profound elaborations of Five Elements; then, theoretical threads in the *Great Plan*; then, reformulated interpretations done in *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi*; and finally, the systemized discourse thanks to efforts made by Dong Zhongshu, Liu Xiang, Liu Xin, and Ban Gu in particular, who penned “Wuxing pian” (An essay devoted to Five Elements) in

*Baihu tongyi* 白虎通义 (Comprehensive discussions of the true meaning of Confucian classics in the White Tiger Pavilion). At last, the theory of Five Elements was transformed into a theological system characterized by the mystical representation of *tianren ganying*.

Zou Yan's elaboration of Five Elements was particularly worthy of furthered discussions. He held that the *history* grew in such a proper order—the phases of Earth, Wood, Metal, Fire and Water. Such a Five-Element order could also be applied to the rise and fall of dynasties. The Zou-style theory of historical change was too extensive to be easily grasped. Sima Qian had commented,

His words were transcendent and unconventional. He was sure to first illustrate them through small things, extending these to larger things, reaching finally to infinity. He first narrated what was current, then reached back to The Huang-ti [i.e. Yellow Emperor], from whom all scholars derive their methodology, and [narrated] the rise and fall of many generations. Accordingly, he recorded a system for interpreting omens, and inferred [from it] far back to before the birth of Heaven and Earth into darkness too remote to trace [otherwise].<sup>121</sup>

Zou Yan's operation of Five Elements consisted of the mutual generation and the mutual overcoming. In the course of mutual generation, Wood generates Fire; Fire generates Earth; Earth generates Metal; Metal generates Water; and Water generates Wood. In the same vein, in the course of the mutual overcoming, Water triumphs over Fire; Fire over Metal; Metal over Wood; Wood over Earth; and Earth over Water. Such a dual and forever-repeating course of operation of Five Elements was actually a universal law, which stipulated that the human society must follow the same pattern wherein the Five Elements transmorphed into Five Virtues. *Qilüe* 七略 [The seven-partite catalogue], a lost ancient Chinese literature that was quoted in annotations added to *Wenxuan* 文选 (Selected refined literature), had mentioned the historicist application of Zou's theory. The author of *Qilüe* said, "The Master Zou [Yan] had penned *Zhongshi wude* 终始五德 (The cyclical alternations of Five Virtues), which could be universally applied. According to which, [The Virtue of Earth] would be replaced with the Virtue of Wood; the Virtue of Wood with the Virtue of Metal; the Virtue of Metal with the Virtue of Fire; and the Virtue of Fire with the Virtue of Water." A more detailed explanation of the cyclical course of mutual overcoming among Five Virtues could be found in *Lüshi Chunqiu*. The author of "Yingtong 应同" (Resonating with the Identical) in the book expounded,

Whenever an emperor or universal king is about to arise, Heaven is certain first to manifest good omens to the people below. At the time of the Yellow Sovereign, Heaven first caused giant mole crickets and earthworms to appear. The Yellow Sovereign announced, "The ethers of Earth are in ascendance." Since the ethers of Earth were ascendance, he honored the color yellow and modeled his activities on Earth. When it came to the time of Yu, Heaven first caused trees and grasses to appear that did not wither in autumn and winter. Yu proclaimed, "The ethers of Wood are in ascendance." Since the ethers of Wood were ascendant, he honored the color green and modeled his affairs on Wood. When it came to

<sup>121</sup>Sima Qian 司马迁, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Memoirs of Pre-Han China*, trans. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), vol. 7, p. 74.

the time of Tang, Heaven first caused metal blades to appear coming forth from Water. Tang proclaimed, “The ethers of Metal are in ascendance.” Since the ethers of Metal were ascendant, he honored the color white and modeled his affairs on Metal. When it came to the time of King Wen, Heaven first caused a fiery-red crow to appear and alight on the altars of Zhou, holding in its beak a document written in cinnabar. King Wen Proclaimed, “The ethers of Fire are in ascendance.” Since the ethers of Fire were ascendant, he honored the color vermilion and modeled his affairs on Fire. The successor to Fire is certain to be Water. Heaven has again first given signs that the ethers of Water are in ascendance. Since the ethers of Water are ascendant, the ruler should honor the color black and model his affairs on Water. If the ethers of Water culminate and no one grasps that fact, the period when it is effective will come to an end, and the cycle will shift to Earth.<sup>122</sup>

In the quotation, the ascendance of a new ether stood for the rise of a new king with corresponding virtue. The entire Chinese history, the Yin-Yangists predictively schemed, would be endlessly repeated in such a closed circle consisting of the uninterruptedly mutually transmuting Five Elements/Virtues. History, as an inevitable, regulated and cyclic movement, was predestined by Heaven.

Where the *Great Plan* is concerned, so far it is generally held that the treatise was textually produced in the late Warring States era. The author(s) of the thought-provoking treatise took Five Elements as a Heaven-given system, saying,

To him [i.e. Yu] Heaven gave the Great Plan with its nine divisions, and the unvarying principles (of its method) were set forth in their due order. (Of those divisions) the first is called “the five elements;” the second, “reverent attention to the five (personal) matters;” the third, “earnest devotion to the eight (objects of) government;” the fourth, “the harmonious use of the five dividers of time;” the fifth, “the establishment and use of royal perfection;” the sixth, “the discriminating use of the three virtues;” the seventh, “the intelligent use of (the means for) the examination of doubts;” the eighth, “the thoughtful use of the various verifications;” the ninth, “the hortatory use of the five (sources of) happiness, and the awing use of the six (occasions of) Suffering.”<sup>123</sup>

Ban Gu held that the above citation must be taken from the lost mysterious *Luoshu* 洛书 (Book of River Luo) and what it narrated was exactly the nine grandest heavenly principles. Detailed explanations of “five elements,” “five personal matters,” “eight objects of government,” “five dividers of time,” “establishment and use of royal perfection,” “three virtues,” “intelligent use of the means for the examination of doubts,” “thoughtful use of the various verifications,” “five sources of happiness” and “six occasions of Suffering” could also be found in the same treatise.

Venerating Five Elements as the embodiment of the most cardinal principles, the author(s) of *Great Plan* laid the theoretical foundation of the system uniting Heaven and man. Specifically, the theoretical foundation consisted of the mystical mutual response between Heaven and man and the centralized power of sovereign; and the uniting system included not only the political standards, criteria and rituals but also the individual social behaviors and principles and natural phenomenon, celestial movement and secular blessings and disasters. Therein lay the essence of the

<sup>122</sup>*The Annals of Lü Buwei*, trans. John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, p. 282.

<sup>123</sup>*Shangshu*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/great-plan/ens>.

discourse on Five Elements. Such a systemized Five-Element discourse served as the ideological basis of the political, social and historical thinking in the feudal China. In view of this, the present author holds that any scholarly exploration of Five Element in the historical perspective must be premised on the analysis of basic constituents of such an archaic but vibrant theory.

The traditional theory of Five Elements was greatly significant and influential in the history of Chinese nation and the development of Chinese historiography. In this regard, Gu Jiegang had made an inspiring comment. He pointed out that the theory of Five Elements was actually an embodiment of the law applying to the Chinese thinking and served as the core of Chinese cosmology. Gu also stated that for more than two thousand years the theory tenaciously grew in China. In particular, Gu as a modern observer contended that it was in *Shijing* 世经 (Genealogy of archaic sovereigns) produced in the late Former Han that the sequence in the course of mutual overcoming among Five Elements was changed from *Earth, Wood, Metal, Fire* and *Water* to *Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal* and *Water*.<sup>124</sup> The observer said although nobody knew that when the new sequence was formulated, those who penned the ancient and general history unexceptionally followed it, producing numerous history books such as *Diwang shiji* 帝王世纪 (Chronologies of archaic sovereigns) authored by Huangfu Mi 皇甫谧 in the Western Jin dynasty (265–316 AD) and *Gangjian yizhi lu* 纲鉴易知录 (The entire Chinese history: A reader) by Wu Chengquan 吴承权 in the early Qing dynasty (1644–1912). In short, the theory of Five Elements, Gu concluded, actually grew into an established orthodoxy in the ancient China.<sup>125</sup> Epistemologically, the intellectual transformation from Five Elements into Three Orthodoxies served as the theoretical justification of a new dynasty. In other words, invoking the basic ideas of the *Great Plan*, theorists tried their best to show that the substitution of a new dynasty for the old one was approved by Heaven and it was necessary for the new dynasty to re-order the sequence of Five Elements, re-promulgate the calendar, and re-select the primary color of apparel. Accordingly, debates on the issue of orthodoxy were ideologically launched. Such fundamental requirements were all reflected in official historical writings in each dynasty. Simply put, in the Chinese historiographical tradition, the aspiration to be the manifestation of orthodoxy undoubtedly originated from the *Great Plan*.

The role the *Great Plan* played in the medieval China was manifold. First, it theoretically justified the divine power of sovereign. Not only did it demonstrate that the birth and centralization of imperial power was an embodiment of heavenly intention but it also was the source of the ideas of great unification and centralized governance. Second, it provided a theoretical platform, on which interpreters could expound in/auspicious phenomena from the perspective of the mystical mutual

<sup>124</sup>Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚, “Wude zhongshi shuo xia de zhengzhi he lishi 五德终始说下的政治和历史” (The politics and history in the perspectives of cyclical alternations of Five Virtues), in Gu Jiegang ed., *Gushi bian* 古史辨 [Polemics regarding the ancient Chinese history] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), vol. 5, p. 450.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., p. 454.

response between Heaven and man. Later, the theory of Five Elements was interconnected with studies in astronomy, calendar and music, thereby creating a huge epistemic system. Such a gigantic system embodying various types of knowledge was actually a transmuted product of the *Great Plan*. Third, it clearly showed later generations the basic requirements applying to the behaviors of people in all works of life. Fourth, apart from justifying the divine power of sovereign, it taught all sovereigns the grand principles of good governance and showed them the significance of the people to the state in particular.

The *Great Plan* was quite an important treatise in the history of Chinese idea of history. It is ridiculous to blindly downplay the significance of the treatise. But instead, it must be admitted that the *Great Plan* did influence the social life in the feudal China and the Chinese ideas of history in many aspects. For example, the author(s) of the treatise placed the food and wealth as the top priority in the “eight objects of government” and their selection was the direct inspiration to later historians in their work writing annals of institutions in the formal history and producing the special history devoted to various established institutions. Most importantly, differing fundamentally from other chapters of *Shangshu*, the treatise went beyond specific and detailed historical facts and explored instead the grand socio-historical mode and political principles. Therein lay the reason that why sovereigns through all ages paid great attention to the *Great Plan*. But on the other hand, due to the strong advocacy of divine power, the treatise was constantly criticized in the wake of the improved historical thinking, whereby scholars critically reexamined the theories advocating the mystical mutual response between Heaven and man and the causal relationship between in/auspicious phenomena and human activities. It was particularly worth mentioning that some points of “eight objects of government” were theoretically and practically carried forward by the later generations.

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## Chapter 4

# Ideas of History in the Medieval China: *Shiji*, or *The Grand Scribe's Historical Records*, and *Hanshu*, or *History of Former Han Dynasty*

### 1 *Shiji*, or *The Grand Scribe's Historical Records*: A Historian's Statement of an Intellectual School

(1) Differing ways of syncretizing teachings and Sima Qian's words of a school

In his *Shiji xinlun* 史记新论 (Shedding new light on the significance of *Shiji*), Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, one of leading Marxist historian in the modern China, commented, "In a certain phase of historical development there must be a history book concluding the previous dynasty."<sup>1</sup> Actually, such a type of conclusion was actually a *process*. In the historical period spanning from the eras of Spring and Autumn and Warring States down to the early Former Han dynasty, the traditional Chinese scholarship underwent first contentions among a great number of intellectual schools and then reached by degrees an academic integration, paralleling the fundamental historical growth from the devastating social disintegration to a great national unification. Some insightful thinkers at that time had grasped this point. Zhuangzi 庄子, for instance, said,

[T]he various schools held on their several ways, and could not come back to the same point, nor agree together. The students of that later age unfortunately did not see the undivided purity of heaven and earth, and the great scheme of truth held by the ancients. The system of the Dao was about to be torn in fragments all under the sky.<sup>2</sup>

Above words indicated that long and heated debates among the intellectual schools in the pre-imperial China were inevitable. Such an inevitability reflected the general historical trend wherein "the Dao was about to be torn in fragments all under the sky."

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<sup>1</sup>Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, "Shiji xinlun 史记新论" (Shedding new light on the significance of *Shiji*), in Bai Shouyi, *Shixue yichan liujiang* 史学遗产六讲 [Six lectures on the legacies of ancient Chinese historiography] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2003), p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>Zhuangzi 庄子, or *The Writings of Chuang Tzu*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi/tian-xia/ens>.

Since the mid-Warring State era, what was lying ahead for the history was the great unification. Accordingly, an academic integration dawned in the intellectual world. Xunzi 荀子 had envisaged what the situation would be in the age of “*renren* 仁人” (humane man). In his “*Fei shi'er zi* 非十二子” (Contra twelve philosophers), the last Confucian guru in the pre-imperial China said,

With what task should the humane man of today occupy himself? On the one hand, he should model himself after the regulations of Shun 舜 and Yu 禹; and on the other hand, he should model himself after the moral principles manifested by Confucius and Zigong 子貢, thereby making it his task to silence the theories of the twelve philosophers. When this has been done, then harm to the world is eliminated, the undertakings of the humane man are completed, and the footprints of the sage kings are made visible.<sup>3</sup>

Like Xunzi, Han Fei 韓非, an epitome of the entire teaching of the School of Legalists, was strongly against the “motley and contradictory doctrines, saying,”

Because the ruler gives equal ear to the learning of fools and impostors and the wranglings of the motley and contradictory schools, the gentlemen of the world follow no fixed policy in their words and no constant code of action in their behavior. As ice and live coals cannot share the same container for long, or winter and summer both arrive at the same time, so, too, motley and contradictory doctrines cannot stand side by side and produce a state of order. If equal ear is given to motley doctrines, false codes of behavior, and contradictory assertions, how can there be anything but chaos? If the ruler listens and acts in such a way, he will surely govern his people in the same absurd fashion.<sup>4</sup>

The two leading thinkers' perceptions of an integrated scholarship indicated that although scholars from varying schools greatly differed from each other in terms of the way of integrating the intellectual world, they held unanimously that the integration was inevitable. Of course, they did hope that such an ideological unification be conducted in the light of the thought of their own school.

In the reign of the First Emperor of Qin, the complacent emperor violently had varying intellectual schools silenced while propagandizing a shallow idea of divine power of sovereign, hoping that by doing so the intellectual world would be put under the control of the ruling aristocracy. Nevertheless, in the wake of the collapse of the Empire, the Qin-style academic control went bankrupt. In the following Former Han dynasty, the ideological unification became inevitable due to the well-established national unification. In the early days of the Former Han, Shusun Tong 叔孫通 (?–c. 194 BC) reformulated the system of (Confucian) proprieties. But, the Emperor Wen 文 was more interested in the Legalist ideas rather than in the Confucian thinking; and the Emperor Jing 景 did not trust Confucianism at all. Most importantly, the highly influential Empress Dowager (née Dou 竇) was very fond of the Daoist Teaching of *Huanglao* (Yellow Emperor and Laozi). As a consequence, the Teaching of Yellow Emperor and Laozi grew into a celebrated

<sup>3</sup>John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), vol. 1, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup>*Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 120.



intellectual school. Due to the prevalence of the Teaching of *Huanglao*, which was characterized by the politics of nonaction, sovereigns of the early Former Han dynasty were tolerant of differing genres of scholarship. For example, the Empress Dowager Dou did not attempt to ban Confucianism, though she disliked Confucian scholars very much. An eclectic book entitled *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (The Master Huainan) was a perfect embodiment of the remarkable academic diversity at that time. After the death of the Empress Dowager, Confucianism gradually gained ground. When appointed the prime minister, the Lord Wu'an 武安 placed restrictions on the dissemination of the teachings of *Huanglao* and Legalists. Gongsun Hong 公孙弘 (200–121 BC) was even given the premiership and lordship due to his great mastery of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Consequently, the popularity of Confucian scholarship was greatly increased and a growing number of young intellectuals aspired to be masters of the Confucian knowledge. Finally in the reign of Emperor Wu 武 (r. 141–87 BC), who led China to be the greatest empire in the East Asia at that time, the integration of scholarly thinking became a must-do for the rising dynasty.

In the time when the Emperor Wu reigned over China, there were two ways whereby the intellectual integration could be achieved. One was to exclusively venerate Confucianism while rejecting other genres of scholarship by means of the administrative means. It actually emerged in the reign of Emperor Jing (r. 157–141 BC) and was carried forward by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC). Standing before the Emperor Wu, Dong had suggested,

The *Spring and Autumn Annals* hold in esteem the great unification, which is the common law that can be applied to entire world and the grand principles that are universally recognized. Nevertheless, present-day masters of knowledge intellectually rebel against the orthodoxy; the people are exposed to heterodox ideas; and intellectual schools follow differing directions and have diverse intentions. In these conditions, the sovereign is unable to maintain uniform standards; [and what's worse,] established institutions are continuously changed, so that the inferiors are completely lost in how to obey [laws and regulations.] In view of this, I suggest that all teachings other than the Six Arts and the learning of Confucius be strictly banned and deprived of the possibility of growth. As soon as heterodoxies are entirely eliminated, the order of the scholarly world will be effectively consolidated; laws and regulations, unequivocally stated; and the ordinary people, enlighteningly taught how to follow and act. (“*Dong Zhongshu zhuan* 董仲舒传” [The life of Dong Zhongshu], Chapter 56, in *Hanshu* 汉书 [History of the Former Han dynasty])

In order to ideologically consolidate the unified empire, Dong had Confucianism theologized. Specifically, he added elements of Yin-Yangism into Confucian doctrines and then proposed the famous *tianren sance* 天人三策 (the trinity of strategies for dealing with the relationship of Heaven and man).

The other way of applied to the intellectual integration was developed by Sima Qian 司马迁, together with Sima Tan 司马谈, Qian's father. Sima Tan advocated the creation of a new teaching by having teachings of varying intellectual schools fused together. In this regard, he stated,

The Great Commentary on the *Book of Changes* says: “There is one moving force, but from it a hundred thought and schemes arise. All have the same objective, though their ways are different.” The schools of the yin-yang, the Confucianists, the Mo-ists, the Logicians, the Legalists, and the Taoists all strive for good government. It is simply that they follow and teach different ways, and some are more penetrating than others.<sup>5</sup>

In the eyes of Sima Tan, there were reasonable elements in the scholarship of each intellectual school, though schools did differ from each other. Additionally, such intellectual schools, Tan held, shared the same inspiration for the fulfillment of good governance. Therein Sima Tan shed light on the general law of academic development, implying that neither could a genre of scholarship be eliminated by another one nor should diverse thoughts of intellectual schools be replaced with a single ideology. Historically, the teachings of differing intellectual schools would definitely be integrated; but meanwhile, such an inevitable integration did not mean that the diversity of intellectual schools would be replaced with the ideological predominance of a single school. Logically, there would be a new teaching that was created on the basis of conclusion and digestion of differing genres of scholarship ascribed to various intellectual schools. In discourses of the two Simas, the creation of a new school depended on the fusion of existing schools and the absorption of the academic advantage of each school rather than on the adoption and employment of coercive administrative means. Therein lay the two Simas’ basic line applying to the academic integration at that time.

Thanks to Sima Tan and Sima Qian’s great efforts, the unique Sima-style words of an intellectual school were produced. First, the two leading historians concluded the diverse teachings of intellectual school. Their efforts included the critical absorption of scholarly achievements of Six Schools, the digestion of Confucian classics and the assimilation of ideas of thinkers in the Former Han dynasty. Second, both worked collaboratively on the summarization of the history books that were produced in previous ages. Third, both were open to varying types of natural knowledge such as astronomy. The philosophy of Sima Tan was exactly based on the conclusion of scholarship of major intellectual schools. In his significant treatise entitled “Liu jia zhi zhi yao 六家之要指” (The Discussion of the Essentials of the Six Schools), Sima Tan commented the six predominant intellectual schools in a much more inspiring manner. His thought-provoking comment read,

It has been my observation that the yin-yang school in its theories puts strong emphasis upon omens and teaches a great many things to be shunned and tabooed. Hence it causes men to feel restrained and bound by fear. But in its work of arranging correctly the all-important succession of the four seasons it fills an essential need.

The Confucianists are very broad in their interests but do not deal with much that is essential. They labor much and achieve but slight success. Therefore their discipline is difficult to carry out to the fullest. But in the way they order the rules of decorum between lord and subject and father and son, and the proper distinctions between husband and wife and elder and younger, they have something that cannot be altered.

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<sup>5</sup>Theodore de Bary et al. eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 205–206.

The Mo-ists are too stern in their parsimony to be followed and therefore their teachings cannot be fully applied. But in their emphasis upon what is basic (agriculture) and upon frugal usage they have a point that cannot be overlooked.

The Legalists are very strict and of small mercy. But they have correctly defined the distinctions between lord and subject, and between superior and inferior, and these distinctions cannot be changed.

The Logicians cause men to be overnice in reasoning and often to miss the truth. But the way in which they distinguish clearly between names and realities is something that people cannot afford not to look into.

The Taoists teach men to live a life of spiritual concentration and to act in harmony with the unseen. Their teaching is all-sufficient and embraces all things. Its method consists in following the seasonal order of the yin-yang school, of selecting what is good from the Confucian and Mo-ist teachings, and adopting the important points of the Logical and Legalist schools. It modifies its position with the times and responds to the changes which come about in the world. In establishing customs and practices and administering affairs it does nothing that is not appropriate to the time and place. Its principles are simple and easy to practice; it undertakes few things but achieves much success.<sup>6</sup>

Sima Tan's analysis of the teachings of Six School was actually a course of sublation. In the case of yin-yang school, the farfetched analogies between Heaven and men were abandoned while the reasonable arrangement of the alternations of four seasons being incorporated into the new teaching. In the case of Mohism, Tan approved the Mohist advocacy of the consolidation of the basic economic sector (i.e. agriculture) and a thrifty life, though he criticized that by and large the Mohist principles were too idealistic to be easily applicable. In the case of Legalism, Tan recognized the indispensable role Legalist ideas played in the mission safeguarding and maintaining the proper distinction between sovereign and minister, while revealing the School's excessive rigidity and harshness. In the case of Logicism, Tan accepted the significance of the effort to make an unambiguous distinction between name and reality; but meanwhile, he sharply pointed out the Logicians' drawback that they were usually divorced from reality.

In the case of Confucianism, Tan held that the problem of Confucians lay in the overbroadness and inefficiency. Even so, he unswervingly believed that Confucianism played the pivotal role in the work maintaining the hierarchized system of proprieties whereby the ruling hierarchy could prevent social distinctions from being easily ruined. Tan also contended that the traditional Confucian Six Arts (i.e. Classics) were too complex and too hard to be grasped for later generations, so that they needed to be reproduced. He had metaphorically told Sima Qian, his son,

Five hundred years after the Duke of Chou [i.e. Zhou] died Confucius appeared. It has now been five hundred years since the death of Confucius. There must be someone who can succeed to the enlightened ages of the past, who can set right the transmission of the *Book of Changes*, continue the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and search into the world of the *Odes* and *Documents*, the rites and music.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>7</sup>Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 50.

The above-cited words displayed the greater attention Sima Tan had paid to the Confucian classics. Likewise, Sima Qian himself discussed the value and significance of the six Confucian classics in the “Author’s Preface” to *Shiji*. Qian wrote,

[T]he *Spring and Autumn* makes clear the Way of the Three Kings, and below it discusses the regulation of human affairs. It distinguishes what is suspicious and doubtful, clarifies right and wrong, and settles points which are uncertain. It calls good good and bad bad, honors the worthy, and condemns the unworthy. It preserves states which are lost and restores the perishing family. It brings to light what was neglected and restores what was abandoned. In it are embodied the most important elements of the Kingly Way. The *Book of Change* makes clear heaven and earth, the *yin* and the *yang*, the four seasons, and the five elements. Therefore it is most useful in matters of change. The *Rites* regulates human relations, and so is excellent in matters of conduct. The *Book of Documents* records the deeds of the former kings, and so is most useful in government. The *Odes* tells of mountains and rivers, ravines and valleys, of birds and beasts, plants and trees, and the male and female of beasts and birds. Thus it best expresses the sentiments of the people. Through music joy is achieved, and so it excels in harmony and peace. The *Spring and Autumn* differentiates between right and wrong, and so is most helpful in ruling men. Thus the *Rites* regulates mankind, music spreads harmony, the *Documents* tells us of deeds, the *Odes* expresses the will of men, the *Changes* relates of transformation, and the *Spring and Autumn* discusses right.<sup>8</sup> ... Therefore the *Spring and Autumn* is the basis of propriety and duty. Rites serve to put interdictions in advance on what has not yet taken place, while laws act on what is already past. Therefore the usefulness of laws is easy to perceive, while it is difficult to understand the reason for the interdictions of rites.<sup>9</sup>

In the light of the above two pieces of citation, the present author concludes that in the two Simas’ eyes the value and significance of Confucianism lay in the role the teaching of proprieties could play in the work maintaining the hierarchized governance. Among the Six Classics, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Book of Changes*, the two Simas unanimously held, had a particular importance. Qian explicitly gave top priority to the efforts to rectify the interpretations of *Book of Change* and inherit and carry forward the cause embodied in the writings of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The combination of the two efforts was actually the prerequisite of the creation of the philosophy of history. In fact, the two Simas formulated a trinity—showing people the enlightened world of the past, rectifying interpretations devoted to the *Book of Changes*, and writing a sequel to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*—whereby historians could have history and reality and veritably writings history and philosophically rethinking history fused together. Sima Qian inherited his father’s aspiration and resolved to finish the trinity-inspired work. In practice, imbibing the essence of the Confucian thinking, Qian extracted historical resources meeting the need of feudal dynasty as many as possible.

In the case of Daoism, Tan confidently asserted that academically, methodologically and spiritually the Daoist thinking, which learnt widely from strong points of other intellectual schools, be the guiding ideology. But, it should be pointed out that although the two Simas admired Daoism so much, they did not

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 52–53.

uncritically accept the thinking but instead abandoned a few radical Daoist ideas such as (re-)building a little state with a small population and discarding sageness and wisdom. As a result, some rightly called the two Simas *neo-Daoists*.

Apart from thoughts of the masters of intellectual schools, the scholarship and thinking of eminent figures in the early Former Han dynasty also contributed to Sima Qian's integrating effort. There were two themes in Qian's conclusion of the academic and intellectual achievements in the early Former Han. One was the historical lesson that could be drawn from the fall of Qin and the rise of Han. The other was the inevitability of change. The two themes interweaved with each other. Especially in the reigns of the Emperors Wen, Jiang and Wu, when the social contradiction was growing acute, *change* became the central agenda of debates among politicians, scholars and thinkers. Jia Yi 贾谊 (200–168 BC), Chao Cuo 晁错 (200–154 BC), Yan An 严安 (an imperial officer in the reign of the Emperor Wu) and Xu Yue 徐乐 (an imperial officer in the reign of the Emperor Wu) inspiringly discussed the issue of change in the early Han. For example, in his master piece entitled *Guo Qin lun* 过秦论 (The disquisition about faults committed by the State of Qin), Jia Yi said,

Qin, beginning with an insignificant amount of territory, reached the power of a great kingdom and for 100 years made the ancient eight provinces pay homage at its court. Yet, after it had become master of the six directions and established its palaces within the passes, a single commoner opposed it and its seven ancestral temples toppled, its ruler died by the hands of men, and it became the laughing stock of the world. Why? Because it failed to rule with humanity and righteousness, and did not realize that the power to attack, and the power to retain what one has thereby won, are not the same.<sup>10</sup>

Digging into the history wherein the powerful Qin Empire drew itself towards destruction, Jia Yi summed up the lessons written in blood. On the one hand, he recognized the legitimacy of the policies whereby the rising State of Qin annexed rival states and finally unified entire country. But on the other hand, Jia ridiculed Qin's obstinate adherence to old policies and refusal to adopt new policies benefiting the people after the fulfillment of the grand unification.

In the light of the tragic end of Qin Empire, Jia Yi gave advice to the Han emperor, saying, "The former kings perceived the changes that occur in the course of events and understood the secret of survival or downfall. Therefore their way of shepherding the people was simply to assure them of security."<sup>11</sup> In other words, Jia hoped that as soon as a new dynasty was solidly established, the sovereign would immediately perform the governance in a much more humane manner. It was exactly what the changed situation required. Simply put, Jia advanced the idea that in differing historical conditions the concerned policies should be changed or adjusted accordingly. Such a thought-provoking cognizance of history was of a great value. In a much more vivid way, Lu Jia 陆贾 (240–170 BC) repeated this

<sup>10</sup>Sima Qian 司马迁, *Records of The Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong; New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 80.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 83.

idea. According to *Shiji*, being scolded by the angry founding emperor of Han because of his repeated praise for several Confucian classics at court, Lu asked in reply, “Your Majesty may have won it on horseback, but you rule it on horseback?”<sup>12</sup> He went further, pointing out, “Kings Tang and Wu in ancient times won possession of empire through the principle of revolt, but it was by the principle of obedience that they assured the continuance of their dynasties.”<sup>13</sup> Hearing Lu’s inspiring words, the founding emperor was suddenly enlightened and realized how important the conclusion of history was for his new dynasty. Consequently,

The emperor grew embarrassed and uneasy and finally said to Master Lu, “Try writing something for me on the reasons why Qin lost the empire and I won it, and of the successes and failures of the states of ancient times.” Master Lu accordingly set out to describe in brief the keys to political survival and defeat in a work running to twelve sections in all. As each section was presented to the throne, the emperor never failed to express his delight and approval and all those about him cried, “Bravo!” The book was given the title *New Discourses* [i.e. 新语.]<sup>14</sup>

Among other things, the exposure to historical lessons significantly contributed to the founding emperor’s rapid and successful stabilization of the country.

In the reigns of Emperors Wen and Jing, although the two enlightened sovereigns enjoyed a great fame of good governance, the Han dynasty was actually threatened by the growing crises. To make matters worse, the Emperor Wu’s policies possibly endangered the empire. In view of this, Zhufu Yan 主父偃 (?–126 BC) admonished the Emperor Wu to learn from history. He said, “Now Your Majesty does not observe how the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties managed to preserve their rules for so long, but imitates only the mistakes of the recent past, which is a source of grave concern to me and of tribulation and trial to the common people.”<sup>15</sup> The gravest danger, Zhufu implied, did not lie in the reign’s short-term failure but in the emperor’s arrogant defiance of history and complete ignorance of historical lessons. Apart from Zhufu Yan, Xu Yue concluded the rise and fall of dynasties in the past and dichotomized the peril endangering a state into the “landslide” and the “falling tiles.” He explained,

I have heard that in the past and present alike the greatest danger to the empire is a landslide, not a few falling tiles. What do I mean by a landslide? The end of the Qin dynasty is a good example. ... What do I mean by a few falling tiles. The armies of Wu, Chu, and Zhao are example.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I*, trans. Burton Watson (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong; New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 226.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 227.

<sup>15</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong; New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 196.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

The “landslide” referred to peasant revolts—for example, the rebellion led by Chen Sheng 陈胜 in the ending years of the powerful Qin Empire—aiming to overthrow an established dynasty; and, the “falling tiles” metaphorically meant that there were enfeoffed states—for example, Wu 吴, Chu 楚, Qi 齐 and Zhao 赵 in the early Former Han—acting rebelliously when the society was still well stabilized. In practice, the rebellious enfeoffed kings who had led putsches were actually hopeless; by contrast, those who were the leaders of landslide-like rebellions could truly threaten the dynasty. In the face of growing crises, if the sovereign could profoundly reexamined lessons drawn from failures of past dynasties and probe into the deepest origin of changes, he would be able to prevent the catastrophe from taking place. In a word, in order to help the dynasty avoid being endangered, the sovereign should change in accordance with the changing situation. Yan An shed light on this point, saying, “The Zhou dynasty failed because of its weakness, the Qin because of its strength; both suffered by not changing with the times.”<sup>17</sup> Thanks to such earnest suggestions and admonishments based on the true historical lessons, the Emperor Wu, one of the greatest sovereigns in the ancient China, almost started afresh in his twilight years. Overall, in the early years of the Former Han many reexamined the past and drew useful lessons, creating a great spirit of thoroughly understanding entire history, to which Sima Qian paid much greater attention in his monumental *Shiji*.

To sum up, there were five points in the two Simas’ conclusion of teachings of pre-imperial thinkers and early Han scholars. First, probing into Daoist and Confucian interpretations of *Book of Changes*, both absorbed intellectual elements that were of a strong dialectical nature and could be used to observe the history. Second, inspired by thoughts of Confucians, Legalists and Logicians, both realized the importance of methodological diversity in the effort to maintain the hierarchized governance. Third, both paid great attention to various thinkers’ teachings that could be conducive to the betterment of governance. Fourth, the early Former Han thinkers’ intellectual practice, wherein they profoundly rethought changes embodied in the rise and fall of past dynasties, exerted deep influence on the scholarship of Sima Qian. Fifth, Sima Qian attached greater importance to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and regarded his own creative writing in the historical perspective as the spiritual and physical extensions of the *Annals*. In particular, Sima Qian thought very highly of two *Chunqiu*-style ideas—the *righteousness* and the educational function of history, of which there will be a furthered discussion.

Sima Qian systematically concluded the history books written in previous ages. It was Qian’s brilliant work exploring the past that marked the founding of history as *jia* 家, or an intellectual school independent of other scholarly sects. Before Qian, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, a historical work, was categorized into the Confucian Six Arts (Classics). Intellectually, apart from *Chunqiu*, other historical writings more or less influenced Qian. Sima Qian discussed this point in his “Preface to the Chronological Table of Twelve Lords.” In the “Preface,” Qian said,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

Duo Jiao 铎椒 was tutor to King Wei 威 of Chu (r. 339 – 329 B.C.E). Because the king could not read all the way through the *Annals*, Duo selected [examples of] success and failure and made the *Subtleties of Mr. Duo*, forty chapters in all. In the time of King Xiaocheng 孝成 of Zhao (r. 265 – 245 B.C.E), his chief minister Yu Qing 虞卿 selected from the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and observed recent political conditions in order to write the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Yu*, in eight chapters. Lü Buwei 吕不韦, chief minister of King Zhuangxiang 庄襄 of Qin (r. 249 – 247 B.C.E), also investigated ancient history, selected from the *Annals*, and brought together the affairs of the Six Kingdoms [Warring States] Era, in order to compose the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü*, which includes the eight “Surveys,” the six “Discussions,” and the twelve “Regulations.” As for the disciples of Xunzi, Mencius, Gongsun Gu 公孙固, and Hanfeizi 韩非子 who constantly borrow from the words of the *Annals* to write books, their number is beyond counting. The Han chancellor Zhang Cang 张苍 calculated a table of the Five Virtues, and the high official Dong Zhongshu promoted the [principles of] righteousness in the *Annals* and put them into writing.<sup>18</sup>

It was true that various *annals* mentioned above could not all be unexceptionally the *history* book; but it was also true that none of them was excluded from the category of *Chunqiu*, or the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. In fact, some were produced on the basis of selections of *Chunqiu*; some were actually the abridgment or redaction of *Chunqiu*; and some even directly borrowed words from *Chunqiu*. For this reason, Sima Qian commented,

The Confucians make judgments on the principles of righteousness [in the *Annals*] and the Itinerant Debates recklessly expound its wording, but neither group takes into account the ends and the beginnings. Calendar-makers appropriate their years and months, Yin-yang specialists elaborate the divine twists of fortune, and Genealogists record only posthumous titles, but their comments are all quite sporadic. If one wished to grasp all the essentials at a glance it would be difficult.<sup>19</sup>

Sima Qian recognized the value and significance of such annals of all forms in their efforts to record things past and analyze prosperity and decline in the historical perspective, while sharply pointing out their drawbacks. In particular, he showed that “Calendar-makers” paid exclusive attention to chronological issues, “Yin-yang specialists” excessively depended on the so-called divine power, and “Genealogists” concerned themselves only with things such as posthumous titles. As a result, the history they produced were, to some extent, pointless. Under such circumstances, there should be an unconventional approach, if historians did aspire to carry forward the spirit and practice of *Spring and Autumn Annals*. In reality, in five hundred years since the birth of *Chunqiu* there was not any history books in accord with the times. To put it another way, as late as Sima Qian’s time no historical work could be regarded as the successor of the *Spring and Autumn*. But in the meantime, the intellectual trend in which the learned reexamined the past and drew useful lessons indicated that the Han China did need a magnum opus systematically concluding the history. In this sense, Sima Qian’s effort to summarize

<sup>18</sup>Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian’s Conquest of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 56–57.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57.



works that could be categorized into the genre of *Chunqiu* demonstrated that he did have a strong sense of time and responsibility.

Apart from the *Chunqiu*-style writings, many other types of book contributed to the thought of Sima Qian. Sovereigns in the early Han lifted the ban on the private ownership of books. In particular the Emperor Wu encouraged people to donate books to the imperial library. As a consequence, in one hundred or so years, the Library continuously collected books as many as possible. Sima Qian as the Grand Historian was allowed to almost unlimitedly read precious collections of book. Qian definitely read a huge number of historical documents. In addition to writings of the masters of intellectual schools, Six Arts (Classics), anthologies, *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu* 国语 (Narratives of the states), all of which had been textually examined, some rare literature—for example, *Wudi de* 五帝德 (Virtues of Five Emperors), *Dixi xing* 帝系姓 (Genealogies of archaic emperors), *Dieji* 谍记 (Book of posthumous titles), *Zhongshi wude zhi chuan* 终始五德之传 (Teachings of the cycle of Five Virtues), *Wudi xidie* 五帝系谍 (Genealogies of Five Emperors), *Qinji* 秦记 (Records of the State of Qin), *Yu benji* 禹本纪 (Annals of the Emperor Yu) and *Shanhai jing* 山海经 (Classic of mountains and seas)—were all very helpful to Qian's creative writings devoted to history. Not only did such greatly diverse documents constituted the primary sources of *Shiji* but they also historiographically inspired Qian to create five basic writings styles—i.e. the *benji* 本纪 (basic annals), *liezhuan* 列传 (biographies/memoirs), *shijia* 世家 (hereditary houses), *nianbiao* 年表 (chronological tables) and *shu* 书 (treatises)—for his masterwork. It was particularly worth mentioning that in his creative reconstruction of history Qian tried hard to enable his historiographical aspirations to be in accord with the maintenance of hierarchized feudal governance and the tolerance of a great unified empire. Therein lay the Grand Historian's distinctive idea of historiography. Sima Qian revealed this point in the "Preface" he penned for *Shiji*, stating,

I have sought out and gathered together the ancient traditions of the empire which were scattered and lost; of the great deeds of kings I have searched the beginnings and examined the ends; I have seen their times of prosperity and observed their decline. Of the affairs that I have discussed and examined, I have made a general survey of the Three Dynasties and a record of the Ch'in [Qin] and Han, extending in all back as far as Hsien [Xuan] Yuan 軒轅 [the Yellow Emperor] and coming down to the present, set forth in the twelve "Basic Annals." After this had been put in order and completed, because there were differences in chronology for the same periods and the dates were not always clear, I made the ten "Chronological Tables." Of the changes in rites and music, the improvements and revisions of the pitch pipes and calendar, military power, mountains and rivers, spirits and gods, the relationships between heaven and man, and the faulty economic practices that were handed down and reformed age by age, I have made the eight "Treatises." As the twenty-eight constellations revolve about the North Star, as the thirty spokes of a wheel come together at the hub, revolving endlessly without stop, so the ministers, assisting like arms and legs, faithful and trustworthy, in true moral spirit their lord and ruler; of them I made the thirty "Hereditary Houses." Upholding righteousness, masterful and sure, not allowing themselves to miss their opportunities, they made a name for themselves in the world; of such men I made the seventy "Memoirs." In all one hundred and thirty chapters, 526,500 words, this is the book of the Grand Historian, compiled in order to repair omissions and amplify the Six Disciplines. It is the work of one family, designed to supplement the various

interpretations of the Six Classics and to put into order the miscellaneous sayings of the Hundred Schools. I have placed one copy in the Famous Mountain and another in the capital, where they shall await the sages and scholars of later ages.<sup>20</sup>

Digging into above words, we can find the main purpose, the historiographical style, the time limit of *Shiji*, and the characteristics of the book's five styles and interrelation of these styles. Having all of them fused together, "the work of one family"—that is, a book representing an intellectual school—was produced. Where the five innovative styles of historical writing were concerned, each not only met the need of drawing useful lessons from history but also played a role in creating a stylistic correlation among the five styles. Such correlated styles as a whole embodied the centralized and hierarchized feudal power.

Another source of Sima Qian's wisdom lay in his mastery of natural knowledge generated by his scholarly efforts such as the observation of movement of celestial bodies. In fact, Qian's family had a distinguished heritage of natural knowledge. For example, his father—Sima Tan—had systematically studied the astronomy and finally became an outstanding stargazer. Concurrently grasping the knowledge of history and astronomy, was, however, a conventional practice among ancient Chinese historians. In many cases, not only were historians responsible for recording events but they also played a leading role in the work observing celestial phenomena and making a calendar for entire country. Such a unique tradition exerted a dual influence on the Chinese historiography. On the one hand, officials in charge of the historical writings expounded social phenomena by interconnecting Heaven and man, thereby creating a theoretical unity of Heaven and man. In some cases, historians even attempted to draw a farfetched analogy between natural phenomena and human affairs. On the other hand, enlightened by the cyclic movement of four seasons and celestial phenomena, historians realized that human affairs were actually ever-changing. Thus, they developed a dynamic idea that was diametrically against the static thought advocating the unchangeability of Heaven and Way.

In reality, Sima Qian was both a historian and astronomer. For this reason, his thinking was of a dual nature. It was true that Qian failed to be intellectually independent of the alleged intrinsic interconnection of Heaven and man; but it was also true that he attached much greater importance to the constant socio-historical changeability instead. The intellectual core of Qian's assertion that the relationship existing between Heaven and man actually lay in the *change*. He himself strongly disagreed with the teachings of divination by star movements and prediction of something auspicious. Thus, there were three key points in Qian's elaboration of relationship of Human and man. First, the mystical mutual response between Heaven and man was ungrounded. Second, inasmuch as celestial phenomena and four seasons were ever-changing, the society and human affairs kept changing accordingly. Simply put, the *change* was universal. Third, like the changes taking place in celestial bodies, the changes in relation to the society and human affairs

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<sup>20</sup>Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China*, pp. 56–57.

followed a certain Way. In “Huozhi liezhuan 货殖列传” (The biographies of the money-makers), Qian shed light on the inevitability of changes taking place in the society and human affairs and rhetorically asked, “Does this not tally with reason? Is it not a natural result?”<sup>21</sup> It was Qian’s intellectual harvest after observing and rethinking the movement of Heaven. In this regard, Hou Wailu 侯外庐, one of the most prominent scholars exploring the Chinese intellectual history, commented that thanks to his studies in celestial bodies, star movements and calendars and his participation in the calendric revisions in the reign of Emperor Wu, Sima Qian, a historian who was equipped with the solid knowledge of natural science, successfully had his materialist worldview and scientific knowledge fused together.<sup>22</sup> If the leading scholar’s assertion was true, Qian’s idea of the *change*, which was applied to his reexamination of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective, would definitely be interconnected with his scientific knowledge.

It should be pointed out that Qian’s intellectual elaboration of the relation of Heaven and man was dichotomized into the separation between Heaven and man and interconnection of Heaven and man. The *separation* meant that Heaven should not be allowed to dominate human affairs. It was against such an intellectual backdrop of separation between Heaven and man that Qian argued against the mystical mutual response between Heaven and man. For example, he greeted the idea of mandate of Heaven with skepticism in “Boyi liezhuan 伯夷列传” (The life of Bo Yi). In the memoir devoted to Boyi, Qian said,

Some say, “Heaven’s way favors none, but always sides with good men.” Can men such as Po Yi and Shu Ch’i (i.e. Shu Qi 叔齐) be called good then, or bad? They accumulated such virtue, kept their actions this pure, and died of starvation. Of his seventy disciples, Confucius recommended only Yen Yuan [i.e. Yan Yuan] 颜渊 as “fond of learning.” But “Hui 回 [Yan Yuan] was often poor,” and did not get his fill of even rice dregs and husks, finally dying young. How then does Heaven repay good men? The Bandit Chih [Zhi] 盗跖 killed innocent men daily, made delicacies from men’s flesh, was cruel and ruthless, willful and arrogant, gathered a band of thousands of men and wreaked havoc across the world, yet finally died of old age. From what virtue did this follow? ... I am deeply perplexed by all this. Perhaps this is what is meant by “the Way of Heaven.” Is it? Or isn’t it?<sup>23</sup>

The overtone of the above cited text lay in the historian’s total denial of the mandate of heaven. In the case of Xiang Yu 项羽, a major rival of the founding emperor of Former Han dynasty, the failed haughty general muddleheadedly declared, “It is Heaven, [which] has destroyed me, and no fault of mine in the use of arms!”<sup>24</sup> In view of this, Qian ridiculed that Xiang was “indeed deluded” and pointed out for what reason the imperious general was defeated. Qian thus wrote,

<sup>21</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 434.

<sup>22</sup>Hou Wailu 侯外庐, Zhao Jibin 赵纪彬, Qiu Hansheng 邱汉生, and Du Guoxiang 杜国庠, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi 中国思想通史* [General history of thoughts in China] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), vol. 2, p. 134.

<sup>23</sup>Sima Qian 司马迁, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Memoirs of Pre-Han China*, trans. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), vol. 7, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 48.

He was obstinate in his own opinions and did not abide by established ways. He thought to make himself a dictator, hoping to attack and rule the empire by force. Yet within five years he was dead and his kingdom lost. He met death at Dongcheng, but at that time he did not awake to or accept responsibility for his errors.<sup>25</sup>

Invoking the case of Xiang Yu, Qian attempted to show readers the irrelevance of Heaven to the society and human affairs.

But on the other hand, Sima Qian acknowledged that the natural Heaven did influence humans and there was indeed an interconnection of Heaven and man. According to *Shiji*, Heaven influenced humans in several aspects. First, the natural and geographical conditions exerted special substantial influence on the human society. Qian explicitly discussed this point in “Huozi liezhuan” and “Pingzhun shu 平准书” (Treatise on the balanced standard). Second, natural movements inspired observers to better their understanding of social changes. There was wax and wane in nature; and likewise, historically, the human society embraced both prosperity and decline. The celestial rule that the movement passed its zenith and then was on the wane was still applicable to the socio-historical growth of human society. Obviously, Qian held that *movement* was the common characteristic shared by nature and the human society. Such an idea was actually a philosophical sublimation. In fact, among ancient Chinese thinkers many intellectually underwent a similar course of philosophical sublimation. Dong Zhongshu, for instance, formulated his ideas in a way similar to that of Sima Qian. Nevertheless, Dong fundamentally differed from Qian in his effort to venerate Heaven as the history’s willed, ultimate subject, which dominated the human society, and to draw a forced analogy between celestial bodies and the human body. In short, while Dong Zhongshu was creating a theologized view of history, Sima Qian turned it upside down. In spite of the fact that there were indeed something superstitious in Qian’s thinking, the historian intellectually and epistemically treated Heaven from a philosophical perspective and formulated the theory of historical prosperity and decline on the basis of enlightenments obtained from his observation of movements of celestial bodies.

In this sense, the Sima Qian’s assertion—“the work of one family”—actually gave expression to the great syncretism of teachings of intellectual schools of every hue. Epistemologically, the historian should not be categorized into any established intellectual schools. He was neither neo-Daoist nor Confucian. Qian was nothing else than a *historian*. It was in his own works that Sima Qian reconstructed the *history* as *jia*, or an independent intellectual school. Some hold that history as an independent school in China began with the Emperor Wen’s (r. 407–453 AD who was a sovereign of the Liu’s Song, one of the constituents of the Southern Dynasties) quaterchotomization of scholarship into *ru* 儒 (Confucianism), *xuan* 玄 (the mysterious learning), *wen* 文 (literature) and *shi* 史 (history). The present author disagrees with it and contends instead that an independent discipline be based on three basic elements—that is, a specific ideological system, a completed scholarly system, and a

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

distinctive style of study or research methodology. In the light of the basic constituents, the assertion that the Emperor Wen's quatrochotomy marked the founding of history as an independent discipline was entirely ungrounded.

What were the scholarly characteristics and basic features of Sima Qian's School? First, the intellectual core of Qian's *process* of history lay in the idea of thoroughly understanding changes, which was of a dialectical nature and abundantly contained in the Daoist teachings and *Zhouyi* in particular. Such a Daoist or *Zhouyi*-style teaching was transmitted within the Sima family and served as the basic constituent of Qian's thinking. Qian had proclaimed that his father had studied the *Book of Changes* under the instruction of Yang He 杨何. According to "Kongzi shijia 孔子世家" (The hereditary house of Confucius), Yang He was one of the eighth-generation disciples of Confucius and devoted himself to the teaching of *Zhouyi*, or the *Book of Changes*. Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 AD) in "Rulin zhuan 儒林传" (Renowned Confucians) of *Hanshu* asserted that He was the ninth-generation disciple of Confucius. Ban furthered his discussions, pointing out that it was in the transmission of the teaching of *Book of Changes* in the early Han that a master known as Meng Xi 孟喜 added discourses on the interconnection of natural disasters and *yin-yang* forces into the established teaching and fundamentally changed it. Later, Meng Xi, together with his disciples, developed such an altered teaching into a special branch of studies in the *Book of Changes*. Pi Xirui 皮锡瑞 (1850–1908), a renowned scholar in the late Qing and the early modern China, held that the branch grew much more prominent in Han and played a very active role in advocating the theory centered on the interconnection of natural disasters and *yin-yang* forces. Unlike Meng Xi, Yang He, who tutored Sima Qian's father, inherited the scholarly legacy from Wang Tong 王同. According to "Yiwen zhi 艺文志" (Treatise on literature) of *Hanshu*, Wang Tong penned two monographs devoted to the teaching of *Book of Changes* and Yang He produced two, too. Most importantly, the author(s) of *Hanzhi* 汉志 (Annals of Han), a history book devoted to the history of the early Han, particularly pointed out that the two masters of *Zhouyi* did not change what they were taught by their masters; that is to say, both Wang Tong and Yang He strictly adhered to the orthodox teachings of Tian He 田何, the founder of a systematic study in the *Book of Changes* in the early Former Han dynasty. In this regard, Pi Xirui insightfully concluded that in the early Han the *Zhouyi* studies as a whole focused on the grand principles and meanings of the *Book of Changes* and human affairs, while showing no interest in discourses on *yin-yang* forces and divination.<sup>26</sup> In view of this, it is safe to say that the two Sima's teaching of the *Book of Changes* followed the early-Han scholarly tradition. Sima Tan particularly urged his son to rectify interpretations devoted to the profundity of *Book of Changes*. Sima Qian's work of rectification and such a rectifying work's influence on the writing of *Shiji* are worthy of furthered discussions. The present author proposes several points in this regard.

<sup>26</sup>Pi Xirui 皮锡瑞, *Jingxue tonglun* 经学通论 [A comprehensive discussion of studies in Confucian classics] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1954), p. 19.

First, Sima Qian paid particular attention to the *Zhouyi*-style idea of thoroughly understanding changes and applied it to the observation of socio-human affairs. For example, in “Pingzhun shu,” Qian said,

When a thing has reached its height it must begin to decay, and when an age has gone to one extreme it must turn again in the opposite direction; therefore we find periods of rude simplicity and periods of refinement alternating with each other endlessly. ... King Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty, and King Wu, the founder of the Zhou dynasty, both heirs to the chaos of the dynasties which preceded them, worked to put the empire into order, causing the people to be unflagging in their efforts, and both of them, by their diligence and circumspection, succeeded in establishing firm rule.<sup>27</sup>

Obviously, Qian’s effort to rethink the remote history of Shang and Zhou was inspired by the intellectual legacy of the *Book of Changes*. Second, Sima Qian embraced a scholarly diversity that was embodied in one of *Zhouyi*’s assertions—all genres of thought had the same origin and aspired to achieve the same goal in different ways. Third, Sima Qian employed the *Book of Changes* to comment historical events and figures. For example, in the memoir devoted to the life of Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 340–278 BC), one of the most renowned poets in the ancient China, Qian penned,

The *Book of Changes* reads,  
 Not to drink when the well has been dredged,  
 Cause my heart sorrow.  
 It can be drawn.  
 If the king is perspicacious,  
 All can receive blessings from it.  
 If the king is not perspicacious, how could there be good fortune?<sup>28</sup>

Fourth, invoking ideas of *Book of Changes*, Sima Qian shed light on how current affairs would develop. For example, in “Tian Jingzhong wan shijia 田敬仲完世家” (The hereditary house of Tian Wan), Qian said,

In his twilight years Confucius was very fond of the *Book of Changes*. Only when some were truly and completely enlightened would they be able to grasp the *Book*’s knowledge that was so profound, so broad, and so farsighted. [Exactly due to the *Book*’s profundity, broadness and farsightedness,] an imperial historian from the court of the King of Zhou could foretell what would take place after ten generations in the session of divination he performed for Tian Wan 田完. When Tian Wan fled to the State of Qi, Yizhong 懿仲 [who was one of Qi’s senior politicians and intended to marry his daughter to Tian Wan] heard similar words from a diviner. For what reason Tian Qi 田乞 and his son – Tian Chang 田常, [both of whom were Tian Wan’s descendants and leaders of the Tian family] – could offend the sovereigns of Qi and even monopoly the political power in Qi? It did not necessarily accord with the general and inevitable trend. Rather, it might act in accordance with the divinations.

<sup>27</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 84.

<sup>28</sup>Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe’s Records: The Memoirs of Pre-Han China*, trans. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al., vol. 7, pp. 298–299.

Related records in *Zuozhuan* were conducive to the understanding of Sima Qian's words. According to *Zuozhuan*, in the light of the *Zhouyi*-style principle that it could by no means be possible for two things to grow equally great, the imperial historian of Zhou predicted that the ruling aristocracy must be replaced with the increasingly powerful Tian family in near future. The imperial historian philosophically grasped the fact that the development was propelled on the basis of the interconversion of things originally contradicting with each other. It was in this regard that Sima Qian recognized the extraordinary profundity, broadness and farsightedness of the *Book of Changes*. Apart from the "Hereditary House of Tian Wan," in other chapters such as "Chu Yuan Wang shijia 楚元王世家" (The hereditary House of King Yuan of Chu) the *Zhouyi*'s influence on Sima Qian was also discernible.

Like what he did to the *Book of Changes*, Sima Qian attached importance to the Daoist thinking. Ban Gu in "Yiwen zhi" contended that Daoists might grow from the community of archaic historians and they devoted themselves to the deep exploration of the grand ways regarding success and failure, survival and downfall, and weal and woe in the historical perspective. Qian thought very highly of the Daoist School's intellectual essence, which advocated that everything change with the times and circumstances. Evidently, what Qian imbibed from Daoist thought lay exactly in the Daoist elaborations of *change*.

To sum up, the knowledge of natural science at that time laid an empirical foundation of Sima Qian's scholarship, but meanwhile it placed restriction on the historian due to its own limitations. Combining ideas of the *Book of Changes*, the Daoist thinking and the rudimentary astronomical knowledge into one, Qian created a unique idea of thoroughly understanding changes. In addition, conclusions of prosperity and decline in works of past historians and thinkers inspired Qian and most importantly the consciousness of concluding the past that was embodied in these works was part and parcel of the intellectual core of the School founded by Qian. Last but not least, Sima Qian harvested ideas of the historical education in his effort to holistically reexamine past historical works including the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Historiographically, Sima Qian innovatively produced a new genre of history—*jizhuan ti* 纪传体 (annals-memoir-predominated history)—on the basis of the fusion of various historiographical styles and the veneration of the idea of grand unification as the guiding ideology. The predominance of annals and memoirs perfectly embodied the basic form and style of the Sima School. Where the philosophy of history was concerned, the Sima School, which was comprised of Sima Tan's scholarship and his son's creative reconstruction of history, intensively gave expression to the dialectical thinking embodied in *Laozi*, *Book of Changes* and the teachings of *Tianguan* 天官 (imperial officials in charge of the observation of celestial bodies). As a result, there were abundant dialectical elements in Sima Qian's idea of history. Due to the abundance of dialectics in his thinking, Qian's exploration of the historical prosperity and decline reached new heights. In short, all constituents—that is, content, form, idea and style—of *Shiji* unexceptionally indicated that the *history* had grown into an independent, mature discipline. Sima Qian played a crucial role in such an epoch-making epistemic breakthrough.

(2) Exploring beginning and end while examining prosperity and decline: Sima Qian's perception of the dynamic course of historical change

As mentioned above, the sovereigns of Han dynasty paid greater attention to the work drawing lessons from the rise and fall of past dynasties. For example, Liu Bang 刘邦 (247–195 BC), the founding emperor of the Former Han, had asked his ministers to discuss for what reason he won and Xiang Yu, his prime rival, lost; and the Emperor Wen 文 (r. 180–157 BC) praised Zhang Shizhi 张释之 who shed enlightening light on the fall of Qin Empire and the rise of Han dynasty. In addition, the Emperor Wu even said he regretted not having earlier met Zhufu Yan, Xu Le and Yan An, all of whom critically rethought past and present and then candidly admonished the sovereign. In fact, in comparison with a sovereign's attention he paid to the conclusion of rise and fall of past dynasties, how to reexamine prosperity and decline in the historical perspective was much more relevant to the governance. Furthermore, the method whereby people rethought history could be used to analyze the social reality and find a solution to imminent social crises. It was against such an epistemological backdrop that Sima Qian took the reexamination of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective to the new heights.

In Sima Qian's eyes, the *history* consisting of endless sessions of prosperity and decline was a *process* and it should be perceived through *complete* processes with beginning and end. In his letter to Ren Shaoan 任少安, one of his close friends, Qian explained why he made a determined effort to write history. His explanation read,

I have gathered up and brought together the old traditions of the world which were scattered and lost. I have examined the deeds and events of the past and investigated the principles behind their success and failure, their rise and decay, in one hundred and thirty chapters.<sup>29</sup>

Therein lay Sima Qian's fundamental idea of perceiving history. He implied that if historians rethought history merely from a certain fragment or part rather than from entire process, they would very probably be unable to find true reasons of prosperity and decline; nor would they be able to properly appraise historical events and figures. For example, many could not fairly comment the First Emperor of Qin. Quite a few scholars simplistically denied such an unparalleled sovereign merely because of the short-lived empire. Sima Qian explained that why they drew such a hasty and shallow conclusion, stating,

Scholars, influenced by what they have heard, see that the Qin occupied the position of emperor for only a short period, and they fail to examine the beginning and end of the matter. Hence they refer to the Qin only as an object of ridicule and decline to say anything more about it. This is as ridiculous as trying to eat with one's ear, and lamentable indeed.<sup>30</sup>

Simply put, due to the lack of insight into history, many made fallacies in their assessment of historical figures. By contrast, in his exploration of history between the Emperors Hui 惠 (r. 195–188 BC) and Jing 景 (r. 157–141 BC), Sima Qian

<sup>29</sup>Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China*, p. 66.

<sup>30</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 87.



“set forth a complete list of these from beginning to end, a record of the men who distinguished themselves during this age by their virtue and accomplishment.”<sup>31</sup> In view of this, the present author holds that the perception of history as a complete process or an entity consisting of complete processes was philosophically and methodologically significant to Qian's creative historical writing.

The *history as process* was, however, unstable. Rather, it was ever-changing, embodying in endless sessions of prosperity and decline. One of the most distinctive characteristics of *Shiji* lay in its holistic grasp of entire history as a *process* brimming with rise and fall of dynasties. For example, in the basic annals devoted to the State of Qin and the First Emperor of Qin respectively Sima Qian panoramically delineated Qin's entire history extending from an undervalued princely state, to an empire unifying China, and finally to the total collapse. In “Qin benji 秦本纪” (Basic annals of the State of Qin), the rise of the Kingdom of Qin was narrated in detail. In “Qinshihuang benji 秦始皇本纪” (Basic annals of the First Emperor of Qin), how the rising empire wiped out all powerful rival states and ultimately plunged into disintegration was textually recreated. Vividly depicting Qin's exciting grand unification, the helpless self-destruction of the Second Emperor of Qin and Xiang Yu's merciless murder of the last lord of Qin, Sima Qian dramatically reconstructed the legend empire's history. Thinkers in the early Han showed great interest in critically rethinking the fall of Qin and the rise of Han. Among them, Sima Qian did the most brilliant work. Usually, the Grand Historian had lessons drawn from the vicissitudes of past dynasties contained in his surprisingly vivid narratives and directly expressed his own feelings at the end of his narration.

According to Sima Qian, the prosperity and decline in the historical perspective consisted in differing phases and times. Although he recognized the universality of the rule that a thing must begin to decay after reaching its height, he did not think that the history could be simplistically dichotomized into prosperity and decline. The process of prosperity and decline was actually complex, dynamic and penetrating. Simply put, *process* definitely had the periodicity. For example, in “Yin benji 殷本纪” (Basic annals of the Shang dynasty), Qian penned, “[In the reign of Yongyi 雍乙,] Yin's way [of government] declined and some of the feudal lords would not come [to pay homage]; [in the reign of Emperor Wu 戊,] Yin again became prosperous and the feudal lords all returned to it; [in the reign of Hedanjia 河亶甲,] Yin again declined; [in the reign of Zuyi 祖乙,] Yin again prospered; [in the reign of Emperor Yangjia 阳甲,] Yin declined; [in the reign of Pangeng 盘庚,] [t]he Yin way of government again prospered and all feudal lords came to court [to pay homage]; [in the reign of Emperor Jia 甲,] Yin again declined; [in the reign of Emperor Wuyi 武乙,] Yin declined even more;”<sup>32</sup> and finally in the reign of Zhou 纣, Yin totally collapsed. Therein lay the endless alternating cycles of prosperity and decline. In view of this, the present author holds that Sima Qian's perception of

<sup>31</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 432.

<sup>32</sup>Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Basic Annals of Pre-Han China*, trans. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 46, 47, 49.

historical prosperity and decline was actually his own idea of historical periodicity. In Qian's writings, things as great as an era or a dynasty and as insignificant as an individual's life were all unexceptionally a dynamic process brimming with rise and fall and glory and disgrace. Sima Qian as a great historian had grasped the profundity of changes taking place in history. For this reason, his historical narrative was charmingly dramatic and magnificent. In contrast, for those who were intellectually devoid of the idea of thoroughly understanding changes, their writings could only be insipid and insignificant.

In Sima Qian's discourses, the *prosperity* and *decline* interrelated with each other. The historian held that things were interrelating with, act on, mutually restrict each other and in doing so they kept growing. The most remarkable point of the Sima-style reconstruction of history lay exactly in his reexamination of historical changes from an interconnecting perspective, whereby he could make the complexity of history perceivable to readers. For example, in "Shi'er zhuhou nianbiao 十二诸侯国年表" (The chronological table of twelve lords), Sima Qian treated the rise and fall of princely states as an interrelating and interacting process and, meanwhile, delineated the decline of the royal family of Zhou, which enjoyed the highest lordship in name, in order to show there was an interconnection between the rise of princely states and fall of the supreme sovereign. In addition, Sima Qian's idea that a thing would definitely decay after reaching its height, the Laozian interconversion of opposite things and *Zhouyi*-style adaptable change were virtually identical with each other. But on the other hand, the three intellectual threads were not exactly the same thing. To a certain extent, Qian's thinking was more similar to that of *Zhouyi*. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the *change* in *Book of Changes* was actually premised on certain conditions and likewise Sima Qian never discussed prosperity and decline in an unconditioned perspective. Without conditions, prosperity to decline and vice versa would be totally ungrounded. Whenever Sima Qian talked about the interconversion of prosperity and decline, he would always lay stress on specific conditions.

Where the elements contributing to prosperity and decline were concerned, Sima Qian attached greater importance to the human effort. In his discussions of historical turning points, the historian always highlighted the role outstanding humans played in the epoch-making changes. Qian trichotomized the roles humans played into strategies, the politics and wars. For example, in "Gaozu benji 高祖本纪" (Basic annals of the founding emperor), along with the penetrating role played by Liu Bang, who founded the Former Han dynasty, the strategies developed by Zhang Liang 张良 (c. 250–185 BC), the extraordinary executive ability of Xiao He 萧何 (257–193 BC) and successful wars led by Han Xin 韩信 (230–196 BC) and Cao Can 曹参 (?–190 BC) were all prominently displayed. Even the founding emperor acknowledged, "These three [i.e. Zhang Liang, Xiao He and Han Xin] are all men of extraordinary

ability, and it is because I was able to make use of them that I gained possession of the world.”<sup>33</sup> In another chapter Sima Qian echoed this point, penning,

The saying goes: “‘A fur [garment] of one thousand *chin* does not [only consist of] the small leg pieces of one fox; the raters of a high pavilion are not [made by only] the branch of one tree’; [the achievements] within the times of the Three Dynasties did not [consist of only] one gentleman’s wisdom.” Verily! Now, Kao-tsu [i.e. Gaozu, or the founding emperor] rose from a humble background to stabilize the [land] within the Sea. [His abilities] in selecting and making of plans and in employing troops could be said already to exhaust it [the meaning of the saying.]”<sup>34</sup>

Sima Qian was not niggardly in describing excellent strategies developed by outstanding historical figures. In “Qi Tai Gong shijia 齐太公世家,” Qian vividly portrayed Lü Shang 吕尚, who was one of the greatest strategists in the Western Zhou and commonly known as Jiang Ziya 姜子牙. In “Yue wang Goujian shijia 越王勾践世家” (The hereditary house of Gou Jian, the King of the State of Yue), the legend king strategically made concessions and patiently waited for twenty-two years before successfully taking revenge on the King of the State of Wu by annihilating his state. In addition to leading strategists such as Jiang Ziya and Gou Jian, Sima Qian portrayed some professional schemers who were even able to manipulate the political situation by means of well-designed plans. It was particularly worth mentioning Qian’s delineation of Zhang Liang’s strategies. In “Gaozu benji,” the historian dramatically reconstructed the fourteen Zhang-style strategies whereby the founding emperor of Han built a solid base, won the wars against Qin and Xiang Yu, and stabilized the socio-political order in the dynasty’s incipient phase. Putting the “Basic Annals” and “Liuhou shijia 留侯世家” (The hereditary house of Marquis of Liu (i.e. Zhang Liang)) together, the importance Sima Qian attached to the role human played in the history became much more discernible.

In his effort to rethink the rise and fall of the immediate past dynasty, Sima Qian admirably borrowed Jia Yi’s inspiring words in which Jia insightfully analyzed the fall of Qin and the rise of Han and placed particular emphasis on the significance of the popular support to the prosperity and decline of a state. To some extent, Jia’s conclusion was exactly what Sima Qian wanted to say. Jia’s statement read,

The old territory of Qin is well protected by mountains and girdled by the Yellow River, a state fenced in on four sides. From the time of Duke Mu to that of the First Emperor, Qin had over twenty rulers, and at all times they were leaders among the feudal lords. Surely this was not because generation after generation they were worthy men, but because of the strategic position they occupied. Once before, the empire had joined together in heart and pooled its strength to attack Qin. At that time worthy and sagacious rulers abounded, skilled generals headed the armies, and wise ministers cooperated in laying plans. But they were frustrated by the steep slopes and narrow defiles and were unable to advance. To entice them inside and draw them into battle, Qin purposely opened the passes, and the invading troops, though a million strong, were forced to flee in defeat and were utterly crushed.

<sup>33</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 76.

<sup>34</sup>Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Memoirs of Pre-Han China, Part I*, trans. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), vol. 8, p. 301.

Surely this was not because they were lacking in bravery or wisdom, but because the shape of the land was against them and the circumstances were not to their advantage. ... The leaders of the rebellion rose up from among the common people and joined forces for their own profit – they did not act in the manner of natural-born kings. They were not linked by bonds of kinship, nor were their subjects as yet deeply attached to them. In name their goal was to overthrow Qin, but in reality they were out for profit. If they had observed that Qin's barriers would be difficult to penetrate, they would surely have withdrawn their armies, remained in the safety of their own lands, rested their people, and waited for Qin's power to decline. One who succours the weak and aids the weary, as the ruler of a great kingdom is commanded to do, need never worry that he will not gain his way with the lands within the seas. But when one is honoured with the position of Son of Heaven, possesses all the riches of the empire, and yet ends up as a captive, it must be he has failed to remedy his errors.<sup>35</sup>

Jia Yi's final conclusion was that the sagacious ancient kings knew well that the secret of political success lay in exactly the effort to assure the people of security. For both Jia Yi and Sima Qian, although human endeavors such as developing strategies and leading wars were very significant to the governance, the role that the people played was much more crucial in a state's survival and downfall and the general development of history. In this regard, Sima Qian appreciated Jia Yi's insight very much, praising, "Master Jia has written an excellent discussion of the matter."<sup>36</sup>

Overall, Sima Qian shed light on the value and significance of human endeavors in history by comprehensively reexamining good ministers and generals' strategies, political maneuvers and military acts. In doing so, he infused something fresh into the reconstruction of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. In Sima's idea of history, history was a *process* embracing prosperity and decline, both of which contradicted each other while being inseparably interconnected in a certain society and alternated with each other under certain circumstances. A certain trend of history, Qian held, could be displayed in the holistic elaboration of prosperity and decline.

### (3) The human aspiration for wealth and general trend of historical movement

The historical movement consisted in endless interconversions of prosperity and decline. In Sima Qian's eyes, the movement in the historical perspective was neither a cycle nor a simplistic repeat of prosperity and decline. Rather, it was a type of *development* that uninterruptedly move forwards. In other words, it was actually the Way. The Way, Sima Qian implied, was inherently generated by the human aspiration for wealth. In the famous treatise entitled "Huozhi liezhuan" in *Shiji*, the historian intensively discussed this point, penning,

Society obviously must have farmers before it can eat; foresters, fishermen, miners, etc., before it can make use of naturel resources; craftsmen before it can have manufactured goods; and merchants before they can be distributed. But once these exist what need is there for government directives, mobilizations of labour, or periodic assembles? Each man has only to be left to utilize his own abilities and exert his strength to obtain what he wishes.

<sup>35</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson, pp. 75–76.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 74.

Thus, when a commodity is very cheap, it invites a rise in price; when it is very expensive, it invites a reduction. When each person works away at his own occupation and delights in his own business then, like water flowing downward, goods will naturally flow forth ceaselessly day and night without having been summoned, and the people will produce commodities without having been asked. Does this not tally with reason? Is it not a natural result?<sup>37</sup> ... The desire for wealth does not need to be taught; it is an integral part of all human nature.<sup>38</sup> ... And when farmers, craftsmen, traders, and merchants lay away stores and work to expand their capital, we may be sure that it is because they are seeking wealth and hope to increase their goods.<sup>39</sup>

It was such an inherent aspiration for wealth that laid the foundation of a general trend of social development. Such a predestined trend enjoyed the full freedom from the personal will. Thus, it was exactly the Way predominating the growth of history.

Sima Qian concluded the significance of wealth to a society from differing perspectives. First, due to timely reforms a princely states economically developed and grew wealthier. As a consequence, it became politically preeminent, militarily powerful and even possibly a hegemon. Second, the wealth contributed decisively to the political privilege a state could enjoy. Whether a state would dominated other states or be dominated by other states depended on its wealth. Thanks to Guan Zhong's innovations, the State of Qi grew much wealthier and stronger in the reign of the Duke Huan and so that it became the leading hegemon and remained quite powerful for several reigns. Likewise, Goujian, the King of the State of Yue, spent ten years developing economy and then not only successfully avenged himself on the State of Wu but also magnificently displayed his military strength in the Central Plains, wherein the highest sovereign of all under Heaven dwelt. It was because of these achievements that the State of Yue was venerated as one of the most powerful Five Hegemons at that time.

In another widely acclaimed treatise entitled "Pingzhun shu," Sima Qian pointed out that the economic elements played a great role in social changes embodied in endless interconversions of prosperity and decline. Additionally, the historian asserted that there was the correlation between wealth and social stability. His assertion read,

Therefore it is said, "Only when the granaries are full can people appreciate rites and obligations; only when they have enough food and clothing do they think about glory and disgrace." Rites are born of plenty and are abandoned in time of want. When superior men become rich, they delight in practising virtue; but when mean-minded men are rich, they long only to exercise their power. As fish by nature dwell in the deepest pools and wild beasts congregate in the most secluded mountains, so benevolence and righteousness attach themselves to a man of wealth. So long as a rich man wields power, he may win greater and greater eminence, but once his power is gone, his guests and retainers will all desert him and take no more delight in his company. This is even more the case among barbarians.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 434.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 446.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 447.

<sup>40</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson, pp. 435–436.

Therein lay a very progressive idea—the possession of wealth directly affected the social stability.

In the same vein, Sima Qian contended that an individual's social status was determined by his or her wealth. In “*Huozhi liezhuan*,” the historian mentioned several persons who became prominent and influential due to their amazing wealth. For example, the extremely powerful First Emperor of Qin specially built a pavilion in honor of a Sichuan-based widow, who was named Qing 淸 and renowned for her gigantic assets. Apart from the Widow Qing, the First Emperor enfeoffed Luo 倮, who was from the family Wu 烏 and amassed great wealth by raising livestock. In view of this, Sima Qian concluded,

From this we may see that there is no fixed road to wealth, and money has no permanent master. It finds its way to the man of ability like the spokes of a wheel converging upon the hub, and from the hands of the worthless it falls like shattered tiles. A family with 1,000 catties of gold may stand by side with the lord of a city; the man with 100,000,000 cash may enjoy the pleasures of a king. Rich men such as these deserve to be called the “untitled nobility”, do they not?<sup>41</sup>

It is particularly worth mentioning that Sima Qian had the phenomenon that wealth was able to determine an individual's social status turned into a grand social rule. In this regard, he stated,

As for the ordinary lot of tax-paying commoners, if they are confronted by someone whose wealth is ten times their own, they will behave with humility; if by someone whose wealth is 100 times their own, they will cringe with fear; if by someone whose wealth is 1,000 times their own, they will undertake to work for him; and if by someone whose wealth is 10,000 times their own, they will become his servants. This is the principle of things.<sup>42</sup>

Here the historian enlighteningly revealed that the differences existing in social status were perfectly in accord with the wealth inequality.

Additionally, Sima Qian asserted that wealth exerted substantial influence on the general mood of society. He intensively discussed this point in “*Huozhi liezhuan*.” According to his words, soldiers bravely scaled walls of cities because they wanted harvest handsome rewards; beautiful female entertainers from states of Zhao and Zheng walked a thousand miles to perform because they desired for great wealth; and princes down to street boys were ready to risk everything because they strove for a vast fortune. Sima Qian implied that wealth dominated and influenced every aspect of the social life. Even the aspirations for lofty virtues such as loyalty, trustworthiness, benevolence and righteousness and noble acts were not the exception. In this regard, the historian sharp-mindedly commented,

[W]hen wise men lay their profound plans in palace chambers or deliberate in audience halls, guard their honour and die for their principles, or when gentlemen retire to dwell in mountain caves and establish a reputation for purity of conduct, what is their ultimate objective? Their objective is simply wealth.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 446.

Sima Qian went further, pointing out that the behavioral code of the riches the Kong 孔 family of the region of Wan 宛 and the Bing 邴 family of Cao in “Huozi liezhuan,” for instance—would be followed by others and in turn influenced the general mood of society.

Sima Qian also analyzed the economic discrepancy existing between differing regions from the geographical perspective. Furthermore, he contended that it was the economic discrepancy that resulted in differing characteristics of social customs and culture between regions. In order to more convincingly elaborate this point, the historian divided the country into several greater areas—that is, Guanzhong 关中 (the area within the Pass); Sanhe 三河 (Hedong 河东, Henei 河内 and Henan 河南); Zhongshan 中山; Zhao 赵; Yan 燕; Qi 齐; Lu 鲁; Yue 越; and Chu 楚 (consisting of the Western, Eastern and Southern Chu). Geographically, these regions greatly differed from each other; and consequently, they were culturally distinctive from one another. In his descriptions, Sima Qian attempted to fuse regional customs and culture with natural conditions such as the quality of soil, characteristics of climate and local products.

To sum up, Sima Qian empirically justified the human aspiration for wealth in his monumental *Shiji*, vividly stating,

Jostling and joyous,  
The whole world comes after profit;  
Racing and rioting,  
After profit the whole world goes!

If even the king of a land of 1,000 chariots, the lord of 10,000 households, or the master of 100 dwellings must worry about poverty, how much more so the common peasant whose name is enrolled in the tax collector's list?<sup>44</sup>

In the Grand Historian's eyes, the human desire for wealth was actually unstoppable. It was such an unstoppable desire for wealth that reconstructed the historical movement into a natural trend, to which Sima Qian designated it the Way. The Way laid a solid philosophical foundation of Qian's idea of history. Although the historian still could not enjoy the full freedom from the limits of his times, his perception of history did symbolize the new height of intellectual growth of historical thinking in the ancient China. Later, Ban Gu criticized that Sima Qian improperly praised highly the powerful and the rich and was ashamed of the poor and the lowly. Therein, however, exactly lay the excellence of Sima Qian's reconstruction of history.

#### (4) Reconstructing the chaos into order: The idea of inevitability of change

In Sima Qian's discourses, history would always move forwards in endless inter-conversions of prosperity and decline. Simply put, *change* was inevitable in the historical perspective. The role human played in history was embodied in *changes*. *Change* was unchangeable in both nature and the human society. Epistemologically,

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 436.

Sima Qian was one of the heirs to the idea of change in the *Book of Changes*. It was against the epistemological backdrop of the inevitability of change that the historian rethought social movements in past and present. Qian elaborated the key point—that is, the inevitability of change—in “Pingzhun shu” and “Gaozu benji” respectively, saying,

When a thing has reached its height it must begin to decay, and when an age has gone to one extreme it must turn again in the opposite direction; therefore we find periods of rude simplicity and periods of refinement alternating with each other endlessly. From the description of the nine provinces in the “Tribute of Yu” [i.e. Yugong 禹贡, one of chapters of *Shangshu* 尚书] we learn that, in the time of that ruler, each region submitted as its tribute to the throne whatever goods it was best fitted to produce and whatever the people had the most of. King Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty, and King Wu, the founder of the Zhou dynasty, both heirs to the chaos of the dynasties which preceded them, worked to put the empire into order, causing the people to be unflagging in their efforts, and both of them, by their diligence and circumspection, succeeded in establishing firm rule. Any yet little by little the ages after them sank into weakness and decay.<sup>45</sup>

The government of the Xia dynasty was marked by good faith, which in time deteriorated until mean men had turned it into rusticity. Therefore the men of Shang who succeeded to the Xia reformed this defect through the virtue of piety. But piety degenerated until mean men had made it a superstitious concern for the spirits. Therefore the men of Zhou who followed corrected this fault through refinement and order. But refinement again deteriorated until it became in the hands of the mean a mere hollow show. Therefore what was needed to reform this hollow show was a return to good faith, for the way of the Three Dynasties of old is like a cycle which, when it ends, must begin over again. It is obvious that in late Zhou and Qin times the earlier refinement and order had deteriorated. But the government of Qian failed to correct this fault, instead adding its own harsh punishments and laws. Was this not a grave error? Thus when the Han rose to power it took over the faults of its predecessors and worked to change and reform them, causing men to be unflagging in their effort and following the order properly ordained by Heaven.<sup>46</sup>

In the light of above two pieces of quotations, the present author contends that Sima Qian’s conceptualization of change was clearly embodied in his assertion of *chengbi yibian* 承弊易变—being the heir to faults of precedent dynasties and endeavoring to rectify them. There were two points worthy of furthered discussions in this change-themed perception of history.

First, in a certain phase of historical development there must be change(s). Sima Qian’s assertion—“[w]hen a thing has reached its height it must begin to decay, and when an age has gone to one extreme it must turn again in the opposite direction”—was actually inspired by the *Zhouyi*-style idea—“When a series of changes has run all its course, another change ensues. When it obtains free course, it will continue long.”<sup>47</sup> What the author(s) of *Zhouyi* said—“a series of changes has run all its course”—referred to a certain phase wherein changes would inevitably take place. Intellectually the two assertions in *Shiji* and *Zhouyi* were identical with each other.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>46</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson, pp. 85–86.

<sup>47</sup>*Zhouyi* 周易 or *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-xia/ens>.



Both emphatically said whenever things reached their heights or ran all their courses the change heralding a new phase would definitely take place and likewise at a certain point of growth of human affairs—viz., that there were faults—rectifying changes would inevitably be initiated. Moreover, just like things that could continue long due to timely changes, the human society could be adaptable to Nature as long as it change accordingly to rectify the faults of precedent phases. Invoking his cosmological view, Sima Qian analyzed changes in the historical perspective and concluded that history would inevitably change or be changed. Specifically, the historian discussed mutual changes between simplicity and refinement, changes taking place in thirty-year and five-hundred-year periods respectively, and endless alternations of virtues such as loyalty, piety and (aspiration for) refinement, all of which were, however, of a historicist character. Despite this, Sima Qian's intellectual threads—the idea of thoroughly understanding changes, the theory of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective, for instance—as a whole systematically gave expression to the outlook on development.

Second, Sima Qian pointed out the socio-historical change differed from the natural movement. The difference exactly lay in *man* and the role humans played in changes. In reality, humans could adapt themselves to history and then act. To put it another way, humans were able to positively choose to change, viz., that rectify the faults of precedent periods. But on the other hand, man's choice and action must be premised on certain historical conditions. In *Shiji*, many reforms—the Lord Shang's 商 all-embracing reform in Qin, Li Kui's 李悝 revolutionary reconstruction of land system in the State of Wei 魏, the King Wuling's 武灵 groundbreaking military reform in the State of Zhao 赵, for instance—and dynastic revolutions—such as the Shang's replacement for Xia, Zhou for Shang, and Han for Qin—were unexceptionally conditioned changes. The key of such successful changes lay in the performers' adept adjustment of strategy and practice after taking full consideration into the existing, differing faults. Specifically, in the cases of the remote Three Dynasties, because the faults made by Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties respectively in their ending years were different from each other, the successive dynasty adopted different policies in their effort to rectify them. For this reason, Shang rectified the Xia's deteriorated "good faith" by the "virtue of piety" and Zhou had Shang's deteriorated "virtue of piety" corrected by the "refinement and order."

Besides the rectification of faults of past dynasties, the restoration of good governance of ancient sagacious sovereigns was indispensable to the successful implementation of necessary and inevitable changes. In other words, an enlightened king would effectively incorporated the successful experience of past sovereigns into his rectification of faults of past dynasties. For example, digging into the history of Qin Empire, Sima Qian found that the rise of the state from the remote western border area should be ascribed to the creative reforms led by the open-minded politicians such as Shang Yang 商鞅 (390–338 BC) and the rehabilitation of good policies made by past kings such as the Duke Mu 穆 (r. 659–621 BC). In fact, if the Duke Mu's policies were not adopted by the Duke Xiao 孝 (r. 381–338 BC), Shang Yang could by no means be an active player in the politics

of Qin. In this sense, what Sima Qian emphasized in his assertion of being the heir to faults and endeavoring to rectify them was not the separation of the present from the past but the necessary change of things that should be rectified. In this regard, the historian said, “Emperors and kings all have different rites and different things which they consider important. If a man hopes to win success and establish a lasting family, he cannot afford to confuse past and present.”<sup>48</sup> Therein lay Sima Qian’s conclusion and suggestion regarding *change*. The conclusion was that inasmuch as sovereigns’ established rites and goals differed from each other *change* was inevitable; and the suggestion, a success criteria should be used to judge *changes* that had been done.

In *Shiji*, among lessons drawn from the alternation of the rise and fall of Qin and Han dynasties, Sima Qian placed particular emphasis on Qin’s failure to change with the times. After unifying entire China, the First Emperor of Qin did not realize that he should reform his empire in accordance with the changed situation. In other words, the powerful emperor of Qin failed to grasp the fact that a sovereign could win the country on horseback but he could not rule it on horseback due to the completely changed situation after the Grand Unification. Jia Yi discussed this point and his words were admiringly quoted in Sima Qian’s *Shiji*. The quotation read,

The Qin faced south to call itself ruler of the empire, which meant that the world now had a Son of Heaven to head it. The masses hoped that they would be granted the peace and security to live out their lives, and there was not one of them who did not set aside selfish thoughts and look up to the sovereign in reverence. This was the moment for demonstrating authority and proving one’s merit as a ruler, laying the foundation for lasting peace in the empire.<sup>49</sup> [Under such circumstances, the Emperor should have rectified faults of previous regimes and made necessary changes in his mind and practice. But, unfortunately,] [t]he First Emperor trusted his own judgment, never consulting others, and hence his errors went uncorrected. The second Emperor carried on in the same manner, never reforming, compounding his misfortune through violence and cruelty. Ziying 子嬰 [the Last Lord of Qin] stood alone and friendless, weak and imperiled, with no one to aid him. All three rulers were deluded, and to the end failed to awaken – is it not fitting that they perished?<sup>50</sup>

For what reason the unprecedentedly powerful Qin Empire tragically ended in total collapse? Simply because the three emperors of Qin did not change with the times; nor could they start a thorough reform. To make matters worse, because the politics was manipulated by Zhao Gao 赵高 (258–207 BC), a despicable eunuch, the faults of past dynasties were actually exacerbated rather than were rectified. As a result, the powerful Qin logically collapsed. In this regard, Sima Qian commented,

At that time the ruler was busy driving back the barbarians from the borders of the empire, while within the empire he was carrying out various construction works and projects, so that although the men who remained at home worked the fields, they could not supply enough to eat, and though the women wove and spun, they could not produce enough

<sup>48</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I*, trans. Burton Watson, pp. 428–429.

<sup>49</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 81.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76.

clothing. And so we see that in antiquity there was once a time when the entire wealth and resources of the nation were exhausted in the service of the ruler, and yet he found them insufficient. There was but one reason for this; the stream of circumstances flowed so violently at that time that it made such a situation inevitable. Surely there nothing strange about this!<sup>51</sup>

Jia Yi echoed the historian in pointing out that the reason of Qin's tragic end lay in the emperors' inability to practice humanity and righteousness and make timely changes to basic policies. Even the Emperor Wu correctly grasped this point, asserting that because sovereigns failed to change with the times the Zhou dynasty collapsed due to the growing weakness and Qin declined due to the unparalleled strength. The historian, political theorist and emperor spoke the same thing—a sovereign's success and failure was determined by the proper changes based on the observation of the times and the judgment of occasions rather by the short-term strength or weakness. Both the history of archaic Three Dynasties and the young Han's replacement for the powerful Qin illustrated this point.

“Causing the people to be unflagging in their efforts” was another important aspect of Sima Qian's discussion of the inevitability of change in history. Not only was the *unflaggingness* one of the keys condition of change but it was also the goal of change. The abovementioned *success criterion* that was used to measure the success or failure of change exactly lay in the unflaggingness. Historically, it was against the fact wherein whether the people were unflagging or not that a reform was judged. Only when the people was mobilized to unflaggingly make efforts to build or rehabilitate a state would be there an age of prosperity and power. Highlighting the importance of the people's unflaggingness and the decisive role it played in determining the political success or failure of a sovereign was one of the most distinctive features of historical narratives in *Shiji*. For example, Sima Qian said in Shang Yang's all-embracing reform in Qin the people felt it was *convenient* after years of practice and the society was consequently well governed. The concerned record in *Shiji* read,

When the laws had been in effect among the populace for the space of a year, the people of Qin who poured into the capital complaining that the new laws were unsuitable numbered in the thousands. ... By the time the laws had been in effect for ten years, the people of Qin were delighted. No one picked up objects dropped in the road, the mountains were free of robbers and bandits, and each family had enough of what it needed. The people were brave in public warfare and fearful of private vendettas. Profound order prevailed in the hamlets and towns. The people of Qin who had earlier complained that the laws were unsuitable now came forward to say how suitable they were...<sup>52</sup>

Similar cases could be found in New Policies initiated by the Duke Zhao 昭 who successfully increased the wealth of the State of Yan 燕 and caused soldiers to be fearless and fight unencumbered; in the King Wuling's groundbreaking reform of established military practice with a view to benefitting the people and strengthening

<sup>51</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 85.

<sup>52</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 93.

the State of Zhao; and in the innovative work done collaboratively by Guan Zhong and Bao Shuya 鮑叔牙 (?–644 BC) making the people happy by launching a politico-economic-military reform in the state of Qi. In a word, the secret of successful changes in history lay exactly in whether the sovereign could be “causing the people to be unflagging in their efforts.”

Thoroughly examining endless alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in history, Sima Qian drew a conclusion that the reform was exactly an embodiment of the inevitability of change, from which he went further, analyzing the social reality. One of his master pieces entitled “Pingzhun shu” was actually a conclusion of the history of early Han. At the very beginning of the treatise, the historian sharply point out, “When the Han dynasty came to power, it inherited the evils left by the Qin.”<sup>53</sup> Then, after seventy-year efforts made by several sovereigns, the Han society took on a new look. Qian proudly portrayed the stable and prosperous society wherein he was living. The treatise read,

By the time the present emperor had been on the throne a few years, a period over seventy years had passed since the founding of the Han. During that time the nation had met with no major disturbances so that, except in times of flood or drought, every person was well supplied and every family had enough to get along on. The granaries in the cities and the countryside were full and the government treasuries were running over with wealth. In the capital the strings of cash had been staked up by the hundreds of millions until the cords that bound them had rotted away and they could no longer be counted. In the central granary of the government, new grain was heaped on top of the old until the building was full and the grain overflowed and piled up outside, where it spoiled and became unfit to eat. Horses were to be seen even in the streets and lanes of common people or plodding in great numbers along the paths between the fields, and anyone so poor as to have to ride a mare was distained by his neighbours and not allowed to join the gatherings of the villagers. Even the keepers of the community gates ate fine grain and meat. The local officials remained at the same posts long enough to see their sons and grandsons grow to manhood, and the higher officials occupied the same positions so long that they adopted their official titles as surnames. As a result, men had a sense of self-respect and regarded it as a serious matter to break the law. Their first concern was to act in accordance with what was right and to avoid shame and dishonour.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the amazing peace, stability and wealth of the early reign of Emperor Wu, the historian dauntlessly revealed serious social problems that could have the dynasty ruined. The treatise went on,

At this time, however, because the net of the law was slack and the people were rich, it was possible for men to use their wealth to exploit others and to accumulate huge fortunes. Some, such as the great landowners and powerful families, were able to do anything they pleased in the countryside, while the members of the imperial house and the nobility, the high officials and the lesser government officers, strove to outdo each other in luxurious living; there was no limit to how far each would go in aping the houses, carriages, and dress of his social superiors. But it has ever been the law of change that when things reach their period of greatest flourishing, the must begin to decay.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Sima Qian, *Records of The Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 62.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

Therein lay even the symptoms of social deterioration though the Emperor Wu's Han was outstandingly wealthy and powerful. In view of this, Sima Qian sharply pointed out that some social changes were necessary and imminent. In the ancient China, a great historian would always have studies in history and the aspiration to free the society from crises fused together. Such an intellectual effort was quite evident in Sima Qian's treatise, wherein the historian-*cum*-thinker at the very beginning candidly admitted that the Han dynasty was the heir to faults of the immediate past Qin Empire and in the end repeated lessons drawn from the collapse of Qin in order to admonish the present sovereign. In doing so, the historian clearly displayed his sense of history and the times. Thanks to the *Shiji*-style idea of being the heir to faults and endeavoring to rectify them, later generations could inspiringly find a way out for their societies or solutions to real crises.

#### (5) *Shiji* and the Grand Unification

In the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, the feudal society was rapidly taking shape. It was in this time that a unified great empire appeared in the East Asia. Undoubtedly, Sima Qian's *Shiji* must be adaptable to the Empire's need. The present author holds that *Shiji* was actually of a dual nature. On the one hand, Sima Qian sharply realized that there was a deep social crisis in Han and attempted to uncover it. In particular when he was unfairly incarcerated and humiliatingly punished by the Emperor, he perceived the deepening crisis in a much more direct way and furthered his resolution to unmask the corrupt. But on the other hand, *Shiji* was not merely a niche nestling the historian's emotions, but instead it was an outlet through his aspirations to find a way out for the crisis-ridden society, rectify faults and rehabilitate the good governance were poured forth. It was actually Sima Qian's true motive for writing history. For Sima Qian and his father—Sima Tan, the general goal of historical narratives was to display what the enlightened world of the past was before readers. It was true that Sima Qian exposed the true face of the early Chinese feudal society as the past scholarship overwhelmingly emphasized; it was also true that there was a sincere hope of maintaining and bettering the hierarchized feudal society in his writings. For this reason, Sima Qian said,

Since the rise of the Han we have come to the time of our enlightened Emperor. He has received auspicious omens and blessings; he has established the sacrifices of Feng 封 and Shan 禘; he has changed the beginning of the year, altered the color of the vestments, and received the Mandate in his majesty and purity; his goodness flows over our land without bound. The multitudinous tribes within the four seas, translating and retranslating their strange tongues, have come knocking at our borders in submission. Those who bring tribute and beg for an audience are too numerous to be told. The ministers and hundred officials with all their might sing the praises of his holy virtue, but still they feel they have not been able sufficiently to publish it abroad. Now if there are scholars and worthy men of ability who are not made use of in the government, this is shame upon the ruler of the kingdom, while if the emperor is one of shining holiness and yet his virtue is not published throughout the land, this is a fault of the men in official position. I myself have for some time held this office [of Grand Historian.] If I should cast aside this shining holiness and

supreme virtue and fail to make a record of it; if I should permit the labors of the meritorious ministers, the feudal families, and the worthy officials to fall into oblivion and not to be transmitted; if I should allow the words of my father to be forgotten, I could certainly be guilty of no greater sin. When I say that I “transmitted” a record of past affairs, putting in good order the genealogies and chronicles, it does not mean that I “made” a work such as Confucius did. Therefore when you compare my writings to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, you mistake their true nature.<sup>56</sup>

The above quotation was taken from the conversation between Sima Qian and Hu Sui, a high official in the Emperor Wu’s court. Qian humbly said he dared not compare his narratives with that of Chunqiu. In fact, his laudation to the Han dynasty in the quotation revealed his sincere hope of reviving the Kingly Way in the present.

Sima Tan, Qian’s father also revealed his own motive for writing history, saying,

It has now been over four hundred years since the capture of the unicorn. The various feudal states have merged together and the old records and chronicles have become scattered and lost. Now the house of Han has arisen and all the world is united under one rule. I have been Grand Historian, and yet I have failed to set forth a record of all the enlightened rulers and wise lords, the faithful ministers and gentlemen who were ready to die for duty. I am fearful that the historical materials will be neglected and lost.<sup>57</sup>

Sima Qian, the son, was the heir to Tan’s great ideal of recording history. He carried his father’s ideal forward, resolving to produce a great work that would not only embody the basic spirit of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* but also accord with the need of the times of Grand Unification. He did an excellent job in this regard. For example, *Shiji*’s structure—the twelve “Basic Annals” devoted to kings and emperors sitting on top of the ten Tables and thirty “Hereditary Houses”—was a perfect embodiment of the hierarchized feudal rule. Sima Qian was very satisfied with such a well hierarchized structure, metaphorically saying, “As the twenty-eight constellations revolve about the North Star, as the thirty spokes of a wheel come together at the hub, revolving endlessly without stop, so the ministers, assisting like arms and legs, faithful and trustworthy, in true moral spirit their lord and ruler; of them I made the thirty ‘Hereditary Houses.’”<sup>58</sup>

In order to cause the feudal empire to remain stable, the hierarchized feudal institutions must be well maintained. History could play a positive role in this endeavor. Personally, Sima Qian did hope that his *Shiji* could be as orthodox as the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the work rectifying people’s—in particular sovereigns’—mind and practice. Where the role *Chunqiu* played was concerned, Sima Tan had told Qian, “The Spring Autumn picks out the good and condemns the evil, exalting the virtue of the Three Dynasties and praising the house of Chou [i.e. the Western Zhou.] It does not confine itself solely to criticism and ridicule.”<sup>59</sup> If Tan’s

<sup>56</sup>Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch’ien: Grand Historian of China*, pp. 53–54.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

words were true, later generations should never treat *Shiji* merely as a book of “criticism and ridicule.” The original intent of the two Simas was not to produce a simply critical book but to be the heirs and practitioners of the spirit of *Chunqiu*. In Qian’s eyes the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was a textbook perfectly embodying the feudal hierarchy. Qian’s comments on *Chunqiu* read,

Therefore, for dispersing revolt and turning the people back to the right, none of the other Classics can compare to the *Spring and Autumn*. The *Spring and Autumn* consists in all of some ten or twenty thousand words, and its ideas number several thousand. The answers to how all things join and break away are to be found in it. It records thirty-six instances of assassination of rulers, and fifty-two of kingdoms which perished, and of feudal lords who were forced to flee and could not protect their altars of the soil and grain, the number is too great to be reckoned. If we reflect on how these things happened, we will find in every instance it was because they lost the True Way. Therefore the *Book of Changes* says, “The error of a fraction of an inch can lead to a difference of a thousand miles.” And it also says, “When a minister assassinates his lord or a son murders his father, this is not something that came about in one morning or evening, but something that had built up gradually over a long period.” For this reason one who rules a state cannot afford not to know the *Spring and Autumn*. If he does not, he will fail to perceive slander near about him, or will not understand the reason when rebels rise behind his back. A man who is a minister must know the *Spring and Autumn*, or he will not understand the reason what is proper in managing his regular duties, nor, when an emergency arises, will he know how to exercise independent judgment. One who is a ruler or a father and does not understand the principles of the *Spring and Autumn* will bring upon himself in infamy of chief evildoer, while one who is a minister or a son and does not understand the principle of the *Spring and Autumn* will surely fall into the sin of rebellion or regicide and suffer the judgment of death. All of this comes truly from thinking one knows the good when one does not really understand its principles. Such men will stand indicted by the moral judgments and will not dare to deny their guilt. Now a lack of understanding of the meaning of propriety and duty leads to lords who are not true lords, minister who are not true ministers, fathers who are not fathers, and sons who are not sons. If a lord is not a true lord, then there will be revolt. If a minister is not real minister, then he will suffer punishment. If a father is not a father, he will act immorally; and if a son is no son, he will be without filial piety. These four failures are the greatest faults of mankind. When one finds himself guilty of one of these great faults, he will have to accept his punishment without daring to make excuses. Therefore the *Spring and Autumn* is the basis of propriety and duty.<sup>60</sup>

To put it succinctly, Sima Qian held that the role *Chunqiu* sociopolitically played could be trichotomized. First, the *Annals* aspired to preserve the Kingly Way, an extensively constructed political concept. In order to fulfill the mission, it wholeheartedly elaborated the good governance of Three Dynasties, unswervingly adhered to the basic criteria whereby people could judge right and wrong and good and evil, and ideologically safeguarded established blood lineages. Second, the *Annals* aspired to fulfill the good governance. On the basis of clear and correct differentiation between right and wrong, it resolved to generate a moral power by which the political malpractice could be rectified and the people brought back to the right. Third, the *Annals* aspired to protect the feudal hierarchy based on solidly established proprieties

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<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.

from being easily ruined. In this regard, Sima Qian placed particular emphasis the role the proprieties could subtly play in the mission moralizing the society. In other words, the Grand Historian recognized that history could functionally act as a tool of moralization. Sima Qian's elaboration of the role *Chunqiu* played was so influential that many a historians—for example, Hu Sanxing 胡三省 (1230–1302) who profoundly and thought-provokingly exegetized Sima Guang's 司马光 (1019–1086) *Zizhi tongjian* 资治通鉴 (Comprehensive historical records in aid of governance)—in the post-*Shiji* era followed his words. Sima Qian actually laid the foundation of the tradition attaching importance to the role historical narratives could play in the moralization of the society among ancient Chinese historians.

Inspired by Sima Qian's elaboration of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the present author proposes several points regarding the significance of historical writing in the ancient China. First, history justified the present sovereigns by designating them as the heirs of Kingly Way. In quite a few cases, even the theology was employed to legitimize the present sovereigns' rule. Second, history could draw useful lessons from rise and fall of past dynasties and shed light on what would lie ahead for a state. Third, history could play an effective role in the social education and moralization. Fourth, studies in institutions in the historical perspective could be used for reference in sovereigns' effort to better their governance. Later, the school laying stress on the positive epistemic and ideological roles history played in the work bettering statecraft went further, having history and all aspects of social life interconnected and proposing reform plans aiming at elements that were existing in the established institutions and disconform to the reality. Where such an empirical and pragmatic genre of history was concerned, there was a great diversity in terms of quality and nature. Some works were enlightening and profound; some, shallow and eclectic; some, progressive; some, conservative; some, more divinity-oriented; and some, human-oriented. Where the research methodology of such works was concerned, some strictly followed the history per se, respectfully and critically reexamined historical facts, and finally draw solid conclusions; but meanwhile, some had their studies based on certain a priori dogmas, to which they handpicked historical facts to justify.

On the whole, Sima Qian had laddered to the top of the idea of the history in the ancient China. Besides, he also reached new heights in the work developing the idea of (historical) education. It was in the period when the Chinese feudal society was still vibrantly growing that the Grand Historian discussed the issue of historical education and even clearly defined basic contents of the cause. In view of this, the present authors suggests that the studies in Sima Qian's idea and practice of historical education be substantially furthered.

#### (6) Concluding remark: Sima Qian, the Father of Chinese historical writing

Sima Qian was born in present-day Hancheng 韩城 County, Shaanxi. His courtesy name was Zichang 子长. The exact year when Qian was born was still open to discussion. Some hold it was 145 B.C., while some assert it should be in 135 B.C. Qian probably passed away in the third year of Zhenghe 征和 (90 BC) of the reign of Emperor Wu. Where the historian's outstanding scholarship was concerned, there



were two points worthy of furthered discussions. First and foremost, Qian's scholarship was based on his solid grasp of teachings of diverse intellectual schools in the pre-imperial China and early Han. According to the "Preface" he penned for *Shiji*, he began studying classics written in the old-style script when he was a ten-year-old boy. In the light of this, the present author contends that the Sima family had an Old-Text scholarly tradition. In the meantime, Qian was, however, open to the teachings of Dong Zhongshu, who was renowned for his amazing mastery of classics written in the new-style script. Thus, the scholarly tradition of the Sima family was actually a confluence of diverse genres of scholarship. For example, Qian recalled that his father had studied astronomy with Tang Du 唐都; the *Book of Changes*, with Yang He; and Daoism, with the Master Huang 黄. To put it another way, the Simas' scholarly tradition was actually the trinity of astronomy, Confucianism and Daoism. It should be pointed out that Sima Qian paid particular attention to the Confucian teaching of change (as elaborated in the *Book of Change*) and Daoist theories of the Way. The two scholarly constituents, both of which of a strong dialectical nature, together with the idea of movement in the astronomical perspective, constituted the core of Sima Qian's scholarship.

Second, the Grand Historian's scholarship had an empirical foundation. In the "Preface," for instance, Qian wrote,

When [I] was twenty year I traveled south to the Yangtze and Huai 淮 rivers, [I] climbed Kuaiji 会稽 and looked for the Cave of Yu 禹, and [I] saw Nine Peaks. [I] sailed down to Yuan 沅 and Xiang 湘 rivers and in the north forded the Wen 汶 and Si 泗 rivers. [I] studied the learning of the cities of Qi 齐 and Lu 鲁. [I] observed the customs and practices inherited from Confucius and took part in the archery contest at Mount Yi 嶧 in Zou 邹. [I] met with trouble and danger in Po 郢, Xue 薛 and Pengcheng 彭城. Then [I] passed through Liang 梁 and Chu 楚 and returned home.<sup>61</sup>

In his trips, Sima Qian investigated in person the true situation of grass-roots society and critically reexamined historical materials. Digging into the legends, materials and relicts articulating endless alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in the past, Qian rethought the history in a much deeper way. In particular, standing before the ruins of Daliang 大梁, or Greater Liang, the magnificent capital city of the perished State of Wei 魏, the old city of the Lord Chunshen 春申 (?–238 BC) and the site where Qu Yuan drowned himself, all of which touchingly demonstrated that history, a process brimming with incessant drastic changes, was but floating smoke and passing clouds, the historian paid his respects to the prominent ancient people and drew lessons from the vicissitudes of history. Later, Qian as a special envoy of the imperial court visited the southwest China, wherein he observed the local life and production of differing ethnic groups. The historian's recollection read,

I once traveled west to Mount K'ung-t'ung [Kongtong 空桐] and Cho-lu [Zhuolu 涿鹿] [Mountain] in the north; to the east I drifted along the coast, and to the south I floated over the Huai River and the Chiang [Yangtze River.] Wherever I went, all of the village elders

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid, p. 48.

would point out for me sites of The Huang-ti [Yellow Emperor], Yao and Shun. The traditions were certainly very different from each other.<sup>62</sup>

In this trip, Qian realized that the Chinese culture was collaboratively created by all ethnic groups living in the land. Although social customs regionally differed from each other, the cultures in a great diversity of regions in China shared a common ground and had similar characters and consequently grew centripetally.

It was in the time of Sima Tan and Sima Qian that the Former Han dynasty began declining. The father had an extremely good memory of the power and prosperity of the Han Empire. He even expressed the deep regret he felt in failing to attend the grand sacrificial ceremonies held at the altars of Feng and Shan, which were amazingly magnificent and presided by the Emperor Wu in person, before his death. He sincerely hoped that his son could finish a history depicting such a stable, peaceful and prosperous age of Grand Unification. By the time of the son, the Han dynasty was, however, falling into a decline, embodying in the exacerbated social contradictions. What's worse, the son himself was unfortunately involved in a case, wherein he suffered a humiliating corporal punishment and witnessed the appalling corrupt. Despite the unspeakable and unbearable pain, acting like the tenacious King Wen, who had been in really dire straits, Sima Qian made a determined effort to fulfill the dying wish of his father. Consequently, he produced the monumental *Shiji* whereby the historian insightfully expounded things past and bequeathed invaluable enlightening perceptions of history to later generations.

Thanks to the scholarly tradition of his own family and the exciting times wherein he was living, Sima Qian creatively developed the inspiring idea of thoroughly understanding changes, the profound socio-political thinking and the deep-going epistemological representation of Grand Unification. In the Chinese epistemic and practical contexts, a history book was expected not only to reflect the history and times but also to interpret the history from a certain perspective. Thus, on the one hand, *Shiji* was a veritable record of history. On the other hand, the book, however, went far beyond veritable records of past affairs. Sima Qian actually had the book based on a profound philosophy of history and attempted to analyze the history and reality with an alternative vision. As time went on, *zhengshi* 正史, or the formal, standard and orthodox history officially produced by the imperial agency in later dynasties were merely able to mechanically imitate the style of *Shiji*. In most cases, the creative reproduction of *Shiji*-style historical work was out of the question. Some scholars—for example, Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚 (1738–1801), a leading scholar in the Qing dynasty—ridiculed works parroting *Shiji* as something that was as ossified as the eight-legged essay and completely devoid of creativity and vitality. In this sense, *Shiji* was unique, incomparable and unsurpassed. It is for this reason that the present author reverently calls Sima Qian the *father* of the Chinese historical writing.

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<sup>62</sup>Sima Qian, *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Basic Annals of Pre-Han China*, trans. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al., vol. 1, p. 17.

## 2 *Hanshu: The Paradigm of Zhengshi, or the Formal, Standard and Orthodox History, and the National Spirit*

### (1) Ban Gu and his scholarship in history

It was under the special circumstances of the Later Han dynasty that Ban Gu acquired some distinctive characteristics in his creative historical writings. Toppled down by a huge peasant revolt, the Former Han, or the Western Han Empire, was replaced with the Later Han, or the Later Han dynasty. Again, the Liu Family ruled over all under Heaven. Had the new dynasty been ideologically legitimized? If such a Liu Family was justified to reign over the country, for what reason the Former Han Empire, whose ruling family was also surnamed Liu, was overthrown? And, what types of lesson would the new sovereigns draw from the collapse of the Former Han? History books produced in the new dynasty were inevitably responsible for answering such perplexing and fundamental questions. It was in such a root-searching exploration of the rise and fall of the immediate past dynasty that Ban Gu developed his own scholarship in history.

When Liu Xiu 刘秀 (5 BC–57 AD) was grabbing the highest power from Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BC–23 AD), who was the de facto supreme ruler in the ending years of the Former Han, the founding emperor of the Later Han invoked the divine power to justify his substitution for Wang. In accordance with the established ideology, Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445 AD) dramatically reconstructed the rise of Liu Xiu in his master piece entitled *Hou Han shu* (Book of the Later Han). Fan's narrative read,

When the Emperor Guangwu [i.e. Liu Xiu] arrived in Hao 鄗[County], Qiang Hua 强华, who had been one of housemates of the Emperor studying in Chang'an 长安, had already been there and presented *Chifu fu* 赤伏符 (Symbol of Red [i.e. Fire] Emperor Lying Invisible, which was a mystical diagrammatic prophecy regarding the rise of Liu Xiu). The *Chifu fu* read,

Liu Xiu sends troops to quell rebels acting against the Kingly Way.

People in power across entire country gather, fighting each other like dragons in the wild.

It is the time when there has already been two hundred and twenty-eight years [since the rise of the founding Emperor Gao of the Former Han] and the [Emperor representing the Virtue of] Fire will reign again.

Inspired by the revealing symbol, Liu Xiu's chief assistants subserviently suggested, "The auspicious magic symbol indicating the receiver of the Mandate of Heaven is predominantly efficacious in human affairs. Apart from human affairs, even materials things ten thousand miles distant from here has echoed, let alone millions of people unanimously perceiving [what lies ahead.] In comparison with the King Wu of Western Zhou, whose rise was predicted by the tally of a white fish, the Symbol of Red [i.e. Fire] is far superior. Inasmuch as at present the Son of Heaven is absent and the entire country has fallen into chaos, [Heaven] prepares auspicious omens and makes them known to the people. Under such circumstances, it is better for the Emperor – Liu Xiu – to respond to the Lord Above

[in the sacrificial ceremony] and fulfill the people's expectation [by ascending the throne.]  
 (“Guangwu di ji shang 光武帝纪上” (The first part of the basic annals of the Emperor Guangwu), Chapter 1, in *Hou Han shu*)

The appearance of the mysterious symbol declared that the drama enthroning Liu Xiu was officially staged. It was evident that the symbol was actually prepared beforehand by Qiang Hua. More interestingly, in the sacrificial ceremony devoted to Heaven, Liu Xiu stealthily added an enigmatic sentence—“Mao jin xiude wei tianzi 卯金修德为天子”<sup>63</sup>—into the original symbol and in doing so he divinely told the people that the Liu Family's reign over all under Heaven was exactly the embodiment of Heaven's Intention. Similar cases were repeated time and again in later ages.

As the Confucian saying goes, “When a ruler loves anything, those below him are sure to do so much more.”<sup>64</sup> Due to the founding emperor's fetish about mysterious symbols, there was the growing tides of superstitious belief in magic tallies and arbitrary application of them to the politics as soon as the Later Han was formally founded. In the concluding remark of the basic annals of Liu Xiu, or the Emperor Guangwu, the author of *Hou Han shu* tried his best to show that the Liu Family's reign was fully ordained by Heaven. The author superstitiously stated that when the Emperor Guangwu was born, there were a bright red light beaming the room, which should be regarded as an unmeasurably auspicious omen, and one piece of standing grain on which there auspiciously were nine ears was found, in the county. In the light of the unusually auspicious nine-eared grain, the newborn baby, *Hou Han shu* alleged, was named *xiu* 秀, which literally referred to the crop growing ear or blossoming. Fan Ye, who authored *Hou Han shu*, did not stop here but went further, saying, next year a necromancer told the Emperor Ai 哀 (r. 8–1 BC) that although the ruling Liu Family was declining it would definitely be rehabilitated and receive the Mandate of Heaven again in near future. When Wang Mang usurped the throne, Fan Ye retrospectively penned that there was a thick ether symbolizing the emperorship on top of Liu Xiu's hometown. *Hou Han shu* finally concluded, “Indeed, there are magic symbols indicating the receiver of the Mandate of Heaven. Otherwise, how can the receiver(s) ride the dragon [of the times] and reign [on behalf of Heaven]?” In some extreme cases, the founding emperor of the Later Han even threatened to execute those who were against the teaching of *chen-wei* 讖纬.<sup>65</sup> For example, incessantly kowtowing to the Emperor till the head was bleeding, Huan Tan 桓谭 (c. 23 BC–56 AD), a renowned

<sup>63</sup>The prophecy—“Mao jin xiude wei tianzi 卯金修德为天子”—meant that the man whose surname consisted of *mao* 卯 and *jin* 金—explanatorily, the combination of *mao* 卯 and *jin* 金 is exactly the Chinese world *liu* 刘, the surname of Liu Xiu—cultivated his virtues so successfully that he would finally become the Son of Heaven.

<sup>64</sup>*Liji* 礼记, or *Book of Rites*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/liji/zi-yi/ens>.

<sup>65</sup>Translator's note: *Chen-wei* 讖纬 was a prevalent mystical learning and practice, wherein the regular divination and Confucian ideas were fused together. To be specific, *chen* 讖 referred to the enigmatic words that were used by the diviners in sessions of divination; and *wei* 纬, the books embodying concerned superstitious Confucian interpretations.

philosopher, narrowly escaped execution, when the highest sovereign was extremely angry at Huan's denial of *chen-wei* and planned to put him to death.

In the Later Han, the politics garbed in the divine power was actually a great impetus to the theologization of scholarship in varying fields. As early as the incipient stage of the Former Han, Dong Zhongshu had already finished creating the system of feudal ideology. In such an ideological system, Dong had the theory expounding the divine will and thoughts emphasizing the importance of human affairs and social administration combined into one, thereby creating an intellectual foundation consisting of the unity of Heaven and man and mystical mutual response between Heaven and man and applying it to his own cosmology, ontology, epistemology, and socio-historical ideas. In particular, he placed emphasis on the quite significant role sovereigns played in the prosperity and decline of a society. From the early Former Han down to the founding of the Later Han, the theologized teaching of *chen-wei* was gradually and greatly furthered. Ban Gu discussed the course in the Former Han in "Wuxing zhi 五行志" (Treatise on Five Elements) of his *Hanshu*. Ban Gu in particular mentioned the learning of Dong Zhongshu, Liu Xiang and Liu Xin. The present author will not elaborate the academic difference existing among the three influential Han scholars but instead pointing out that, overall, the two Lius vulgarized the idealistic system of ideology by coercively applying the theory of mystical mutual response between Heaven and man to the alleged relation of natural or man-made calamities and the politics and giving strained interpretations.

In the light of the dual nature consisting of the envisagement of the reality and the conscious theologization, the present author holds that scholars such as Liu Xiang and Liu Xin, on the one hand, vulgarized theological threads and on the other hand intellectually retreated into the closed academic circle. It was in such a detached circle that scholars rethought changes taking place in the Chinese scholarship in the light of the scholarship's true academic origin and growth. Hou Wailu 侯外庐 pointed out that what the scholars possessed was actually a dual-natured concept of truth. "Such a dual-natured concept of truth," Hou said, "that is, an eclectic contradiction, hinted at the crisis of the monistic theological thinking and the medieval inability to solve social contradictions."<sup>66</sup> After Dong Zhongshu, the crisis of dual-natured theories including theoretical threads applying to the historical studies were constantly deepened. Although on the face of it the theologized theory was continuously consolidated by the state's administrative power, such a top-down state effort actually indicated an immanent ideological weakness.

The most distinct characteristic of the Later Han scholarship was the omnipresent permeation of the theologized teaching of *chen-wei*. In the later Han, the New-Text School of Confucianism predominated almost entire scholarship. Intellectually and academically, the School was characterized by the

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<sup>66</sup>Hou Wailu et al., *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi*, vol. 2, p. 207.

fusion of studies in Confucian classics and teachings of *chen-wei*. Within the School there were branches devoted to specific Confucian classics such as *Book of Changes*, *Book of Poetry*, *Book of History*, *Book of Rites* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Pi Xirui had criticized the School from the perspective of Qing scholarship. His criticism read,

Inasmuch as *chifu* 赤符, or the Red Symbol, indicated that it was the Emperor Guangwu who would receive the Mandate of Heaven, the founding emperor of the Later Han believed in the teaching of *chen-wei* so firmly that he required the basic meanings of Five Classics be determined in strict accordance with the *chen-wei*-themed epistemic and ideological criteria. As a consequence, adhering to teachings of *chen-wei*, Jia Kui 贾逵 (174–228 AD) carried forward the *Chunqiu* Scholarship by annotating the *Master Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals* and Cao Bao 曹褒 (?–102 AD) epistemically and ideologically established the system of proprieties that was applied to entire dynasty. Finally, in the Later Han, the [orthodox] Five Classics were intellectually externalized; and the [heterodox] Seven Books of *Wei*, internalized. It had already been a common practice [in the scholarly world at that time.]<sup>67</sup>

In the reality, sovereigns of the Later Han endeavored to further the popularity of the teachings of *chen-wei*. In 56 A.D., just two years before his death, the founding emperor issued an imperial edict, whereby various illustrated *chen-wei* booklets were disseminated nationwide. The Emperor Ming 明 (r. 57–72 AD) went further, lecturing in person Confucian classics from the *chen-wei* perspective. One of renowned lectures by the Emperor was held in the imperial academy, where the Son of Heaven expounded segments of Five Classics in 72 A.D. Seven years later, the Emperor Zhang 章 (r. 75–88 AD) convened a huge meeting in the White Tiger Pavilion. In this conference, the Emperor himself took part in the discussions among leading Confucians who fiercely debated on the similarities and differences existing between Confucian classics and made a final judgment. The Emperor Zhang actually emulated the Emperor Xuan of the Former Han. It was in this historic meeting that Ban Gu was asked to paraphrase the Emperor Zhang's judgments regarding Confucians' arguments. Thus, there was the highly influential *Baihu tongde lun* 白虎通德论 (a. k. a. *Baihu tong* 白虎通 and *Baihu tongyi* 白虎通义, a comprehensive elaboration of the most basic meanings of Confucian classics). Under the circumstance that the *chen-wei* teaching predominantly prevailed and sovereigns wholeheartedly supported it, Ban Gu grew by degrees prominent in the academia of the Later Han.

Ban Gu was greatly influenced by his father—Ban Biao 班彪 (3–54 AD). Some quipped that Ban Gu stole his father's academic fruits in his work penning *Hanshu*. It was, however, not a far-fetched exaggeration. To some extent, *Hanshu* was the brainchild of the father *plus* the son. Fan Ye, the author of *Hou Han shu*, properly asserted that the two Bans, both of whom were masters of knowledge of humanities, worked collaboratively in the production of the magnum opus—*Hanshu*. It was true that when Ban Gu was penning *Hanshu*, he basically followed the

<sup>67</sup>Pi Xirui 皮锡瑞, *Jingxue lishi* 经学历史 [History of studies in Confucian classics] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 109.

principle formulated by Ban Biao and used primary sources predominantly prepared by Sima Qian and his father. In this regard, the present author suggests that there be furthered studies. Where Ban Biao's thought was concerned, the present author proposes several points. First, his idea of history was embodied in his treatise entitled "Wang ming lun 王命论" (On the sovereign's Mandate of Heaven), which emphasized that the reason that why the Liu Family fulfilled the reign over all under Heaven lay in the Family's fate of being chosen as the receiver of Mandate rather than in the Family's crafty and seizure of power. In his conclusion of the history of the Former Han, Ban Biao pentachotomized the reason of Liu Bang's rise into the facts that (1) Liu Bang was the descendant of the Emperor Yao 尧, one of the most sagacious ancient kings; that (2) Liu Bang had an extraordinary face and body; that (3) Liu Bang acted magnificently, effectively and powerfully; that (4) Liu Bang was tolerant and enlightened; and that (5) Liu Bang was good at discovering able people and putting them at suitable posts.

Second, Ban Biao's historiographical thinking could be found in his conclusion of the historical writings produced in past dynasties. His systematic appraisals of history books were recorded in "Ban Biao zhuan 班彪传" (The life of Ban Biao) of *Hou Han shu*. Biao's criticism focused on Sima Qian's *Shiji*. The concerned record in *Hou Han shu* read,

During the time of Han Wudi 汉武帝 (r. 140–87 BC), the prefect gran historian, Sima Qian (c. 145–c. 86 BC), extracted from the *The Commentary of Mr. Zuo* and *Discourses of the states*, and edited the *Shiben* 世本 and *Intrigues of the Warring States* 战国策, and relied upon the various state histories of the time of Chu and Han (i.e. the war between them just prior to the founding of the Han dynasty); he began at the time of the Yellow Emperor and ended with the capture of the unicorn (122 BC). He produced "Basic Annals," "Hereditary Families," "Collected Biographies," "Documents," and "Charts" totaling 130 chapters, and ten are missing from it.

That which Sima Qian recorded from the first year of the Han to the time of Wudi, from whence it discontinues, is the basis of his merit. But when he extracted from the classics, gleaned from biographies, and divided the affairs of the schools of thought, much of what he did was quite imprecise and not equal to his original sources. He devoted himself to hearing much and recording a broad history to accomplish his merit, but his disquisitions were shallow and incidental. His discussions of techniques and learning valorize Huang-Lao and slight the Five Classics. He gave a place to "Good and Wealth" (*Records of the Grand Historian* 129) while treating lightly Benevolence and Righteousness, and he expressed shame for the poor and destitute. He spoke of "Wandering Knights" (*Records of the Grand Historian* 124) while demeaning those who held to principle and honoring those of common achievement. In this way, Sima Qian inflicted great harm to the Way, and for this reason encountered the extreme punishment of castration.

Nevertheless, he was skilled at narration and the order of events in his records is reasonable. His discussions are not flowery and their substance is not crude, and the pattern and substances of his writing are balanced. Overall, these are the talents of a good historian. If Sima Qian had only been made to rely on the model words of the Five Classics and to agree with what the sagely men (Confucius?) considered to be right and wrong, his intentions would not have been far from success.

Now, the records of the schools of thought still can be taken as a model. Works such as the *Commentary of Mr. Zuo*, *Discourses of the States* 国语, *Shiben*, *Intriguers of the Warring States*, *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Chu and Han* 楚汉春秋, and the *Book of the*

*Lord Grand Historian* (i.e., *Records of the Grand Historian*) are the means whereby this generation understands antiquity, and the means whereby later generations see the future; they are the ears and eyes of sagely men. Sima Qian ordered accounts of emperors and kings, and they were called the “Basic Annals.” The accounts of nobles whose states were inherited were thus called the “Hereditary Families.” The accounts of chamberlains and servicemen of special distinction were thus called the “Collected Biographies.” Moreover, Sima Qian advanced Xiang Yu and Chen She 陈涉 while devaluing the kings of Huainan 淮南 and Hengshan 衡山, and his meticulous intentions became crooked, and his principles of organization were not standard. As for the writings produced by Sima Qian, he collected records of past and present, penetrated the Classics and commentaries, reaching expansively. With the intense effort of a single man, his writings were repetitious and his thoughts problematic. Accordingly, his book could be pared without end and there would still remain a surplus of words, and there would be many places where the text would not make a unified work. As for arranging the account of Sima Xiangru 司马相如, Sima Qian mentions his commandery and prefecture, and makes a record of his style. But when he arrives at Xiao He 萧何, Cao Shen 曹参, and Chen Ping 陈平, as well as Dong Zhongshu, of the same era, he does not record their styles. There are some instances where he records the prefecture but not the commandery, and one generally finds no rest (in having to locate this information on one’s own).

Now, in the following chapters I carefully investigate their affairs and put into order what has been written. I do not make a “Hereditary Families” section, but only “Annals” and “Biographies,” and that is all. A saying has been passed down which says, “Reducing superfluous wording in order to show the standard, and keeping it simple and direct, are the principle of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.”<sup>68</sup>

In Biao’s eyes, Sima Qian, on the one hand, did an excellent job in his programs (re-)organizing, structuring, syncretizing and narrating history; but on the other hand, Qian committed almost unpardonable mistakes running counter to the grand principles of Five Classics and failing to display the Liu Family’s inheritance of the Mandate that the Sage King Yao had received from Heaven. For this reason, Biao attempted to fundamentally remold the existing *Shiji*. In the sixty-five-chapter sequel he wrote for *Shiji*, Ban Biao cut off the section of Hereditary House and preserve only the Basic Annals and Memoirs; and, most importantly, he ideologically remolded the basic spirit of *Shiji*.

However, Bao Biao’s comments on Sima Qian and *Shiji* were onesided. For example, his assertion that Sima Qian despised the Confucian Six Classics was ungrounded. Besides, his opinion that Sima Qian was merely narratively superior was a de facto misjudgment. Unlike the father, Ban Gu treated Sima Qian in a slightly more objective and more affirmative way. In “Sima Qian zhuan 司马迁传” (The life of Sima Qian) he penned in *Hanshu*, Ban Gu said,

Spoking of the Great Way, Sima Qian first tackled with the teachings of Yellow Emperor and Laozi rather than with the Confucian Six Classics; of wandering knights, Qian downplayed those who are chaste and virtuous rather than persons in possession of crafty and power; and, of economic issues, Qian thought highly of the wealthy and the powerful rather than of the poor and the lowly. Therein lies Qian’s disadvantages in the historical writing. Despite this, both Liu Xiang and Yang Xiong 扬雄 (53 BC– 18 AD) praised Qian

<sup>68</sup>Antony E. Clark, *Ban Gu’s History of Early China* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), pp. 199–201.



as a talented historian and admired so much his outstanding ability to translate history into narratives that were neatly organized and well principled, unornamentally represented but dialectically convincing, and sincerely unsophisticated but impossibly vulgar. Furthermore, [both held that inasmuch as] Qian's writings were straightforward, well-grounded, and completely freed from the artificial glorification [of historical figures and events] and the concealment of vices, his *Shiji* was a real *veritable record*.

Therein lay the difference existing between the father and the son, which hinted at Ban Gu's true appeals in the creative historical writing.

Ban Gu was born in 32 A.D. in Anling 安陵 of Fufeng 扶风 County. He died in the seventieth year of his age. Born into an aristocratic family, Gu had studied in the most prestigious Imperial College. When he was twenty-three-year old, his father passed away. Being the heir to the cause of his father, Gu was primarily responsible for writing history for the imperial court. In 92 A.D., some maligned Gu and had him thrown into the prison, wherein he died of wounds and disgrace brought about by daily humiliating caning. Later, his younger brother—Ban Chao 班超 (32–102 AD)—tried his best to retrieve Gu's honor and later was appointed *Lantai shilling* 兰台史令 (The Orchid-Terrace Imperial Historian).

Ban Gu as one of the most renowned historians in the ancient China had several distinctive characters. First, Ban Gu was a very learned scholar. In “Ban Gu zhuan 班固传” (The life of Ban Gu), Fan Ye wrote,

As young as nine-year old, Gu, whose courtesy name was Mengjian 孟坚, was able to recite poems and write essays. When he had grown up, Gu immersed himself in collections of books and explored almost unlimitedly teachings of a great diversity of intellectual schools. Gu never obstinately followed one master's teaching; nor did he ever literally adhere to any established writings. Rather, he endeavored to grasp the main idea of all extant writings.

In the light of this, the present author contends that Gu's scholarship was different from both the Old-Text and New-Text schools. Such an academic uniqueness enabled him to independently and creatively rethink the origin and changes of scholarship in past and present and enjoy the full freedom from the scholarly sectarianism. Being the heir to the familial tradition writing history, Gu logically devoted himself to the historical study rather than aspired to be a master indulging in so broadly and extensively interpreting Confucian classics, or a scholar wallowing in so narrowly and intensively expounding certain sentences and even words of existing Confucian classics.

Second, Ban Gu was the leading historian witnessing the beginning of the decline of the Later Han. On the face of it, the time of Ban Gu was still stable and prosperous, embodying in hundreds of auspicious omens reported by prefectures and enfeoffed kingdoms. Even Fan Ye in *Hou Han shu* retrospectively highlighted the era's peace, power and prosperity. Wang Chong 王充 (27–97 AD), who was an eminent materialist philosopher and one of the contemporaries of Ban Gu, also said the Later Han outnumbered the legendary Western Zhou in terms of the auspicious omen, outperformed Zhou in terms of the territorial expansion, and outshone Zhou in terms of the social moralization. Even so, as the social crisis was depending, there was a surge of peasant revolts. Wang Chong recalled,

During the first years of *Chien-chu* [Jianchu 建初], there was a great dearth in *Chung-chou* [Zhongzhou 中州]. The people from *Yin-ch'uan* [Yingchuan 颍川] and *Ju-nan* [Runan 汝南] had to leave their homes, and were scattered in all directions. His Holy Majesty felt very much distressed, and many edicts were issued.<sup>69</sup>

Faced with such a worsening situation, sovereigns of the Later Han desperately needed to find a way out. According to Fan Ye's *Hou Han shu*, in the reigns of the Emperors Ming (r. 57–75 AD) and Zhang (r. 75–88 AD) there were, in total, more than forty pieces of imperial edicts revealing the graveness of social crisis at that time. One of the key points of such sovereign-prepared edicts was the advocacy of learning lessons from the past. In these conditions, the mission of a historian was to rethink the reality from the historical perspective. In the context of the Later Han, the mission could be designated as *xuanhan* 宣汉, or advertising [the illustrious achievements of] Han.

In order to more effectively fulfill the mission *advertising Han*, Gu made a significant effort, rewriting his father's sequel to *Shiji* into *Hanshu*. In the reformulated sequel to *Shiji*, or *Hanshu*, Ban Gu not only inherited the basic thinking embodied in his father's treatise entitled "Wangming lun" (On the sovereign's Mandate of Heaven), but also fundamentally changed the stylistic rule and layout of the original sixty-five-chapter sequel. Among other things, the most important change in the basic style of narrating history lay in Gu's groundbreaking effort to reconstruct the sequel into a special history exclusively devoted to a certain dynasty—that is, the Former Han. The present author contends that such a fundamental stylistic change should not be regarded as an effort to fragmentize the history, but instead as an innovative sublation of conventional way of interconnecting historical periods. According to the first part of "Ban Biao zhuan" in *Hou Han shu*, Ban Gu had explained this point with a view to revealing the inappropriateness of *Shiji*. Specifically, Gu held that neither *Shiji*'s contents nor Sima Qian's historical periodization was appropriate to the work *advertising Han*. In Gu's eyes, the goal of the work *advertising Han* was trichotomized into the eulogization of illustrious achievement of Han, the justification of the Liu Family's reign by invoking the divine power, and the conclusion of lessons drawn from the fall of the Former Han. Driven by such an ideological aspiration, Gu cultivated a consciousness of writing history. Such a history-oriented consciousness actually gave expression to the need of the ruling class.

Third, Ban Gu played quite an important role in the Later Han's effort to build up an ideologically theological system. The abovementioned meeting at White Tiger Pavilion, in which Ban Gu took part, was quite significant to the Chinese intellectual history and marked the birth of a theologized Confucianism. Ban Gu played quite an important role in the work summarizing the imperial Conference and disseminating the key imperial ideology. From the founding emperor's edict whereby the illustrated *chen-wei* books were circulated nationwide down to the

<sup>69</sup>Wang Chong 王充, *Lun-Heng: Philosophical essays of Wang Ch'ung*, trans. Alfred Forke (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1907), pp. 87–88.

Emperor Zhang's effort to theologize Confucianism, the ruling echelons of the Later Han society tried their best to find the grandest criterion—or *guoxian* 国宪, the most fundamental law whereby a state could be well organized and governed—from theologized Confucian doctrines. *Baihu tongyi*, which was produced by Bai Gu on the basis of the Emperor Zhang's final judgments regarding Confucians' arguments in the White Tiger Pavilion, could be regarded as a solution. The roles the book played were twofold. First, it had the Liu Family's reign deified; and second, it prepared grand doctrines that could be used to guide the social administration.

Where *Baihu tongyi* was concerned, it was theoretically based on Confucian writings that were of a strong *chen-wei* nature. At the very beginning of the book, author(s) declared that despite their poor or superior quality, all sovereigns were the Son of Heaven because they were unexceptionally the chosen receiver of the Mandate of Heaven. Although it was not a voluminous book, *Baihu tongyi* encyclopedically formulated and interpreted institutions, rites and policies involving all aspects of the Later Han's politico-economic-culturo-military life. Among Ban Gu's two representative works, one was a history book and the other an ideological manifesto. Despite the stylistic difference, both played the same role in the work ideologically justifying the feudal reign.

Ban Gu resolutely aspired to create a divine-power-centered system whereby he could orthodoxly and unchangeably justify the reign of Liu's Han. In his writings, Gu showed his strong dissatisfaction with the scholarship of the Later Han. He sharply criticized that very few scholars had a clear understanding of the origin of the prime virtue of Han. Thus, he required that the most significant task of creative historical writing be the exploration of origin of prime virtue embodying the Han dynasty. In this regard, Gu prepared a systematic solution. He ideologically created first a divine lineage, according to which it was Heaven that ultimately justified the Liu Family's reign over the world. He expounded this point in his *Dianyin pian* 典引篇 (The elaboration on classics), which was recorded in the first part of "Ban Biao zhuan" of *Hou Han shu*. Thanks to Gu's effort, the system of Liu Family's divine power was created and made theologically convincing. Gu went further, attempting to divinely and mysteriously have the two Hans fused together and consolidate the justification of the rule of the Later Han. The key of his furthered effort lay in the assertion of the Heaven-sanctioned orthodoxy. In one of his well-known poems—*Dongdu fu* 东都赋 (*Eastern Capital Rhapsody*)—Gu boldly speak out the *orthodoxy*. In the *Rhapsody*, the historian sang,

In the past, Wang Mang plotted treason,  
 And the Han throne was vacant in mid-reign.  
 Heaven and Man inflicted the punishment,  
 And the entire empire rose up to destroy him.  
 ...Thereupon, the Sage Emperor:  
 Grasped the celestial tally,  
 ...And built the capital at He-Luo.  
 He inherited the devastation and difficulties of past kings;  
 Relied on the Transformer to cleanse and exterminate.  
 Embodying the Origin, he established institutions;  
 As successor to Heaven, he began to act.  
 Heir to the heritage of Tang,  
 He continued the lineage of Han.  
 In fructifying and nurturing all life,  
 Expanding and restoring our territory,  
 His merit rivaled the kings of the past,  
 And his work showed more effort than the Three and the Five.<sup>70</sup>

The “Sage Emperor,” or the “successor to Heaven,” in the quotation was none other than the Emperor Guangwu, who founded the Later Han. Intellectually and ideologically, what Gu poetically and enthusiastically sang here and what he plainly and calmly narrated in *Hanshu* echoed each other.

In the history reconstructed by Ban Gu, the Man originated from the most primordial chaos and the human society grew along with the cyclical alternations of Five Virtues. Thus, the ruling family of Han was exactly the heir to the Mandate of Heaven that had been given to the sagacious Yao Emperor. In the light of the formula of the movements of Five Virtues, there were successively the kingdoms of Yao, Shun, Xia, Shang, Zhou, and the Liu Family’s Han. When the Zhou dynasty was declining and there was a huge disaster, Confucius, the sage of sages, strove to rehabilitate the fallen society. After the Sage, there were Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Former Han, and Liu Xiu, the creator of the Later Han. History moved like this, embodying the Heaven’s intention. When the two Lius were taking the throne, there were unexceptionally the revealing auspicious omens. What Gu elaborated was actually a divine view of history that was based on the perpetual alternations of Five Virtues.

Apart from the Heaven’s intention, the feelings of the people was employed by Gu to interpreted the Former Han’s fall and the Later Han’s rise. His interpretation could be found in the above-cited poem entitled *Dongdu fu*. Concerned verses read,

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<sup>70</sup>Xiao Tong 萧统, *Wen Xuan*, or *Selections of Refined Literature; Volume One: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals*, trans. David R. Knechtges (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 147, 149.

During the turmoil of this period,  
 The living were nearly obliterated,  
 And the deceased spirits disappeared.  
 ...Thus, the common people cried out and made their plaint above...  
 In the first year of Established Might,  
 Heaven and Earth changed the mandate.  
 Within the Four Seas  
 They created anew the relation of husband and wife,  
 And there was now distinction between father and son.  
 The positions of ruler and subject were now established,  
 And the system of human relations began.  
 It was this then on which Fu Xi based his august virtue.  
 He divided the territory of the provinces,  
 Established marketplaces,  
 Made boats and carriages,  
 Manufactured tools and weapons.  
 It was this then by which Xuanyuan developed his imperial accomplishments.  
 He reverently carried out Heaven's punishment,  
 Responded to Heaven, conformed to Man.  
 It was this then by which Tang and Wu displayed their royal deeds.  
 Moving the capital, changing the city,  
 Are in the pattern of the Yin Ancestor's restoration,  
 Proceeding to the center of the country,  
 Is a measure that brought King Cheng of Zhou great peace.  
 Not relying on a foot of ground or a single person in his command,  
 He perfectly matched Gaozu.<sup>71</sup>

In such laudatory verses, the founding emperor of the Later Han was analogically portrayed as great as past sage kings. The reason that why he could be the heir of the grandest orthodox, or the Mandate of Heaven, lay not only in Heaven's favor but also in the brilliant role the founding emperor played in the history. In view of this, the present author holds that Gu's idea of history was actually of a dual nature. On the one hand, Gu believed that history was principally determined by the divine power; on the other hand, he acknowledged the role humans could play in the historical changes.

Ban Gu was indispensable to the intellectual growth of the Later Han. Not only did he formulate an idea of history from the divine perspective, but he also used his historical writings—i.e. *Hanshu*—to excellently and convincingly give expression

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 147, 151, 153.

to the divine view and demonstrate that the Later Han itself was a divine creation. When it comes to the rise and fall of the Former Han, Gu asserted that it be ascribed to both Heaven's intention and human efforts. Specifically, the historian interpreted the legitimacy of Liu Family's reign from the perspective of Heaven's intention; and meanwhile, he elaborated the dynastic transition in the light of human efforts. Therein lay a distinctive characteristic of the Chinese medieval theology based on the *chen-wei* teaching. In comparison with its counterpart in the medieval Europe, the Chinese theology attached greater importance to the role humans played in the history. Dong Zhongshu, a towering figure of the intellectual world of the Former Han, and Ban Gu, a leading ideology-builder of the Later Han, shared the same idea that humans could substantially contribute to changes taking place in history. There was, however, a difference between Dong and Gu's thinking. While Dong rethought history in a more mystical, more formalistic, more ossified and more analogical manner, Gu was more vividly displaying the alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in his attractive historical narratives.

In retrospect, Ban Biao, Gu's father, fundamentally changed Sima Qian's *Shiji* by applying a new idea of history to the reconstruction of the past. Inspired by the father's effort, the son groundbreakingly reformulated the style and layout of historical works. *Hanshu* was the epitome of Gu's creative revisionism in the scholarship of history. On the fact of it, *Hanshu* fragmented history because it focused exclusively on the history of the Later Han; in fact, with the help of the alleged divine power, it interconnected the Later Han with the history embodied in the sagehood of Yao. Historiographically, it was a successful practice of the *unfragmentedness in fragmentation*. In this regard, the present author suggests there be furthered studies. For what reason the aspiration for the *unfragmentedness in fragmentation* was fulfilled in Gu's historical writings? It was exactly because of the penetrating divine will, or Heaven's Intention.

Thanks to Gu and his father's efforts, the traditional Chinese historical writings were intellectually, ideologically and stylistically re-created to be more adaptable to the feudal reign. Such an adaptability was exactly the secret of the almost unbroken production of *zhengshi*, or the formal, standard and orthodox history produced by the present dynasty for the previous one(s). Overall, Gu's achievements in the historical writing, his literary talent and studies in Confucian classics were fused together. Moreover, Gu's historiographical practice was perfectly in accord with his idea of history. In particular, Gu's brilliant literary works enabled his idea of history to be passed on generation after generation and exert great influence on the traditional Chinese historical thinking. The historian's ideological reformulations regarding history and historical writing were primarily embodied in and demonstrated by his *pièce de résistance*—*Hanshu*. Just one more point, the intellectual core of Gu's scholarly exploration of Confucian classics lay exactly in the divine will, or Heaven's Intention.

Fourth, the vicissitudes of life contributed greatly to Ban Gu's thought. Like Sima Qian, Gu's path through life was hard. The historian's life consisted in his efforts to study classics, engage in politics, perform military duties, and write history. Gu did have his day. But finally, he was reduced to the status of a prisoner

and died in humiliation. In his life, Gu had been incarcerated twice. Some had reported him to the imperial court on account of Gu's illegal work writing the history of the immediate past dynasty without the central government's permission. Consequently, Gu was arrested. Later, Gu was unfortunately dragged into the extremely complicated power struggles within the imperial court. The powerful mayor of Luoyang 洛阳, the capital city of the Later Han, had Gu incarcerated to death on the pretext that one of Gu's servants offended himself. One of Gu's representative literary works—*Youtong fu* 幽通賦 (*Rhapsody on Communicating with the Hidden*)—hinted at the influence exerted by the unexpected encounters on his life. *Fu* 賦, or the rhapsody, created a fancy realm, wherein the author could rethink the vicissitudes of life and pour out his heart. In *Youtong fu*, Gu called himself one of the descendants of Zhuanxu 顓頊, a sage king in the far remote antiquity, and greatly prided himself on being a member of Ban Family, which outlived the Former Han and remained stable and prosperous in the Later Han dynasty. Most importantly, Gu in the rhapsody showed that, in spite of undergoing many hardships, he would unswervingly carry forward the ancestors' cause. The rhapsody read,

How am I worthy to carry it on?  
 I regret that the heritage of our house is such cause for concern.  
 Days and months elapse—the past becomes ever more remote.  
 ...I thought—Heaven and Earth are infinite,  
 But few men reach old age.  
 All is a mass of hardship and obstacles—  
 How much travail, how little wisdom!  
 ... With constant change there is constant reversal;  
 Who can predict the end or beginning?  
 ...The Way, chaotically formed, is natural and spontaneous;  
 Only its methods flow in separate streams from a common source.  
 The gods determine fate before mind,  
 But fate also fluctuates in accord with human action.  
 Revolving, flowing, moving—it cannot be overcome;  
 Thus, with every encounter there is either gain or loss.<sup>72</sup>

The poem had a finale, speaking out Gu's resolution and aspiration. The finale read,

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<sup>72</sup>Xiao Tong, *Wen Xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature; Volume Three: Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena, Birds and Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passions*, trans. David R. Knechtges (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 85, 87, 97.

When Heaven created things out of dim darkness,  
 It determined their nature and fate.  
 Returning to original nature, broadening the Way—  
 Only the age and worthy can do so.  
 A vast primal force propels things;  
 It flows and never stops.  
 Preserving self, bequeathing a good name,  
 These are examples for men to follow.  
 Choosing what is right and rejecting life  
 Is to follow the workings of the Way.  
 To be afflicted with grief and die young,  
 Nothing is more disgraceful than this.  
 Keep yourself unsullied and pure—  
 Why change colors?  
 I hope to reach the infinitesimal,  
 And enter the realm of the gods.<sup>73</sup>

At the first glance, the rhapsody should be written when Gu was still young, in particular considering the fact that the “preface” of *Hanshu* said Ban Biao had a son known as Gu had penned *Youtong fu* to express his feelings. Actually, the words in the “Preface” were used to camouflage Gu’s dissatisfaction with the brutality of the ruling Liu Family. It might be Ban Zhao 班昭, the younger sister of Ban Gu, who made such a subtle textual arrangement in her work annotating her brother’s poems and completing *Hanshu*. In view of this, the present author contends that the sentimental rhapsody was composed when Gu was being persecuted by his rivals. Faced with unexpected hardships, Gu more deeply perceived the society’s darkness and corrupt and thus made a solidier resolution to fulfill the ideal of safeguarding and carrying forward the established orthodoxy. Interestingly, when Fan Ye was penning the memoir dedicated to Ban Gu and his father, he intentionally omitted the more critical *Youtong fu*, but instead included Gu’s two rhapsodies devoted to the Later Han’s two capital cities and *Dianyin pian* in praise of the illustrious virtues of Han. Fan’s omission might enlighten us to grasp the reason that why *Hanshu* was also praised as one of the greatest pieces of *veritable record*. It was exactly because Ban Gu candidly confronted the social reality.

## (2) *Hanshu* and the mission advertising Han

In *Hanshu*, Ban Gu invented an imperial lineage that could be traced back to Yao, one of the three most sagacious ancient sovereigns. Both Sima Qian and Ban Gu penned Basic Annals for Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Former Han. In comparison with Qian’s writings, Gu’s concluding remark in the Basic Annals was

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 103.



more distinctive in the reconstruction of the lineage of Liu. The concerned *Zan* 贊, or the “Eulogy” (a special type of concluding remark) prepared by Gu, read,

In eulogy we say, In ‘Spring and Autumn’ [times], the historian of [the state of] Chin 晉, Ts’ai Mo 蔡墨, said, “When the T’ao 陶 and T’ang 唐 family had lost its power, among its descendants there was a Liu Lei 刘累 who learned to train dragons. He served K’ung-chia 孔甲. The Fan 范 family were his descendants.” Moreover the Grandee Fan Hsien-tzu 范宣子 also said, “My ancestors before [the time of] Yu 虞 [Shun] were surnamed T’ao and T’ang; in the [time of the] Hsia 夏 [dynasty], they were surnamed Yu-lung 御龙; in [the time of] the Shang 商 [dynasty], they were surname Shih-wei 豸韦; in [the time of] the Chou 周 [dynasty], they were surnamed T’ang and Tu 杜; when [the state of] Chin became the lord of China’s oaths, they were surnamed Fan. A [member of the] Fan [family] was the Supreme Judge of Chin. In the time of Duke Wen 文 of Lu 鲁, [the family] fled to Ch’in 秦. Later they returned to Chin. Those [of the Fan family] who remained [in Ch’in] became the Liu family.” Liu Hsiang 刘向 said, “In the time of the Contending States, [a member of] the Liu family from Ch’in was made prisoner of war by Wei 魏. When [the state of] Ch’in destroyed [the state of] Wei, [the family] moved to Ta-liang 大梁 and dwelt at Feng 丰. Hence Chou Fu 周市 said to Yung Ch’ih 雍齿, ‘Feng was formerly a colony of Liang 梁.’ Thus the “Eulogy” of Kao-tsu 高祖 said,

‘The line of descent of the Han Emperor

Is traced from the Emperor T’ang [Yao.]

Coming on down to the Chou [dynasty],

In [the state of] Ch’in it became the Liu [family.]

Thereupon [its head] became the Lord of Feng.”

The Lord of Feng was indeed the Grand Emperor’s father. The period since his moving [to Feng] had been brief, [for] there are few mounds or graves [of the family] at Feng. When Kao-tsu took the throne, he established officials for the worship [of his ancestors], so there were shamans from Ch’in, Chin, Liang and Ching 荆. For generations the worship of Heaven and Earth has been accompanied by the worship [of these ancestors.] How could [these facts] be untrustworthy? From the foregoing [accounts] we infer that the Han [dynasty] succeeded to the fortunes of Yao; its virtues and the happiness recompensing it are already great. The cutting in two of the snake, the auspicious omens which appeared, the banner and pennons which emphasized [the color] red in harmony with the virtue of fire, were responses which came of their own accord, [thereby showing that Kao-tsu] secured the [dynastic] rule from Heaven.<sup>74</sup>

The “Eulogy” was remarkable because it assertively figured out that the Liu Family was exactly the descendant of the Emperor Yao. It went further, pointing out that it was the Family Yao that founded the Former Han in the light of the alternations of Three Orthodoxies. In answer to the question that for what reason it was Liu Bang among the descendants of Yao who was chosen to be the founder of a new dynasty, Gu asserted that it was the Heaven’s choice, embodying in Liu’s heroic deed of cutting a huge snake in two and the appearance of auspicious omens. However, it must be admitted that Gu’s demonstration was very weak. Even in the ancient China, Gu’s assertions were severely reproached by more empirical scholars. For

<sup>74</sup>Ban Ku 班固, *The History of The Former Han Dynasty*, trans. Homer H. Dubs (Baltimore, MD: Waverly Press, 1938), vol. 1. pp. 146–150.

example, Zheng Qiao 郑樵 (1104–1162), one of the leading historians in the Southern Song dynasty, sharply ridiculed that Gu's fabricated lineage of Liu Family was totally ungrounded due to his complete ignorance of the anthroponymy and genealogy (Chapter 5, in *Tongzhi* 通志 [General treatises on history]). But on the other hand, the assertion regarding the ruling family's divine origin was indeed one of Gu's indispensable methods of fulfilling the grand mission advertising Han.

The ideological foundation of the mission advertising Han consisted in Dong Zhongshu's theories and his painstakingly-advocated unity of Heaven and man in particular. Dong's Heaven-man-themed theoretical threads multifariously embodied the cosmology, social ideas and historical thinking. In his *Hanshu*, Ban Gu borrowed a great number of Dong's theoretical assertions focusing on the relationship of Heaven and man. In comparison with the memoir dedicated to Dong Zhongshu in *Shiji*, the one Gu wrote for *Hanshu* was much more complete, including the unabridged edition of Dong's treatises such as *Tianren sance* 天人三策 (Three disquisitions exploring the Heaven-man relationship). Contrary to the fact that Sima Qian and Dong Zhongshu were close friends and Qian knew very well Dong's thinking and even venerated Dong as the Master, in *Shiji* there was merely a very brief biography dedicated to Dong. Gu entirely gave up Qian's brevity and fully displayed the core of Dong's thought. On the basis of "Dong Zhongshu zhuan 董仲舒传" (The life of Dong Zhongshu), the present author concludes that there are three key points of Dong's Heaven-man theory.

First, the sovereign receives Mandate of Heaven. Dong asserted,

Your servant has heard that when one is about to become king by means of the great appointment of Heaven, he will invariably possess things that cannot be brought about by human effort, yet he finds himself in possession of them. There are the auspicious signs that he has received the Mandate.<sup>75</sup>

On the basis of the assertion that a sovereign must be the one who received the Mandate of Heaven, Dong laid an intellectual foundation of the theory advocating the inherent relationship between natural disasters and human affairs. In answer to the Emperor Wu's inquiry about the selection of talented people, Dong stated,

Your servant [i.e. Dong] has heard that Heaven is the ancestor of all things. Thus it covers and envelopes [all things] so that there is nothing separate from it. It establishes the sun and moon, wind and rain, to harmonize things. It regulates yin and yang, cold and heat, to complete things. Thus the sages emulated Heaven in establishing the Way. With universal love and free from selfish desires, they spread their bounty and displayed their humaneness to benefit [the people.] ...Speaking from this perspective, the verifications of Heaven in the human world are principles that endure from antiquity to the present. When Confucius composed the *Spring and Autumn*, he planned it with regard to the Way of Heaven above and substantiated it with regard to the sentiments of humankind below. He compared [its accounts] with ancient practices and tested them against the present. Therefore, [conduct] that the *Spring and Autumn* condemned engendered anomalies. [Conduct] that the *Spring and Autumn* despised gave rise to disasters. Confucius recorded the faults of the states and related them to various

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<sup>75</sup>Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, *Luxuriant Gems of The Spring and Autumn*, trans. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major (New York, NY: Columbia Press University, 2016), p. 623.

anomalous and disastrous transformations to demonstrate that no matter how good or how evil, the actions of human beings pervade and penetrate Heaven and Earth, and past and future respond to one another. Such is the paramount principle of Heaven.<sup>76</sup>

Your servant respectively notes that the *Spring and Autumn* scrutinized affairs that occurred in an earlier age to draw conclusions about the mutual interaction between Heaven and humankind. Truly, it is something to hold in awe. When a state is about to suffer a defeat because [the ruler] has strayed from the proper path, Heaven first sends forth disastrous and harmful [signs] to reprimand and warn him. If the [ruler] does not know to look into himself [in response], then Heaven again sends forth strange and bizarre [signs] to frighten and startle him. If he still does not know [that he should] change, only then will he suffer ruin and defeat. From this, we observe that Heaven's heart is humane and loving toward the people's ruler and that Heaven desires to keep him from chaos.<sup>77</sup>

According to Dong's theory that Heaven and man were correlated with each other, the sovereign—a human being—was able to play a role that should not be neglected in the social administration even though Heaven was unchallengeable predominant in the course of history. To a certain extent, even Heaven would recognize the inevitability of historical change. Dong's explanation in regard to this point read,

Similarly, when governmental policies are enacted but they prove ineffective, in serious cases it is necessary to change and reform them before they can be set in good order. When one must restring [an instrument] and fails to do so, then even a gifted artist cannot make the tuning correct. When one must reform [the government] but fails to do so, then even a great and worthy ruler cannot govern well. Therefore, since the Han obtained the empire, it has constantly desired to govern well, but up to the present day it has failed to accomplish this because it did not reform when it was appropriated to do so.<sup>78</sup>

Thanks to Dong's novel approach, the traditional theory of Mandate was reformulated to be more flexible and adaptable. Consequently, as an interpretive tool, the innovatively-reformulated theory could be applied to both the fall of old dynasties and the rise of new ones. When Gu was writing "Tianwen zhi 天文志" (Treatise on astronomy) for *Hanshu*, he had his elaborations totally based on the thought of Dong Zhongshu. In the first paragraph of the treatise, Gu wrote,

[If a sovereign] politically makes a fault at one point, there, accordingly, will be a change at another. The situation resembles the shadow that is in harmony with the body, or the echo that is in concert with the original sound. The truly sagacious sovereign will be enlightened [by such natural phenomena], so that he treats the politics in a more accurate and more cautious manner, and sincerely and seriously rethinks the faults he made. In doing so, the calamities will be warded off and blessings brought about. In this sense, [the perfect harmony existing between body and shadow and between sound and echo] is Nature's omen [heralding something auspicious.]

Here, Gu set an example that was followed by later historians who were responsible for writing the treatise on astronomy for *zhengshi*, or the formal, standard and orthodox history.

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 636–637.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 621–622.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 627.

Second, Dong's thinking advocates the idea of Grand Unification embodied in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and justifies the feudal hierarchy. Dong had asserted, "The *Spring and Autumn* magnifies unified rule. This is the eternal warp thread binding together Heaven and Earth and the penetrating righteousness pervading the past and the present."<sup>79</sup> Then, the thinker went further, elaborating the concepts of nature and disposition and the significance of the feudal hierarchy, moralization and punishment to the society. Dong's elaboration read,

Heaven's command is called the "Mandate." Without a sage, the Mandate cannot be implemented. The unadorned substance [of a living creature] is called the "nature." Without transformation through moral instruction, the nature cannot be perfected. Human desire is called the "disposition." Without limiting regulations, the disposition cannot be moderated. For this reason, with regard to what lies above, the king is careful to recognize the intentions of Heaven in order to comply with Heaven's Mandate. With regard to what lie below, the king strives to enlighten his people by means of transformation through moral instruction in order to complete their nature. He rectifies the suitability of the various laws and measures and establishes the hierarchy of superior and inferior in order to guard against [unrestrained] desires. If the ruler cultivate these three, the great root will be promoted.<sup>80</sup>

Dong implied that the effort to put entire feudal rule and hierarchy in order was perfectly in accord with Heaven's Intention.

Third, the core of the idea of historical movement lies in the Way's invariability in line with the immutability of Heaven. Dong held that history evolved in accordance with the Three Orthodoxies and societies in the history had either simple or refined nature. For example, the Xia dynasty valued so much the virtue of loyalty; Shang, respectfulness; and Zhou, refinement. Despite differences existing among dynasties in the antiquity, the Way, which unchallengedly dominated the course of history, did not change at all. Dong's elaboration read,

The great source of the Way emanates from Heaven. Heaven does not change; the way also does not change. Thus, when Yu succeeded Shun and Shun succeeded Yao, these three sages received and safeguarded the same way. There were no policies [needed] to repair flaws, and so there is no discussion of what they diminished and what they augmented. Looking at the issue from this perspective, for a ruler who succeeds a well-governed age, the way remains the same. For a ruler who succeeds a chaotic age, the Way changes.<sup>81</sup>

On the one hand, there was not even the slightest change in the Way, because all under Heaven in the past and the present did not differ from each other. On the other hand, inasmuch as there were the chaotic times, which were generated by the changing Way, the Way did change. The history was nothing but the alternations of stable and chaotic times. In this regard, the present author does not agree with the opinion that Dong Zhongshu exclusively advocated the thought of a static nature. Contrary to the general idea, Dong actually placed emphasis on a dynamic process—that is, *history*. The historical movement, Dong held, consisted in the adherence/

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 644.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 637–638.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 641.

preservation and deterioration of the Way, as well as in the consequent alternations of stable and chaotic societies. But, it should be pointed out that Dong recognized only one type of change, viz., that the change that was in accord with Heaven's Intention. Meanwhile, Dong did not think the emergence of a chaotic times was in harmony with the basic requirement of the Way, even though the chaotic times factually and historically existed. Therein lay Dong's unspoken words—the historical movement was finally determined by Heaven's Intention and the perpetual feudal ruling order could always be resiliently rehabilitated.

The present author does not intend to analyze the Master Dong's thinking. Rather, he just wants to show that Dong ideologically inspired Gu to such an extent that the later included a huge number of the former's theoretical threads into his *Hanshu* and conscientiously venerated Dong's thinking as the most authoritative and most orthodox Confucianism at that time. In the "Eulogy" at the end of "The Life of Dong Zhongshu" in *Hanshu*, Gu concisely appraised leading Confucians including Dong Zhongshu in the Former Han. His appraisal of Dong read,

Zhongshu encountered the aftermath of Qin's destruction of learning, [the effects of which were] inherited by the Han. The Six Classics had been torn asunder. [Yet] with lowered curtain, he expressed his ardor, diligently pursuing his grand thinking, enabling future scholars to enjoy [the classical learning] he had gathered into one and unified.

Interestingly, although Sima Qian had studied classics under the instruction of Dong Zhongshu and thought very highly of the Master, he was much less enthusiastic about the dissemination of Dong's thought. By contrast, Ban Gu spent much more time and energy propagandizing Dong's intellectual threads, because the two were ideologically in tune with each other. Specifically, if nothing else, Dong's theoretical elaborations with respect to the correlation of Heaven and man laid the most fundamental ideological foundation of Gu's mission advertising Han.

In the concluding mark devoted to the life of the enfeoffed King Yuan of Chu, Ban Gu prepared a general description of the intellectual history since the death of Confucius. His encapsulation read,

After the demise of Confucius, there was a huge pool of scholars, among whom only Mencius, Sun Kuang 孙况 (i.e. Xunzi), Dong Zhongshu, Sima Qian, Liu Xiang and Yang Xiong [were worth raising.] The six scholars were unexceptionally well learned and informed and the masters of past and present, so that their writings were all conducive to the society. ... [For example,] Liu Xiang authored *Da zhuan* 大传 (Great interpretive texts devoted to *Shangshu*), expounding the mutual responses between Heaven and man. In addition, he [and Liu Xin, his son] collaboratively produced *Qilüe* 七略 (Seven categories) whereby the teachings of multitudinous intellectual schools could be put into due order; and [his son] made *Santong lipu* 三统历谱 (Calendar in line with the alternations of Three Orthodoxies), inquiring into the movements of the Sun, the Moon and Five Stars. [Authors of these writings] aspired to expound most profoundly the deepest Great Root. ("Chu Yuan wang zhuan 楚元王传" [The Life of King Yuan of Enfeoffed Chu], Chapter 36, in *Hanshu*)

Besides, Gu summarized Han scholars' discussions of Five Virtues in "Jiaosi zhi 郊祀志" (Treatise on sacrificial matters). According to Gu's summarization, in the early Former Han Zhang Cang 张苍 (253–152 BC), who was a senior minister in charge of the work formulating various legal and administrative institutions, asserted that the Han dynasty was the embodiment of Virtue of Water. Later, Gongsun Chen and Jia Yi contended that it was not the Water but the Earth that virtuously marked

the dynasty. In the late Former Han, due to Liu Xiang and his son's efforts, the symbolic mark was shifted from Earth to Fire whereby the dynasty was interconnected with the reign of sagacious Yao. The present author holds that such a Five-Virtue-cyclically-alternated theory was, however, created by Dong Zhongshu.

In one of sections entitled "Sandai gaizhi zhiwen pian 三代改制质文篇" (The Three Dynasties' Alternating Regulations of Simplicity and Refinement) in his *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 (*Luxuriant Gems of The Spring and Autumn*), Dong Zhongshu combined the theories of mutual engendering and mutual overcoming of Five Elements into one, successfully bridging the Former Han and the reign of Emperor Yao by designating both reigns as the embodiments of Virtue of Fire.<sup>82</sup> According to "Sui Hong zhuan 眭弘传" (The life of Sui Hong) in *Hanshu*, Dong even arguably asserted that the ruling Liu Family was the descendant of Emperor Yao and the chosen heir to the Mandate of Heaven. On the basis of Dong's system of cyclical alternations of Five Virtues, whereby the ruling Liu Family's heirship of Yao's reign was mystically and divinely justified, Liu Xin went further, fabricating a more complete cycle.<sup>83</sup> Apart from Liu Xin, Ban Gu in *Baihu tongyi* ideologically extended and theologized Dong's thinking. The chapter entitled Five Elements in *Baihu tongyi* made clear the complete mutual engendering course—viz., that Wood generates Fire; Fire, Earth; Earth, Metal; Metal, Water; and Water, Wood, and the mutual overcoming course—Water triumphs over Fire; Fire over Metal; Metal over Wood; Wood over Earth; and, Earth over Water. Furthermore, the chapter entitled "San zheng 三正" (Three rectifications) explicitly stated that the Three Orthodoxies—that is, the Black (symbolizing the reign of Xia), White (symbolizing the reign of Shang), and Red (symbolizing the reign of Zhou)—smoothly alternated one after another. Finally, in *Hanshu* Gu had the Dong-inspired thinking and historical facts perfectly fused into one.

Ban Gu's idea of advertising Han was actually a syncretism of various thoughts. In the syncretic system, the basic theory of correlation of Heaven and man and idea of historical movement were based on Dong Zhongshu's thinking and Liu Xiang's—as well as his son's—furthered perfection; and his father's treatise entitled "On the sovereign's Mandate of Heaven" directly influenced Gu's ideological elaborations. Where the writing of *Hanshu* was concerned, stylistically, Gu straightly borrowed his father's experimental writing. Moreover, the writing of "Treatise on Five Elements" in *Hanshu* was obviously inspired by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin, though Gu himself was reticent about the two Liu's opinions. And, the widely cited "Yiwen zhi" (Treatise on literature) was evidently an extension of the two Lius' *Qilüe*. In addition, both Ban Biao and Ban Gu accepted the dual-natured idea developed by Yang Xiong, who criticized that not only was the writing of *Shiji* discordant with that of the Sage but it also deviated from the established orthodoxy of Confucian classics ("Yang Xiong zhuan 扬雄传" (The life of Yang Xiong), Chapter 87, in

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 241–255.

<sup>83</sup>Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚, "Wude zhongshi shuo xia de zhengzhi he lishi 五德终始说下的政治和历史" (The politics and history in the perspectives of cyclical alternations of Five Virtues), in Gu Jiegang ed., *Gushi bian* 古史辨 [Polemics regarding the ancient Chinese history] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), vol. 5, pp. 404–635.

*Hanshu*). In a nutshell, Ban Gu's idea of advertising Han was like one piece of assemblage, in which the theoretical elaboration of correlative relationship of Heaven and man was predominant. But on the other hand, inasmuch as Gu fail to create his own idea on the basis of the complete fusion of differing thoughts, the theory of correlation of Heaven and humankind could by no means successfully penetrate entire volumes of *Hanshu*. In comparison with Sima Qian's *Shiji*, Gu's masterwork was much more theoretically dual-natured and eclectic.

Even in the two Ban's explorations of the reason of the Former Han's fall, the father and the son still tried their best to advertising good points of the collapsed dynasty. The reigns of the Emperors Yuan 元, Cheng 成, Ai 哀 and Ping 平 constituted the Former Han's last phase, wherein the social contradictions were so exacerbated that the peasants even could not live a subsistence lifestyle. Bao Xuan 鮑宣 (?–3 BC), a high officer in the reign of Emperor Ai, sharply pointed out that not only did the commoners have to confront seven types of natural and man-made calamities and could gain nothing but they also have to embrace death in seven kinds of circumstances and found no way out. Nevertheless, in the two Ban's writings the last four emperors of the Former Han were still enlightened highest lords. For example, descriptions about the Emperor Yuan in the “Basic Annals” penned by Ban Biao read,

In eulogy we say: The elder and younger brothers of your servant, [Pan Piao's (i.e. Ban Biao 班彪)], maternal grandfather, were Emperor Yuan's Palace Attendants, and spoke to your servant, saying, “Emperor Hsüan [i.e. Yuan] had much ability in polite arts and was good at the clerly [style of] writing, at playing the guitar and lute, and at blowing the open flute.” He himself composed new songs, clothed them with melodies for singing... When he was young, he liked the Confucians, and when he ascended the throne, he summoned and gave office to Confucian masters, entrusting the government to them. Kung [Yu, (i.e. Gong Yu 貢禹), Hsieh [Kuang-te, (i.e. Xue Guangde 薛广德), Wei [Hsüan-ch'eng, (i.e. Wei Yuancheng 韦元成), and K'uang [Heng, 匡衡 (i.e. Kuang Heng)] were successively his ruling chancellors. The Emperor, however, tied and controlled himself by written principles, so that he hesitated to settle matters, and thus the achievements of [Emperor] Hsiao-hsüan (i.e. Xiao-Xuan 孝宣) decayed. Yet he was broad-minded and had his inferiors express themselves completely. He was outstanding in respectfulness and self-restraint. His proclamations and ordinances are polished and elegant, and have the spirit and fire of the ancients.<sup>84</sup>

In the historian's eyes, the Emperor Yuan merely had one disadvantage—that is, the hesitation caused by his adherence to the written principles. But, despite the brilliant historian's painstaking defence, readers still felt ridiculous, in particular taking into consideration the fact that the restoration fulfilled by the Emperors Xiao and Xuan did evaporate into thin air even under the circumstances that the Emperor Yuan was well learned, tolerant, broadminded and self-restrained.

In the case of Emperor Cheng, Ban Biao in the “Basic Annals” regarded him as a real treasure even though the Emperor “gave himself up to wine and women.”<sup>85</sup> Biao's “Eulogy” dedicated the Emperor Cheng read,

<sup>84</sup>Ban Ku 班固, *The History of The Former Han Dynasty*, trans. Homer H. Dubs (The American Council of Learned Society, 1944), vol. 2, pp. 336–338.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 418.

Your servant [Pan Piao's (i.e. Ban Biao)] paternal aunt was given a place in the [imperial] harem and became a Favorite Beauty; her father, [Pan K'ung (i.e. Ban Kuang 班况)], his sons and her brothers waited [upon the Emperor] in his private apartments, and frequently said to your servant, "Emperor Ch'eng [i.e. Cheng] was good at cultivating his deportment and appearance. 'When he mounted his chariot, he stood upright, he did not look around, he did not speak hastily, he did not point with his hands.' When he attended court, he was profound and silent, dignified and grave like a god, so that it might be [truly] said, Majestic is the bearing of the Son of Heaven. He read widely on [both] ancient and present matters, and received frank discourse indulgently." His ministers were worthy of their positions, and their memorials and discussions are worthy of being transmitted [to posterity.] He happened upon an age which inherited a peaceful condition, when the superior and his inferiors were in concord.<sup>86</sup>

There were indeed something self-contradictory in Biao's comments. Apart from Biao, Sima Guang 司马光, the leading historian of the Northern Song dynasty, held that the Emperor was merely a wary keeper.

When it comes to the Emperor Ai, who died in his twenties, Ban Gu, the author of "Basic Annals" of Ai, portrayed him as an impeccable sovereign. According to Gu's delineation of Emperor Ai's achievements, the young highest lord of entire China acted moderately, respectfully and thriftily, imposed restrictions on big land owners' excessive appropriation of farmland, and resolutely executed Xia Heliang 夏贺良, a necromancer presumptuously advocating heterodox prophecies. In the "Eulogy" dedicated to the Emperor Ai, Gu commended,

[The Emperor's] vocabulary was large and intelligent, [so that even when] he was young, he [had already] obtained a good renown. He observed the period of [Emperor] Hsiao-ch'eng [Xiaocheng 孝成], when blessings left the imperial house and [the Emperor's] power was transferred to his maternal [relatives.] For this reason, when [Emperor Ai] attended court, he frequently executed his great officials, seeking to strengthen the might of the ruler and to imitate [Emperors] Wu and Hsüan [Xuan 宣.] In his nature he did not care for music or women.<sup>87</sup>

In the "Eulogy" to the Emperor Ping, the last sovereign of the Former Han, Ban Gu even did not say anything critical. In Gu's conclusion of Wang Mang's unorthodox and illegal seizure of power from the ruling Liu Family, the historian asserted that the reason of such a drastic power reconfiguration lay in the decline of the central power rather in the usurper's crafty. To be specific, it was the Empress Dowager Wang's monopoly on the political power that made the reign morally and politically corrupt. As regards the ultimate total collapse of Wang Mang's regime, Gu ascribed it to the Heaven-ordained Sage King's purifying effort. Gu's analyses read,

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 417–418.

<sup>87</sup>Ban Ku 班固, *The History of The Former Han Dynasty*, trans. Homer H. Dubs (Baltimore, MD: Waverly Press, 1955), vol. 3. For the quotation, <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=xwomen/texts/hanshu.xml&style=xwomen/xsl/dynaxml.xsl&chunk.id=d2.49&toc.depth=1&toc.id=0&doc.lang=bilingual>.



Since [Wang] Mang did not [possess] benevolence, but had a talent for flattery and evil and also took advantage of the power his four uncles, [Wang Feng 王凤, Wang Yin 王音, Wang Shang 王商, and Wang Ken 王根, had exercised for] successive generations, and [because] it happened that the Han [dynasty] became weak in the midst [of its period] and the dynastic succession was thrice broken, so that in her old age the Empress Dowager [nee Wang] became the mistress of the [imperial] clan, hence [Wang Mang] was able to give free rein to his viciousness and thereby to bring to pass the calamity of his usurpation [of the throne.] If we speak of [the situation by] investigating it from this [aspect], it was a time [set by] Heaven and not brought about by human effort. ... [For rebellious and evil men like Wang Mang, they] were both “dragons [who had flown] too high” and whose breath was cut off, which was not the destiny [originally bestowed upon them by Heaven’s] decree. They were [like] a purple color or a croaking sound, or the leftover minutes [that are given] the place of an intercalation, which are driven out by a sage-king.<sup>88</sup>

After the complete downfall of Wang Mang, Liu Xiu, the founding emperor of the Later Han, rose by degrees to power. It was also determined by Heaven. In a word, Gu’s mission advertising Han was theoretically based on the Heavenly-Mandate-themed view of history and predominantly carried out by distorting the historical actuality.

To a certain extent, the historiographical layout of a history book perfectly gives expression to the author’s idea of history. In this sense, the historical periodization that was applied to *Hanshu* by Ban Gu was exactly used to meet the needs of the Han-advertising mission. But on the other hand, although *Hanshu* as a whole focused exclusively on the history of the Former Han, some treatises and tables were actually more retrospective and extensive. Even so, they chiefly served as the tools whereby Gu could more convincingly transmit his basic ideas. Besides the reformulated periodization, the fundamental stylistic rearrangement in *Hanshu* made the masterpiece be much more suitable for the work venerating the Confucian Six Classics and advocating the Great Way governing the historical movements. To be specific, Gu reduced Sima Qian’s five basic styles of historical narratives—that is, the *benji* (basic annals), *liezhuan* (biographies/memoirs), *shijia* (hereditary houses), *nianbiao* (chronological tables) and *shu* (treatises)—down to four styles by deleting *shijia*, which was regarded as a defiance of the unique orthodoxy and authority of sovereign; and downplayed the significance of rebellious leaders such as Chen Sheng, who lead the peasant revolt toppling down the powerful Qin Empire and then encapsulated Chen’s deeds into the much less prestigious *liezhuan*. Due to such an ideological reorganizations, *Hanshu* was successfully turned into a tool fulfilling the mission advertising Han.

### (3) *Hanshu*’s spirit of veritably recording history

The present author proposes several criteria, whereby whether a history book is a *veritable record* can be judged. First, does the book record what took place in the past strictly according to facts? The author of a true *veritable record* will include

<sup>88</sup>Ibid. For the quotation, <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=xwomen/texts/hanshu.xml&style=xwomen/xsl/dynaxml.xml&chunk.id=d2.58&toc.depth=1&toc.id=0&doc.lang=bilingual>.

not only the stability and prosperity of a society but also the society's darkness and corruption into his or her narratives. In doing so, the historian can display his or her deep and enlightening understanding of social contradictions. Therein actually lies a much higher aspiration for historians devoting themselves to the *veritable record*. Second, does the book truthfully reflect every aspect of the past societies and reexamine the past from a much broader and loftier perspective? The veritable-record-style history keeps an account of a specific event as it really is, as well all of aspects of social life as they really are. Third, does the book critically and rigorously do textual research and do groundbreaking studies with a view to reconstructing historical actuality?

In answer to such fundamental questions, one tendency is not desirable. Such a paranoid tendency believes that only when a history book focuses exclusively on exposing the dark side of a society will it be truly the *veritable record*. It is, however, ridiculous if the entire human history is totally portrayed as something dark and completely devoid of light. Such a *dark* history is undoubtedly false. The historian with the aspiration to represent a totally dark history of humankind is diametrically against the true spirit of *veritable record*. History must be truthfully reconstructed. In most cases, the prosperity of a certain society should not be exaggerated in the historical narratives. In particular, a conscientious historian should never use the apparent prosperity to conceal the social crisis and contradiction, just as Ban Gu said neither the artificial glorification nor the concealment of vices was acceptable in the mission writing history. In the feudal China, it was quite a hard job for historians to veritably record what took place in the past and was happening at present, let alone fearlessly exposing social problems and contradictions. Under such circumstances, historians who aspired to watchfully observe hidden omens of decline in the gilded prosperity of a rising dynasty by interconnecting prosperity and decline in the historical perspective must put more effort.

It is much easier to advocate the *veritable record*; but meanwhile, the fulfilment of the aspiration to veritably record history is almost a mission impossible in practice. A historian must write history from *a certain* perspective, and with *a certain* viewpoint. He or she must make his or her own judgment about social phenomena and events of every hue. In doing so, he or she develops *a* conviction concerning history and reality. It is such an acquired conviction that determines whether a historian is able to truthfully reconstruct and objectively interpret the past. It should also be pointed out that a historian's will to truthfully record history is actually not always consistent with his or her ability to truthfully record history, and vice versa. In this sense, Ban Gu's scholarship in history was almost *schizophrenic*. When he aspired to fulfill the mission advertising Han in his writings, Gu frequently exaggerated the stability and prosperity of the Han Empire and un/intentionally distorted some historical facts in defence of the reign. Such an unfair treatment of history had been severely criticized by Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217–278 AD), one of the leading poets and writers in the late Later Han and early Western Jin 晋 (Chapter 5, in *Yilin* 意林 (The forest of enlightening ideas)). In view of this, we might say, to a certain extent, Gu fulfilled the mission advertising Han at

the cost of the spirit of *veritable record*. Despite it, *Hanshu* as a whole was still the heir to *Shiji* and an embodiment of the spirit of *veritable record*.

First, Ban Gu veritably reconstructed the complete historical course of the Former Han in *Hanshu*. According to “Xuzhuan 叙传” (Postscript to *Hanshu*), or the last chapter of Gu’s masterwork, *Hanshu* began with the story of the founding emperor of the Former Han and ended in the demise of Emperor Ping and totally collapse of Wang Mang’s regime, covering a complete historical period spanning two hundred and thirty years and consisting of twelve reigns. Additionally, the “Postscript” pointed out that the orthodoxy embodied in Confucian Five classics was injected into the book’s comprehensive narratives of events and the superiors and inferiors in history were consequently put into a harmonious order. Finally, the “Postscript” concluded the value and significance of *Hanshu* as a veritable history. The confident conclusion read,

[*Hanshu* veritably] reconstructs reigns of past sovereigns; diagrammatically displays imperial agencies and official positions; delineates genealogical changes among enfeoffed lords; rectifies the knowledge about Heaven and Earth; examines [deeds of sovereigns] in the light of changes taking place in the *yin-yang* forces; interprets the origin of a myriad of things; calculates the movements of the Sun, the Moon and stars; explore differing regions; observes regional differences in the soil quality; exhaust the most basic principles of human ethics; includes all things in descriptions of sacrificial activities; safeguards the established orthodoxy of the Confucian Six Classics; expounds the Great Way and cardinal principles; narrates stories of prominent figures of all shades; and appraises the recorded characters and events in the historical perspective. Overall, the book [of *Hanshu*] embodies decent and correct interpretations [of history]; sheds enlightening light on past and the present; rectifies the written languages; and inevitably becomes one of the sources of scholarly endeavors.

Thus, in comparison with *Shiji*, which was renowned for its aspiration for the thorough understanding of changes taking place in past and present, *Hanshu* not only inherited the basic spirit of *Shiji* but, most importantly, endeavored to grasp changes in the entire span of a certain dynasty.

In Ban Gu’s eyes, the two-hundred-thirty-year-history of the Former Han was a *process* brimming with alternating cycles of prosperity and decline. In his *Hanshu*, the “Basic Annals” and “Memoirs” were actually the heirs to their counterparts in *Shiji*, so that the intellectual core of the writings lay in the observation of alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. Besides “Annals” and “Memoirs,” the eight “Chronological Tables” in *Hanshu* were also embodiments of Gu’s aspiration for the thorough understanding of the causation and mutual transformations of prosperity and decline. In particular, Gu critically rethought the prosperity and decline pertaining to the Former Han in the context embodying all changes in the entire course of past and present. Such a type of historical inquiry into changes of a certain dynasty from the perspective of entire history could be found “Yixing zhuhouwang biao 异姓诸侯王表” (Table of dukes bearing the surname other than that of the ruling family), “Zhuhou wang biao 诸侯王表” (Table of dukes bearing the surname of the ruling family), “Gao Hui Gaohou Wen gongchen biao 高惠高后文功臣表” (Table of meritorious officials in the reigns of the founding emperor, Emperor Hui, Empress Dowager Lü and Emperor Wen), “景

武昭宣元成功臣表” (Table of meritorious officials in the reigns of Emperors Jing, Wu, Zhao, Xuan, Yuan and Cheng), “外戚恩泽侯表” (Table of marquises from families of imperial consorts), “百官公卿表” (Table of ranks of nobility and imperial governmental positions) and “古今人表” (Table of prominent figures in past and present) in *Hanshu*. It is particularly worth mentioning that “Yixing zhuhouwang biao,” which began with the rise of Xia and ended in the extinguishment of enfeoffed lords in the reign of Emperor Wen of the Former Han, was an embodiment of Gu’s effort to inherit and carry forward Sima Qian’s spirit of thoroughly examining alternating cycles of prosperity and decline. Additionally, in “Zhuhou wang biao,” Gu particularly implied that the history greatly changed thrice—that is, the Qin Empire’s abolishment of the eight-hundred-year-long system of enfeoffment, the newly-born Former Han’s excessive effort to rehabilitate the abolished system of enfeoffment, and the decline of enfeoffed kings due to the crackdown of the Rebellion of the Seven States and the ultimate plebification of enfeoffed aristocrats in the early and later Former Han respectively. Gu had stated that his goal of compiling tables was to admonitorily shed light on the alternations of strength and weakness. He did achieve it. Digging into Gu’s tables, readers were indeed able to clearly see the rise and fall of prominent ministers in the Former Han.

In “Baiguan gongqing biao,” Gu displayed changes in the bureaucratic system since the remote antiquity wherein sage kings such as Fuxi, the Divine Farmer and the Yellow Emperor reigned over all under Heaven. When it comes to the significant changes taking place in the bureaucratic hierarchy in the late (Eastern) Zhou, Gu made wonderful remarks. Gu’s words read,

Since the time when Zhou had already been on low ebb, the ranks of nobility and governmental offices were descending into chaos. It was at that time that princely states were violently contending with each other and undergoing huge changes. Finally, Qin successfully annexed all rival states and set up its reign over all under Heaven. Then the sovereign of Qin innovatively reformulated his title into “Huangdi 皇帝” (lit. the Grandest Lord, or Emperor) and established imperial governmental positions of all forms. When Qin was replaced with Han, the later inherited the fallen empire’s imperial title and bureaucratic system and did not make any changes to them with a view to achieving a simple and adaptable politics. Later, significant revisions had been done to the established systems of rank and position. Then, Wang Mang usurped the throne of Han and put his lavish admiration for ancient titles of nobility and governmental offices into practice. Nevertheless, both imperial and local officials and commoners felt uncomfortable [to such vintage institutions]; and meanwhile the rule of Wang Mang was increasingly despotic. At last the usurpative regime totally collapsed. [In view of this, the author of *Hanshu*] in the Table lists primary titles of nobility and governmental offices and sheds light on the significant changes taking place in past and present, in the hope that the new knowledge can be acquired by studying the old ones.

Gu implied that there were three types of change in the bureaucratic system—that is, amendatory changes made by princely states themselves, creative changes made by the unified Qin empire, and adjustmental changes made by the new Han dynasty. Besides, the historian attempted to show what caused these changes and how these changes influenced the history.

Among *Hanshu*'s inventory of treatises, "Yiwen zhi," or the *Treatise on Literature*, was actually a systematic observation of the scholarly origin and changes, most intensively embodying Ban Gu's aspiration for a thorough understanding of alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. Where the *Treatise*'s specific contents are concerned, not only did it show that how the Chinese scholarship emerged, grew and changed in the pre- and early imperial China but it also displayed the origin and evolution of specific genres of scholarship. For example, it portrayed the big picture of Chinese scholarship in the period spanning from the death of Confucius down to the reign of Emperor Wu of Former Han. Gu's portrayal read,

When Confucius passed away, the subtlest interpretation of the most profound meaning of Confucian classics silenced; and to make matters worse, the grandest principle of righteousness was misinterpreted and misrepresented due to the demise of seventy distinguished disciples of Confucius. As a consequence, the scholarship devoted to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was pentachotomized; that to *Book of Poetry*, quatrochotomized; and that to *Book of Changes*, heterogenized. In the Warring States era, there was an increasingly heterogeneous and heterodoxy intellectual world, wherein the false and genuine scholarship were contending with each other and thoughts of the master of intellectual schools of every hue were confusing and disordered. The unified Qin Empire was troubled by such growing intellectual and scholarly chaos. For this reason, it took measures to destroy heterodox writings with a view to making the mind of the people simple and pure. When the Former Han rose to power, it abandoned Qin's failed policies restraining the scholarship and worked hard instead to collect extant writings as many as possible, as well as encouraging the commoners to donate books voluntarily and without reservation to the imperial library. Despite such candid efforts, by the time of the Emperor Wu's reign the literature as a whole was still incomplete and the established system of rituals was full of loop holes. The Emperor was disappointed at seeing this and sighed, "I feel so regretful!" Thus, he ordered concerned ministers and agencies to compile a systematic and complete catalogue of all types of existing written literature and appointed imperial officials to be in charge of the work collecting and transcribing extant books. The collection of the reign of Emperor Wu was all-embracing, viz., that even writings such as legends, tales and treatises/monographs of unorthodox intellectual schools were included into the Forbidden Imperial Library.

The quotation succinctly delineated the alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in the Chinese scholarship. Meanwhile, each specific genre of scholarship witnessed its own changes as time went on. Most importantly, changes in the scholarship were closely related to changes in the politics. Obviously, Ban Gu's *Yiwen zhi* was inspired by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin's *Qilüe* and *Bielu* 别录 (A separate comprehensive catalogue). Gu's effort to absorb and remold the two Lius' works gave expression to his understanding of *history as process*.

Second, *Hanshu* provided a panoramic view of the social life and concerned changes in the Former Han dynasty. In "Basic Annals" and "Memoirs," having all narratives revolved round the deeds of sovereigns, Gu depicted figures of every shade—emperors, members from families of imperial consorts, ministers, scholars, and so on—in the Former Han. Apart from politicians and learned people, renowned wandering knights and money makers were also included into the historian's reconstruction of the history of Former Han, though in comparison with their counterparts in *Shiji* such alternative figures were represented in a differing

ideological context. It is particularly worth mentioning *Hanshu's* ten “zhi,” or *Treatises*, all of which vividly displayed the Former Han’s socio-politico-economic life. Each *Treatise* focused on a special aspect of Han’s social life. Ban Gu’s ten *Treatises* exerted deep and far-reaching influence on the Chinese historiography. The section of “zhi” of *zhengshi*, or the formal, standard and orthodox history, in each dynasty in the post-Han China was stylistically based on Gu’s *Treatises*. Even the encyclopedic and critically analytic compilations of institutions through all ages—*Tongdian* 通典 (The encyclopedic collections of imperial institutions), *Wenxian tongkao* 文献通考 (A comprehensive examination of existing literature), for instance—were actually an extension of Gu’s ten *Treatises*. A brief introduction to the ten *Treatises* (excluding “Yiwen zhi”) is as follows.

“Jiaosi zhi” (Treatise on sacrificial matters) and “Wuxing zhi” (Treatise on Five Elements) were part and parcel of the tenpartite system of *Hanshu*-style *zhi*. Not only did both speak out Ban Gu’s idea of history but they also displayed the social life as it really was. Moreover, both clearly demonstrated that the idea of mystical mutual response between Heaven and man really played a predominant role in the intellectual and scholarly communities. “Tianwen zhi 天文志” (Treatise on astronomy) and “Lüli zhi 律历志” (Treatise on musical notes/tubes and calendric issues) were conducive to the agricultural production. Besides it, both reflected the scientific and technological innovations and the influence of theological theories on natural sciences at that time. “Liyue zhi 礼乐志” (Treatise on rituals and music) and “Xingfa zhi 刑法志” (Treatise on penal codes) included basic feudal institutions of the Former Han. It is particularly worth mentioning that “Xingfa zhi” was the brainchild of Ban Gu and devoted to the delineation of laws—including military laws—since the decline of the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770–255 BC).

“Shihuo zhi” 食货志 (Treatise on foods and goods) was actually a groundbreaking effort made by Ban Gu to explore the relation of economic growth and historical development. At the very beginning of the *Treatise*, Gu said,

According to the “Great Plan” [of *Shangshu*], among the eight most basic political elements, the first is *food* and the second *goods*. The *food* refers predominantly to the agricultural work and its productions that can be consumed by the people; and the *goods*, to cloths and silks that can be used to produce apparels and gold, metal and shell currencies whereby the commercial exchange and circulation of wealth can be made possible. The two elements constitute the underlying foundation of the people’s livelihood and have been attached much greater importance since the remote reign of Divine Farmer.

A society is based on foods and goods. In the feudal society, the agricultural production played a pivotal role in the survival and growth of a dynasty. In the *Treatise*, the land system and taxation were given top priority and discussed by the historian in the perspective that how changes taking place in the two fields directly influenced the alternation of prosperity and decline in a certain society. Gu also echoed this point in “Xuzhuan” (Postscript to *Hanshu*). If nothing else, the *Treatise* is a perfect embodiment of Gu’s excellent understanding of the historical movement.

“Gouxu zhi 沟洫志” (Treatise on canals) was an heir to “Hequ shu 河渠书” (Book of rivers and canals) in *Shiji*. Inheriting the spirit of Sima Qian, Ban Gu

highlighted the importance of irrigation works in the *Treatise*. In comparison with Qian, who pointed out that *river* was the crucial player in the agricultural production, Gu paid greater attention to the feasible programs building irrigation works. For example, he included Jia Rang's 贾让 three grand proposals of controlling rivers into the *Treatise*. Most importantly, Gu had already realized that the central government's performance in the effort to implement conservancy projects would directly influence a society's prosperity and decline. For example, he pinpointed the great role the Zheng Guo 郑国 Canal played in the rise of Qin Empire. Gu's enlightened perception of the relation of irrigation works and a dynasty's rise and fall even heralded Karl Marx's understanding of ancient Asiatic society. In one of his well-known articles—*The British Rule in India*, Marx opined,

There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of Government; that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior; that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and, finally, the department of Public Works. Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert, extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India, and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and water-works the basis of Oriental agriculture.<sup>89</sup>

In comparison with Marx's analysis in the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese historians such as Sima Qian explored the issue as early as two thousand years ago. It was really remarkable. For this reason, Ban Gu was exactly an heir to Sima Qian's spirit and practice.

“Dili zhi 地理志” (Treatise on geographical matters) was a very special type of historical narrative. It shed light on the regional differences in the population, social customs, local products, and, most importantly, the level of economic growth. The *treatise* embodied past concerned discussions on the role the economy and local products played in the work shaping the politics and social custom in a certain era. For example, Gu pointed out that in the Warring States era, apart from the general mood honoring the talented people, the success of a sovereign who aspired to be a hegemon must have his cause solidly based on the local economy. Of course, changes in the local economy would in turn significantly influence the general mood and politics of the state. Gu comparatively analyzed the differing development paths of Qi and Lu, both of which were significant princely states in present-day region of Shandong, vividly displaying his perception of the relationships existing among the geographical conditions, the local economy, the political reform and the social culture. Overall, the *Treatise* paid great attention to the discrepancies in the economy, culture and social customs among differing regions and dynamically reconstructed changes taking place in these fields.

Third, the history of the Former Han was reconstructed into a historical *process* of unified and multinational country in *Hanshu*. For this reason, it is safe to say that *Hanshu* was an heir to the tradition of *Shiji*. In “Xiongnu zhuan 匈奴传” (Memoir of Xiongnu (an ethnic group in the northern border area of China)), Ban Gu

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<sup>89</sup>Karl Marx, *The British Rule in India*, in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected works* (New York: International Publishers, 1979), vol. 12, p. 127.

specially included one of Yang Xiong's memorial to the throne. In his memorial, Yang admonished the sovereign to always pay attention to ethnic groups in the border area and try his best to nip things that would cause the border instability in the bud. Ban Gu even systematically concluded the Former Han's policy on Xiongnu affairs in the concluding "Eulogy" he penned for the *Memoir of Xiongnu* in *Hanshu*. His conclusion read,

From the rise of the Han, officials with sincere remonstrance and excellent plans presented and debated many proposals in court. In the time of Kao-tsu [Gaozu 高祖, the founding emperor], there was Liu Ching [Liu Jing 刘敬]; in the time of Empress Lü 吕, Fan K'uai [Fan Kuai 樊哙] and Chi Pu [Ji Bu 季布]; in the time of Wen [文] the Filial, Chia I [Jia Yi 贾谊] and Ch'ao Ts'o [Chao Cuo 晁错]; in the time of Wu [武] the Filial, Wang Hui [王恢], Han An-kuo [Han Anguo 韩安国], Chu Mai-ch'en [Zhu Maichen 朱买臣], Kung-sun Hung [Gongsun Hong 公孙弘], and Tung Chung-shu [Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒.] Each man held his own view, with points of similarity and differences, but when considering the essentials of their arguments, we find that they can be divided into two kinds, those of the scholars in red girdles who advocated ho-ch'in [heqin 和亲] (peaceful, fraternal relations) and those of the armed officers who advocated cheng-fa [zhengfa 征伐] (punitive military expeditions). All confined themselves to short-term considerations and failed to investigate [the affairs of] the Hsiung-nu [Xiongnu 匈奴] from beginning to end. The period from the rise of the Han to the present day is longer than the Ch'un-ch'iu [Chunqiu 春秋] [era.] As regards the Hsiung-nu, we used statecraft [to establish] ho-ch'in with them, and we used military force in punitive expeditions against them; we humbled ourselves and served them; we awed them into submission and nurtured them as subjects. Their influence contracted and expanded; they went from strength to weakness and back.<sup>90</sup>

The quotation revealed that Gu, a renowned historian, observed the question of Xiongnu—the advantages and disadvantages of the strategies of peaceful coexistence and punitive expedition in particular—from the perspective of thoroughly understanding historical changes. Similar ideas could also be found in other chapters of *Hanshu*. In "Xi'nanyi liangyue chaoxian zhuan 西南夷两粤朝鲜传" (Memoirs devoted to ethnic groups living in the southwest China, present-day Guangdong and Guangxi, and the Korean peninsula), Gu illuminated the significance of closer contact between ethnic groups. For example, ethnic communities living in the remote ancient Sichuan developed close commercial exchanges with other communities and consequently made themselves very rich. All in all, Gu held that the sovereign treat ethnic groups in the remote regions in accordance with proprieties and morally cherish them. In "Xiyu zhuan 西域传" (Memoirs devoted to ethnic groups living in the Western Region), he pointed out that the proper policies applying to the border areas in the reigns of the Emperors Wen and Jing greatly contributed to the stability and prosperity of the early Former Han. Historically, the prosperity and decline of China was in close relation to the central government's handling of border affairs. In this regard, Gu in "Xiao Wangzhi zhuan 萧望之传" (The life of Xiao Wangzhi) particularly praised the Former Han's reception of Huhanye 呼韩邪, the *chanyu* 单于 (chief leader) of tribes of Xiongnu.

<sup>90</sup>Ellis Tinios, "Sure Guidance for One's Own Time: Pan Ku and the Tsan to 'Han Shu' 94," *Early China*, vol. 9/10 (1983–1985), pp. 193–194.



According to *Hanshu*, when the *chanyu* was visiting the imperial court, the Han emperor gave him preferential treatment that even the prestigious enfeoffed lords could not enjoy. In Gu's eyes, the sovereign's practice was circumspect and far-sighted. To sum up, Gu's idea of Grand Unification and national thought interlinked with each other. To put it another way, the historian would not disagree with the idea that the Chinese history was a course wherein differing nationalities shared the common development and the Central Plains and border areas closely acted on each other.

Fourth, not only did Ban Gu delineate the Former Han's prosperity and its sovereigns' divine power but he also portrayed the brutal and exploitative rule of Han emperors. As regards Han emperors' rule, Gu's narratives were seemingly divided. On the one hand, the dark side of Han's rule was almost invisible in "Basic Annals" devoted to the emperors; but on the other hand, the truth of history could be found in "Shihuo zhi," or the *Treatise on Foods and Goods*, which amassed a large quantity of literature and analyzed the alternating cycles of prosperity and decline. For example, Gu in the *Treatise* sharply criticized that even in the reigns of the Emperors Wen and Jing, both of whom were regarded as the most enlightened sovereigns in the history of Former Han, there were the sad news that parents sold their children in order to survive and reports that the government corruptively sold ranks and titles for profit. In the reign of Emperor Wu, one of the most capable and most powerful emperors in the Chinese history, the Former Han was actually faced increasingly serious social crisis. Later, despite a slight rehabilitation done by the Emperor Xuan, the last four emperors—Yuan, Cheng, Ai and Ping—had to helplessly see the empire growing weaker and weaker. However, such an inevitable decline could not be found in "Basic Annals;" but instead, it was uncovered in some "Memoirs." For example, "Wang Mang zhuan 王莽传" (The life of Wang Mang) pointed out that the increasingly exacerbated land annexation had caused acute social problems. Concerned narratives in the *Memoirs* read,

The Han dynasty reduced and lightened the land tax, taking [only] one-thirtieth, [but in addition] there were regularly [required] conscript service and capitation-taxes, which [even] the sick and aged were all required to pay, while powerful common people encroached upon [the poor, letting their own] fields [out on] shares, robbing [people] by the rentals [required for their land, so that while] in name they were taxed only one-thirtieth, in reality they are taxed or pay as rent five-tenths of their produce. Fathers and sons, husbands and wives plowed and weeded for a whole year, [but] what they got was insufficient to keep themselves alive. Hence the horses and dogs of the rich had surplus beans and grain and [the rich] were proud and did evil, while the poor could not satiate themselves with brewer's grains, became destitute, and acted wickedly. Both [rich and poor] fell into crime, so that the punishments had to be employed and could not be set aside.<sup>91</sup>

Apart from the above worried portrayal the dauntless senior ministers such as Gong Yu 贡禹 (124–44 BC) even more boldly admonished that the popularity of

<sup>91</sup>Ban Ku, *The History of The Former Han Dynasty*, trans. Homer H. Dubs, vol. 3. For the quotation, <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=xwomen/texts/hanshu.xml&style=xwomen/xsl/dynaxml.xsl&chunk.id=d2.57&toc.depth=1&toc.id=0&doc.lang=bilingual>.

the reign among the people had been shaken. In one piece of memorial to the throne Gong severely criticized the reign's unrestrained extravagance. His criticism read,

Nowadays, each of the three imperial clothing agencies in the region of Qi [present-day Shandong] has several thousand employees respectively and invests tens of thousands of dollars in production. Enfeoffed lords in the regions of Shu and Guang (present-day Sichuan) spends five million each year manufacturing goldware and silverware. The annual budget of the three imperial workshops is as many as fifty million. The Eastern and Western imperial spinning mills' annual expenditures are similar to those of the three imperial workshops. Besides them, the imperial stable consumes as many as ten thousand *dan* (approximately 310,000 kilograms) of grains every year. I, a humble servant, had been one of the attendants when Your Majesty was visiting the Eastern Palace, where I saw myself the patterns of imperially-granted cups. On the surface of the cups, there are extremely exquisite paintings and gold and silver decorations. I do not think such highly elegant utensils be granted to humble officials as gifts. The expenditures of the Eastern Palace is, however, almost countless. Therein lies the reason why the people are starving to death. More astonishingly, some who died from starvation cannot be buried properly and their corpses are consequently eaten by wild dogs and swines. Most shockingly, there is an emerging cannibalism! By contrast, horses in the imperial stable eat too much, so that the keepers do worry that they will grow too fat and become irascible. For this reason, the keepers must walk the horses every day. How can a sovereign, who is endowed with the Mandate of Heaven and required to take care of the people as parents do to their children, act in such an indifferent manner? Is Heaven blind [to such circumstances]? ("Wang Gong liang Gong Bao zhuan 王贡两龚鲍传" (Lives of Wang Ji 王吉, Gong Yu, Gong Sheng 龚胜, Gong She 龚舍 and Bao Xuan), Chapter 72, in *Hanshu*)

Gong even criticized that in the period after the Emperor Wu, emulating the sovereigns who licentiously had thousands of concubines, quite a few wealthy officials and commoners kept as many as dozens of mistresses. In the same piece of "Memoirs," Bao Xuan, another conscientious imperial minister, distressingly revealed that under such circumstances the people had no alternative but to helplessly embrace seven types of tragic end. With profound grief and sorrow, Bao stated,

Under seven kinds of situation, the people are impoverished. First, there are floods and droughts due to the *yin* and *yang* forces that are in discord. Second, the county magistrates impose heavy taxes on the people. Third, greedy officials not only misappropriate public properties but also milk the people. Fourth, local despots endlessly prey on the people. Fifth, harsh officials increase corvee to such an extent that peasants cannot labor in farming seasons. Sixth, both male and female rural residents must take part in the security roundup whenever there is an alarm. Seventh, bandits keep plundering villages and towns. To make matters worse, the people have to confront seven ways of death. First, oppressive official might beat commoners to death. Second, commoners might have to meet their doom because of the disproportionately severe sentence. Third, commoners might be framed and put to death on a false charge. Fourth, commoners might die from the rampancy of banditry. Fifth, commoners might be killed in revenge. Sixth, commoners might starve to death in the bad year. Seventh, commoners might be deprived of their lives in a devastating plague. Thus, it will be quite a hard job to stabilize the state if the people are always impoverished and cannot find a way out; nor can the state enjoy the full freedom from draconian laws if the people have to confront death no matter what happens. ("Wang Gong liang Gong Bao zhuan," Chapter 72, in *Hanshu*)

Besides Gong and Bao's bold criticisms, the exposure of the dissipation of powerful nobles from families of imperial consorts and the imperiousness of local lords could also be found in *Hanshu*. Ban Gu as a conscientious historian veritably recorded the darkness and corruption of the Former Han, in the hope that he could provide useful historical lessons to the sovereigns of the Later Han.

To sum up, in order to fulfill the mission advertising Han, Ban Gu tried his best to justify the Liu Family's reign over all under Heaven and demonstrate that the ruling Liu Family was exactly the Heaven-handpicked receiver of Mandate. But on the other hand, in his narratives the great historian sincerely attempted to veritably reflect the history of the unified and multinational Former Han dynasty, keep account of the dynasty's prosperity and decline, and uncover the brutality and corruption of some ruling aristocrats. As regards the role *Hanshu*, the consummation of Gu's idea and practice of historical exploration, historically and historiographically played, not only was it used by the sovereigns of the Later Han for reference but it was also an epistemic tool fulfilling the mission advertising Han. In a word, it epitomized the inseparable dual nature of the traditional Chinese historical writing. Thanks to Sima Qian's groundbreaking stylistic innovations in *Shiji* and Ban Biao's revisionist reformulation done to *Shiji*, Ban Gu creatively produced *Hanshu*, a history book meeting the needs of a unified feudal dynasty. Historiographically, Ban Gu's *Hanshu* was a paradigmatic masterwork that was emulated generation after generation by historians in their work producing *zhengshi*, or the formal, standard and orthodox history devoted to the immediate past dynasty.

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# Chapter 5

## Medieval Ideas of History, Confucianism, and the Mysterious Learning

### 1 Changes in Studies in Confucian Classics and the Rise of Mysterious Learning

The scholarly growth in the two Han dynasties was perfectly embodied in the contentions between the Confucian *jinwen jingxue* 今文经学 (New Text School) and *guwen jingxue* 古文经学 (Old Text School). In comparison with the Old Text School, the New Text School was much more adoptable to the feudal empire, advocating the Grand Unification and the divine power of the sovereign and consequently assuming the predominance in the ideological system. It should also be pointed out that at that time the New Text School and the mystically-reformulated superstitious teaching of *chen-wei* 讖纬<sup>1</sup> were combined into one, creating an intellectual trend that influenced all aspects of the social life and the social culture including historical studies.

In the reign of the Former Han's Emperor Wu 武 (r. 147–87 BC), the central court created prominent positions—*boshi* 博士, or the Man of Eruditeness—for scholars devoting themselves to the studies in the (Confucian) Five Classics. Then, in the time of the Later Han's Emperor Guangwu 光武 (r. 25–57 AD), the number of such scholarly imperial positions increased to fourteen (see Table 1). The fourteen prestigious titles of *boshi* displayed the prominence of scholars renowned for their extraordinary mastery of specific Confucian classics. It should be pointed out that for the laureate *boshi* scholars devoting themselves to Five Classics (excluding *Book of Poetry*) there were actually not the strict master-disciple succession in terms of concerned teachings. Pi Xirui 皮锡瑞 (1850–1908) in his well-known *Jingxue lishi* 经学历史 (History of studies in Confucian classics) asserted that distinctions

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<sup>1</sup>Translator's note: *Chen-wei* 讖纬 was a prevalent mystical learning and practice, wherein the regular divination and Confucian ideas were fused together. To be specific, *chen* 讖 referred to the enigmatic words that were used by the diviners in sessions of divination; and *wei* 纬, the books embodying concerned superstitious Confucian interpretations.

**Table 1** *Wujing boshi*, an imperially-conferred title—*boshi*, or Man of Eruditeness—in honor of the scholars devoting themselves to the studies in Confucian Five Classics

Confucian classic(s)	Author(s) of differing editions of concerned classic <sup>a</sup>	Notes
<i>Shi</i> 诗 ( <i>Book of Poetry</i> )	The Master Yuan Gu 辕固 from the State of Qi 齐	The three editions of <i>Book of Poetry</i> were imperially recognized in the early Former Han
	The Lord Shen Pei 申培 from the State of Lu 鲁	
	Han Ying 韩婴 from the State of Yan 燕	
<i>Yi</i> 易 ( <i>Book of Changes</i> )	Shi Chou 施雠	
	Meng Xi 孟喜	
	Liangqiu He 梁邱贺	
	Jin Fang 京房	
<i>Shu</i> 书 ( <i>Book of History</i> )	Ouyang Sheng 欧阳生	Xiahou Jian was one of the younger male cousins of Xiahou Sheng
	Xiahou Sheng 夏侯胜	
	Xiahou Jian 夏侯建	
<i>Li</i> 礼 ( <i>Book of Rites</i> )	Dai De 戴德	Dai Sheng was one of Dai Sheng's nephews
	Dai Sheng 戴圣	
<i>Gongyang Chunqiu</i> 公羊春秋 ( <i>The Master Gongyang's commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals</i> )	Yan Pengzu 严彭祖	
	Yan Anle 颜安乐	

<sup>a</sup>The prestigious imperial title was conferred upon the masters of differing editions of a concerned classic

between differing branches of a specific Confucian classic were not always properly made. It is not hard to grasp this point. Undoubtedly, at that time although the New Text School and the *chen-wei* teaching were not equated with each other, both collaboratively formed a powerful ideological alliance, dominating Han's intellectual world. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC) was exactly an epitome of such a drastic ideologico-intellectual change in the two Hans.

The Han emperors employed the New Text School to consolidate the ruling family's reign over all under Heaven. Ban Gu 班固 in "Rulin zhuan 儒林传" (Collected biographies devoted to renowned Confucians) of *Hanshu* (Book of the Former Han) recalled,

From the time of the Emperor Wu, who innovatively created the position of *boshi* (Man of Eruditeness) for scholars exhausting the Five Classics, wholeheartedly received recommended young scholars, tolerantly allowed scholars to debate about specific issues, and sincerely honored meritorious ones with official positions, down to the end of Yuanshi 元始 reign (1–5 AD), there had been more than one hundred years. [Due to the efforts that had already been made,] the number of scholars devoting themselves to the studies in Confucian classics substantially increased and their communities and grew like green trees with

luxuriant foliage. In some cases, an interpretative work with respect to the original classic could have as many as one million words. Unsurprisingly, a great Master of Confucian classics might have as many as one thousand disciples. The reason of such an astonishing scholarly prosperity lay in the fact that the studies in Confucian classics were not nonprofit.

In the Later Han, the trend grew even more remarkably prosperous. It was quite common for a Master to have more than one thousand followers. In the fifth year of Jianwu 建武 (29 AD), the central court renovated the Imperial Academy. In the first year of Zhongyuan 中元 (57 AD), the Sanyong 三雍 complex consisting of Imperial Academy, Hall of Light and Sacrificial Altar(s) was built. It was in the grand Sanyong that the Later Han's Emperor Ming 明 (r. 57–75 AD) lectured himself the teachings of Confucian classics. The Emperor's direct participation in the scholarly exploration of Confucian classics attracted a huge number of members from the upper echelons of the Chinese society. Even young and educated Xiongnu aristocrats were enrolled in the Imperial Academy. Generally speaking, when the scholarly prosperity dawned, there would definitely be the ideological heterodoxies. The ideological heterogeneity, in turn, heralded a great intellectual decline in the very near future. In view of this, the author of *Hou Han shu* 后汉书 (Book of the Later Han) sharply pointed out,

[At that time] each classic is being interpreted by differing schools of scholars and each school embodies greatly diverse interpretations of classics. There are lengthy interpretive works consisting in more than one million words. Under such circumstances, those who study the classics achieve very little while being almost exhausted and later generations of scholars can learn only the dubious rather than well rectified teachings. (Chapter 35, in *Hou Han shu*)

In short, despite the gilded prosperity, the New Text School would inevitably be at a low ebb. It is a natural law that things irreversibly decay after reaching their heights. The scholarship—the New Text School, for instance—is of course not an exception. In retrospect, thanks to the Emperor Xuan's 宣 (r. 74–49 BC) Conference at the Shiqu 石渠 (Stone Brook) Pavilion in the third year of Ganlu 甘露 (51 BC), the founding Emperor Guangwu's 光武 program disseminating the illustrated *chen-wei* books and the Emperor Zhang's 章 (r. 57–88 AD) highly influential Conference at Baihu 白虎 (White Tiger) Pavilion, the School rode the crest of intellectual history. Nevertheless, it was exactly at this moment that the turning point of the flagship shop of Han's imperial ideology arrived.

Metaphorically, the Old Text School was the ideologico-intellectual party out of office. In the School, there were brilliant thinkers such as Yang Xiong 扬雄 (53 BC–18 AD), one of the epitomes of the Former Han's scholarship, and Wang Chong 王充 (27–97 AD), the towering figure in the philosophical circle of the Later Han. Unfortunately, even though the prominent gurus of Old Text School were academically superior to those from the Old Text School, they failed to fundamentally change the situation due to their ideological inadaptability. For example, Liu Xin 刘歆 (?–23 AD) had made a vain attempt to attack the New Text School. Despite this, the Old one gained by degrees momentum after the Conference held at the White Tiger Pavilion. The emperor even issued an edict

inviting the Confucian scholars who were good at interpreting *Shangshu* (*Book of History*) written in the old-style scripts, Mao's 毛 edition of *Book of Poetry*, *The Master Guliang's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals* and *The Master Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*. Although the invited scholars had not yet been officially admitted into the imperial scholarly system, they were all prestigiously appointed as the imperial lecturers and given the treatment resembling that of an imperial official. In doing so, the central court hoped that it could collect lost books as many as possible and preserve diverse intellectual schools as far as possible. Later, after undergoing politico-intellectual twists and turns, the studies in Confucian classics decayed to such an extent that the interpretations devoted to the classics grew increasingly shoddy and the scholarly ostentatiousness predominated academic communities. In a word, the genuine Confucian academic spirit had already declined ("Rulin liezhuan shang 儒林列传上" (Collected biographies devoted to renowned Confucians), Chapter 79, in *Hou Han shu*). Besides the academic deterioration, the exacerbated factional struggles between differing established groups of imperial officials also dealt a heavy blow to the Later Han's scholarship. Fortunately, a handful of gurus of Old Text School—Jia Kui 贾逵 (30–101 AD), Ma Rong 马融 (79–166 AD) Fu Qian 服虔 (?–?), for instance—grew much more prominent in the late Later Han. In spite of being still excluded from the imperial scholarly system, such Old-Text gurus were far more academically superior to and socially influential than their counterparts in the New Text School. It is particularly worth mentioning that Zheng Xuan (127–200 AD), one of the disciples of Ma Rong, became the epitome of studies in Confucian classics in the two Hans. According to *Hou Han shu*, due to the contributions made by Zheng Xuan, who exhausted all existing Confucian classics, (re-)examined interpretations of differing schools, excluded repetitious and heterodox explanations, and complemented those incomplete pieces of classics, scholars were able to preliminarily grasp the origin and orthodox of the (Confucian) scholarship (Chapter 35, in *Hou Han shu*).

The decline of New Text School marked the emergence of something new. First, the criticism of the teaching of *tianren ganying* 天人感应 (the mystical mutual responses between Heaven and man) was furthered. Second, the effort to reexamine the Heaven-man relationship and human affairs was philosophically deepened. Third, the established Confucian moral and ethnic ideas and institutions were shaken due to the rampancy of separatist movement and instability caused by incessant wars in the late Later Han. In the meantime, Daoism as religion was born in China and Buddhism was introduced to the Middle Kingdom. As a result, the new blood was injected into the Chinese scholarship. It was in these conditions that *xuanxue* 玄学, or the Mysterious Learning, arose in the scholarly world. *Xuanxue* played quite a significant role in the Chinese intellectual history. In this regard, Hou Wailu 侯外庐 in his well-known book exploring the Chinese thoughts from the historical perspective pointed out,

The core of the Han scholarship lay in the textual criticism aspiring to grasp the Great Way through a hermeneutic effort. In contrast, the scholarly aspirations in the dynasties of Wei



and Jin were embodied in the exploration of the significance of and principles regarding the relationship existing between Heaven and man. The Han scholarship was, however, the arch enemy of the Song 宋 scholarship characterized by the succession based on the inner enlightenment rather than on the written tradition. The Wei-Jin scholarship was actually the archetype of *lixue* 理学 (the Learning of Principle) prevailing in and predominating the scholarly world of the two Song dynasties (960–1279). For those who were strongly against the Song scholarship, gurus of the two Songs academically went beyond neither the Han scholarship nor that in Wei and Jin.<sup>2</sup>

Fou Youlan 冯友兰, one of the leading scholars exhausting the history of Chinese philosophies, also asserted,

The efforts to deeply debate names and analyze principles among gurus devoting themselves to *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning, were exactly and entirely the embodiments of the abstract thinking. In this sense, *xuanxue* that emerged and grew in the Wei-Jin era (220–420 AD) was the revolution engulfing the philosophy of the two Hans. ...In the history of Chinese philosophies, it was *xuanxue* that epitomized an unprecedented growth of the Chinese abstract thinking.<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly the birth and growth of *xuanxue* marked the turning point of the Chinese intellectual history. Such a deep change in the intellectual world would definitely exerted influence on the historical writing.

In the late Later Han, there was an intellectual trend embodied in the popularity of *qingtan* 清谈 (lit. abstract discussions), exactly from which *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning, grew and matured in the dynasties of Wei and Jin. In this era, the intellectual growth was represented first in *qingyi* 清议 (lit. sublimed criticisms) and then in *qingtan*, wherein Confucian scholars proceeded from the analyses of social problems to the purely theoretical speculation. The Wei-Jin *xuanxue* could be roughly divided into several phases—that is, Zhengshi 正始 (240–249 AD), Zhulin 竹林 (it referred to the seven most renowned gurus of *xuanxue*, all of whom were intellectually active in the mid-third century) and Yuankang 元康 (291–299 AD). Finally, there was the syncretism of *xuanxue* and Confucianism. In the Zhengshi phase, the representative figures of *xuanxue* were He Yan 何晏 (?–249 AD) and Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249 AD). Both held that the world ontologically existed as *nonexistence*. Besides, the established Confucian cardinal ethical and moral principles were dismissed by the two gurus as something entirely insignificant. Wang and He suggested instead that the governance be based on the Daoist non-action, which was the most intensive embodiment of the human emulation of nature. In the early Western Jin 晋 (266–316 AD), the creation of a community consisting of seven *xuanxue* gurus—among whom Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263 AD)

<sup>2</sup>Hou Wailu 侯外庐, Zhao Jibin 赵纪彬, Qiu Hansheng 邱汉生, and Du Guoxiang 杜国庠, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中国思想通史 [General history of thoughts in China] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), vol. 3, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup>Feng Youlan 冯友兰, *Zhongguo zhexueshi xinbian* 中国哲学史新编 [The new general history of philosophies in China] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1986), vol. 4, p. 44.

and Ji Kang 嵇康 (224–263 AD) were the most renowned—marked the School’s great development. As regards the seven gurus, one piece of record recalled,

Juan Chi [Ruan Ji] of Ch’en-liu (Honan) [Chenliu 陈留 in Henan 河南], Chi K’ang of Chiao [Qiao 谯] Principality (Anhui 安徽), and Shan T’ao [Shan Tao 山涛] of Ho-nei (Honan) [He’nei 河内, in Henan] were all three of comparable age, Chi K’ang being the youngest. Joining this company later were Liu Ling 刘伶 of P’ei 沛 Principality (Kiangsu [Jiangsu 江苏]), Juan Hsien [Ruan Xian 阮咸] of Ch’en-liu, Hsiang Hsiu [Xiang Xiu 向秀] of Ho-nei, and Wang Jung [Wang Rong 王戎] of Lang-yeh 琅邪 (Shantung) [Langye, in Shandong]. The seven used to gather beneath a bamboo grove, letting their fancy free in merry revelry. For this reason the world called them the “Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove.”<sup>4</sup>

The “Seven Worthies” radically proposed that the Confucian cardinal principles be abandoned and humans be all allowed to enjoy the personal freedom to the fullest extent. Among them, some unperturbedly indulged themselves in drinking wine and having meats even during the mourning for their beloved mother; and some were naked in their residences, intentionally and ostentatiously showing off their unconventional spirit. The purpose of such rebellious efforts was to resist the established Confucian principles by means of the *xuanxue*-soaked unrestrainedness. In the late Western Jin, Guo Xiang 郭象 (252–312 AD) was the towering *xuanxue* guru. Guo held that the *existence* evolved itself and was responsible for the reconciliation of basic Confucian and Daoist principles. It should be pointed out that, in the historical periods spanning from the Later Han down to the Three Kingdoms, the Western and Eastern dynasties and the Southern and Northern Dynasties, changes taking place in the idea of history paralleled the growth of philosophical thinking. In other words, the philosophico-intellectual development at that time did contribute to and even mix together the ideas and theories of history.

The criticism of *tianren ganying* in the Later Han was greatly deepened. Wang Chong did a brilliant job in this regard. In his famous *Lunheng* 论衡 (Disquisitions), the renowned atheist thinker pointed out that Heaven was nothing but a natural phenomenon without mouth, eyes and desires. Simply put, in the thinker’s eyes the supreme *tian* 天, or Heaven, was something completely devoid of any will. The way of Heaven, Wang asserted, lay exactly in the *nonaction* and by contrast the character of human way was embodied in *actions* (Chapter of “Ziran 自然” (Spontaneity), in *Lunheng*). Wang’s assertion debunked the fallacy of the superstitious idea that natural disasters and human affairs were mystically inter-linked. The ungrounded interconnection between calamities and human behaviors was, however one of the brainchildren of the theory of *tianren ganying*, which alleged that the Heavenly Way was *in action*. In view of this, Wang sharply criticized,

<sup>4</sup>Liu I-ch’ing 刘义庆, *Shih-shuo hisn-yu* 世说新语, or *A New Account of Tales of the World*, trans. Richard B. Mather (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1968), p. 398.

The heart of high Heaven is in the bosom of the Sages. When Heaven reprimands, it is done through the mouths of the Sages. Yet people do not believe the words of the Sages. They trust in the fluid of calamitous event, and strive to make out Heaven's meaning therefrom. Why go so far?<sup>5</sup>

He went further saying,

Arguing on calamitous events I have already expressed my doubts as to Heaven reprimanding man by misfortunes. They say, moreover, that the sovereign, as it were, moves Heaven by his government, and that Heaven moves the fluid in response. Beating a drum and striking a bell with a hammer would be an analogous process. The drum represents Heaven, the hammer the government, and the sound of the drum or the bell is like Heaven's response. When man acts below, the heavenly fluid survenes, and accompanies his actions. I confess that I doubt this also. Heaven can move things, but how can things move Heaven? Men and things depend upon Heaven, and Heaven is the master of men and things.<sup>6</sup> ... The cold and hot fluids depend on heaven and earth, and are governed by the *Yin* and the *Yang*. How could human affairs and government have any influence upon them?<sup>7</sup>

In short, Wang denied the mystical interconnection between Heaven and human affairs—and the state administration in particular, giving the theory of *tianren ganying* a slap in the face. In fact, a quarter of the eighty-four chapters constituting the monumental *Lunheng* were used to criticize a great variety of superstitious ideas and practice at that time.

Wang Chong was born in Shangyu 上虞, Zhejiang. When he was young, he studied in the Imperial Academy and was one of the disciples of Ban Gu, the leading historian in the Later Han. Where Wang's idea of history was concerned, not only was it of an evolutionary nature but it also served as a powerful beam of searchlight fully revealing the superstitiousness of *tianren ganying*. In this sense, Wang Chong played quite an important role in the history of ideas of history, even though he intellectually embraced the historical givenness and historicism. Like Ban Gu, who devoted himself to the work of *xuanhan* 宣汉, or advertising (the illustrious virtues of) Han, Wang also penned a chapter entitled *xuanhan* (In praise of Han) in *Lunheng*. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the thinker's *xuanhan* was fundamentally different from that of the historian. The goal of Ban's work advertising Han was to demonstrate that it was the Former Han's ruling Liu Family that was chosen by Heaven to be the heir to Yao 尧, who was one of the greatest Sage Kings in the remotest antiquity and bestowed upon the Mandate of Heaven. In doing so, Ban hoped, the reign of Later Han would be justified, too. In comparison with Ban, Wang's aspirations were much more positive. The thinker said,

The Literati contend that the Five Emperors and the Three Rulers brought the empire the blessings of universal peace, and that since the accession of the *Han* dynasty there has not yet been general peace. By saying that the Five Emperors and Three Rulers brought about a time of uninterrupted tranquility, and that the *Han* have not yet enjoyed such a state, they

<sup>5</sup>Wang Chong 王充, *Lun-Heng: Philosophical essays of Wang Ch'ung*, trans. Alfred Forke (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1907), p. 129.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

imply that the Five Emperors and Three Rulers were sages, for only the virtue of sages can have such an effect, and the allegation that the *Han* have not had such a peaceful time means to say that there were no sage emperors, because the influence of worthies is not sufficient. Furthermore, they remember the words of *Confucius* saying: The phoenix does not come; the River sends forth no Plan: it is all over with me! At present, we have no phoenix and no Plan of the River, and numerous are the omens that persist in not coming. Wherefore they say that we are not living in a period of general peace. This view is preposterous. Universal peace manifests itself by the establishment of government, when the people respond, by being cheerful and at ease. *Confucius* teaches that one renders the people happy by cultivating one's own self. The fact that *Yao* and *Shun* were toiling for the welfare of their people proves that at that time there was universal peace. For governing others the individual must be the starting point. The people being at ease, the *Yin* and the *Yang* are in harmony, and when they harmonize all things grow and develop; such being the case, strange omens come forth. How about our empire? Is it at ease or in jeopardy? Being at ease, it is at peace, and then even the absence of omens would not be hurtful to the peaceful state. The style of government becomes manifest from its institutions and appears from the real state of affairs. When these manifestations are not visible the true conditions cannot be ascertained. Sometimes all may be in perfect order, but there are no witnesses to prove it. Therefore, as regards the principles of government, provided that its institutions be true and real, it is not requisite that they should all be manifest. A wise ruler in his administration aims at universal peace, and it is not indispensable that there should be corresponding omens.<sup>8</sup>

To put it in a nutshell, it was unnecessary to exclusively praise the far remote eras of Five Emperors and Three Kings and moreover the (Later) Han dynasty could actually outshine the reigns of Sage Kings in the great antiquity. It was the historical actuality rather than the so-called auspicious omens whereby whether a historical period was stable and prosperous could be fairly judged. In the light of this, the present author holds that Wang's *xuanhan* effort was of an evolutionary nature. Besides the evolutionism-tinted praise of (the Later) Han, the Wang-style criterion based on the trueness and realness of effective institutions was a de facto scientific epistemology.

Apart from Wang Chong, there were other enlightened thinkers in the academia of the Later Han. For example, Wang Fu 王符 (c. 85–163 AD) ridiculed the superstitious idea that the rise and decline of a reign depended on the mysterious *yun* 运 (fortune) or *shu* 数 (lit. number) and focused instead on the progressive idea that the people should be attach greater importance in the political practice. He said,

How can a reign be the *genuine* state? The secret lies in the fact that there is the people. ... In a well-governed state, policies are restful and far-sighted, so that the people are effectual, and carefree. By contrast, in a poorly-managed state, policies are acquisitive and short-sighted, so that the people are ineffectual, and exhausted. (Chapter of "Ai'ri 爰日" (Cherishing the days), in *Qianfu lun* 潜夫论 (Discourses by a hidden master))

In addition, Zhong Changtong 仲长统 (179–220 AD) in his treatise entitled *Changyan* 昌言 (Unrestrained assertions) explicitly objected the theory of divine Mandate of Heaven, proposing instead the idea that human affairs served as the *root*

<sup>8</sup>Wang Chong, *Lun-Heng: Philosophical essays of Wang Ch'ung*, trans. Alfred Forke (New York, NY: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), reprinted, vol. 2, pp. 192–193.

and the Heavenly Way as the *cap*. Zhong went further, stating that the so-called Heavenly Way was of a spontaneous nature and acted as a natural law that could be used to instruct the agriculture. It was in this sense, Zhong held, that the application of Heavenly Way to the mystical *tianren ganying* was ridiculous. Zhong's assertion read,

Generally speaking, the value of the [practical] application of *tiandao* 天道, or the Heavenly Way, lies in the role stars play in the instruction of the agricultural production, as well as in the prosperity due to the harmonious circulation of the four seasons. In view of this, what is the point of [searching for] auspicious and inauspicious omens? For those who claim that they have grasped the Heavenly Way rather than human strategies, they are nothing but witch doctors or fortune tellers, as well as being appallingly stupid and despicable. For sovereigns who blindly believe in Heaven while abhorring human affairs, they are merely muddleheaded and bewildered emperors, being guilty of ruining the country. (Quoted in the forty-fifth chapter of *Qunshu zhiyao* 群书治要 [Gist of books])

Simply put, invoking the idea of greater significance of the people to the state, the thinker delivered a counterpunch to the prevailing theory of *tianren ganying*.

It is particularly worth mentioning Zhang Heng 张衡 (78–139 AD), a great scientist, thinker and man of letter. Most interestingly, Zhang was also an excellent historian making contributions to the idea of history, on the grounds that he was *Taishi ling* 太史令, or the imperially-commissioned Grand Historian, in the reigns of the Emperors An 安 (r. 106–125 AD) and Shun 顺 (r. 125–144 AD). In *Hou Han shu*, there was one piece of Zhang's writing entitled *Yingjian* 应间 (Response to those who have a grudge against me). It should be a treatise devoted to the historical writing, on the grounds that Zhang in the writing explicitly stated that five years after his resignation of Grand Historian he took up the prestigious post again and thus penned the treatise. In the Yuanchu 元初 (114–120 AD), Zhang was invited to rectify the chapters devoted to imperial rituals, when Liu Zhen 刘珍 (?–126 AD) and other scholars were writing *Dongguan Han ji* 东观汉记 (The history of Later Han that was written in the Eastern Imperial Archives). Unfortunately, due to the death of Liu Zhen, Zhang's work could not be fully done. Despite this, Zhang still tried his best to reexamine and improve the history written in the past. According to the "Life of Zhang Heng" in *Hou Han shu*, Zhang wrote memorials to the throne, suggesting (1) that the existing unfinished *Dongguan Han ji* be complemented to be a full history; (2) that the writings—an unnecessary full delineation of Wang Mang's 王莽 life apart from his usurpation of the throne of Former Han, for instance—contrary to the orthodox in the history penned by Sima Qian 司马迁 and Ban Gu 班固 be rectified; (3) and that the regnal title of Gengshi 更始 be recognized and adopted in the annals devoted to the founding Emperor Guangwu 光武, taking into consideration the fact that the founding emperor was originally one of generals in the service of the Emperor Gengshi (Chapter 59, in *Hou Han shu*). The emperor, however, turned a blind eye to Zhang's memorials and his suggestions were finally brushed aside. For this reason, many felt greatly regretful even at that time. Zhang's suggestions shed light on his idea of history. In particular, his unconventional handling of the Emperor Gengshi, who had been the ritual leader of peasant army in the ending years of the Former Han, challenged the

most basic principle of *zhengshi* 正史, or the formal, standard and orthodox history. It explained for what reason his suggestions became something unacceptable in the sovereign's eyes.

In *Hou Han shu*, Zhang Heng was an epistemological warrior fighting against the rampant superstitious *chen-wei* idea and practice. The concerned delineation read,

At first, the founding Emperor Guangwu firmly believed in [the practice of] *chen-wei*. Then, the Emperors Xian 显 (i.e. Ming 明, r. 57–75 AD) and Su 肃 (i.e. Zhang 章, 75–88 AD) emulated what the founding sovereign did. After the Restoration [of Han's reign], almost all Confucians strove to study the illustrated *wei* books, into which they added mystical and lengthy interpretations. [Digging into the *chen-wei* teaching,] Zhang Heng concluded that the illustrated *wei* books were all fabricated, running counter to the teachings of Sages. He [analyzed concerned contents in *Chunqiu chen* 春秋谶 (The *chen*-style interpretations of *Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Shi chen* 诗谶 (The *chen*-style interpretations of *Book of Poetry*) and the representative *wei*-style book entitled *Chunqiu yuanming bao* 春秋元命苞 (The grand Mandate wrapped in *Spring and Autumn Annals*) and then sharply] pointed out, "Even in a book consisting merely of one volume, there are conflicting records or interpretations in regard to the same event. By contrast, under no circumstances would the Sage speak in such an inconsistent manner. In view of this, I strongly hold that the authors of such a genre of books must be those who are inherently hypocritical and avaricious. In retrospect, Jia Kui 贾逵, who were *Shizhong* 侍中 (the prestigious erudite consultant in the service of the sovereign), had picked out more than thirty pieces of paradox or self-contradictory interpretations in the *chen-wei* books, to which none scholars devoting themselves to the *chen-wei* teaching could convincingly justify. Most ridiculously, as regards the unprecedented calamity caused by Wang Mang's brutal usurpation of the throne, why the splendid *eighty chen-wei* books failed to issue a warning about this beforehand? ... [For this reason, I asseverate that] the *chen-wei* books are all unexceptionally deceptive, bewildering and fraudulent [and the purpose of producing them is to] grab power and prestige. Nevertheless, even though the fact is clear, nobody has tried to rectify the situation. ... [In view of this,] I strongly suggested that it be quite better for the central court to confiscate all genres of illustrated *chen* books and effectively put an end to the circulation of them." (Chapter 59, or the "Life of Zhang Heng," in *Hou Han shu*)

Apart from the profundity of Zhang's criticism of the *chen-wei* teaching, the scientific basis of his reexamination of *chen-wei* was also worth being mentioned. As a scientist, Zhang had produced amazingly sophisticated and advanced instruments demonstrating the movement of celestial bodies and predicting earthquakes. Due to such really fine apparatus, several quakes were accurately explained. Such scientific achievements dealt a heavy blow to the superstitious, mystical theory of *tianren ganying*. In addition Zhang's explanations with respect to the movement of celestial bodies—the lunar eclipse, for instance—slapped hard the idea that there was mystical mutual responses between Heaven and man. Despite his brilliant scientific thinking, it must be pointed out that Zhang did not entirely deny the *efficacious chen*-style interpretations; nor did he show even the slightest disapproval of the practice of divination. In this sense, his thinking was not yet thoroughly scientific. Last but not least, politically, Zhang was fearless enough to oppose the despotic hereditary big landlords. Overall, in spite of being impacted by the political instability engulfing the mid-Later Eastern Han, Zhang Heng, a trinity of top-notch scientist, enlightened thinker and thought-provoking historian in the early medieval

China, had made substantial intellectual progress toward the grand principles of *xuanxue*.

*Xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning, challenged the predominant theory of *tianren ganying* from a differing perspective. In the late Later Han, the political corruption devoured the dynasty. For this reason, the ruling class rapidly decayed; the orthodox studies in Confucianism sharply declined; and the feudal moralities and ethics seriously deteriorated. In these conditions, scholar-officials were wild about the comments on contemporaries, hoping that by doing so they could advertise each other and increase their prominence. As a consequence, there was the trend of *qingtan*, or the abstract discussions. *Qingtan* was closely related to *xuanxue*. It should be pointed out that neither should both be combined into one nor could both be completely separated. At that time the established Confucian moralities and ethics were seriously challenged and finally replaced with their counterparts in *xuanxue*. *Xuanxue* should not be regarded as empty talks. Rather, it was a multidimensional intellectual complex consisting in diverse explorations of ethics, moralities, cosmologies, celestial bodies and so on. Of course, there were discussions of history. *Qingtan* gave expression to the *zeitgeist* of the early medieval China. The chapter of “Yanyu 言语” (Speech and Conversation) in Liu Yiqing’s 刘义庆 (403–444 AD) *Shishuo xinyu* 世说新语 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*) shed light on this point. The concerned record read,

All the famous gentlemen of the Western Chin [Jin 晋] court once went together to the Lo [Luo 洛] River on a pleasure excursion. On their return Yueh Kuang [Yue Guang 乐广] asked Wang Yen [Wang Yan 王衍], “Did you enjoy today’s excursion?” Wang replied, “P’ei Wei [Pei Wei 裴頠] is good at conversing on Names and Principles (*ming-li* 名理); his words gushed forth in a torrent, but with an air of refinement. Chang Hua [Zhang Hua 张华] discussed the “Records of the Grand Historian” (*Shih-chi* [Shiji 史记]) and the “History of the Han Dynasty” (*Han-shu* [Hanshu 汉书]); his words were slow and deliberate, well worth the listening. Wang Jung [Wang Rong 王戎] and I talked about Chi Cha [Jizha 季札] and Chang Liang [Zhang Liang 张良], our words, too, were totally transcendent, abstruse but lucid.”<sup>9</sup>

*Qingtan*, wherein the well educated scholar-officials diversely commented on writings of every hue—including history books, prevailed so much in the Wei and Jin dynasties. As regards the prominent historical figures and contemporaries, the practitioners of *qingtan* shed either complimentary or critical light on their demeanor, talent, creativity, writings and moralities. The present author contends that the varying types of *qingtan* since the late Later Han and the predominant concept of *ren ziran* 任自然 (unrestrained spontaneity) be reexamined in the *process* perspective of Chinese intellectual history. In the two Han dynasties, the theory of *tianren ganying* dominated China’s intellectual world; and consequently, the humankind was ideologically reduced to a mere appendage to Heaven. Inasmuch as the alleged (Confucian) cardinal principals applying to ethics and

<sup>9</sup>Liu I-ch’ing, *Shih-shuo hisn-yu*, or *A New Account of Tales of the World*, trans. Richard B. Mather, p. 43.

moralties were embodiments of the Heavenly Intention, all social members must unconditionally obey them. Thus, *qingtan* and the almost totally unrestrained comments on historical figures and contemporaries in particular actually constituted a challenge to the so-called cardinal principles in the divine garb of *tianren ganying*, undauntedly highlighting and expressing the human individuality. In the extreme case, wherein the Seven Worthies of Bamboo Grove spoke and acted almost unacceptably unconventionally, the Confucian moral and ethical criterion were entirely denied. In the late phase of *xuanxue*, there was the syncretism of Confucianism and *xuanxue*, denoting a *xuanxue*-style revision of the orthodox Confucian teaching.

Due to the heavy blow dealt by peasant rebellions, the two Han dynasties inevitably collapsed. As a result, the old class of *shijia* 世家 (the highly influential hereditary houses) landlords was replaced with the new class of *menfa* 门阀 (the extremely powerful non-hereditary houses) landlords. Obviously, the *menfa* class was of a private nature. Apart from the privileged political rights and status that could be inherited by their descendants, such astonishingly wealthy and powerful landlords *privately* and *absolutely* owned dependent peasants and exploited them at will. Most importantly, such dependent peasants were not registered as taxpayers administered by the central and local governments. Put plainly, the feudal state's system of household registration could not be applied to dependent peasants due to the wealth, power and privileges of *menfa* landlords. Such a drastic socio-economic change was reflected in the vibrant growth of genealogies and history devoted to a certain family. The works that represented changes in the historiography in the post-Later Han period were exactly *Hanji* 汉纪 (Annals of the Former Han), *Sanguo zhi* 三国志 (Records of The Three Kingdoms) and *Hou Han ji* 后汉纪 (Annals of the Later Han). Among them, *Hou Han ji* most intensively shed light on *xuanxue* in the Southern and Northern Dynasties from the *historical* perspective. *Hou Han shu* authored by Fan Ye 范晔 (398–445 AD), epitomized the general trend of historical writing under the circumstances that *xuanxue* and Confucianism were increasingly syncretized.

## 2 The Relationship Between Heaven and Man in *Hanji* and the Five Treatises

Changes in the style of historical writing gave expression to the diversification of idea of history. The most distinctive characteristic of historiography in the Southern and Northern Dynasties lay in the paralleled growth of *jizhuan* 纪传, or the biography-centered, and annalistic history. To put it another way, the monopoly of *jizhuan* history was broken in this era. The *co-prosperity* of the two predominant styles of historical writing was actually conducive to the consolidation of feudal rule. In this regard, Liu Zhiji 刘知几 (661 A.D.–721 A.D.), who was a Tang 唐 (618–907 AD) scholar and one of the most prominent theorists of the ancient Chinese historiography, had pointed out,



The two styles represented by Ban Gu and Xun Yue 荀悦 respectively competed with each other and none of them could be easily abandoned. As regards the writers devoting themselves to history in later ages, they followed either Ban or Xun. Thus, there were Wang Yu's 王虞 (?-?) *Jinshi* 晋史 (History of Jin), which could be complemented by Gan Bao's 干宝 (283–351 AD) *Jinji* 晋纪 (Annals of Jin); and Xu Yuan's 徐爰 (394–475 AD) and Shen Yue's 沈约 (441–513 AD) *Songshu* 宋书 (Book of Song), by Pei Ziyue's 裴子野 (469–530 AD) *Songlüe* (The brief history of Song). Each of them had its own advantages and prevailed at that time. ("Er ti 二体" (The two styles of historical writing), in *Shitong* 史通 (A comprehensive disquisition about historiography))

Liu Xie 刘勰 also discussed the two most basic styles in "Shizhuan 史传" (Historical Writings) of *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*). Liu's exposition read,

The *chi* [ji 纪, lit. record] is a form of chronology and the *chuan* [zhuan 传, lit. memoir] a framework for arranging events; they are not inconsequential writings, but factual records. However, when chronology stretches out too long, it is difficult to list with any precision events happening either at the same time or at a different time; and when events are accumulated in mass, it is easy to be careless about their beginnings and endings. This is why it is difficult to obtain a synoptic view. Sometime the same achievement is shared by many characters; if it is recorded in every case, the work will suffer from redundancy; and if it is mentioned only once, the work will suffer from being perfunctory. This is why it is not easy to have a general arrangement of material. These are the kinds of arguments on which were based Chang Heng's [Zhang Heng] criticisms of Shih [Ch'ien (i.e. Sima Qian)] and Pan [Ku (i.e. Ban Gu)], and Fu Hsuan's [Fu Xuan 傅玄] [217 – 218] sarcastic remarks about records of the Later Han.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, both the *jizhuan* and annalistic historical writings had disadvantages in the endeavor to veritably reconstruct the past. The *jizhuan* history was the child of Sima Qian's innovative brain, almost perfectly satisfying the need of a unified feudal empire. Nevertheless, as time went on, the disadvantages of *jizhuan* history grew increasingly conspicuous. In comparison with the annalistic history such as *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, the performance of *jizhuan* history in the work clearly and pervasively disseminating the veneration of sages and classics was quite poor. It was exactly for this reason that the annalistic history was rehabilitated at that time after hundreds of years of the popularity of *jizhuan* history. In the mid-Tang dynasty, historians fiercely debated about which one—*jizhuan* or the annalistic—was better. Then in the two Song dynasties, the annalistic history regained the predominance again.

*Hanji* was the first annalistic history devoted exclusively to a certain dynasty. It was Xun Yue (148–209 AD) who penned the book. Xun was born in Yingchuan 颍川 (present-day Xuchang 许昌, Henan). His courtesy name was Zhongyu 仲豫. When Xun was forty-nine-year old, the Emperor Xian 献 (r. 189–220 AD), who was actually controlled by a senior minister known as Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220 AD), had to switch the capital city from Luoyang 洛阳 to Xuchang. Wishfully, Xun envisioned that the declining Han would witness an encouraging

<sup>10</sup>Liu Xie 刘勰, *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙, or *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, trans. Vincent Yu-chung Shih (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 91–92.

resuscitation with the help of the Cao Family. In 197, or the second years of the Jian'an 建安 reign, the historian finished penning *Shenjian* 申鉴 (Reexaminations of the historical experience). Three years later, *Hanji* came out. Besides the two monographs, Xun produced dozens of treatises such as *Chongde* 崇德 (In honor of the virtue) and *Zhenglun* 正论 (Rectified disquisitions).

Having the substance primarily based on Ban Gu's *Hanshu*, Xun Yue adapted the source book into an annalistic history, that is, *Hanji*. Xun candidly acknowledged this point in the opening chapter of *Hanji*. Xun's thirty-volume creative recreation had 180,000 words, concisely delineating the Former Han's entire history. Xun had a flair for writing. The author of *Hou Han shu* praised that his narratives were succinct but all-embracing and his arguments fluent but profound (Chapter 62, in *Hou Han shu*). Liu Zhiji explained for what reason Xun Yue brought about a fundamental stylistic change to *Hanshu*. His explanation read,

Xun unfavorably commented that Ban Gu's *Hanshu* was too broad and too extensive. For this reason, he concisely rewrote *Hanshu* in the light of the basic spirit of *Zuozhuan*, or *The Master Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*. As a consequence, there was the thirty-volume *Hanji*, which was applauded for generations and regarded as a work outshining the original one. (The second part of "Erti," in *Shitong*)

The Emperor Tai 太 (r. 626–629 AD) of Tang thought very highly of *Hanji* and called it a model for the production of history. Such a well-known enlightened sovereign even gave his ministers the book as a prestigious gift.

Examining collectively historical works such as Ban Biao's 班彪 *Shiji hou lun* 史记后论 (A late critical examination of *Shiji*) and Wangming lun 王命论 (On the sovereign's Mandate of Heaven), Ban Gu's *Hanshu* and Baihu tonged lun 白虎通德论 (A comprehensive elaboration of basic meanings of Confucian classics that was written in the White Tiger Pavilion), and Xun Yue's *Hanji* and *Shenjian*, we can learn how the idea of history changed in the late Later Han. First, Xun highlighted the idea that human factors should be attached greater importance while leaving *tianren ganying* theoretically intact. In *Hanji*, there were indeed a great number of records delineating various calamities from the perspective of mystical mutual responses between Heaven and man. Nevertheless, Xun shed a new light on the predominant *tianren ganying*. In the chapter of "Shishi 时事" (Current affairs) in *Shenjian*, the historian discussed the primary goals of historical writing and what should be included into a history book. His discussion read,

In ancient times, whenever something significant took place, the Son of Heaven or Princes would always report them to [the Lord Above and the ancestral spirits] in the imperial Ancestral Temple. In addition, there were two imperial historians in the central court. The Left Historian was responsible for transcribing what the sovereign said; and the Right, recording what the sovereign did. The written works devoted to actions of sovereigns were known as *Chunqiu*, or the *Spring and Autumn Annals*; and those to speeches, *Shangshu*, or the *Book of History*. Whatever sovereigns did and spoke must be veritably recorded and fairly evaluated. As a rule, there should be nothing about the sovereign that could be, *intentionally or unintentionally*, omitted. As regards officials the of every level and commoners, who hierarchically differed from each other, they were all recorded in [the history] books. [Digging into such veritable records, readers could better understand that] some aspired to be prominent, but they actually remained to be men of no mark; and by contrast,

though some tried to live a secular life, they were actually socially eminent. Inasmuch as [the history] could shed revealing light on a dynasty's gains and losses and permanently inscribed a dynasty's honor and disgrace, the men of virtue could be encouraged and inspired [by reading it] and those of evil nature be frightened and discouraged. Exactly for this reason, the ancient kings attached much greater importance to history, whereby the [impartial practice of] rewards and punishments, they believed, could be continued and the [orthodox] teachings and laws be consolidated [and improved]. For records that were conducive to the betterment of present-day laws or rules, the authorities could use them as standards or instructions. Each genre of historical record should be brought into the fullest play and they collaboratively constituted the *Shangshu*-style history book. In the case that *shiguan* 史官, or the imperial officers assuming the responsibility for putting down veritable records, they abstain themselves from recording things that were of abnormal or commonplace nature. [Where the things that were worth being included into the history were concerned,] those who were renowned for their acts of kindness or enjoyed a foul reputation should be recorded; those whose practice could be regarded as the standard, recorded; those who had great merits, recorded; wars and incidents wherein a great number of people were mobilized, recorded; events that heads of neighboring ethnic groups tributarially paid respects to the sovereign, recorded; episodes in which the queen, highest-ranking imperial consorts and Crown Prince were officially selected, recorded; the occurrences of commissioning or deposing princesses and senior ministers, recorded; the efforts that was of a beneficent, licentious or disastrous nature, recorded; and the happenings embracing auspicious or inauspicious omens, recorded. [It is particularly worth mentioning that] the late emperors left us *qijuzhu* 起居注 (Annotated accounts of a sovereign's everyday life), through which we can know significant things a sovereign did every day.

There are four key points in Xun's above-cited discussion. First, anything that were concerned with the state's politico-military affairs and all aspects of social customs and rites should be recorded by imperial historians. Second, the ancient sovereigns paid particular attention to the historical writings on the grounds that *history* was conducive to varying types of political practice such as rewards, punishments, moralization and law-enforcement. Third, it is true that there were calamities delineated from the perspective of mystical mutual responses between Heaven and humans; but it is also true that such calamity-centric accounts were merely one of the constituents of *history*. Fourth, the effort to attach greater importance to the people was in harmony with the mission receiving and preserving the Mandate of Heaven. In this regard, Xun Yue in the chapter of "Suxian 俗嫌" (Vulgar resentments) of *Shenjian* said,

The primary mission of a sovereign, who is being conferred upon the Mandate of Heaven, is to nurture the people. There are the people, there are the altars dedicated to the Earth and Grain Gods, that is, the state. Whenever there is not [the popular support of] the people, the Altars will vanish, symbolizing the complete fall of the state. Thus, the practice of attaching importance to the people is totally congruous with the efforts to cherish the Altars and receive the Mandate.

Therein lies the prerequisite—*attaching importance to the people*—for being the receiver of the Mandate of Heaven. Such a historical narrative was actually a fundamental *correction* of the spiritual/ideological imbalance wherein the Heavenly Intention overwhelmingly dominated over human affairs. In *Hanji*, Xun went further, explicitly asserting that although whenever and whatever the Profoundest Ultimacy (i.e. Heavenly Intention) did not change at all there were constant changes

in human affairs (“Xun Yue yue 荀悦曰” (As Xun Yue says), in Chapter Six of *Hanji*), and that so long as humans endeavored to sincerely and effectively rectify themselves in response to the alterations of a myriad of things the spirit, form (that is, body) and *qi* (vital breath) would be brought back to their deepest roots (“Xun Yue yue,” in Chapter Thirteen of *Hanji*).

It should be pointed out that there were indeed a huge number of records narrating calamities caused by the mystical mutual responses between Heaven and man and an account devoted to Ban Biao’s treatise on the Mandate of a sovereign. In particular, when the legend of the founding emperor of the Former Han was narrated, the theory of divine power bestowed by Heaven was consolidated and refined in Xun’s writings. For what reason did the historian write in such a conservative manner? It might lie in the fact that it was the Emperor Xian himself who ordered Xun to adapt the lengthy and complex *Hanshu* into a terse and concise work in the light of the basic spirit of *Zuozhuan*. Due to the Emperor’s devotion to the mainstream and predominant ideology that was based on theory of *tianren ganying*, Xun had to spend much energy delineating calamities in line with the mystical theory. In view of this, it is better for researchers to examine Xun’s idea of history in *Shenjian*, rather than to rashly draw a one-sided conclusion that Xun Yue fervently advocated the theory of *tianren ganying* exclusively according to *Hanji*.

Obviously, *Hanji* was of a dual nature. On the one hand, the historian preserved the divine idea of history, wherein Heaven and humankind were closely interrelated and the ruling Liu Family of the two Han dynasty was proven to be the receiver of the Mandate of Heaven. On the other hand, his effort to attach greater importance to the people indicated that the theory of *tianren ganying* had been seriously weakened and its predominance in the ideologico-intellectual world been broken. In addition, Xun Yue in *Hanji* highlighted the idea that history should be primarily used for reference. In the “Preface” to *Hanji*, Xun explained this point in details. His explanation read,

*Hanji* has standard styles of writing. Specifically, there are writings devoted to the history embodying inspiring lessons; writings to the instability and fall [of a dynasty]; writings to the fair and balanced politics; writings to good military strategies; writings to the political moralization; writings to auspicious omens; writings to the abnormal and disastrous events; writings to the affairs concerned with the Central Plains; and writings to affairs with respect to [non-Han] ethnic groups. In addition, there are writings about the Constant Way, political expedience, schemes, sophistries, classics, arts and literature. It is exactly through the prism of [such a kaleidoscopic collection of] writings that readers can catch sight of the remarkable achievements of enlightened sovereigns and virtuous ministers, brilliant merits of imperial consorts and commendable deeds of the talented people. Such diverse writings are not ungrounded but veritable in terms of the historical actuality; and moreover, they are amazingly extensive and all-embracing while enjoying the full freedom from redundancy. Functionally, the writings can be used to express one’s feelings; to better the government; to instruct acts; to pacify the mind; to refine speeches; and to make efforts effectual. [In the light of the writings,] those who do evil things will be justly punished and those do good works be properly encouraged; and in the same vein, those successfully finish a mission will be rewarded and those fail to accomplish it be frightened. In this sense, the writings constitute the standard teaching applying to the state politics, as well as being a source of classics.

Simply put, it is for the reason that the writing of *Hanji* was well factually grounded that the book could play quite a positive role in the mission fulfilling the poetic justice. Xun Yue himself was very confident of the role his work played, assertively saying that his writings panoramically displayed the politics of the Former Han and could be well suitably used for reference (Chapter 30, in *Hanji*). The idea that the goal of historical writing was to play a role in the work supervising the politics and admonishing sovereigns, together with the aspiration to attach greater importance to the people, constituted the other key element of Xun's historical thinking.

As regards the role history could play in the work supervising the politics and admonishing sovereigns, there were two points worthy of furthered discussions. First, Xun Yue trichotomized *shi* 勢, or the general momentum determining the rise and fall of a dynasty in the historical perspective. The Xun-style trichotomization read,

There are three genres operation of the momentum. First, the momentum is concurrently in harmony with the nature of things and thus works naturally. Second, the momentum cannot work without the help of human efforts; or, it fails to be put into effect exactly due to the human interventions. Third, under no circumstance can the momentum work even being fused with human efforts. ("Xun Yue yue," in Chapter Six of *Hanji*)

Xun went further, justifying the theory of *tianren ganying* in the light of the trichotomization of *shi*. As a result, not only did Xun acknowledge the significance of Heaven but he also legitimized the role the humankind could play in the historical development. The two points were actually combined into one in Xun's writings. Putting together the historical prosperity and decline in the perspective of *shi*, Xun carried forward the pre-imperial Chinese theory about the dynastic rise and fall and the idea of Han Fei 韓非 in particular, as well as concretely analyzing *shi* embodied in the historical changes. In his (re-)examination of history, the historian shed light on for what reason a dynasty rose and fell; and moreover, he classified concerned cases into certain types. For example, Xun divided sovereigns through all ages into six groups—that is, the sovereigns acting in line with the Kingly Way, sovereigns fulfilling the good governance, sovereigns who could be called the heirs to the success made in previous reigns, sovereigns witnessing the dynasty's decline, sovereigns placing themselves in the danger of a complete fall of the dynasty, and the sovereigns of subjugated dynasties. In the same vein, Xun asserted that there were six types of minister—the *kingly*, the excellent, the candid, the ordinary, the favorite and the sycophantic. The Xun-style classification exerted influence on historians of later ages. For example, Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), the leading historian of the Northern Song dynasty, carried forward Xun Yue's historiography, assorting sovereigns in past dynasties into several groups.

Xun Yue set out principles and methods with respect to the historical writing. According to his "Preface" to *Hanji*, such historiographical principles and methods lay in five *aspirations*. In other words, if a historian wanted to produce a standard work, he must aspire to fully understand and explicitly speak out the Way and Principle of Righteousness; to shed revealing light on the Grand Models; to grasp changes taking place in past and present; to have people with great merits thrust into the limelight; and to praise people of ability and virtue (Chapter 62, in *Hou*

*Han shu*). Xun Yue himself hoped that the history book that was produced in accordance with the five principles would be able to meet the feudal reign's dual needs. It should be pointed out that the historian's effort to unequivocally define the purpose of writing history and set out the concerned principles was actually an embodiment of the growing *historical* consciousness.

To sum up, in the era beginning with *Hanshu* and ending with *Hanji*, the most notable idea of history was Xun Yue's thought that the people assumed the greater importance in the politics. In retrospect, Zhong Changtong had already had similar ideas. Despite this, it was Xun Yue who systematized the idea and incorporated it into the creation of influential history book. Overall, thanks to such progressive thinkers, who constantly attacked the theory of *tianren ganying*, the predominance of the mainstream ideology was being broken. In these conditions, the divine idea of history was, *inevitably and substantially*, diluted.

### 3 The Idea of History and Comments on Historical Figures in *Sanguo Zhi*, or *Records of The Three Kingdoms*

In 196, the Emperor Xian was forced to move the capital from Luoyang to Xuchang. It marked that the Later Han had become only a shadow. Twenty-four years later, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226 AD) proclaimed himself the Emperor. In 265, Cao's Wei was replaced with the Western Jin, which unified entire China. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the era was the confrontation between rival kingdoms such as Wei 魏, Shu 蜀 and Wu 吴. How did a historian understand the era? What were the characteristics of the tri-kingdom era? Answers to the two questions revealed a historian's idea of history. Later generations of scholars thought highly of *Sanguo zhi* 三国志, or the *Records of The Three Kingdoms*. For example, authors of *Jinshu* 晋书 (Book of Jin) held that Chen Shou, who penned *Sanguo zhi*, could be revered as the heir to the greatest ancient historians such as the Master Zuo, who authored *Zuozhuan*, Sima Qian and Ban Gu (“Shichen yue 史臣曰” [The Historian says], in Chapter 82 of *Jinshu*).

Chen Shou 陈寿 (233–297 AD), whose courtesy name was Chengzuo 承祚, was born in Anhan 安汉 (present-day Nanchong 南充, Sichuan). He was one of the disciples of Qiao Zhou 譙周 (201–270 AD), a renowned scholar living in the Kingdom of Shu (221–263 AD). Chen had been one of the imperial officers in the central court of Shu. Nevertheless, his political career was much less prominent on the grounds that he refused to become an appendage to Huang Hao 黄皓, who was an eunuch and the most powerful people in Shu's political circles. After the collapse of Shu, Chen worked for the central court of the Western Jin, taking a few imperial and regional posts. As regards his historical writings, Chen produced *Zhuge Liang gushiji* 诸葛亮故事集 (Zhuge Liang: Collected legends), *Guguo kao* 古国考 (Investigations of ancient kingdoms) and *Yidu qijiu zhaun* 益都耆旧传 (Memoirs

devoted to the senior and virtuous people in Yidu) apart from the well-known sixty-five-volume *Sanguo zhi*. Where *Sanguo zhi* was concerned, it was annotated by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451 AD), a great historian living in the Song of Southern Dynasties. Pei's detailed annotations substantially implemented the original *Records*, embodying the historian's aspiration for the verity of history. The characteristics of historical writing in the feudal China were almost perfectly displayed in the combination of Pei's annotations and Chen's original writings.

Chen Shou holistically grasped the entire history of the Three Kingdoms, innovatively selecting the history of Wei as the penetrating thread and unconventionally including the Lords of Wei, who were usually denounced for their arrogant acts, into the most prestigious *ji* 紀, or the Basic Annals, which were usually exclusively reserved for emperors in conformity with the orthodox principles. Chen's handling of the history of Wei indicated that his historical writing was practical and empirical, taking into consideration the fact that the Kingdom of Wei always played a pivotal role in the ever-changing and complex historical course of the Three Kingdoms. The selection of Lords of Wei as the penetrating thread and application of the much more prestigious title—*ji*—to writings devoted to them was a perfect embodiment of Chen's creative historical thinking. In this sense, ancient scholars—such as Xi Zaozhi 习凿齿 (?–383 AD) and authors of *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四库全书总目 (The general catalogue of *Four Treasures*)—and even a few modern scholars, all of whom either criticized Chen in the light of the established orthodoxy or ridiculously dug into the alleged profound meaning of Chen's handling of Lords of Wei, were actually ignorant of Chen's basic idea of history.

It is worth mentioning the influence of Qiao Zhou, Chen's master, on the outstanding author of *Sanguo zhi*. Chen specially penned a memoir dedicated to his beloved teacher, in which Chen commended that Qiao was the heir to Master Dong [Zhongshu 董仲舒] and Yang Xiong 扬雄, the two eminent scholars of the Former Han, on the grounds that he was epistemically extensive and profound and thus was venerated as an unmatched erudite Confucian scholar at that time (Chapter 42, in *Sanguo zhi*). Most importantly, Chen pointed out that Qiao was the historian grasping the general trend of historical development. Qiao had a good command of (Confucian) Six Classics and placed emphasis on the sharp and profound understanding rather on the shallow and eloquent rhetoric. Thus, Qiao could be regarded as an embodiment of the late-Han scholarship. Of course, Qiao's thought influenced Chen. In particular, Qiao's understanding of the confrontation between the Three Kingdoms inspired Chen's reconstruction of the history. Qiao had worked for the Crown Prince in the last reign of Shu and did his best to persuade the heir to act energetically and thriftily. In the light of historical facts, he in the treatise entitled *Chouguo lun* 仇国论 (On adversaries) sharply pointed out although the entire country was politically trichotomized, the Lord of Shu could not be Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Former Han dynasty, but the King Wen, who led the early Zhou to gradually gain advantages rather than to rashly proclaim himself the emperor. When the tripartite confrontation drastically changed and the rising Sima Family of Wei, which founded the Western Jin dynasty in the very near future, sieged the capital with a powerful army, Qiao sent a memorial to the throne,

suggesting Shu make obeisance to the Sima, or the becoming Emperor of Western Jin. Convinced by Qiao's suggestions, the last Lord of Shu chose to give up resistance, consequently saving Shu from being violently and bloodily annihilated. In view of this, the present author holds that Chen Shou's handling of the history of Wei be directly related to Qiao's idea of history.

In his own writings, Chen Shou did not discard the theory of Mandate of Heaven. Rather, he used it to justify the replacement of Han's ruling Liu Family by the Cao Family. It must be pointed out that Chen placed emphasis on the role Cao Cao played in the rise of Cao's Wei. In his narratives of Cao Cao's annihilation of Yuan Shao 袁紹 (153–202 AD), the most powerful rivals of Cao in the north China, an interlude implying that Cao Cao had been endowed with the Mandate was elaborately inserted. The episode read,

Originally in the reign of Emperor Huan 桓 (146–168 AD), there was a Yellow Star shining over the border area between the regions of Chu 楚 and Song 宋. Being informed this, Yin Kui 殷旭, who was from Liaodong 辽东 [present-day Liaoning 辽宁] and very good at the astrology, explained that [the appearance of the Yellow Star] heralded the rise of an invincible True Man in somewhere between the regions of Liang 梁 and Pei 沛 in five decades. By this year there have been precisely fifty years. It is at this time that the Lord [i.e. Cao Cao] destroys the troop of Yuan Shao and consequently outshines all rivals. ("Wudi ji 武帝纪" (The basic annals of Emperor Wu [i.e. Cao Cao]), Chapter 1, in *Sanguo zhi*)

Therein lay Chen's implication that the replacement of the ruling Liu Family by Cao was exactly the embodiment of Heavenly Intention. Nevertheless, in the last part of "Wudi ji" (The basic annals of Emperor Wu), Chen, in a totally differing manner, shed light on for what reason Cao Cao defeated all his rivals. His explanation read,

Here goes the Author's comment. In the late [Later] Han, all under Heaven was thrown into the chaos. Consequently, the powerful separatist warlords rose to eminence and power one after another. Among them, Yuan Shao was the most powerful, occupying four regions and growing almost invincible. Despite this, Cao Cao, or the founding emperor [of Wei], had the situation well in hand and extended his military force to every corner of the country. [In order to fulfill the mission,] he creatively absorbed the law-centric ideas developed by Shen Buhai 申不害 (385–337 BC) and Shang Yang 商鞅 (390–339 BC) while adopting the unconventional strategies ascribed to Han Xin 韩信 (230–196 BC) and Bai Qi 白起 (c. 332–257 BC) into his own schemes. [As regards the selection of the talented people,] Cao assigned candidates the posts in strict accordance with their true ability and tried to bring the fullest play of their talents; and moreover, he did his best to be freed from the biased feelings and old grievances. Finally, he assumed a dominant role in the central court and achieved a historic success. It was for the reason that he strategically outdid all rivals that Cao successfully fulfilled his mission. In this regard, Cao Cao was the man with extraordinary abilities and a hero going far beyond the age wherein he was living. ("Wudi ji," Chapter 1, in *Sanguo zhi*)

The quotation indicated that the rise of Cao's Wei depended on the ability of Cao Cao rather on the so-called Mandate of Heaven. Overall, the characteristic of Chen's discourses on the historical prosperity and decline in *Sanguo zhi* lay in the historian's act of concurrently attaching importance to the Mandate and human efforts.



As regards the replacement of Wei by the Western Jin, Chen Shou justified it by invoking the Mandate of Heaven. However, in the ending comment penned for “San shaodi ji 三少帝纪” (Basic annals of the three young emperors), Chen explored the rise and fall of Wei exclusively in the light of the ability and morality of heirs to the throne. His analyses read,

In the great antiquity, the heir [to the throne] was determined in strict accordance with whether a candidate had the public and common spirit, ability and virtue. Later, it was stipulated that only *di* 嫡, or the first son of the first wife of a sovereign, was eligible to be the heir. In practice, if *di* was not available, the sons who were from other royal families and had illustrious virtues—the Emperors Wen and Xuan of the Former Han, for instance—could be granted the heirship. It was a well-established *tradition/institution* that should not be easily changed. Unfortunately, in the case of the Emperor Ming 明 (r. 226–239 AD) [of Cao’s Wei], the sovereign failed to hold fast to the established rule. On the contrary, he acted with the connivance of personal feelings, bringing up an infant and endowing him with the heirship. To make matters worse, the Emperor Ming did not entrust the young Crown Prince exclusively to reliable lineal relatives, but instead allowed the collateral relatives to participate in the work assisting the heir. As a consequence, Cao Shuang 曹爽, [one of the entrusted senior ministers,] was brutally murdered and the Lord Qi, or the heir to the throne, was replaced with the Lord Gaogui 高贵. The new Crown Prince was intelligent even at a very young age, as well as being enthusiastic about study and good at writing, and thus acquired the literary talent similar to that of the Emperor Wen 文 (r. 220–226 AD) [of Cao’s Wei]. Nevertheless, he was indiscreet and restless and in particular recklessly discharged his anger [over the usurpative Sima Family]. Exactly for this reason, the Lord courted his own doom.

It was reasonable that Chen Shou explained the rise of a dynasty in the light of the Mandate of Heaven; it is also reasonable that the historian shed light on the fall of the dynasty from the same perspective. But meanwhile, Chen laid stress on the decisive role humans played in the alternating cycles of prosperity and decline. In fact, the two opposing views of history concurrently existed in the same book, thereby creating an incongruity. Intellectually, it indicated that the idea of the Mandate of Heaven, which prevailed so much in the two Han dynasties, had already been significantly changed in Chen’s time. Chen fused the Mandate with human factors and took the compound as the driving force of historical movement. To put it another way, the two factors—the Mandate of Heaven and capable sovereigns—collaboratively worked to determine the general trend of historical growth. The people should, Chen implied, be adaptable to the trend. Exactly for this reason, Chen in his indelible masterpiece—*Sanguo zhi*—reconstructed the life of Qiao Zhou, his master, with great respect.

*Tianming* 天命, or the Mandate of Heaven, in Chen’s discourses actually differed from that prevailing in the ideologico-intellectual world of the Former and Later Han dynasties. For example, in the memoir devoted to the life of Liu Zhang 刘璋 (162–220 AD), who had been the regional lord of Yizhou 益州 (Prefecture Yi), Chen commented,

In the past, although Wei Bao 魏豹 (?–204 BC) married a woman surnamed Bo 薄 according to Xu Fu’s 许负 suggestions and in the same vein Liu Xin changed the name in the light of the illustrated *chen* book, neither Wei nor Liu did escape the calamities. On the contrary, their Lords were blessed. Thus, it is evident that humans could by no means

deceitfully ask blessings from supernatural beings; nor should they have the delusion that they could grab the Mandate of Heaven. Otherwise, humans are doomed to failure. In the case of Liu Yan 刘焉, the father of Liu Zhang, not only was he convinced by Dong Fu 董扶 to seize the region of Yi 益 [in present-day Sichuan], but he also believed in a diviner's words, making an offer of marriage to the Wu 吴 Family. In the meantime, he rashly prepared clothes and chariots that were exclusively used by emperors, conspiring to mount the throne. How ridiculous was he! As regards Liu Zhang, Liu Yan's son, he was not that extraordinary in terms of ability and virtue. Nevertheless, he occupied a huge piece of land in an extremely chaotic age, resembling the situation wherein a wagon fully loaded with monies invited robbers. For this reason, it was natural or inevitable rather than unfortunate or helpless for Liu Zhang to be ultimately robbed of the land, wealth and post.

Simply put, Chen evidently displayed that the illustrated *chen* book, an embodiment of the mysterious supernatural force, could do nothing to help humans be freed from disasters. In this sense, the Mandate of Heaven in Chen's discourses referred actually to a *historical necessity*.

As indicated above, it was against the backdrop of changes taking place in the general trend of history that Chen Shou evaluated the acts of historical figures. In Chen's eyes, only when a brilliant figure grasped and adapted himself to the general trend of history would he be positively appraised. By contrast, those who failed to swim the tide would receive very different comments. Such a dualistic handling of history was embodied in Chen's reconstruction of the life of Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮 (181–234 AD), who played a pivotal role in the founding of the Kingdom of Shu. On the one hand, Chen acknowledged that Zhuge was one of the greatest worthies in the era of Three Kingdoms. According to "Zhuge Liang zhuan 诸葛亮传" (The life of Zhuge Liang) in *Sanguo zhi*, Chen lavishly applauded Zhuge, the irreplaceable Prime Minister of Shu. Chen's commendations read,

Here goes the Author's comment. Being appointed the Prime Minister [of the Kingdom of Shu], Zhuge Liang did his best to placate the people; show them laws and regulations; reduce the number of redundant officials; adopt flexible and expedient policies and institutions; make the social politics candid; and sincerely endeavored to fulfill the social justice. [In the Zhuge administration,] those who were loyal to the country and conducive to the time would definitely be rewarded, though they might be personal enemies [of the Prime Minister]; those who broke the law and arrogantly or sluggishly acted be punished, though they be relatives [of the Prime Minister]; those who pleaded guilty and sincerely repented of their faults be given a lesser – or even exempted from – punishment, though they carry out felonious acts; and those who were addicted to lying and spoke plausibly be severely punished, though their misdeeds not be very serious. Even if a person did the slightest good work, the person must be rewarded; and likewise, even if a person committed the slightest crime, the person must be punished. In addition, Zhuge Liang was very proficient in handling various political affairs; was good at grasping the nature or essence of differing things and affairs; strove to create the reality corresponding to the name; and resolutely abandoned those who were of a hypocritical nature. As a consequence, in the Kingdom of Shu, the people unexceptionally loved Zhuge while being in awe of him. [As regards the social order,] although the laws were a bit draconian, nobody was full of grievance, on the grounds that Zhuge was fair in the work enforcing the laws and had always explicitly admonished the people beforehand. Due to such candid efforts, Zhuge was revered as a politician who was in possession of an outstanding talent for social administration and on a par with Guan Zhong 管仲 and Xiao He 萧何 in term of the political excellence. Nevertheless, Zhuge failed to unify the country in spite of years of

massive mobilization and warfare. It might be for the reason that Zhuge Liang was good neither at meeting an emergency nor at proposing military strategies that brought about his ultimate failure.

Overall, Chen thought very highly of Zhuge Liang. As regards the administration of the Kingdom of Shu, Zhuge, Chen held, did an almost perfect work. Chen's conclusion that Zhuge Liang as a statesman was on a par with Guan Zhong and Xiao He, both of whom made great contributions to the rise of a dynasty, was the highest honor that a historian could confer upon an eminent figure. But on the other hand, Chen pointed out that although Zhuge Liang did his best to help Liu Shan 刘禅 (207–271 AD), the last sovereign of Shu, rehabilitate the Kingdom, he could not turn the tide at all, because the Kingdom had already gone into a cul-de-sac. It was not because of Zhuge's insufficient ability but the declining general trend that determined his ultimate failure. It could be said that Chen's comments on Zhuge's political practice were fair and just.

Some had arbitrarily asserted that, for the reason that Chen's father was punished because he was one of the chief assistants of Ma Su 马谡, who was a senior general and executed by Zhuge Liang due to the fatal mistake he made in a crucial military action, Chen intentionally played down the significance of Zhuge in *Sanguo zhi*. Simply put, they accused Chen of unreasonably evaluating historical figures solely in the light of the personal love and hate (Wang Yin 王隐, *Jinshu* (Book of Jin)). Such an allegation was, however, not well grounded, taking into consideration the fact Chen clearly stated that Zhuge Liang enjoyed a great popularity among the people because of his successful fulfillment of the poetic justice. In fact, the author of *Shishuo xinyu* had mentioned that there was indeed an influential Chen-style comment embodied in the narrative about Zhuge Liang. It should be pointed out that someone's refusal to accept Chen's historical narrative exactly reflected the historian's aspiration for a veritable reconstruction of the life of a historical figure.

As the renowned people in Wei and Jin did, Chen Shou appraised a figure in the light of the person's talent, character, manner and feature. For example, in Chapter Six of *Sanguo zhi*, he portrayed Liu Biao 刘表 (142–208 AD) as such a person, who was as tall as eight *chi* (one *chi* roughly equaled 23 cm), magnificent-looking, and gained fame at a very early age, thereby being venerated as one of the eight most handsome and talented people at that time. In the same vein, Chen in Chapter Twelve vividly depicted Cui Yan 崔琰 (?–216 AD). His depiction read,

[Cui's] voice was clear and loud. His features were quite fine. His beard was as long as four *chi*, thereby making himself look very dignified. Quite a few renowned people in the central court admired him very much. Among them, there was even the founding emperor, who held the Lord Cui in awe and veneration.

Inspired by Zhong Changtong's method whereby historical figures could be assorted into differing groups and then be collectively evaluated, Chen discussed the figures from a comparative perspective. For example, in the Chapter Twenty-One, Chen analyzed Wang Can 王粲 and other five persons, all of whom were renowned for their literary talent. Such a comparative method was also

employed to assess the three significant politicians—that is, Zhou Yu 周瑜, Lu Su 鲁肃 and Lü Meng 吕蒙—of the Kingdom of Wu (229–280 AD) in Chapter Fifty-Four. In addition, Chen shed light on the roles eminent figures played through the prism of the general trend embodied in the confrontation between the Three Kingdoms. In this regard, his comments on Lu Xun 陆逊, one of the towering figures in the political circle of Wu, in Chapter Fifty-Eight constituted a perfect example. Chen’s historical-figure-centered comment as a whole was completely freed from the divine tone. Rather, it had a flavor of *qingtan*. Chen’s historical narratives, wherein the personal character of a historical figure was highlighted, the person’s feature, talent and morality emphatically discoursed, and the role humans played in the alternating cycles of prosperity and decline attached greater importance, actually embodied the progress made in the idea of history.

According to “Chen Shou zhuan 陈寿传” (The life of Chen Shou) of *Jinshu*, when he was still in the mourning for his father, Chen felt ill and then asked a handmaiden to prepare the pills. One of his guests saw this and told others. Consequently, Chen’s countrymen criticized that what he did was immoral. Such an alleged immoral misdeed, however, did not matter at all in Wei and Jin dynasties, wherein people were accustomed to seeing unconventional and unorthodox behaviors. In comparison with other renowned people’s absurd and unreasonable acts, what Chen did—asking a handmaiden to prepare the pills—really meant nothing to everybody. More unconventional deeds could be, however, found in records about Ruan Xian and Shi Chong 石崇. According to *Shishuo xinyu*,

Juan Hsien [i.e. Ruan Xian] had previously shown favor to a Hsien-pei [Xianbei 鲜卑] slave girl in the household of his paternal aunt. At the time when Hsien was in mourning for the death of his mother, the aunt was on the point of moving to a distant place. At first she said she would leave the slave girl behind, but after she had set out, it turned out she had taken her along. Juan Hsien borrowed a guest’s donkey, and still wearing the clothes of mourning for a parent, rode after her himself, returning with the two of them riding one behind the other on the same saddle.<sup>11</sup>

Shi Chong 石崇 acted in a much more absurd manner. *Shishuo xinyu* revealed,

In [his] privy there were always ten or more female slaves lined up, all beautifully dressed and ornamented, holding onycha paste, aloeswood lotion and the like, with no amenity lacking.<sup>12</sup>

What Ruan Xian and Shi Chong did was exactly what the renowned people in Wei and Jin *should* do. But, the author(s) of *Jinshu* thought very differently, intentionally exaggerating the immoral nature of Chen’s act in the mourning period. Not only did the ungrounded accusation show that the conservatism and intolerance dominating the region of Shu wherein Chen lived, but it also convincingly demonstrated that the unorthodox principles of *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning, were replaced again with those of the orthodox Confucianism.

<sup>11</sup>Liu I-ch’ing, *Shih-shuo hisn-yu, or A New Account of Tales of the World*, trans. Richard B. Mather, p. 405.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 494.

#### 4 Yuan Hong: Fusing History with *Xuanxue* and *Hou Han Ji*

Yuan Hong 袁宏 (328–376 AD) was born in an aristocratic family in Yangxia 阳夏 (present-day Taikang 太康 County, Henan). His courtesy name was Yanbo 彦伯. Yuan's father had been the regional leader of Linru 临汝. In his childhood, the Yuan Family sharply declined. As a result, the young Yuan had to earn his own living, transporting tax grain to the designated place. Later, he became the chief scribe in the service of Huan Wen 桓温, one of the most powerful generals in the Eastern Jin. Finally, he was appointed the leading officer of Prefecture of Dongyang 东阳. Apart from the well-known *Hou han ji* 后汉纪 (Annals of the Later Han), Yuan produced *Zhulin minshi zhuan* 竹林名士传 (Collected memoirs devoted to the renowned people of Bamboo Grove), *Dongzheng fu* 东征赋 (Rhapsody on the Eastern Expedition), *Beizheng fu* 北征赋 (Rhapsody on the Northern Expedition), *Sanguo mingchen song* 三国名臣颂 (Eulogies to the distinguished ministers in the era of Three Kingdoms), and so on. Due to his extraordinary talent for literature, Yuan was venerated as *a literary master for a generation*.

In the reign of Yuankang (291–299 AD), *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning, entered a new phase. Thinkers such as Guo Xiang 郭象 (c. 252–312 AD) advocated the idea of *chongyou* 崇有 (In veneration of existence), painstakingly having *mingjiao* 名教, or the Confucian cardinal principles, and *ziran* 自然, or the Daoist concept of nature, fused together. Inspiringly and dialectically, they contended that *mingjiao* was *ziran*, and vice versa; and likewise, that *ben* 本, or the root, and *mo* 末, or the cap, were identical with each other and could not be separated from each other. Such a *you-* or existence-based idea ran completely counter to the *wu-* or nonexistence-centered philosophy advocated by Wang Bi. The next phase of intellectual growth of *xuanxue* lay in the syncretism of *xuanxue* and Buddhism. According to the chapter of “Wenxue 文学” (Men of letter and scholars) in *Shishuo xinyu*, Yuan Hong divided the learned people devoting themselves to *xuanxue* since the Cao's Wei into three groups, that is, Zhengshi, Zhulin and Zhongchao (the mid-reign, or the Western Jin). By and large, Yuan's trichotomization correctly reflected the general growth of *xuanxue*. It also indicated that Yuan had quite an outstanding historical consciousness among scholars renowned for their mastery of *xuanxue*.

Yuan Hong critically reexamined the general trend of scholarship in the past thousands of years, as well as discussing the advantages and disadvantages of Six Classics. In doing so, he developed his own opinion about the scholarship of the Former and Later Han dynasties. Like Sima Tan 司马谈, who was Sima Qian's father, and Ban Gu, Yuan holistically discussed differing intellectual schools (Chapter 12, *Hou Han ji*). It should be pointed out that although Yuan rethought past and present scholarship from the perspective of *xuanxue*, he did not assume an intolerant attitude toward the scholarship other than *xuanxue*. As regards Daoism and Confucianism, the historian explicitly asserted that Daoism provided insight into the nature of things and Confucianism shed revealing light on the role things

could play in the society. Overall, Yuan observed changes in the scholarship through the prism of *xuanxue* and meanwhile he fairly gave expression to the growing syncretization of Confucianism and Daoism. In comparison with Sima Tan, who contended that inasmuch as Daoism absorbed strong points of other schools and discarded all weak points it played a predominant role in both intellectual and practical world, Yuan attached importance to Confucianism from the perspective of the betterment of the governance and in doing so he demonstrated the growing syncretism of Confucianism and Daoism. But on the other hand, it must be pointed out that it was through the prism of Daoism that Yuan (re-)evaluated Confucianism. Where the historical writing was concerned, Yuan's summarization of the past scholarship indicated that in the general trend—wherein diverse intellectual schools competed and integrated with each other in the early Han; six prominent schools were deeply explored by scholars such as Sima Tan; Confucianism was elevated to a position superior to all other schools due to the efforts made by Dong Zhongshu and the Emperor Wu; the traditional studies in Confucian classics declined; and *xuanxue* rose to prominence—a new type of scholarly syncretism emerged and consequently the *history* acquired new characters that were congruous with the time.

Yuan Hong said that he spent eight years writing *Hou Han ji*, consulting hundreds of volumes of literature. In “Yuanxu 原序” (Original preface), Yuan explained his original intention in detail. There were three key points in his detailed explanation. First, the most fundamental goal of writing history was to thoroughly understand all changes taking place in past and present and consolidate the Confucian cardinal principles in regard to the basic ethics and moralities. Yuan personally thought highly of *Zuozhuan*, *Shiji*, *Hanshu*, and Xun Yue's *Hanji* in particular. Although such brilliant history books had unique advantages, none of them could be regarded as the embodiment of the basic spirit of historical writing. Yuan sharply pointed out that in these works the fundamentals of cardinal principles and the lofty meanings of Kingly Way were merely *wrapped* in rhetoric rather than were fully elaborated. By contrast, his *Hou Han ji* aspired to advance the Kingly Way by veritably reconstructing the past and succinctly and explicitly illustrating the essence of the most basic (Confucian) teaching of a benevolent nature. Thus, as regards the historical writing, the method was the thorough understanding of past and present; the basic spirit, the consolidation of cardinal principles; and the ultimate goal, the advancement of Kingly Way. In practice, Yuan successfully put his grand idea of history into effect in his creative historical writings. Second, the historiographical feature lay in the *assortment* of the objects of historical writing. It was Yuan who made a groundbreaking contribution to the traditional Chinese historiography by distinctively integrating the systematized *assortment* in the historical creative writing. Third, where the writing itself was concerned, Yuan aspired to vividly and veraciously reconstruct the life of people in the past in his historical narratives. Originally, Yuan was a renowned man of letter. Some even praised Yuan as the most outstanding literary figures among writers at that time. To put it in a nutshell, methodologically, Yuan creatively infused *leizhuan* 类传 (the assorted memoirs) of the *jizhuan* history into the annalistic history;

narratively, the historian had the strong aspiration for a more refined display of the features, spirit and bosom of historical figures; and most importantly, the goal of historical writing must be redefined in accordance with the basic requirements of *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning.

It is particularly worth mentioning that Yuan Hong's idea of *mingjiao*, or the Confucian cardinal principles regarding the basic ethics and moralities. Yuan's *mingjiao* was, however, neither Confucian nor decayed as some alleged. Rather, his idea should be analyzed in the light of the concrete historical conditions. Yuan's *mingjiao* in the historical perspective was an embodiment of the conceptual cluster consisting of nature, changes and accommodation (to circumstances) since the founding of the Former Han dynasty. The *history* in Yuan's discourses was a history of natural changes, as well as being a history of *mingjiao*. Yuan held that *shanrang* 禅让, or the peaceful handover of the crown to another person, and *geming* 革命, or the violent alteration of an established dynasty, were all in harmony with the natural course. Yuan as a historian tried his best to fairly treat such historical events. For example, in 220, Cao Pi, the first sovereign of Cao's Wei 曹魏 (220–265 AD), formally claimed to be the Emperor. In some history books, it was praised as a case of *shanrang*. Yuan thought differently, pointing out that it was improper to regard the Cao Family's replacement with the ruling Liu Family of Han as a peaceful incident in line with the principles of benevolence and righteousness on the grounds that the virtue of Han had not been dead yet. In particular, he shed light on the general trend of the development of history, delineating the growth of *mingjiao* in the historical perspective (Chapter 30, in *Hou Han ji*). His delineation read,

The Sages in the great antiquity grasped the rules in regard to stability, disorder, prosperity and decline. For this reason, they made great efforts to create *mingjiao*, or (Confucian) cardinal principles regarding the basic ethics and moralities, whereby they could well govern the myriad people; and to have [the politics] firmly based on [the grandest rule of] Heaven and earth and consolidate the root [of social administration.] [According to the Sages' principles,] when the sovereignty could be handed down in a virtuous manner, there would be *shanrang*, or the peaceful handover of the crown; and, if there was the politics carried out in a despotic way, *geming*, or the violent alteration of an established dynasty, would definitely take place. The rise and fall [of a dynasty] and the abdication and acceptance [of sovereignty] all depend on a *certain* situation; and in the meantime, [a sovereign shall] see the ways of the people in accordance with time and take action only after exhaustively grasping the grandest principles. In doing so, [the sage sovereigns] can successfully put magnificent programs [of administering the country] into effect and make an indelible mark [on the history].

Simply put, in the light of the historical actuality wherein the sessions of *shanrang* and *geming* spontaneously took place, the Ancient Sages created the system of *mingjiao* whereby the country could be well governed. The core of the *mingjiao* that was of a spontaneous nature lay in *de* 德, or the virtue, which was the true source of the rise and fall of a dynasty. In this regard, Yuan made a detailed explanation. His explanation read,

The rise of a dynasty would be irresistible, so long as it was based on the illustrious virtues [of its sovereigns]. In these conditions, the talented people from all prestigious clans wholeheartedly contributed to the course [of the rise] and even the [powerful] spiritual beings were willing to collaboratively work with human beings. As a consequence, the myriad people would be unexceptionally blessed [in the course of the rise of a dynasty led by the virtuous sovereigns]. ...On the contrary, when a dynasty was irresistibly declining, it would excessively rely on cruel punishments, imposing torturing agonies on the people. Each ordinary man and woman grew increasingly emaciated due to the despotic rule; and meanwhile, those who were loyal and righteousness, found no ways whereby they could fulfill themselves. In these conditions, the voices of grievances could be heard everywhere, while the people were desperately expecting a new sovereign. Now that the [old] sovereign had completely abandoned the Kingly Way, even the most mediocre people could turn their back to despots such as Jie 桀 and Zhou 纣. But on the other hand, if the despotic rule [of the old dynasty] had not grown to the last degree, the coming sovereign still could by no means ascend to power, even though he was as sage as the King Wen 文 was. It is the Way that the [Highest] Principle works. (Chapter 30, in *Hou Han ji*)

Yuan's idea of *mingjiao* in the historical perspective progressively embodied the concept that the historical growth was inevitable. Such a historical inevitability could be applied to two circumstances. First, if the core of *mingjiao* had not been completely destroyed, a great man could not have the old dynasty replaced with a new one, even though he was a sage in possession of the greatness of the King Wen, who laid the politico-cultural foundation of the legendary Western Zhou dynasty. By contrast, as soon as the system of *mingjiao* and the basic virtues of a sovereign in particular were ruined, everyone had the right to stand up against and even overthrow the corrupted dynasty. Therein exactly lay Yuan's principle of history.

In his masterpiece, that is, *Hou Han ji*, Yuan put forward the idea of *tianli* 天理, or the Heavenly Principle, stating that Heaven, earth and humankind were all created in line with the Heavenly Principle that was consisted in the forces of *yin* and *yang* (Chapter 11, in *Hou Han ji*). Although it was against the backdrop of the proper applications of law and punishment that Yuan proposed his *tianli*, the historian did raise a universal proposition centering on the relevance between the Heavenly Principle and the myriad things and the good governance's origin in the Principle. In the social context such a grand Principle lay in the institutionalized implementation of virtues, rites, punishments and rewards. The Yuan-style Heavenly Principle exactly denoted *mingjiao*, or *ziran* (nature) and was fundamentally different from its counterpart advocating *youwei* 有为, or the positive action. Therefore, Yuan also called his Heavenly Principle the Principle of Nature. The historian asserted that the foundation of *mingjiao* was no other than the basic relationships existing between sovereign and minister and between father and son (Chapter 26, in *Hou Han ji*). Such a justly hierarchized relationship was totally immune from change, perfectly embodying the nature of Heaven and earth. It was precisely the Principle of Nature, or *mingjiao*. Human beings should act in accordance with the Principle of Nature. Even the affairs of state—such as national ceremonies and alterations of sovereignty—should also be carried out in a *natural* way. Simply put, Yuan did his utmost to incorporate the institutionalized Confucian rites into a Daoist theoretical framework based on the concepts of nature and nonaction. Thus, Yuan's *mingjiao* was neither the same as Dong Zhongshu's



*gangchang* 纲常, or the Confucian Cardinal Principles and Constant Values with respect to ethics and moralities; nor was it identical with the Daoist idea of *wuwei* 无为, or the sublimed nonaction.

In Yuan's disquisition about the Heavenly Principle, the human desires were theoretically tolerated in a limited manner (Chapter 17, *Hou Han ji*). He acknowledged that the indestructibility of human desires was congruous with the essence of Heavenly Principle. Therein lay the characteristic of the historian's theory of *mingjiao/tianli*. It was such a tolerant characteristic that separated Yuan's *tianli* from its counterpart in the School of the Learning of Principle that was prevalent in the two Song dynasties (960–1279). Yuan went further, contending that the society's lower echelons' desire for existence not be simplistically denied but sincerely recognized and most importantly the ruling elites' indulgence in the luxury life must be effectively restricted (Chapter 18, *Hou Han ji*). In particular, the historian pointed out that in order to maintain the social stability and fulfill the ordinary people's need for survival, the excessive desires of those who were pedestalled in the society did need to be eliminated. Obviously, Yuan attached importance to the people in his theoretical construction of the Heavenly Principle, embodying the change taking place in the theory of the people's significance to the state politics since the Former Han dynasty. For this reason, the simplistic conclusion that Yuan's ideologico-intellectual (re-)formulation of *mingjiao* was decayed was actually ungrounded and misleading.

*Li* 礼 (rite) and *yue* 乐 (music) were part and parcel of Yuan's theory. In the historian's eyes, *li* was exactly an embodiment of nature. In this regard, he explained,

*Li*, or the rite, denotes something that can be used to rectify the human mind and regulate many a things. Thus, it can be applied to the administration of human beings. The origin of *li* lies in the love and reverence the humankind project onto *nature*. *Li* is produced by the utmost sincerity and carried forward in [one's] careers. Placing no coercive restrictions on the natural call of humans, the Sages instructively tolerate human dispositions, formulate helpful rites, and lead humans to express [inner feelings] by means of the ritual practice, thereby creating the order whereby the superior and inferior and the degrees of kinship, can be clearly and properly distinguished. Sages go further, enabling [the creatively formulated rites] to extensively and expansively grow into an all-embracing system. (Chapter 13, in *Hou Han ji*)

Yuan furthered his discussion, implying that although *li* was genuinely and spontaneously created it was actually not immune from changes. Rather, there was a changeability in the unchangeability of *li*. For example, the order, which made a clear and hierarchical distinction between superior and inferior and between elder and younger, was a product of social changes and meanwhile it assumed a nature-given unchangeability. Of course, the concrete things in relation to the rites—for example, the ritual utensils, clothes and institutions—were changeable. Therein the basic criterion in regard to the great efforts that Sage Kings in previous ages made to develop *li* (Chapter 13, in *Hou Han ji*). Yuan criticized those who obstinately adhered to the ritual dogmata developed by the renowned Confucians such as Dong Zhongshu and Liu Xiang 刘向 (77–6 BC) in centuries ago,

sarcastically pointing out that such thickheaded scholars could neither make the established institution of rites more complete nor innovatively change it with the times (Chapter 13, in *Hou Han ji*). The true goal of Yuan's interpretive efforts was to fuse the changeability and unchangeability of the institutionalized *li* with *xu-anxue*, or the Mysterious Learning.

As regards the changeability and unchangeability of *li*, it depended on *shi* 時, or the concrete conditions of a certain time. Digging into the history of peaceful or violent handovers of crown in the eras of Yao, Shun, Yu and Tang (who founded the Shang dynasty in the seventeenth century BC) and the alterations of institutions of punishments and rewards in Shang and Zhou dynasties, as well as into the praiseworthy and detestable deeds committed by high lords or ministers in the Spring and Autumn Era, Yuan shed light on the historical actuality that even the established rites would change accordingly whenever *shi*, or the socio-political conditions of a certain time, changed (Chapter 12, in *Hou Han ji*). Above discussions indicated that the historian did theoretically recognize the validity and necessity of *change* in the historical perspective.

Where the role *yue*, or the music, could play in the society was concerned, Yuan held that it was based on the most basic concepts of *wuwei* (nonaction) and *ziran* (nature). Invoking Ji Kang's 嵇康 (223–263 AD) well-known treatise entitled *Sheng wu ai le lun* 声无哀乐论 (Music Has in It Neither Grief nor Joy), the historian discoursed his theory of *yue*. One piece of Ji's inspiring writing that was cited by Yuan in his *Hanji* read,

The kings of antiquity, carrying on the work of Heaven in bringing order to things, necessarily venerated teachings that were simple and easy, and controlled by means of the government of non-action. The ruler was tranquil above and his ministers submissive below. Mysteriously things transformed and in hidden ways interfused. Heaven and man were united and at peace. ...All forms of life were secure and at ease, 'bringing to themselves many blessings.' Silently they followed the Way, cherishing loyalty and holding righteousness dear, unaware of the reason why things were so. Filled with a harmonious heart on the inside, they manifested a harmonious manner on the out. ...And therefore, music that had no sound is the father and mother of the people.<sup>13</sup>

Simply put, *yue* could play a great role in the work stabilizing the social order and bringing the great harmony to the country. For this reason, *yue* was turned into a means of governance by nonaction. To sum up, *yue* and *li*, Yuan implied, complemented each other in the political perspective.

In addition, Yuan thoroughly applied the idea that Daoism was the *root* and Confucianism the *function* to his interpretations of the socio-political history of dynasties in previous ages. Take his interpretive narratives about the Former and Later Han dynasties for example. Yuan pointed out there was a huge difference between the antique Three Dynasties and the eras of Qin and Han empires from the perspective of the Daoist nonaction. Put plainly, in the Three Dynasties the sovereigns and their subjects were in perfect harmony; but by contrast, the harmony

<sup>13</sup>Ji Kang 嵇康, *Philosophy and Argumentation in Third-Century China: The Essays of Hsi K'ang*, trans. Robert G. Henricks (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 101–103.

was broken and the inferiors (ministers) had to try their best to please the superiors (sovereigns) in the Qin-Han era (Chapter 4, in *Hou Han ji*). In other words, the governance in the great antiquity was in congruous with the Way of Nonaction; the social administration in later ages, meanwhile, was not in conformity with the lofty teaching of *wuwei*, or the nonaction. Overall, Yuan did not make himself distinct from historians in past dynasties, but instead thought very highly of the remote Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, all of which were renowned for their sage sovereigns. But on the other hand, obviously, Yuan illuminated the course of history from the Daoist perspective. The fusion of Confucianism and Daoism could also be found in his reexamination of the early Later Han's enfeoffment in a comparative context wherein the stable hierarchically-pentachotomized enfeoffment contrasted with the prefecture-county system that was susceptible to change and instability (Chapter 7, in *Hou Han ji*). It is evident that Yuan's idea of history as *progress* and theory regarding the alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective were greatly influenced by his thought of *xuanxue*. As a historian, Yuan adored nature and meanwhile he unswervingly held fast to the Confucian principle that the distinction hierarchically made between superior and inferior could by no means be changed.

Yuan critically rethought the founding emperor's political programs that were proposed and implemented in accordance with the mystical and superstitious teachings of *chen* and *wei*. His criticism read,

As regards the genre of *chen* keeping account of heterodox speeches and absurd things, it was of course not the record of the Way of Sages. When the founding emperor [of the Later Han] rose to power and rehabilitated the Han dynasty, the Kingly Way was still far from being perfectly put into effect. It must be admitted that the Emperor's great performance making his own virtue like that of Heaven depended on [the talents and hard work of his] high ministers. (Chapter 3, in *Hou Han ji*)

Simply put, in Yuan's eyes, although the rise of Liu Xiu 刘秀 (5–57 AD), or the founding emperor of the Later Han, was an embodiment of the Heavenly Intention, his choice of the *chen-wei* teaching as the guiding principle of social administration was neither congruous with the Way of Sage nor welcomed by the people. As a well-educated historian, Yuan, on the one hand, justified the founding of the Later Han by invoking the Mandate of Heaven and Heavenly Intention; but on the other hand, he was very discontent with the effort to vulgarly interpret history in the light of the *chen-wei* doctrines.

Yuan strongly disagreed with the opinion that the fall of a dynasty was closely related to the predominance of *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning. One piece of record in *Jinshu* demonstrated this point. The record read,

[In the northern expedition,] Huan Wen 桓温 (312–373 AD), one of the most powerful generals of the Eastern Jin dynasty) passed by the region of Huaisi 淮泗 and stepped on the frontier of the North. Thereupon, the General, being attended by the crowd of his inferiors, ascended the high Pavilion of Pingcheng 平乘 (Balanced Chariot) [on a huge boat] and looked out over the Central Plains (wherein the original capital of Jin dynasty was situated). He sentimentally sighed, “Wang Yifu 王夷甫 [i.e. Wang Yan 王衍 (256–311 AD), a leading proponent of *qingtan*, or the abstract discussions] must be responsible for the

collapse of the dynasty lasting for hundreds of years and the decline of the entire country!" [Being shocked by Huan's ungrounded and arbitrary assertion that the *xuanxue* pioneered by thinkers such as Wang Yan was the chief culprit of the decline of the Western Jin dynasty, Yuan straightly refuted.] "The rise and fall [of a dynasty] is actually decreed beforehand [by Heaven]. For this reason, it is totally unreasonable to blame a certain person for the predestined collapse!" (Chapter 98, in *Jinshu*)

Therein lay both Yuan's defence of a renowned figure of *xuanxue* and his theory regarding the alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. Huan was extremely mad at Yuan's scathing defence. Nevertheless, the powerful warlord could do nothing with the exception of sneering at the veracious historian.

In Yuan's *xuanxue*-centric reexamination of the rise and fall of dynasties in previous ages, there was a genre of historical criticism. For example, Yuan criticized sovereigns' policies on the expansion of borderlands from the perspective of Daoist nonaction, pointing out that Ancient Sages' true goal was not to conquer all under Heaven but to stabilize it by means of the abstention from excessive desires and inner cultivation (Chapter 14, *Hou Han ji*). He asserted that it was for the reason that sage sovereigns in the eras of Yao, Shun, Xia, Shang and Zhou made efforts to stabilize the borderlands rather than to conquer them that there were the long stability and peace between the Central Plains and frontiers. In contrast to their counterparts in the great antiquity, emperors in Qin and Han became much greedier of the land and tried to extend their empire into the remote Western Region and the sea, even though they had already greatly expanded the territories under their rule. As a result, the laws and punishments of the central court could not be easily and effectually applied to the extremely huge land; nor did the approved decency effectively influence regions too far away from the center, thereby setting the scene for the future chaos (Chapter 14, in *Hou Han shu*). In addition, invoking the Daoist idea advocating the obedience and abstention from excessive desires, Yuan disparaged sovereigns who cruelly exploited the people and asserted that only when present-day sovereigns grasped the Ancient Sage Kings' principles regarding thrifty and critically reexamined sovereigns' misdeeds in the Qin and Han dynasties would they be able to bring the long stability and prosperity to the country (Chapter 9, in *Hou Han ji*). Thanks to Yuan's intellectual efforts, the Daoist concepts of nonaction and nature constituted the theoretical foundation of criticism against the coercive and exploitive sovereigns through all ages.

Finally, it should be pointed out that Yuan's comments on historical figures was primarily based on his idea of *mingjiao*. Yuan lavished praises on those who were renowned for loyalty, filiality, morality and righteousness. Nevertheless, his understanding of such principal virtues was very different from that of Confucians. His comment on Ma Yuan 马援 (14–49 AD) was an embodiment of the difference. Ma was a prominent general in the early Later Han dynasty. Unfortunately, he was suspected and even verbally attacked by the emperor short before his death. Worst of all, he was not allowed to be buried in the cemetery that he originally selected after his death. In view of this, Yuan commented that the General Ma, a talented people, was indeed *excessively* talented (Chapter 8, in *Hou Han ji*). In other words,

Ma was lack of such a kind of Daoist wisdom, which taught people to take advantage of all opportunities rather than to force themselves to do difficult things. Therein lay an obvious ideological difference existing between the Yuan-style and Confucian concepts of loyalty. Apart from the Daoist concept of nonaction, the Daoist idea of saving life could be found in Yuan's comment on Kou Xun 寇恂 (?–36 AD), who made a remarkable contribution to the founding of the Later Han (Chapter 6, *Hou Han ji*). Additionally, in Yuan's annals in praise of the Emperor Zhang the Daoist spontaneous, sincere veneration of *li*, or the rites, was highlighted (Chapter 11, *Hou Han ji*). By contrast, the Confucians emphasized that virtues such as the reverence to *li* could only be acquired through study and cultivation. For a general survey of Yuan's comments on historical figures, readers can expose themselves to *Sanguo mingchen song* (Eulogies to distinguished ministers in the era of Three Kingdoms), which was preserved in "Yuan Hong zhuan 袁弘传" (The life of Yuan Hong) in *Jinshu*. Readers shall always bear in mind that in his historical narratives Yuan unswervingly held fast to his idea of *mingjiao* that was exclusively *xuanxue*-oriented and fundamentally different from the *mingjiao* in the Confucian perspective.

## 5 "Lun" (Remarks) and "Zan" (Eulogies) in *Hou Han Shu* and Fan Ye's Idea of History

Generally, the philosophical thinking always extensively influenced the growth of historical writing in a certain era. If a great variety of thoughts were syncretizing each other in a time, the idea of history would definitely become complicated. In the Southern and Northern Dynasties, there was a great syncretization of Confucianism, Buddhism and *xuanxue* (the Mysterious Learning). The idea of history in the same period changed accordingly. To be specific, historians gave expression to styles and principles of *xuanxue* in their works, as well as interpreting changes taking place in history and ruminated on what would lie ahead in the course of history from the Confucian perspective. Among them, some even displayed a reserved anti-Buddhist sentiment. The most representative figures among the community of historians in the Southern and Northern Dynasties were Fan Ye and Shen Yue. Undoubtedly, Fan Ye was the most renowned guru of historical narratives in this era.

Fan's *Hou Han shu* (Book of the Later Han) was one of the monumental works in the history of Chinese historical writings. As regards the work's significance to the primary sources for the historical study, *Hou Han shu* was not very prominent on the grounds that it was based on the corrections and deletions of existing books devoted to the history of the Later Han dynasty (Chapter 69, or "Fan Ye zhuan 范晔传" (The life of Fan Ye), in *Songshu* 宋书 (The book of Song [420–479 AD])). Fan himself had shed light on the contribution of his own work to the history of Chinese historiography in one letter he wrote to his nephews when he was being incarcerated (Chapter 69, in *Songshu*). There were three key points in the letter.

First, Fan believed that he contributed to the (re-)organization of existing history devoted to the Later Han from the historiographical perspective. The following table displayed the major works Fan had consulted when writing *Hou Han shu*.

Authors of the works	Titles of the works
Liu Zhen 刘珍 et al.	<i>Dongguan Han ji</i> 东观汉记
Xie Cheng 谢承	<i>Hou Han shu</i> 后汉书 (Book of the Later Han)
Hua Qiao 华峤	<i>Hou Han shu</i> 后汉书 (Book of the Later Han)
Sima Biao 司马彪	<i>Xu Han shu</i> 续汉书 (A sequel to <i>Book of Han</i> )
Xie Chen 谢沈	<i>Hou Han shu</i> 后汉书 (Book of the Later Han)
Yuan Shansong 袁山松	<i>Hou Han shu</i> 后汉书 (Book of the Later Han)
Xue Ying 薛莹	<i>Hou Han ji</i> 后汉纪 (Annals of the Later Han)
Zhang Ying 张莹	<i>Hou Han nan ji</i> 后汉南纪 (The southern annals of the Later Han)
Yuan Hong 袁宏	<i>Hou Han ji</i> 后汉纪
Zhang Yao 张瑶	<i>Hou Han ji</i> 后汉纪 (Annals of the Later Han)

It is particularly worth pointing out that the book penned by Hua Qiao (?–293 AD) was in close relation to Fan's *Hou Han Shu*. In his own work, Fan frequently cited Hua's book. Where the characteristic of Fan's (re-)organization of existing history books was concerned, it lay exactly in the historian's application of *assortment* to historical narratives. Apart from the specially-penned memoirs, other biographies were created in the light of assortments based on the historical figures' activities, moralities and even appearances. Historiographically, such Fan-style biographies could be regarded as the sublimed extensions of *qingtan*- and *xuanxue*-tinted appraisal of historical figures that prevailed in the Later Han, Cao's Wei and Western and Eastern Jin dynasties. It should also be pointed out that in Fan's works there were the combined memoirs devoted to a renowned figure and his posterity, historiographically embodying the predominance of the manorial economy and hereditary houses in possession of an incredible wealth and power. Nevertheless, the number of the combined memoirs devoted certain families was very small in Fan's *Hou Han shu*, revealing that the historian consciously downplayed the importance of the hereditary system in the Chinese society.

Second, Fan was confident of his creative historical writing. The present author holds that Fan's contribution to historical writing was most intensively embodied in his *lun* 论 (remarks). Fan's confident assertion that his own writings were eloquent and extraordinary was not exaggerating. Apart from *lun*, *zan* 赞 (eulogies) in *Hou Han shu* was attached great importance by the author himself. Fan even boldly said in his *zan* none of the words were redundant. In the perspectives of the pure literature and popular literary writing at that time his confidence was not ungrounded. Nevertheless, the present author disagrees with Fan's self-assertion, contending instead that many pieces of *zan* be heavily expurgated. In fact, neither were *lun* and *zan* that were attached to the end of memoirs in *Hou Han shu* were ideologically different from each other; nor could both substantially contribute to

the main body of the essays. Ironically, although Fan clearly grasped the fundamental discrepancy existing between history and literature and explicitly stated that he was ashamed of being a literary man, his *zan* was, to a great extent, of a literary nature.

Third, most importantly, Fan made a significant contribution to the Chinese idea of history. *Lun* in sixteen memoirs—namely, “Xunli 循吏” (The law-abiding, upright and incorruptible officials), “Kuli 酷吏” (The officials who advocated the draconian laws and put them into effect), “Huanzhe 宦者” (Renowned eunuchs), “Rulin 儒林” (Famous Confucians), “Wenyuan 文苑” (Reputable men of letters), “Duxing 独行” (Those who had an independent character), “Fangshu 方术” (Well-known Necromancers), “Yimin 逸民” (Those who lived a reclusive life), “Lienü 列女” (Praiseworthy women), “Dong yi 东夷” (Ethnic groups living in the eastern border areas), “Nanman xinan yi 南蛮西南夷” (Ethnic groups living in the southern and southwestern border areas), “Xi Qiang 西羌” (The Qiang people living in the western border areas), “Xiyu 西域” (Western Regions), “Nan Xionggnu 南匈奴” (The Xionggnu people living in the southern border areas), and “Wuhuan Xianbei 乌桓鲜卑” (The Wuhuan and Xianbei people)—constituted the most intensive embodiment of Fan’s historical thinking. As regards the genres of Fan’s *lun*, there were prefaces, remarks in the main body and ending summarizations. For example, at the very beginning of the thirty-first *zhuan* (memoir) Fan discoursed on the filial piety and obligation to support the aged parents by quoting the *Confucian Analects*; and in the main body of the twenty-ninth *zhuan* the historian profoundly discussed the scholarly tradition and virtuous deeds of the Huan 桓 Family and then retrospectively examined affairs taking place in the Ding 丁 Family. Besides *lun* attached to the regular biographies, special pieces of *lun* were penned by Fan for “Huanghou ji 皇后纪” (Annals of queens), “Danggu liezhuan 党锢列传” (Annals of struggles between rival political factions), and so on. Overall, Fan paid greater attention to *lun* in the historiographical perspective and even compared his *lun* to Jia Yi’s 贾谊 (200–168 BC) indelible treatise entitled *Guo Qin lun 过秦论* (On the faults committed by the Qin Empire). Such a comparison, which was full of confidence, was not unreasonable.

A perfectly syncretized intellectual thread embodying both Confucianism and Daoism penetrated all pieces of commentarial *lun* and *zan* in *Hou Han shu*. Usually, Fan (re-)examined historical figures through the prism of *ren* 仁, or the benevolence, one of the key Confucian concepts. Nevertheless, Fan’s *ren* was different from that of Confucians. Putting *ren* into the context of *xin* 心, or the mind, Fan revealingly illuminated that the quintessence of *ren* lay in the mind rather in the *pro forma* thriftiness. Contrastively, he depicted Jisun Xingfu 季孙行父, who was known to the people in the Warring States era because of his prohibiting the concubines from wearing clothes made of fine silk, and Gongsun Hong 公孙弘, who had been the prime minister in the reign of Emperor Wu of the Former Han dynasty and denounced as hypocrite even though he put on apparels made of coarse material. In view of this, Fan pointed out, “Those who attempted to make profit from *ren* would always pretend to be benevolent; in contrast, those who genuinely grasped the essence of *yi* 义, or the righteousness, would never try to superficially

act in accordance with the principle of *yi*" (Chapter 27, in *Hou Han shu*). One piece of annotation devoted to Fan's original writing echoed that the clear line drawn between the genuine and false *ren* lay exactly in whether the aspiration to benefit the people was from the bottom of one's heart or not. In the light of this, Fan commented on Xuan Bing 宣秉 (?–30 AD), a recluse, Wang Liang 王良, a high official renowned for his incorruptibility and thriftiness, and so on (Chapter 27, in *Hou Han shu*). In his reconstruction of the life of Zhuo Mao 卓茂 (?–28 AD), of whom the founding emperor of the Later Han though very highly, the historian contended that the core of *ren* was consisted in the virtues such as kindness and tolerance (Chapter 25, in *Hou Han shu*). In fact, such a *ren* consisting of kindness and tolerance was not in accord with its counterpart in the *primitive* Confucianism. Fan went further, illuminating the way of being benevolent in one of *liezhuan* 列传, or the collected memoirs (Chapter 93, in *Hou Han shu*). His illumination read,

How magnificent is the Way, by which those who are of the benevolent nature strictly abide and strive to put it into effect! A person shall have their aspirations firmly established and then fulfill the firmly-established aspirations. How can they aspire merely to achieve their own goals and protect their own lives? Rather, they shall set up the grand principles in regard to the advancement and retreat of the life and rectify the general mood of entire society. In doing so, they will live a life in harmony with the Great Way and fearlessly embrace the death according with the principle of righteousness. If a person devotes his life exclusively to the righteousness, the person's life will be bound to be hurt; to the life, the [principle of] righteousness be defiled; to the materials, the wisdom be blemished; and to the self, the [spirit of] benevolence be damaged. In the case wherein the [principle of] righteousness was attached greater importance, embracing the righteousness even at the expense of the life might be the better choice; on the contrary, if the greater importance was attached to the life rather than to the [principle of] righteousness, the irrevocable commitment to the protection of the life from being hurt should never be condemned. [In the late Later Han dynasty, the benighted emperors reigned over the country and the Kingly Way was completely abandoned. Under such circumstances,] if a minister chose to sacrifice his life in defence of the [principle of] righteousness, he died a martyr's death; but, if he gave up the imperial service in exchange of a safe life, he should not be denounced as perpetrator of the crime impeding the fulfillment of the most basic virtues such as *ren*.

Obviously, in his elaborations Fan tried his best to reconcile the need to protect one's own life and the encouragement to die for basic virtues such as benevolence and righteousness. Therein lay another dissimilarity between Fan's altered Confucianism and the primitive Confucian thinking.

In the light of above discussions, it is safe to say that the key criterion whereby historical figures could be fairly evaluated in *Hou Han shu* was consisted in the moral integrity and righteous acts, both of which in turn constituted the way of being a virtuous man. Fan had criticized that both Ban Gu, one of the most prominent historians in the Later Han, and Ban Biao, Gu's father and another renowned history scholar, turned a blind eye to those who died for high moralities and righteousness and failed to discover the beauty of the dauntless act of dying a martyr's death, but instead grew increasingly contemptuous of the aspiration for benevolence and righteousness and the adherence to high moralities (The second part of Chapter 40, in *Hou Han shu*). Fan's accounts of those who unswervingly held fast to the moral integrity were worthy of a furthered discussion. The historian



divided such virtuous practitioners of high moralities into four groups. First, there were the people who defend the principle of benevolence at the cost of their own lives. Second, there were the people who act sincerely and loyally. In Fan’s mind, the sincerity and loyalty—both of which were epitomized by Lu Zhi 卢植, a renowned Confucian general who were unshakably loyal to the Han sovereigns in spite of being incessantly suppressed by the evil-minded eunuchs (Chapter 64, in *Hou Han shu*)—were exactly the characters whereby the people living in the chaotic time could help themselves obtain the freedom from being engulfed by the decadent morals. Third, there were the people who could always remain pure and lofty. In particular, such persons of firmness of will were able to adhere to their aspirations, even though they were being trapped in poverty and humbleness. In the light of this, Fan held that Xun Nen 荀诜 (?-?), a noble people in the early Later Han, be regarded as a paragon. According to Fan’s narratives, when Xun was a young man, he had lofty ideas and was in possession of tens of millions of assets. After His father’s death, Xun donated all his fortunes to his immediate and remote relatives and lived a reclusive life in mountains. In doing so, he purified and fulfilled his original aspirations (Chapter 53, in *Hou Han shu*). Fourth, there were the people who acted in a transcendental way, high-heartedly keeping aloof from those in power. For example, Liang Hong 梁鸿, a reputable recluse and poet, refused to marry the daughter of a powerful hereditary houses (Chapter 83, in *Hou Han shu*). Fan appreciated very much such reclusive talents and specially penned a collected memoirs for them, affectionately eulogizing,

[Those who choose to live a reclusive life in] seas and rivers successfully free themselves from the clamorous world and become transcendently invisible. Whenever they go to the deep mountain forest, they will not return forever. Their nature that are innately reclusive is like the gentle wind [blowing from the innermost part of the mind] and their characters that are radiantly graceful tower into the clouds. [Such brilliant people inspiringly illuminate that] only when the Way is close to the complete voidness will it be truly in completion; and that, in the same – albeit reverse – vein, [the human] affairs cannot be errorless so long as they fail to be secularly well-grounded.

It is evident that such a passionate eulogy was strongly *xuanxue*-tinted.

In addition to the above mentioned criteria, Fan also employed talents, creativity and virtues such as loyalty, sincerity and trustworthiness to judge historical figures. The Fan-sanctioned criteria were all of the Confucian and *xuanxue* nature at the same time. But on the other hand, the two types of intellectual element—that is, Confucianism and *xuanxue*—were not well integrated, so that Fan’s thinking seemed a little bit *eclectic*. Admittedly, such an intellectual eclecticism was unavoidable in the early stage of the scholarly syncretism. It was obvious that Fan attached greater importance to the role human factors played in the social development embodied in the alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. But meanwhile, as regards the supernatural Mandate of Heaven, the historian seemed reserved. For example, when he was delineating the founding emperor’s ascension to the throne, Fan enumerated a series of auspicious omens foreshowing the dynastic change and asseverated that the Mandate had been conferred upon the rising Liu (The second part of Chapter 1, in *Hou Han shu*). In fact,

the advertisement of the new sovereign's divine power was an indispensable role that *Hou Han shu*, a history book that was used to meet the need of feudal sovereign, must play. Nevertheless, the historian laid stress on the significance of the popular will to the founding of the Later Han. For example, in the memoir devoted to Feng Yi 冯异 (?–34 AD), the historian recorded one piece of the renowned general's speech, in which Feng suggested Liu Xiu, who founded the Later Han, do his best to put policies benefiting the people into effect on the grounds that the common people were all suffering from the despotic rule of Wang Mang, the de facto highest ruler in the ending years of the Former Han. Convinced by Feng's words, the founding emperor took his advice (Chapter 17, in *Hou Han shu*). In one piece of his *lun*, Fan concluded it was for the three reasons—that is, a much better external environment wherein there were not any powerful rivals and the people were desperately eager to restore the declining dynasty; the new sovereign's proper and pragmatic military and political policies; and Liu Xiu's practical abandonment of a hasty war against the powerful Xiongnu tribes in the border areas in particular (Chapter 18, *Hou Han shu*)—that Liu Xiu rose to power and successfully rehabilitated the dying Han. In his reconstruction of the founding emperor's rehabilitating efforts, the historian did not preach the divine power at all. Adhering to the secular criteria applying to the political analyses, Fan pointed out that the decline of the reign of Emperor Shun 顺 (r. 115–144 AD) resulted from the Emperor's failure to critically reexamine the mistakes he had committed and the more stupid, repeated maladministration that had been done in past dynasties (Chapter 6, in *Hou Han shu*); and that the evil-minded eunuchs' monopoly on the political power directly caused the dynasty to grow decayed in the reigns of the Emperors of Ling 灵 (r. 168–189 AD) and Xian 献 (r. 189–220 AD). Despite this, it must be pointed out that the historian actually did not entirely give up the role Heaven played in the collapse of the Later Han, but instead mystically asserted that the Highest Lord Above detested so much the deteriorated virtues of Han. As a whole the Fan-style historical narratives in regard to the endless alternating cycles of prosperity and decline of past dynasties concurrently embodied the significant role human factors played in the historical course and Heaven as the mysterious determinant, both of which could not be ideologically separated from each other.

## 6 The Ideologico-Theoretical Elaborations of Ethnic Groups, Religious Sects and Mighty Families in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties

It was in the era of Three Kingdoms and the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern dynasties that a great diversity of ethnic groups conflicted, (re-)integrated, and interconnect with each other. “In the incessant sessions of separation and reconciliation between the Han people and other ethnic groups, the Han people, to a certain extent, had itself substantially improved; and meanwhile the non-Han ethnic

groups were economically and culturally enhanced, thereby the feudalization was greatly facilitated nationwide.”<sup>14</sup> Such a social character was embodied in the growth of the idea of history. Intellectually, *zhengtong lun* 正统论, or the official ideology exclusively based on the established ethno-cultural orthodoxy, was closely related to the idea of *nationality*. Historiographically, the idea of *zhengtong* (orthodoxy) was, however, conceptually dichotomized in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589 AD). The dichotomized concept of orthodoxy referred (1) to the justified succession to the throne or the unjustified usurpation of the throne; and (2) to the idea of (predominant) nationality. The two aspects of *zhengtong*, or the orthodoxy, were actually inseparably intertwined. Dynasties of every hue in the south and north China, all of which strove for the unchallengeable political orthodoxy, made the matter of *zhengtong* increasingly complicated. But on the other hand, the non-Chinese regimes’ participation in the almost cutthroat competition for the highest orthodoxy was an embodiment of the development of traditional Han-centric idea of history. At that time, dynasties nestling in the south disparagingly called their counterparts in the north *pigtailed barbarians*. In retaliation, the northerners stigmatized the southerners as *islandish savages*. The two sides spared no effort to grab the orthodoxy whereby one could proclaim itself the genuine highest lord of the Chinese world.

As regards the historical narratives produced at that time, Chen Shou made a groundbreaking effort to change the ruling orthodoxy reigning over the Former and Later Han dynasties. In an almost revolutionary manner the historian upgraded the memoirs devoted to the sovereigns of Cao’s Wei to the much more prestigious *ji* (the annals of orthodox emperors), while iconoclastically downgrading those devoted to rulers of Shu and Wu to *zhuàn* (the biographies of ministers or high officials). As a result, Chen’s novel approach to the handling of the matter of orthodoxy in the historical writing caused fierce controversies in later times. Even as late as the Qianlong 乾隆 reign (1735–1795) of the Qing dynasty, the prominent author(s) of *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四库全书总目提要 (Refined annotations to the general catalogue of *Four Treasures*) retrospectively and critically discussed Chen’s unorthodox treatment of the orthodoxy of sovereignty (Chapter 45, in *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*). The Qing scholars’ hindsight remark revealed an embarrassing truth that the selection of the embodiment of the established orthodoxy solely depended on the need of the incumbent sovereign(s). Therein exactly lay *the other* aspect of the traditional Chinese historiography. In the Qing scholars’ reexamination of the historical narratives in *Sanguo zhi*, they pointed out that Xi Zuochi 习凿齿 (?–383 AD, a renowned historian in the Eastern Jin dynasty, strongly objected to Chen’s choosing Cao’s Wei to be the heir to the Mandate of Heaven. Xi’s true goal was, however, to warn Huan Wen, the most powerful general in his time, not to cast his covetous eyes on the ruling power of the royal family of (the Eastern) Jin. The author(s) of *Jinshu* echoed this point in the memoir devoted to Xi (Chapter 82, in *Jinshu*).

<sup>14</sup>Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, ed., *Zhongguo tongshi* 中国通史 [The general history of China] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2004), vol. 1, p. 4.

In the feudal China, as a whole historians tried their best to produce the veritable records as regards what happened in the past and what was taking place in their time. At the same time, they had to specially formulate certain rules applying to the historical writing with a view to meeting certain political needs. Simply put, the historical narrative must be used to justify the sovereignty. Apart from the need to make sure which dynasty was the orthodox heir to the Mandate of Heaven in the Central Plains, historians must give an answer to the question that among dynasties founded by non-Han ethnic groups and incessantly altered kingdoms of Han people which one could be politico-ethno-culturally legitimated against the backdrop of drastic changes taking place in the state politics and geographical divisions. Indeed, historians at that time made relevant narrative efforts.

For example, in “Furui zhi 符瑞志” (Treatise on auspicious omens) of *Songshu* Shen Yue fabricated a history wherein the orthodox sovereigns through all ages were all conferred upon the Mandate of Heaven. Such an imagined history began with the legendary kings such as Taihao 太昊 and Fuxi 伏羲 and ended in the Later Han. The Mandate served as an unbroken thread penetrating the entire history. As regards the immediate past, Shen contended that Cao’s Wei, the embodiment of the Virtue of Earth, was the indisputable heir to Han, which embodied the Virtue of Fire; and that the rise of Shu founded by Liu Bei 刘备 (161–223 AD) and Wu reigned over by Sun Quan 孙权 (182–252 AD) exemplified the Heavenly Intention. Even the founding of the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties and Liu’s Song, of which the historian himself was in the service, was foreshown by auspicious omens. Thus, it is safe to say that Shen’s “Furui zhi” was nothing but a hodgepodge of incarnations of divine power. It should also be pointed out that Ban Biao’s *Wangming lun* (On the sovereign’s Mandate of Heaven) was the major ideological source of Shen’s Treatise. Besides “Furui zhi,” “Wuxing zhi 五行志” (Treatise on Five Elements) kept a detailed account of events embodying *tianren ganying*, or the mystical mutual responses between Heaven and humankind; and “Tianwen zhi 天文志” (Treatise on astronomy), of (natural) phenomena relevant to *tianren ganying*, in Shen’s *Songshu*.

In the same vein, Wei Shou 魏收 (506–572 AD) in “Tianxiang zhi 天象志” (Treatise on the celestial phenomena) of his *Weishu* 魏书 (Book of [the Northern] Wei) delineated auspicious omens and natural disasters, by which he tried to convince the readers that the rise of the Northern Wei (386–534 AD) was predestined by Heaven. Wei, as a historian in the service of the Northern Wei, a dynasty founded by the Tuoba 拓跋 Family, which was of a non-Han origin, was obliged to convincingly explain the inevitability of the Northern Wei’s rise. In “Xuji 序纪” (Preamble), or the first chapter of *Weishu*, he solemnly stated that the Xianbei 鲜卑 people, from which the Tuoba Family derived, was the descendants of the Yellow Emperor, who was the most venerable ancestors of the Chinese. The direct ancestor of Xianbei people was Changyi 昌意, one of the sons of the Yellow Emperor. It was for the reason that none of existing records mentioned the Xianbei people who lived in the far north that such a branch of posterity of the Yellow Emperor was unknown to the Chinese living in the Central plains. Nevertheless, Wei ascribed the rise of the Xianbei people to the tribe’s own effort, apart from the

Heavenly Intention. Exclusively, the historian proclaimed that the Tuoba Family was the only heir to the Mandate of Heaven and in contrast neither Liu Bei, the first sovereign of the Kingdom of Shu, nor Sun Quan, the founding emperor of the Kingdom of Wu, was the orthodox candidate for the Son of Heaven (“Lun 论” [Remarks] of “Xuji”). He went further, even radically denying the legitimacy of emperors of the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties (“Zhunxu 传序” [Forewords] of Chapter 95 and “Shichen yue 史臣曰” [The historian says] of Chapter 96, in *Weishu*). Simply put, the Confucian concept of orthodoxy was uprooted in Wei’s historical narratives. In doing so, the historian went to extremes. Where the rise and fall of the Northern Wei was concerned, Wei emphasized that the sovereigns’ constant absorption of the (advanced) culture of Central Plains played quite a significant role in the development of such a non-Han dynasty. The historian was fervently opposed to the irrational efforts made by some ruling non-Han families to destroy the traditional Chinese culture; and meanwhile, he fairly attached importance to the culture of non-Han people. For example, he recognized the value and significance of the cultures of certain ethnic groups living in the south, saying that even the Sages would fully avail themselves of the indigenous culture to educate and moralize the people (“Shichen yue” of Chapter 101, in *Weishu*).

In the ten Treatises he penned for *Weishu*, Wei Shou discussed changes taking place in the country’s dominion, national culture and primary institutions in the perspective of a *changing* unification and (re-)examined the cultures of differing ethnic groups from the perspectives of fairness and pragmatism. He shed light on this point in an essay entitled *Qianshang shizhi qi* 前上十志启 (A revealing introduction to the ten Treatises presented to the throne), which was included into *Weishu*. It is particularly worth mentioning that Wei’s *Weishu* was the first official history devoted to the dynasty founded by a non-Han ethnic group and in many ways the book carried forward Sima Qian’s idea of *nationality* that was embodied in the monumental *Shiji*, or *The Grand Scribe’s Historical Records*. Under the premise that the Yellow Emperor was the common ancestor of all ethnic groups in China, Wei intellectually and narratively did his utmost to win over the politico-cultural orthodoxy for the Northern Wei, of which he himself was in the service. His effort was an embodiment of the centripetal and cohesive force consolidating the entire Chinese nation. Nevertheless, Wei was still less broadminded than Sima Qian, failing to free himself from the stereotyped dispute over the so-called *orthodoxy*. Overall, in an era when a kaleidoscopic array of ethnic groups were blending together in the traditional Chinese land, Wei’s historical narratives as a whole was positive, innovatively giving expression to the coexistence of differing ideas of *nationality*.

Apart from the history books written in the traditional regions of Han people, a great number of works devoted to history were produced in the areas wherein non-Han ethnic groups lived. In the well-known “Jingji zhi 经籍志” (Treatise on the existing literature) of *Suishu* 隋书 (Book of Sui), the historical works produced in the non-Han regions were categorized into the genre of *bashi* 霸史, the history that was compiled by the non-Han regimes. According to “Jingji zhi,” there were quite a few *bashi* (see table below).

Title	Author(s)	Volumes
<i>Shiliu guo chunqiu</i> 十六国春秋 (The Spring and Autumn annals of the sixteen kingdoms)	Cui Hong 崔鸿	100
<i>Zhao Shu</i> 赵书 (Book of the Later Zhao)	Tian Rong 田融	10
<i>Er Shi zhuan</i> 二石传 (Memoirs devoted to Shi Le 石勒 and Shi Hu 石虎, two notorious emperors of the Later Zhao)	Wang Du 王度	2
<i>Er Shi weizhi shishi</i> 二石伪治时事 (Annals of the puppet regime ruled by Shi Le and Shi Hu)	Wang Du 王度	2
<i>Yan Shu</i> 燕书 (Book of the Former Yan)	Fan Heng 范亨	20
<i>Nan Yan lu</i> 南燕录 (Annals of the Southern Yan)	Zhang Quan 张诠	5
<i>Nan Yan shu</i> 南燕书 (Book of the Southern Yan)	Wang Jinghui 王景晖	6
<i>Nan Yan lu</i> 南燕录 (Records of the Southern Yan)	Youlan xiansheng 游览先生	7
<i>Yan zhi</i> 燕志 (Annals of the Northern Yan)	Gao Lü 高闾	10
<i>Qin shu</i> 秦书 (Book of the Former Qin)	He Zhongxi 何仲熙	8
<i>Qin ji</i> 秦记 (Annals of the Former Qin)	Pei Jingren 裴景仁	11
<i>Qin ji</i> 秦纪 (Annals of the Later Qin)	Yao Hedu 姚和都	10
<i>Liang ji</i> 凉记 (Annals of the Former Liang)	Zhang Zi 张谿	8
(Five editions of) <i>Liang shu</i> 凉书 (Book of the Former Liang)		
<i>Tuoba Liang lu</i> 拓跋凉录 (Annals of the Southern Liang founded by the Tuoba Family)		10
<i>Dunhuang shilu</i> 敦煌实录 (The veritable records of Dunhuang)	Liu Jing 刘景 <sup>a</sup>	10
<i>Zuan lu</i> 纂录 (Combined catalogues)		10
<i>Zhanguo chunqiu</i> 战国春秋 (Spring and Autumn annals of states in war)	Li Gai 李概	20
<i>Xihe ji</i> 西河记 (Records of the Xihe Prefecture)	Yu Gui 喻归	2
<i>Han Zhao ji</i> 汉赵记 (Annals of the Former Zhao)	He Bao 和苞	10
<i>Tuyuhun ji</i> 吐谷浑记 (Annals of Tuyuhun, a nomadic people in the northwest China)	Duan Guo 段国	2

<sup>a</sup>Liu Jing should be Liu Bing 刘昉. According to the fifty-second chapter of *Weishu*, Liu, a prominent historian in a non-Han region, was the author of the ten-volume *Liang shu* and the twenty-volume *Dunhuang shilu*. Besides, he also adapted three existing history books into the concise *Lüeji* 略纪 (Succinct annals)

Apart from abovementioned works, there were *Shisan zhou zhi* 十三州志 (Annals of the thirteen prefectures) authored by Kan Si 阚骃 and the ten-volume *Mengxun ji* 蒙逊记 (Annals of the Northern Liang founded by the Mengxun Family) by Zong Qin 宗钦 in the region of Hexi 河西, of both Wei Shou had a very low opinion. Wei also mentioned *Qiju zhu* 起居注 (Annotated records of everyday life of the sovereigns) penned by Zhou Daofang 周道方 and the official history of (the Northern) Liang that was written by Yin Zhongda 阴仲达 and Duan Chenggen 段承根, two talented historians. Overall, at that time the work writing history in the non-Han regions was prosperous and indeed quite a few qualified works were produced. Most importantly, many pieces of historical writing in the non-Han

regions ideologico-intellectually broke the shackles imposed by the *orthodoxy*. Such a history-oriented breakthrough was, to a certain extent, an embodiment of the historical actuality that the Chinese history was collaboratively created by differing ethnic groups.

The syncretism of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism was particularly worthy of a furthered discussion. It was one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the religion and culture in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern dynasties. At that time, Buddhism and Daoism developed in the mutual conflicts and absorption. The two prominent religions' incessant mutual actions were vividly embodied in the personal efforts of the Emperor Wu (r. 502–549 AD) of Liang, who fervently adored Buddhism and by contrast in those of the Emperor Taiwu (r. 424–451 AD) of the Northern Wei and the Emperor Wu (r. 560–578 AD) of the Northern Zhou, both of whom made violent attempts to exterminate Buddhism. Historiographically, “Shi Lao zi 释老志” (Treatise on Buddhism and Daoism) in Wei Shou's *Weishu* was primarily devoted to the growth of Buddhism at that time; and “Manyi zhuan 蛮夷传” (Annals of non-Han ethnic groups), or the ninety-seventh chapter of Shen Yue's *Songshu*, included many memoirs of monks. As regards the nationwide dissemination of Buddhism, Shen Yue, one of the leading historians in this era, concluded,

It was in the reign of Emperor Ming (r. 57–75 AD) of the Later Han that the Dharma (that is, Buddhism) was introduced into the East (that is, the Middle Kingdom, or China). From then on, the Buddhist teaching grows vibrantly and extensively. Thus, from the sovereigns down to the commoners, all of whom are heartily interested in the teaching; and meanwhile, the number of Buddhist scriptures has been immense and the concerned interpretations have become profound and lasting. As a whole the Buddhist teachings have already developed into an independent (Scholarly) School.

Undoubtedly, the rising Buddhist thinking influenced Shen's idea of history. Despite this, Shen still venerated the Confucian Mandate of Heaven as the primary criterion in his interpretive narratives of changes taking place in past and present.

Acting more straightforwardly, Yuan Hong held Buddhism in high esteem. Thus the historian said,

*Buddha* in Chinese refers exactly to the *awakened*. To put it another way, [the ultimate goal of] Buddhism is to awaken all sentient beings. The basic Buddhist doctrines lie primarily in the nurturement of virtue and commiseration, [which can be used to] instruct the followers to strictly abstain from killing and wholeheartedly live a peaceful and unworldly life. [Among the Buddhist practitioners,] those who truly grasp the essence of the teaching are venerated as *Sramana* (that is, monk). *Sramana* can be translated as the *tranquil mind* in Chinese, giving expression to the grand aspirations to abandon desires and return to the most primordial state of complete nonaction. ...[As regards Buddha, Yuan praised,] HE can unrestrainedly transform himself and penetrate into everything, thereby interconnecting the myriad things and applying the deliverance to all sentient beings. [Where the Buddhist sutras were concerned, the historian illuminated,] there are tens of millions of words in them. The most basic doctrine [advocated by the sutras] lies in the prominence attached to the voidness and nonaction. [The sutras] are all-embracing, opening to everything either subtle or material. [Authors of the sutras] are extremely good at expounding the grandest ideas and concepts. (Chapter 10, in *Hou Han ji*)

Obviously, Yuan attempted to incorporate Buddhism into *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning advocating the complete nonaction. Of course, in no way was the historian able to achieve his goal. His interpretations of history was still in accord with the basic principles of *xuanxue*. Simply put, Yuan's work was another embodiment of the syncretism of the three predominant teachings at that time. Such a trinity of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism was, in turn, a symbol of the scholarly eclecticism in the incipient stage of the grand mission syncretizing a kaleidoscopic inventory of thoughts.

As regards the Buddhist influence on historian, some chose to openly embrace the religion and meanwhile some resolutely dumped it into a dustbin. Xiao Zixian 萧子显 (489–537 AD), who authored *Nan Qi shu* 南齐书 (Book of the Southern Qi (479–502 AD)), explicitly declared that he was an adherent of the Buddhist doctrines. In the fifty-fourth chapter of his *Nan Qi shu*, Xiao kept account of a debate about the quality of Buddhism and Daoist between Gu Huan 顾欢, a proponent of Daoism and the author of the well-known treatise entitled *Yixia lun* 夷夏论 (On the barbarians and the civilized), and Yuan Jie 袁桀, an opponent of Gu. In the long “lun” (remarks) attached to the account, Xiao (re-)examined the gist of differing intellectual schools and concluded that the Buddhist doctrines were superior to others. In particular, the historian intellectually attacked Daoism and solemnly stated that he had fully been convinced by the Buddhism, a teaching that outshone all other rival teachings. Frankly, in the history of Chinese historiography it was rare that a historian openly proclaimed that he himself was a Buddhist faithful in his own work. Even so, Xiao still interpreted the rise of the Southern Qi in the light of *tianren ganying*, or the mystical mutual responses between Heaven and humankind, asserting that it was the Greater Qi that was conferred upon the Mandate of Heaven (“Shichen yue 史臣曰” (The historian says) of Chapter 2, in *Nan Qi shu*). He even enjoyed a full freedom from the theological view of history, shedding revealing light on for what reason the heir to a brilliant sovereign was usually unable to prevent his dynasty from being engulfed by crises (“Shichen yue” of Chapter 40, in *Nan Qi shu*). The eclectic character of Xiao's historical narratives indicated that the historical writing had been seriously encroached by Buddhism. Despite this, fortunately, history was not turned into a mere appendage to the Buddhist teaching.

Fundamentally differing from Xiao Zixian, Fan Ye, the author of the indelible *Hou Han shu*, boldly and sharply uncovered the absurdities embodied in the Buddhist teachings. Nevertheless, indeed there was a tendency of syncretizing Buddhism and Confucianism in his idea of history. On the one hand, Fan bitterly denounced Buddhism as extremely absurd and heretical; but on the other hand, the historian recognized the role Buddhism could play in the moral aspiration to promote good virtues such as benevolence and teach people to abstain themselves from killing (Chapter 88, in *Hou Han shu*). Fan's balanced comments on Buddhism read,

Moreover, to cherish unselfish love and loathe killing, to purify oneself and honour virtue is the way the Superior Man demonstrate morality and really conveys the Dharma to others. [However, the Buddhists] have become boastful without any foundation, and speak in



endless monstrous parables. Even Zou Yan's 邹衍 discussions on heaven, and the dissertations of Zhuang Zhou 庄周 [i.e. Zhuangzi 庄子] on the tentacles of a snail, are not a ten-thousandth part [of the Buddhist extravagances]. Also, [the Buddhist doctrines on] the origin and extinction of souls, and the relationship between cause and effect are obscure and difficult to understand, which is why many people doubt them. It is really not the way to guide the common people. To reach everybody, one should take that which all the doctrines agree on, and thus deal with people's doubts. Then the Great Dao will certainly be transmitted.<sup>15</sup>

Simply put, in Fan's eyes Buddhism did have some merits. Such an intellectual openness demonstrated that some at that time had already grasped the *interavailability* existing among Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.

Wei Shou, a historian who authored *Weishu*, objectively delineated the coexistence of Buddhism and Confucianism in the intellectual world of the ruling elites. For example, according to Wei, at sight of the Northern Wei's Emperor Xuanwu's (r. 499–515 AD) excessive indulgence in the Buddhist writings, Pei Yanjun 裴延隼, a high official, suggested that the concurrent exposure to Confucian classics and Buddhist sutras was a better choice on the grounds that the basic Confucian and Buddhist works were all indispensable to the betterment of social administration (Chapter 69, in *Wei shu*). Xiao Mozhi, 萧摹之, an eminent person in the Song of Southern Dynasties, echoed this point, eulogizing that Buddhism could nestle the human mind and consolidate the popular will (Chapter 97, in *Songshu*). Simply put, attaching the equal importance to Confucianism and Buddhism was conducive to the consolidation of the feudal rule. Under such circumstances, then Confucians who profoundly explored the Buddhist sutras and monks who were well versed in Confucian classics were commonly seen. For example, Kou Qianzhi 寇谦之 (365–448 AD), the renowned leader of Daoist Way of Celestial Master, admired so much Cui Hao 崔浩 (?–450 AD), who was a high-profile politician in the Northern Wei and had a very good command of knowledge about the prosperity and decline in the past. Thus, Kou sincerely invited Cui to concisely introduce the gist of Confucian statecraft to him. As a consequence, Cui penned more than twenty pieces of treatises, all of which were based on the basic spirit embodied in the Confucian classics, for Kou (Chapter 35, in *Weishu*). The Kou-Cui story was almost a perfect embodiment of the *interavailability* of Confucianism and Daoism. In addition, among the sovereigns of the Northern Wei some read many Buddhist sutras and explored Buddhist doctrines, though they adored very much the Daoist teachings of Yellow Emperor and Laozi ("Shi Lao zhi," Chapter 114, in *Weishu*). The Emperor Wu of Liang even went to extremes, abandoning the throne and living in a monastery. Of course, there was also the imperial effort to uproot Buddhism in this era. Intellectually, the mutual

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<sup>15</sup>Fan Ye 范晔, "Chapter on the Western Regions" from *Hou Hanshu* 88, trans. John E. Hill, [http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/hhshu/hou\\_han\\_shu.html](http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/hhshu/hou_han_shu.html). See also: John E. Hill, *Through the Jade Gate – China to Rome: A Study of The Silk Routes 1st To 2nd Centuries CE* (CreateSpace: An Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), 2nd revised & enlarged edition, vol. 1, pp. 55–58.

actions of every hue between the three most predominant teachings in the medieval China exerted significant influence on the development of Chinese thoughts in the later Tang and Song dynasties and historiographically on the growth of the Chinese idea of history. As regards the historiography at that time, Wei Shou's "Shi Lao zhi" (Treatise on Buddhism and Daoism) in his *Weishu* shedding revealing light on the rise and fall of the three predominant teachings in the Chinese society, on the conflicts and struggles between the politics and religions, on the religions' influence on the social development of the medieval China, and on the hypocrisy and darkness of major religions. Wei's writings as a whole were fair and objective.

It was evident that even in the chaotic Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties none of religions could grow into a *state religion* that was able to play a leading role in the state politics, even though Buddhism and Daoism in a certain period had been in full flourish in either the north or south China. For this reason, the idea of calamities in the context of *tianren ganying* and the importance attached to human factors were still ideologically predominant in the Chinese historical narratives. Most importantly, under no circumstances could China be the Western Europe, wherein history was merely the handmaiden of theology. By the early Tang dynasty (618–917 AD), Linghu Defen 令狐德芬 (583–666 AD), who was a famous historian and the chief editor of *Zhoushu* 周书 (Book of the Northern Zhou (557–881 AD)), clearly demonstrated that the center of the ideologico-intellectual gravity of the Chinese historical writing irreversibly and definitively lay within Confucianism, which was renowned for the objective reason (Chapter 45, *Zhoushu*). It was in Tang that *xuanxue* and Buddhism entered a new phase and Chinese historians systematically rethought the historical narratives after a scholarly upheaval. Even so, the perfected syncretism of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism still could not be fully established. Consequently, the Chinese idea of history could by no means be fundamentally upgraded, but instead had to be slightly reformulated within the old-fashioned framework.

The era spanning from the Cao's Wei down to the Southern and Northern Dynasties was known to the Chinese for the predominance of the hereditary houses of big, powerful landlords. Such a unique social character greatly influenced the historical writing. As a result, the genealogical studies rose to prominence. Among works devoted to the topic, Jia Bi's 贾弼 *Xingshi puzhuang* 姓氏谱状 (Genealogical diagrams of families with differing surnames) and Wang Jian's 王俭 *Baixing jipu* 百姓集谱 (Collected genealogical trees of various clans) were the most representative ones. In the early Tang, Lu Jingchun 路敬淳 (?–697 AD) did the most excellent work in the genealogical studies and was venerated the greatest guru by later generations of students in this field. In the reign of Emperor Tai (r. 626–649 AD) of Tang, the emperor asked concerned officials and scholars to revise *Shizu zhi* 氏族志 (Genealogical annals of all families), whereby the true family background of officials could be precisely detected and differentiated. In the reign of Emperor Zhong (r. 683–684 AD, 705–710 AD), the two-hundred-volume *Xingxi lu* 姓系录 (Detailed records of the origins and growth of surnames and clans) was finished due to the great efforts made by some renowned historians. In the second year of Kaiyuan (714 AD), the Emperor Xuan (r. 712–756 AD) had *Xingxi lu* revised and republished. Liu Fang 柳芳, an excellent historian in the

mid-Tang, analyzed for what reason the genealogical studies in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties grew increasingly prosperous (Chapter 199, in *Xin Tang shu* 新唐书 (New book of Tang)). As regards the number of genealogical works, “Jingji zhi” (Treatise on the existing literature) of *Suishu* asserted that there were in total fifty-three books consisting of 1,280 volumes. The growth and changes of the genealogical studies, which actually constituted a branch of history, reflected changes taking place in the Chinese society.

In *jizhuan*—or the biography-centered—history books produced in this era, the combined memoirs devoted to an eminent person and his descendants assumed a historiographical prominence. Zhao Yi 赵翼 (1727–1814), a towering historian in the Qing dynasty, strongly objected to such a confusing genre of historical narrative. He pointed out that the most serious problem of a combined memoir lay in the inclusion of persons belonging to differing dynasties into the same memoir and such an indiscriminate assemblage made the original look of history more indiscernible. It was, Zhao held, against the orthodox historiographical rule (Chapter 10, or “Nan Bei shi zisun fuzhuan zhili 南北史子孙附传之例” (Examples of combined memoirs in the *Southern* and *Northern Histories*), in *Nian'er shi zhaji* 廿二史劄记 (Notes on the twenty-two official history books)). In Zhao Yi’s hindsight comments there was a hint about the transformations taking place in the historical writings. Moreover, the historiographical rule that Zhao respected was an embodiment of the social attitudes. Conversely, the historical writing definitely gave expression to the social and intellectual changes in a certain age.

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# Chapter 6

## A Medieval Conclusion of History and Ideas of History

### 1 The General Intellectual Trend in the Conclusion of History

What on earth are the embodiments of the growth of the historical writing? Concerned answers greatly differ from each other. In this regard, the present author concludes four types of historiographical development. First, formally, the growth is embodied in the growing number of history books and the diversifying genres of historical writing. Second, intellectually, the late generations of historians carry forward the idea of history by means of the critical (re-)examination of works penned by historians in previous ages. Third, epistemologically, the understanding of history is deepened among new generations of historians and clearly worded in their works. Fourth, practically, the social role history plays in a certain dynasty is consolidated. Examining the historical writings through the prism of the four types of growth, it can be found that although historians in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties did not produce works as great as Sima Qian's 司马迁 *Shiji* (The Grand Scribe's historical records) 史记 and Ban Gu's 班固 *Hanshu* 汉书 (Book of the Former Han), nor could the general development of historical writing be placed on a par with that of the Northern and Southern Song dynasties (960–1279 AD), the historiography in this era did horizontally and extensively grow and witness a substantial growth, thereby laying the solid foundation of future development of the historical writing.

As regards the idea of history in this era, the consciousness of concluding history and historical writings grew much more prominent. The conclusion of historical writings was premised on the established progress of the creation of history books, as well as on the preliminary scrutiny done to the existing works. Indeed, there was a huge growth in the number and genres of historical writing in this era. According to “Jingji zhi 经籍志” (Treatise on the existing literature) of *Suishu* 隋书 (Book of Sui), in total, there were 817 books or 13,264 volumes. Such a huge collection of books was classified into thirteen genres. In addition, 874 books or 16,558 volumes

were recorded while the hardcopies of them had already been lost. To be specific, the number of history books primarily consisting of *jizhuan* 纪传, or the memoirs/biographies was 67 copies or 3083 volumes and the lost *jizhuan*-style ones comprised of 80 copies or 4030 volumes. Where the annalistic history books were concerned, there were 34 copies or 666 volumes. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that, *usually*, works produced in this era were qualitatively inferior to the monumental works such as *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. The author(s) of “Jingji zhi” candidly acknowledged this point, pointing out that many history books at that time were factually inaccurate, incoherently principled, and narratively poor (Chapter 33, in *Suishu*). Such a declining general situation of historical writing indicated that it was necessary and possible for historians in this era to extensively (re-)examine the past scholarship.

Due to the chaos inflicted upon the Chinese society, a huge number of books—including historical works—were destroyed in this era. As a result, the sovereigns of Sui (581–618 AD) and Tang (618–907 AD) dynasties all spent much time and energy collecting books as many as possible. Thanks to their efforts the number of books in Tang increased. According to “Jingji zhi” of *Jiu Tang shu* 旧唐书 (Old book of Tang), the number of history books produced in Tang was 944 copies or 17,946 volumes. The Tang books were fitted into thirteen genres. The present author contends that the actual number be larger. Unfortunately, in the late Tang and Five Dynasties, when the society was engulfed again by the extreme instability, many books were lost.

Among the ancient Chinese historians, there was a good tradition concluding the historiography in previous ages. It is safe to say that excellent historians in the ancient China were all good at rethinking historiography in the historical perspective and profoundly gained an insight into advantages and disadvantages of the past scholarship. For example, Sima Tan 司马谈 (Sima Qian’s father), Sima Qian, Ban Biao 班彪 (Ban Gu’s father), Ban Gu, Fan Ye 范曄, Chen Shou 陈寿, Yuan Hong 袁弘, Wei Shou 魏收, Shen Yue 沈约, and so on, were all masters of the reexamination of history books produced in previous ages. Quite understandably, if a historian was completely ignorant of what the achievement and misachievement of past historians were, it would be impossible for him or her to carry forward the historical writing. In the previous chapter, the present author has briefly discussed Sima Qian’s conclusion of the historiography in the Qin and Han dynasties and the pre-imperial China, Ban Biao’s and Ban Gu’s reexamination of *Shiji*, and Fan Ye’s comments on Sima Qian’s and Ban Gu’s works. Such brilliant historians’ critical and creative spirit applying to the conclusion of past historiography was inherited by their counterparts in the Wei, Jian and Southern and Northern Dynasties. As regards the conclusion of history and historiography in this era, there are three points worthy of furthered discussions.

First, historians in this era intended to carry forward the cause pioneered by past scholars. In their efforts to conclude history books produced in previous ages, they formulated their own historiographical methodologies. For example, Gao You 高佑 and Li Biao 李彪 wrote a memorial to the throne, suggesting the new reign produce an official history devoted to the immediate past Northern Wei dynasty (386–534 AD)

and clearly and fairly discussed achievements and misachievements of historical works in previous ages (Chapter 57, or “Gao You zhuan 高佑传” (The life of Gao You), in *Weishu* (Book of [the Northern] Wei [Dynasty])). Besides, Wei Shou, a renowned historian in the Northern Qi dynasty (550–577 AD), wrote the ten treatises for his famous *Weishu* and systematically compared *biao* 表 (table) and *zhi* 至 (treatise) penned by past historians (“Qianshang shi zhi qi 前上十志启” (A revealing explanation of the ten treatises presented to the throne), in “Fulu 附录” (Addenda) of *Weishu*). His conclusion lay in the complete abandonment of the slavish imitation of old-fashioned *biao* and *zhi*. He put his conclusion into effect, creatively incorporating *Xuji* 序纪 (General preface), *Guanshi zhi* 官氏志 (Treatise on official ranks), *Shi Lao* 释老 (Buddhism and Daoism), and so on, into *Weishu*. It was a stylistic innovation made on the basis of the critical reexamination of advantages and disadvantages of the past historiography. Generally, imperial historians in the feudal China were almost unexceptionally had a good master of history books produced in past dynasties. It was on such a solid epistemic basis that the historians concluded old works and creatively produce new ones. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that inasmuch as in practice historians paid greater attention to inheriting rather than innovatively recreating the past historiography and in many cases they obstinately adhered to the established teachings and seldom attempted to make an ideologico-intellectual breakthrough, a revolutionary transformation of the traditional historiography did not take place in this era.

Second, generally, historians in this era had a consciousness of critical reexamination of historiography. In this regard, the conclusion and criticism of existing historical works were inseparable. The author(s) of *Jinshu* 晋书 (Book of Jin), for instance, had discussed the quality of historical works at that time (“Shichen yue 史臣曰” (The Historian says), in Chapter 82 of *Jinshu*). In their discussions, they briefly examined the history of historiography since the creation of *Zuozhuan* 左传 (The Master Zuo’s commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*) and *Shiji* 史记 and conferred the laureate crown on Chen Shou 陈寿, who authored *San guo zhi* 三国志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms) and was praised as the one carrying forward the brilliant past historiography. Beside this, they delineated in detail the works penned by historians in the post-Later Han period. In the same chapter of *Jinshu*, historian(s) in Tang introduced readers to works produced by writers in the post-Han era (see table below).

Author	Title	Comments
Yu Pu 虞溥	<i>Jiangbiao zhuan</i> 江表传 (The history devoted to the region of Jiangbiao, or the Kingdom of Wu)	
Sima Biao 司马彪	<i>Jiuzhou chunqiu</i> 九州春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of the Nine Prefectures, or China)	
	<i>Xu Hanshu</i> 续汉书 (A sequel to <i>Hanshu</i> )	

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Author	Title	Comments
	A treatise rectifying 122 mistakes in Qiao Zhou's 谯周 <i>Gushi kao</i> 古史考 (Textual criticism of the ancient history)	It was based on <i>Jizhong jinian</i> 汲冢纪年 ( <i>Bamboo Annals</i> , a very antique history book discovered in a tomb in the late third century in China).
Yu Yu 虞预	<i>Jinshu</i> 晋书 (Book of Jin)	Some said the book stealthily consulted Wang Yin's 王隐 work.
Sun Sheng 孙盛	<i>Wei shi Chunqiu</i> 魏氏春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of Wei)	
	<i>Jinyang qiu</i> 晋阳秋 (The Autumn Annals of Jinyang, or the Wei dynasties)	The narrative of <i>Jinyang qiu</i> was upright and principled. For this reason, it was praised as a <i>Good History</i> .
Gan Bao 干宝	<i>Jin ji</i> 晋纪 (Annals of Jin)	The concise book was a unity of straightforwardness and euphemism. It was also hailed as a <i>Good History</i> .
Deng Can 邓粲	<i>Yuanming ji</i> 元明纪 (Annals of the two reigns of Emperors Yuan and Ming)	
Xie Shen 谢沈	<i>Hou Han shu</i> 后汉书 (Book of the Later Han)	
	<i>Hanshu waizhuan</i> 汉书外传 (Unauthorized memoirs devoted to Han)	
Xi Zaochi 习凿齿	<i>Han Jin chungqiu</i> 汉晋春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of Han and Jin)	Xi painstakingly contended that the Kingdom of Shu 蜀 was the sole heir to the Mandate of Heaven that had been endowed with the Han dynasty. In doing so, he strongly opposed to Huan Wen's 桓温 coercive treatment of the royal family of the Easter Jin dynasty (317–420 AD) and revealingly told readers that the Heavenly Intention could by no means be forcibly intimidated.
Xu Guang 徐广	<i>Jin ji</i> 晋纪 (Annals of Jin)	

The number of high-caliber historians in this era was impressive. Historians in Tang made felicitous comments on their works, even though they did not produce works that could live throughout the ages.

The above-mentioned criticism implied that if a history book aspired to be *upright* and *principled*, it must, on the one hand, be veritable records whereby the sovereigns could use them for reference; and, on the other hand, be an ideological weapon advertising the orthodoxy of a dynasty and its legitimate rule over all under Heaven and playing a great role in the moral appraisal of good and evil. Sovereigns

through all ages paid the greatest attention to the two points in their efforts to found an imperial agency in charge of the work writing official history. In the same vein, historians used both to judge works produced by their counterparts in previous dynasties. Nevertheless, we should always bear in mind that it did not mean that if a book perfectly accorded with the two criteria it would definitely be *liangshi* 良史, or the Good History. Of course there were other standards whereby the quality of historical writings could be accurately measured. For example, whether a historian's narratives could give expression to his or her refined and profound idea of history and whether a historian had the aspiration to create an independent and innovative school of historical writing could be employed to judge the good and bad of his or her works. In addition, when the later generations of scholars rethought a historian's works, the historian's narratives, self-cultivation and morality would be taken into full consideration. Generally, the criteria of historical criticism included the requirements of both object and subject of the history. Therein exactly lay the most incipient growth of historical criticism. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that inasmuch as the ossified Confucian cardinal principles regarding the basic ethics and moralities and the theory of *tianren ganying* (the [alleged] mystical mutual responses between Heaven and humans) impeded the development of historical criticism, many attempts made by historians to critically reexamine the past historiography merely repeated duplicated dogmata and exerted adverse influence on the future growth of the discipline.

Normally when working on a new history book, a brilliant historian had already well understood the history of historiography and the historiographical growth in his or her time. Such a thorough and timely perception was embodied in writings such as "Zixu 自序" (Author's preface), "xuzhuan 序传" (General preface), "Shangshu biao 上书表" (Explanatory memorials presented to the throne) and specific comments. Generally, the achievement of a historian was, to some degree, dependent on the extent of his perception of the state of historiography and the theoretical level of his or her critical rumination about the past scholarship.

As regards the trend of historical criticism in the Wei-Jin era, a *clustered* handling whereby a group of historical works of a similar nature were critically reexamined rather than the *pointed* treatment of an individual history book prevailed among historians. Even the historical writing in regions governed by non-Han groups followed the trend. Cui Hong 崔鸿, for instance, wrote *Shiliu guo Chunqiu* 十六国春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of the sixteen kingdoms) due to his strong discontent with the state of historiography in the non-Han regimes (Chapter 67, or "Cui Hong zhuan 崔鸿传" (The life of Cui Hong), in *Weishu*). It is worth mentioning the hardship that Cui had to suffer in his effort to write the history. Apart from much time and energy he had spent in collecting primary sources and doing the concerned textual criticism, he had to invest a good deal of money in buying papers, though he was very poor. Cui was very proud of the book and called it the most complete and detailed work devoted to the most immediate past. Historiographically, Cui's *Spring and Autumn Annals of The Sixteen*



*Kingdoms* was a perfect embodiment of the unity of historical criticism and historiographical innovation.

Third, historians rethought and carried forward the social role history could play in a dynasty. In the course concluding the past historiography, historians shed new light on the significance of history. For example, Gao Yun 高允, a renowned scholar-official in the Northern Wei dynasty, fearlessly discoursed the significance of history with a view to remonstrating the sovereigns (Chapter 48, or “Gao Yun zhuan 高允传” (The life of Gao Yun), in *Weishu*). Although his discourses on history were not groundbreaking, Gao indeed gave expression to the spirit of Nan-Dong 南董 (Nan and Dong were the two dauntlessly historians who veraciously, uninterruptedly kept account of what was taking place in the central court of the state even in the face of death). In addition, Liu Qiu 柳虬, a scholar in the Northern Zhou dynasty (557–581 AD), was strongly against the popular *cryptic* handling of historical writing among imperial historians, earnestly arguing that it could not play a role at all in the mission exhorting the sovereigns (Chapter 38, or “Liu Qiu zhuan 柳虬传” (The life of Liu Qiu), in *Zhoushu* 周书 (Book of [the Northern] Zhou)). Liu carried forward the Chinese tradition of *zhibi* 直笔, or the veracious narrative of history. Retrospectively, the imperial historian cryptically penned works whereby sovereigns could be taught useful historical lessons. Liu disagreed with that, sharply pointing out that such a secret history could by no means function and only be conducive to later generations rather than to the present reign. To make matters worse, due to the cryptic nature of the writing, the historians who dauntlessly produced the veritable records were unable to be known to the public. As a consequence, it would be very hard for later generations of historians to judge right and wrong and true and false because of the anonymity, supposing that there was a controversy about the historical actuality. Liu’s criticism revealed that in the feudal China the practice in expectation of deterring the excessive royal power by means of the veritable and cryptic records was, in most cases, reduced to an empty talk. Metaphorically, the aspiration to veraciously record what took place in the central court was no more than an absurd act of plugging one’s ear while stealing a bell. In fact, the ambition of veraciously writing history was seldom put into effect in the past. Liu’s critical examination of past historiography indicated that historians in his time had begun to rethink the social role history could play in a deeper way. Liu also concluded that imperial historians abandon the cryptic handling of history and choose instead to write it openly. The works penned in this way should finally be submitted to the Imperial Agency in charge of the production of the official history. Then the Agency would use them to clarify right and wrong, show gains and losses, encourage those acting virtuously, and frighten those doing evil (Chapter 38, in *Zhoushu*). Nevertheless, it was merely an infeasible ideal embodying the naivety. For example, Cui Hao 崔浩, a reputable historian in the Northern Wei, was humiliatingly executed by the central court in the wake of his bold work shedding unfavorable light on the true life of the incumbent sovereign. Even the Emperor Tai (r. 626–649 AD) of Tang, who was renowned for his almost unmatched openness and tolerance, would be greatly infuriated whenever an

audacious minister touched him on a tender spot. For example, Wei Zheng 魏征 (580–643 AD), one of the most talented ministers in the service of the Emperor Tai, burnt his fingers due to his extremely bold remonstrations. For this reason, the tradition of *zhibi* was actually *limited*. To put it another way, only when the history was merely used for reference would it be encouraged by the sovereigns.

Overall, the effort to conclude the past historiography tended to be carried out in a much deeper and more extensive perspective, marking that the idea of history had already witnessed a new round of growth. In the course of the reexamination of existing history books, three works—that is, Liu Xie’s 刘勰 “Shizhuan 史传” (Historical Writings) in *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*), “Jingji zhi” in *Suishu*, and *Shitong* 史通 (A comprehensive disquisition about historiography) penned by Liu Zhiji 刘知几—stood out above the rest.

## 2 Reexamining Past Historiography: “Shizhuan” in *Wenxin Diaolong*, “Jingji Zhi” in *Suishu*, and *Shitong*

### (1) Liu Xie and his *Wenxin diaolong*

Liu Xie (c. 465–520 AD), whose style name was Yanhe 彦和, was the son of a senior military officer in the service of the Southern Song dynasty (420–479 AD). According to “Liu Xie zhuan 刘勰传” (The life of Liu Xie) in *Liangshu* (Book of [the Southern] Liang), when Liu was still a child, his father passed away and the family was thrown into poverty. As a result, he remained single and lived in a Buddhist monastery, where he studied for more than one decade and finally accuquired an extremely good command of the Buddhist sutras and Confucian classics. Liu was renowned for his beautiful writings, as well as for the profound elaboration of Buddhist doctrines. Despite this, his monumental work—*Wenxin diaolong*, or *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*—did not receive much attention from the educated public until Shen Yue 沈约 (441–513 AD), one of the most famous historians and men of letters in the Southern Dynasties (420–589 AD), read and favorably commented on it. Shen valued *Wenxin diaolong* very much and frequently consulted it. In Shen’s time, the Southern and Norther Dynasties had already been in its twilight years, when *xuanxue* 玄学, or the Mysterious Learning, greatly declined and Buddhism was vividly being disseminated in the North and South China while the syncretization of differing teachings was still far from being completed. Undoubtedly, Liu’s treatises on literature and history as a whole constituted an intellectual embodiment of the time.

As regards Liu’s magnum opus entitled *Wenxin diaolong*, it should be understood from the perspective of *tongbian* 通变, or the thorough and all-around understanding of all changes taking place in entire history. The book concurrently was a theoretical reexamination of literature and history. In this regard, the present author disagrees with an ancient Chinese scholar, who asserted that the landmark work of literary criticism was *Wenxin diaolong* and the epitome of historical

criticism was *Shitong*.<sup>1</sup> The present author contends instead that Liu Xie's theoretical discourses on literature and history were fused into one. Even Liu's treatises devoted to literary writings could be regarded as the literature *in* history. Moreover, in Liu's eyes, both literature and history must follow the most basic criterion—*zongjing yangsheng* 宗经仰圣, which required that any literary or historical work must be in perfect harmony with Confucian classics and the elevation of the Sage. In fact, the complete separation of literature and history could by no means be possible in Liu's time. In this regard, Liu asserted,

We find current at present a statement to the effect that literary writings may be classified under two separate categories: *wen* [wen, 文], or patterned, and *pi* [bi, 笔], or unpatterned prose, unrhymed writing being *pi* and rhymed writing *wen*. Now pattern simply adds to the adequacy of *yan* [yan, 言], that is, plain words, and generally includes both the *Poetry* and the *History*. The effort to make them two different categories dates back only a short time.<sup>2</sup> [In ancient times, nobody attempted to make a distinction between literature and history. Exactly for this reason,] Tung Chung-shu [Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒] was a devoted Confucian, and Tzu-ch'ang [Zichang 子长] [or Ssu-ma Ch'ien] [Sima Qian 司马迁] a perfect historian. Their works, as beautiful as embroidery, may be compared to the lamentations of the Ancient Poets.<sup>3</sup> [Even in the Southern and Northern Dynasties, Sun Sheng 孙盛, Gan Bao 干宝 and Yuan Hong, all of whom were reputable historians, were all known to the public for their literary talent. In order to produce good literary works, a writer must have *qi* 气 (soul) and *shi* 识 (idea), including *shishi* 史识 (the insight into history). Thus,] [w]hen a writer casts and molds his works after the patterns of the Classics, soars and alights in the manner in which philosophers and historians have soared and alighted, and is equipped with a profound knowledge of the ever-changing emotions and the ability to display with a delicate touch styles suitable to them, he will be able to conceive new ideas and carve extraordinary expressions.

In view of this, the present author strongly holds that coercively drawing a clear line between Liu's treatises on literature and history was totally undesirable. Rather, the two types of theoretical discourses focused merely on specific aspects of writing. Digging into entire *Wenxin diaolong*, readers might find that it was in the chapter of "Shizhuan" (Historical Writings) that Liu Xie most intensively discussed the production of history books. It was also true that similar discussions were scattered through many chapters in the book.

The most basic criterion reigning over the literary work was *zongjing yangsheng*, which also served as the most fundamental principle whereby a history book could be evaluated. In this regard, Liu made an explicit statement, saying,

<sup>1</sup>See: Wang Weijian 王惟俭, "Xu 序" (Preface to *Shitong*), in Pu Qilong 浦起龙, *Shitong tongshi* 史通通释 [Completely annotated *Shitong*] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1988). See also: Zhang Zhenpei 张振珮, *Shitong jianzhu* 史通笺注 [Furthered annotations to and rectification of the annotated *Shitong*] (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1985). In the present book, the differentiation of Inner and Outer chapters and the table of contents of *Shitong* are based on Zhang's work.

<sup>2</sup>Liu Xie 刘勰, *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙, or *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, trans. Vincent Yu-chung Shih (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 229–230.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

In discussing questions, one must seek the guidance of the sages, and in one's efforts to understand the sages, one must make the Classics one's teachers.<sup>4</sup> [Thus, what on earth is *jing* 经, or the Classics? It refers to the ancient material.] But after our Master [i.e. Confucius] edited and handed down this material, those great treasures, the Classics, began to shine through.<sup>5</sup> If one's writings were based on the Classics, his style would be especially distinguished by one of the following characteristics: deep feeling untainted by artificiality, unmixed purity of form, empirical truth untarnished by falsehood, moral ideas uninvolved in perversity, simple style free from verbosity, and literary beauty unmarred by excesses.<sup>6</sup> [Writing should be based on the Great Way, which is embodied in the Classics. The goal of the positive effort to have one's writings based on the Classics is to carry out the creative production of words in the lofty perspective of Dao, or the Great Way. For this reason,] [i]n forming ideas and selecting words to express them, [the writer] was to establish his rules on the basis of the Classics; and in giving encouragement or warning, approval or disapproval, he was to rest on the principles formulated by the Sage.<sup>7</sup>

Besides, Liu Xie employed the penetrating principle of *zongjing* to appraise existing history books. In this regard, he said,

The classic of what was said is in the *Book of History* [*Shangshu* 尚书] and the classic of what was done is in the *Annals of Ch'un-ch'iu* [*Chunqiu* 春秋.] ... However, the purpose of the work [i.e. *Chunqiu*] is deep and profound, and its language connotative and terse. As [Tso] Ch'iu-ming [Zuo Qiuming 左丘明] was a contemporary, he knew the secrets of its subtle words. He therefore traced its roots and followed all its important ramifications to the end, and in so doing created a style of writing known as *chuan* [zhuān 传], or commentary. By *chuan*, or to comment, is meant *chuan* [传], or to transfer, that is, to transfer the ideas of the Classics one receives to those who come after one. *Chuan*, or the commentary, is indeed the wings of the sage's writings, and the crown of all written records.<sup>8</sup>

It should be pointed out that the later historical criticism developed by Liu Zhiji was actually an extension of Liu Xie's intellectual work. As regards history books produced in the Former and Later Han dynasties, Liu focused on *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. His comments read,

His [the author of *Shiji*] merits include his effort to create a factual record without evasion or omission, his comprehensiveness in covering his sources, his purity of style, his extensive observations, and his logical clarity; and his faults include his love for the strange, contrary to the spirit of the Classics, and the absence of order in his arrangement of certain materials. ... His [the author of *Hanshu*] ten treatises are all-inclusive and rich in sources; his *tsan* [zan 赞], or concluding remarks of praise or censure, and *hsü* [xu 序], or prologues, are grand and beautiful; the work is a specimen of the combination of scholarship and literary grace which gives the reader a taste that lingers on. He wrote in the tradition of the Classics and looked to the Sage as his example; his narratives are both rich and brilliant; these are his merits.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 84, 85–86.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

Nevertheless, Liu pointed out that the *ji* 紀 (basic annals devoted to sovereigns) in works penned by leading historians such as Sima Qian, Ban Gu and Zhang Heng 张衡 was against the principle of *zongjing*. For example, he rebuked historians for preparing *ji* for the Empress Lü 吕. Liu's criticism read,

When Emperor Hsiao-hui [Xiaohui 孝惠] [of the Han, 194-188 B.C.] was gathered to his fathers, his mother, Empress Lü, acted as a regent, and both Pan Ku [Ban Gu] and Ssu-ma Ch'ien [Sima Qian] devoted a *chi* [ji 紀] to her. This is contrary to the principle found in the Classics, and did not do justice to the actual fact. Why? Because since the time of Pao-his [Fuxi 伏羲], nobody has ever heard of a female ruler. ... [A]nd [the violent interference of Empress Lü] threatened to end the life of the Han. Not only should state affairs not be entrusted to the hands of a woman, but even names and titles should be applied to them with discretion. But when Chang Heng [Zhang Heng] [A.D. 78-139] was in charge of the records, he committed the same mistake that Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku had committed. His idea of devoting a *chi* to Empress Yuan and Empress P'ing [Ping 平] is indeed absurd.<sup>10</sup>

Where the works penned in the post-Han era were concerned, Liu paid much less attention. He briefly mentioned the history books devoted to the history of the Later Han dynasty. His succinct comments read, “[B]ut those of Ssu-ma Piao [Sima Biao 司马彪] [A.D. ?-306], which are both comprehensive and authentic, and those of Hua Ch'iao [Hua Qiao 华峤], which are both accurate and appropriate, may be considered the crown of the group.”<sup>11</sup> As regards the history devoted to the Three Kingdoms, Liu thought highly of Chen Shou's monography. He commended, “The three Records [of the Three Kingdoms] by Ch'en Shou [Chen Shou], however, are lucid in their language, and sound in their selection of material. Hsün [Xun Xu 荀勖] and Chang [Zhang Hua 张华] correctly compared them to the works of Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku.”<sup>12</sup> Then, Liu applauded two works delineating the history of Western Jin dynasty (265–316 AD), saying, “Kan Pao [Gan Bao 干宝] [of the Chin (Jin 晋)] wrote *Chi* [Ji], or Chin-chi [Jinji 晋纪] which, because of his good judgment in choosing the right criterion for historical composition, has been well praised; and Sun Sheng's [Sun Sheng 孙盛] *Yang-ch'iu* (Yangqiu 阳秋) has been pronounced an able piece of work on account of its conciseness.”<sup>13</sup> Overall, the principle of *zongjing* played the greatest role in the work measuring gains and losses of existing history books. It was exactly against such a principal principle that Sima Qian and Ban Gu were denounced as *deviants*.

As regards Liu Xie's idea of *zhibi* 直笔, or the veracious narrative of history, there are two points worthy of a furthered discussion. First, Liu shed light on for what reason the history book misrepresented the facts. The first reason lay in the excessive love for “what is strange” and flawed “writing about the past.” His explanation read,

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 89–90.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

However, people in general love what is strange, and pay no attention either to facts or to what ought to be. In transmitting what they hear, they magnify it in pompous style, and in recording the distant past, they describe it in detail. They throw out what is commonplace and pick out what is unusual, boring and digging to find support for unwarranted views, bragging that “in my book is recorded what cannot be found in earlier histories.” This is the source of all error and exaggerations, the greatest of poisonous influences in writing about the past.<sup>14</sup>

The second reason lay in the “selfish interests.” Liu expounded,

When we come to the treatment of contemporaries, many facts are often distorted. While Confucius’ judgments concerning the periods of Duke Ting [Ding 定] and Duke Ai [哀] are couched in subtle language [his example is too seldom followed]; secular opinions are still influenced by selfish interests. If the subject is from a family of great prestige and honor, he tends to be eloquently adorned, even though he may be a mediocrity. But should the subject be a frustrated scholar, all his virtue will not save him from ridicule. This blowing on the already frostbitten and puffing at the already bedewed, or fabrication of hot and cold with the brush is a common distortion involved in writing about a contemporary, and a thing to be deeply deplored.<sup>15</sup>

Therein lay the two circumstances under which the historical writing had to be distorted. Put plainly, it referred to the inadequacy of primary sources and the coercion by those in power. Besides, the writers’ subjective understanding and moral quality indeed played a role in the work distorting history.

Second, Liu Xie’s idea of *zhibi* laid stress on the importance of honoring the virtuous and avoiding mentioning the faults of the dear and superior ones. Therein lay another principal principle reigning over the production of history books. The concerned elaboration in *Wenxin diaolong* read,

It is true that Confucius advocated giving honor to the virtuous and protecting one’s dear ones by hiding their faults, because a tiny flaw will not disfigure a beautiful jade. But straightforward writing by a good historian consists [partially] in the censure of the villainous and the wicked, just as a farmer roots out weeds when he sees them. This is a principle which will remain valid for all time. With respect to the art of systematically handling a mass of material of all sorts, with respect to the importance of devoting oneself to the reliable and getting rid of the strange, with respect to understanding of proper sequence, and with respect to the careful choice of concepts to be employed in dealing with the facts, one must have a perfect grasp of the general principle. With the perfect understanding of this principle, one will be able to comprehend systematically all the related factors. ... When one lets his private prejudices lead him astray, that is the graveyard of his writing.<sup>16</sup>

The elaboration, however, raised a contradiction. On the one hand, historians were required to produce veritable records regardless of danger and threat; but on the other hand, they must respond to the advocacy that the faults of the Sages and the virtuous be intentionally left unnoticed. Again, the limitedness of the so-called *zhibi* was brought to light. In Liu Xie’s edifice, it was by the principle of *zongjing* that the

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 92–93.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

efforts to veraciously narrate history and avoid mentioning the faults of the virtuous and the Sages were combined into one. Such an integrating treatment could also be found in Liu Zhiji's work. Therein clearly lay the dual nature of feudal historiography in the ancient China.

Liu Xie also discussed the types of historical writing and concerned stylistic rules. Usually, he attached greater importance to the annalistic writing. Of course, meanwhile, he did not play down the significance of *jizhuan*, or the biograph/memoir-centered history books. Liu conferred the most prestigious crown upon Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, who authored the indelible annalistic history entitled *Zuozhuan*. Comparatively and inclusively, he held *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* were endowed with advantages respectively and *zhuan*, or the biography/memoir-style narrative in particular, was a substantial progress of the annalistic writing. In this regard, he explained,

Narratives of historical events by Tso [Ch'iu-ming] [Zuo Qiuming] are attached to the main text of the Classic [of *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*.)] His language is succinct; yet it is rather difficult to get a clear idea of clans and families. It was the biographical section of the history by [Ssu-ma] Ch'ien [Sima Qian] that first presented a clear picture and easy view of the prominent men. This served as an example for all later historians.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, Liu commented on Sima Qian's creation of five styles of historical narrative. His comments read,

So he adopted the title used in the *Lü-lan* [or *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* (Lüshi Chunqiu 吕氏春秋)] and gave the general title of *chi* (纪 纪) or annals, to all these chapters. This is a grand title, as it has the meaning of "a principle." [The whole work includes:] the *chi*, or annals, which treat of all sovereigns and kings, the *lieh-chuan* (liezhuan 列传), or biographies, of lords and titular personages, the eight treatises on the various aspects of the government, and the ten charts of chronologies and titleholders. This arrangement, though differing from the ancient form, serves to relate historical facts in neat order.<sup>18</sup>

Of course *jizhuan*, or the history represented by Sima Qian's *Shiji* and Ban Gu's *Hanshu*, was still from being perfected. As regards its flaws, Liu straightforwardly pointed out,

The *chi* [纪 纪] is a form of chronology and the *chuan* [zhuan 传] a framework for arranging events; they are not inconsequential writings, but factual records. However, when chronology stretches out too long, it is difficult to list with any precision events happening either at the same time or at a different time; and when events are accumulated in mass, it is easy to be careless about their beginnings and endings. This is why it is difficult to obtain a synoptic view. Sometime the same achievement is shared by many characters; if it is recorded in every case, the work will suffer from redundancy; and if it is mentioned only once, the work will suffer from being perfunctory. This is why it is not easy to have a general arrangement of material. These are the kinds of arguments on which were based Chang Heng's [Zhang Heng 张衡] criticisms of Shih [Ch'ien] [Sima Qian] and Pan [Ku]

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 87–88.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 86–87.

[Ban Gu], and Fu Hsüan's [Fu Xuan 傅玄] [A.D. 217–278] sarcastic remarks about the records of the Later Han.<sup>19</sup>

Simply put, *jizhuan* suffered from the repetition, incompleteness, and uninterpretability. Liu Zhiji followed Liu's train of thought in his critical reexamination of the biography-centered history books. In view of this, it is safe to say that the historical criticism done in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties laid the foundation of the early Tang's systematic (re-)conclusion of all existing types of Chinese historiography.

Where the role history could play in a certain dynasty was concerned, Liu proposed three points. First, it could be used to meet the need to learn about the past. In this regard, Liu elaborated,

The beginning of human history lies so far back in time that it is shrouded in primitive darkness. For us who live in modern times, are not written records the only sources of learning about the ancient world? During the time of Hsüan-yüan [Xuanyuan 軒轅] [the Yellow Emperor] lived Ts'ang Chieh [Cangjie 仓颉], who served as a historian. So it has apparently been a practice since time immemorial to keep an office in charge of records. In the “Ch'u-li” (Quli 曲禮) it is said, “Historians carry brushes in attendance on the king's left and right.” *Shih* [shi 史], or a historian, literally means *shih* [shi 使], or to employ, one who waited on the left or right of the king and who was employed to keep records. In ancient times, the left-hand historian kept records of what was done, and the right-hand historian, of what was said.<sup>20</sup>

Second, history books could be employed to “give distinction to the good and ill fame to the evil, so as to establish certain norms governing mores.”<sup>21</sup> For this reason, he furthered,

[Confucius] edited *Ch'un-ch'iu* [Chunqiu 春秋], on the basis of the history of Lu. In this work, he dealt with successes and failures in history to illustrate his approval and disapproval [of various facets of the contemporary scene], and exposed the factors governing the destinies of states to show what was to be encouraged and what warned against. One word of praise from him was worth more than the carriage and official cap of high government position; and one word of censure cut deeper than hatchet and halberd.<sup>22</sup>

Third, the historical works could shed light on the rise and fall of dynasties. Thus, Liu wrote,

In writing a historical record, one has to keep in mind [a number of things]: the record must include sources collected by hundreds of authors; stand the test of time for thousands of years; show the evidences of rise and decline of a state, and demonstrate the reasons for its rise and decline; through such a record the institutions of a dynasty may be made to last as long as the sun and the moon, and through it the accomplishments of a government, whether ruled by moral suasion or by force, may become as great and lasting as heaven and earth.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 91–92.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 83–84.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 90–91.



In short, historians shouldered a great mission, just as Liu concluding,

Indeed, the responsibility of a historian involves the ordering of a dynasty; he is responsible to all the people within the boundaries of the seas, in his shouldering of the burden of pronouncing moral judgments. What other labor can compare to this burden of the writer's in magnitude?<sup>24</sup>

Besides, Liu's literary criticism included his discussion about the historical literature. Therein lay some points that are conducive to our understanding of the ancient Chinese historical literature. First, the writing should be succinct. Liu explained,

A resourceful thinker is usually a good elaborator, and a logical talent is usually a good condenser. A good condenser deletes words while he preserves the ideas, and a good elaborator uses a number of different expressions to make the ideas clear.<sup>25</sup>

The goal of writing was to make the essay so well-knit that even not a word could be removed. Unlike the one-sided aspiration to be succinct in writing, Liu's suggestion was flexible. In other words, whether one piece of writing should be further condensed or elaborated entirely depended on the true situation. Quoting Mencius assertion—"Those who comment upon the *Book of Poetry* should not because of one term misconstrue the meaning of a sentence; and should not because of a sentence misconstrue the original idea,"<sup>26</sup> he echoed this point in another piece of writing in *Wenxin diaolong*. Second, the writing should vividly give expression to the basic principles. It was on the basis of a good command of thinkers' writings, history books and literary works produced in the Former and Later Han dynasties that Liu evolved his idea. In the Chapter entitled "Fenggu 风骨" (The vigor of style), Liu went further, saying, "[a true writer should] molds his works after the patterns of the Classics, soars and alights in the manner in which philosophers and historians have soared and alighted, and is equipped with a profound knowledge of the ever-changing emotions."<sup>27</sup> In doing so, the writings could be pure and powerful. As a whole his discussions about the *qi* (soul), *shi* (idea), *li* 理 (principle), *shi* 势 (power) and *fenggu* 风骨 (the vigor of style) were all premised on the principle of *zongjing*. But on the other hand, the literary tolerance and insight, to which Liu paid great attention too, were inspiring for those who devoted themselves to the historical narratives. Beside this, the primary principle guiding the literary writings could be applied to writings devoted to history. Third, the writing should be conducive to the politics. In this regard, he criticized Sima Xiangru 司马相如 and Yang Xiong 扬雄, both of whom were the leading writers in the Former Han, saying,

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

How then can it be explained when a man who has made achievements in literature yet knows nothing about government? The reason Yang [Hsiung] [Yang Xiong 扬雄] and [Ssu]-ma [Hsiang-ju], [Sima Xiangru 司马相如] for example, remained humble in station throughout their lives is that, although they exhibited great literary excellence, they lacked real content.<sup>28</sup>

The quotation indicated that, on the one hand, Liu grasped the universal idea that even in the literary works there should be aspirations to benefit all under Heaven; but on the other hand, his criticism against Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong’s detachment from the politics was not well grounded. Nevertheless, the assertion that Liu’s literary criticism was merely formalism was actually one-sided.

Last but not least, Liu was strongly against the books devoted to *chen-wei* 讖纬.<sup>29</sup> Rather, he attempt to rectify the teaching of *wei* in *Wenxin diaolong* against the backdrop of the wild prevalence of mysterious and superstitious *chen-wei*-themed interpretations of natural/man-made disasters and in/auspicious omens. His starting point of criticism against *chen-wei* lay in the belief that other than the Confucian classics nothing—including *wei*—was qualified to be the orthodox teaching. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the positive elements in Liu’s idea of history should not be exaggerated due to his incomplete freedom from superstition and fatalism. For this reason, Liu’s idea of *tongbian* (a thorough understanding of all changes in entire history) was parochial in comparison with that of the authors of *Book of Changes* and Sima Qian. Specifically, although Liu was open to profound concepts such as the Great Way, *qi* 气 (an invisible force), Principle and *shi* (Power) in *Wenxin diaolong* he exclusively applied them to the elaboration of literary writing rather than to examine changes taking place in history and historiography. In view of this, it is safe to say that the rational thinking had not fully grown yet in this era.

## (2) “Jingji zhi” in *Suishu*

In the third year of Kaihuang 开皇 (583 AD), an imperial officer suggested the sovereign collect existing books as many as possible for the Imperial Library. Finally, the central court accumulated more than thirty thousand books. When the Sui 隋 dynasty (581–618 AD) was replaced with Tang, such collected books were transported to the new Capital by water. Unfortunately, the ship was wrecked and only ten or twenty percent of the collections were rescued. Later, after the careful selection and assortment, in total, there were 14,466 copies or 89,666 volumes of books in Tang’s Imperial Library. Among the collections, the number of writings devoted to history was impressive. It was on the basis of such a huge collection of history books that a systematic reexamination of past historiography was carried out in the early Tang. Such a grand work was embodied in the composition of “Jingji

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>29</sup>Translator’s note: *Chen-wei* 讖纬 was a prevalent mystical learning and practice, wherein the regular divination and Confucian ideas were fused together. To be specific, *chen* 讖 referred to the enigmatic words that were used by the diviners in sessions of divination; and *wei* 纬, the books embodying concerned superstitious Confucian interpretations.

zhi” of *Suishu*. The authors of *Suishu* did a brilliant work concluding and assorting all existing literature. The early Tang’s critical reexamination of history books outshone the similar work done in previous ages. Thus, “Jingji zhi” was a de facto history of historiography in the philological perspective. It is a great pity that such an important treatise was, however, seldom historiographically explored in the past scholarship. In view of this, the present author attempts to shed historiographical light on it.

The author(s) of “Jingji zhi” remarkably contended that *jing* 经, or the Classics, originated from history. The concerned elaboration read,

How the Classics were produced? The past Sages, who had both Dragon Chart and Phoenix Annals and reigned over all under Heaven, all recruited *shi* 史, or the imperial officials in charge of the work recording what the sovereigns said and did. The Left *shi* was responsible for keeping account of what a sovereign said; and the Right, keeping account of what a sovereign did. For this reason, there is the rule that [*shi* must] write down the sovereign’s every act whereby the denouncement [of evil acts] and encouragement [of virtuous efforts] could be made. As regards such a genre of history book in the great antiquity, there were *Sanfen* 三坟 (The three archaic books), *Wudian* 五典 (The five canons), *Basuo* 八索 (The eight ropes) and *Jiuqiu* 九丘 (The nine hills). Then in the Shang 商 (c. 1600–1100 BC) and Zhou 周 (c. 1046–771 BC) dynasties, the system of *shi* was so perfected that the books recording what the sovereigns said and did were almost impeccably complete. (Part One of “Jingji zhi,” Chapter 32, in *Suishu*)

Later, when Zhou declined in the Spring and Autumn era (771–476 BC), Confucius elaborated the *Book of Changes*, adapted the *Book of Poetry*, condensed the *Book of History*, and edited the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. As a consequence, there were the [Confucian] Classics. Entering the new era of Warring States, the country possessed a great number of socially and politically active masters of intellectual schools of every hue. Therefore, there were *zi* 子, or the works penned by thinkers and philosophers. Finally, the author(s) of “Jingji zhi” concluded, “As soon as the position of *shi* was created, the Classics [and other literature] began to emerge” (Part One of “Jingji zhi”). Simply put, such renowned historians expounded and verified the assertion that the Classics were exactly history from the perspective of textual origin. In other words, the collection of *shi*, or the history books, played quite a significant role in the entire history of Chinese literature.

From a philological viewpoint, it took the *history* for quite a long time to become a genre of literature independent of other writings. Retrospectively, *Qilüe* 七略 (Seven categories), which was authored by Liu Xiang 刘向 and his son—Liu Xin 刘歆—in the later Former Han (202 BC–8 AD), was comprised of *Ji* 集 (Collected synopses), *Liuyi* 六艺 (Six Arts, or Confucian classics), *Zhuzi* 诸子 (Writings of the masters of varying intellectual schools), *Shifu* 诗赋 (Poetry), *Bingshu* 兵书 (Books on the art of war), *Shushu* 术数 (Books on necromancy) and *Fangji* 方技 (Books on medicines). The *Ji* was, however, a collection of synopses of all existing literature. Thus, the two Lius actually divided all existing books into six classes. In Cao’s Wei (220–265 AD), Zheng Mo 郑默, a high official of the central court, penned *Zhongjing* 中经 (Central classics). On the basis of *Zhongjing*, Xun Ang 荀昂 compiled *Xinbu* 新簿 (New catalogue). In the two grand catalogues, there were

four classes of book, among which the third one was devoted to miscellaneous historical writings. As a result, the *history* developed into an independent genre of writing. Nevertheless, varying historical writings still could be found in other classes of book. Then, Li Chong 李充 in the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420 AD) and Xie Lingyun 谢灵运 in Liu’s Song (420–479 AD) produced new catalogues that actually did not differ from previous ones. Wang Jian 王俭, a scholar in the Southern Qi 齐 (479–502 AD), penned *Qizhi* 七志 (Seven treatises), among which there were the Class of Classics that included books devoted to history and miscellaneous events. In the Southern Liang 梁 (502–557 AD), Ruan Xiaoxu 阮孝绪 compiled *Qilu* 七录 (Seven records), wherein the Record of Annals and Memoirs embodied history books. Historically, the *history* did not *philologically* grow into an independent class of writing until the birth of “Jingji zhi.”

The course of integration and separation of history books and other writings in the philological perspective was quite long. At first, all types of writing were philologically mixed together. Then, it was out of the philological blend that the *history*, by degrees, grew more prominently independent. Such a change from the undivided amalgamation to the clear-cut differentiation was an embodiment of the development of history in the perspective of philology. Only when the history book assumed a philological independence would the reexamination of historiography be possible. But on the other hand, the independence of the *history* could also limit the epistemological growth in the human effort to reexamine historical works. For example, as soon as the philological rules were established, the books penned by the masters of intellectual schools and interpretive works devoted to the Classics were excluded from the Class of History. Consequently, the rich sources of ideas of history in the masters’ works were neglected by many historians. To make matters worse, exactly due to the philological exclusion and epistemological negligence some (modern and Western) scholarly biasedly held that although China did historically witness a historiographical prosperity the country was notoriously known to the world for the paucity of *ideas of history*. Frankly, the rigid philological classification of books did contribute to the misunderstanding.

According to “Jingji zhi,” apart from the Buddhist and Daoist collections, in total, there were 3,127 copies or 36,708 volumes of books. In terms of the number of existing books, the Class of History ranked the first among the four grand collections. Specifically, it had 817 copies or 13,264 volumes of books. In contrast, the Class of Zi (books penned by the masters of intellectual schools) merely had 6,437 volumes of books, though the number of copies was even slightly more than that of *Shi* (the history). In terms of the number of volumes, the Class of Shi (History) was one time more than those of the Classes of Jing (Classic), Zi and Ji 集 (Literary Work) respectively. The Class of History was further divided into thirteen genres, that this, *Zhengshi* 正史 (the official history), *Gushi* 古史 (the history of archaic times), *Zashi* 杂史 (the history delineating miscellaneous things), *Bashi* 霸史 (the history devoted to hegemonic regimes), *Qijuzhu* 起居注 (the detailed records of a sovereign’s everyday life), *Jiushi* 旧事 (the accounts of past events), *Zhiguan* 职官 (the detailed charts of official positions and ranks), *Yizhu* 仪注 (the annotated records of imperial proprieties), *Xingfa* 刑法 (the records of punishments

in accordance with concerned penal codes), *Zazhuan* 杂传 (the records of miscellaneous events), 地理 (the geographical treatises), *Puxi* 谱系 (the genealogical writings), and *Bulu* 簿录 (the catalogues devoted to things or literature). Among the thirteen types of historical writings, *Zhengshi*, which gave expression to the will of the feudal ruling hierarchy, assumed an unchallengeable orthodoxy and predominance. Generally, in the ancient China the history books were mainly consisted in the biography-centered official history and the annalistic works devoted to the antiquity. Thus, the reexamination of the past historiography focused the two predominant types of history.

The effort to classify all existing written materials into differing types indicated that historians who authored *Suishu* had already been equipped with a relatively broad knowledge. Besides this, the inclusion of *Puxi* (genealogical writings) and *Bulu* (catalogues devoted to things or literature) showed that the historical narratives at that time were used to meet certain social needs. Objectively, such a medieval assortment of historical writings revealed that historians attached greater importance to the efforts to record and compile history rather than to the aspiration to theoretically ruminant over history and historiography. In this regard, the present author suggests that present-day scholars free themselves from the intellectual restraint brought about by the rigid philological classification and pay instead equal attention to the ideas of history in both Class of History and other classes.

As regards the historical criticism embodied in “Jingji zhi,” there are four points worthy of furthered discussions. First, the author(s) of “Jingji zhi” strongly argued against the *chen-wei* teaching and *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning. In one piece of writing delineating the history of studies in the Classics, they said,

In the Later Han dynasty, the illustrated *chen* book prevailed. Then in the Jin dynasties, *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning, became an intellectual fad. Due to the two scholarly trends, the farfetched interpretations and forced analogies grew wild and propagated incessantly. The sovereigns in past dynasties tried to rectify the deviant teachings and produce the classics in strict congruence with the established orthodoxy. Unfortunately, their efforts was adulterated with something heterodox. As a result, the brilliantly decent discourses [in the Classics] were all reduced to absurd words. Such a worsening course even continues to this day, when the interpretation [of the Classics] has repeatedly diverge from the orthodoxy and consequently nothing [in such diverged interpretations] is worthy of being emulated [by later generations.] (Part One of “Jingji zhi,” Chapter 32, in *Suishu*)

Obviously, the author(s) earnestly hoped that the scholarship could be completely freed from intellectual shackles imposed by the teachings of *chen-wei* and *xuanxue* and the orthodoxy of Confucianism be restored. Besides, they assumed an objective attitude towards Buddhism and Daoism. The concerned discussion read,

Buddhism and Daoism are teachings that greatly differ from the orthodox teaching. Both are extraordinarily profound and aspirational teachings developed by the Sages. When the mediocre people study Buddhism and Daoism, in most cases they miss the point. As a consequence, the practitioners are usually deviant from the [orthodox Buddhist and Daoist] teachings and indulge instead in something absurd and impracticable. Worst of all, some even bring chaos to the society by means of the advocacy of false changes. Therein lies the gravest cases of [Buddhist and Daoist] malpractice. Exactly for this reason, the [orthodox]

teaching of Golden Means seldom casts an eye over them. But on the other hand, both shall be protected from being easily vilified. (Par Four of “Jingji zhi,” Chapter 35, in *Suishu*)

In the face of the dissemination of Buddhism and Daoism, the Confucians objectively realized that how both fundamentally differed from the orthodox Confucian teaching, as well as trying to be tolerant of them. It was in the Tang Empire that the three teachings—Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism—intellectually influenced each other. Such a trend of syncretization laid the foundation of the emergence of *lixue*, or the Learning of Principle, in the following Song dynasty.

Second, the author(s) of *Suishu* correctly pointed out that in spite of the impressive number of historians there were very few renowned ones. They revealed that many writers devoting themselves to history were usually intellectually vulgar and shallow-minded though indeed they aspired to carry forward the cause pioneered by Sima Qian. *Hanshu* was an exceptional case, outshining almost all other similar works. In the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, historians produced dozens of official history books in the course emulating the work done by Sima Qian and Ban Gu. Such works were, however, hard to be outstanding, with the exception of Chen Shou’s *Sanguo zhi* and Fan Ye’s *Hou Han shu*. Thus, the Tang historians concluded the general trend of historiography. Their conclusion read,

The position of *shi* (the imperial officer in charge of the work writing history in the great antiquity) had long been abolished. But in the Former and Later Han dynasties, some—Sima Qian and Ban Gu, for instance—attempted to rehabilitate such an archaic system. Since the Wei and Jin dynasties, the cause [pioneered by Qian and Gu] was carried out in an increasingly decadent manner. In the praxis of writing history, the position that had been occupied by Nan and Dong, two respected historians embodying the fearless and veracious spirit of writing history, was used to trade for nobility and leisure; and the concerned imperial agencies were seldom staffed with qualified and talented historians. Thus, in the Southern Liang, there was a saying that went, “[For those who are born into aristocratic families,] they can easily be appointed *zhuzuo* 著作, or the Imperial Scribe, provided that they are strong enough to sit steadily in the wagon; and in the same vein, they can be selected as *mishu* 秘书, or the Imperial Secretary, so long as they are able to put down a few polite formulas such as ‘how’s going your body.’” As a consequence, those who were not the true historians but de facto dead wood, pretentiously and self-complacently acted in the central court. Those who were not only ambitious but also be able to produce indelible works, meanwhile, had to painstakingly do their job in spite of being trapped in lowliness and poverty. As regards the writings, the history of a certain dynasty could be delineated in as far as dozens of books, among which records contradicted each other. To make matters worse, such differing books were based on erroneous primary sources, run counter to the objective and balanced principles, as well as narrating [the history] in a paradoxical rather than in the conscientious and concise manner. (Par Two of “Jingji zhi,” Chapter 33, in *Suishu*)

Beside, in their general interpretations of the Class of Classics the Tang historians shed critical light on the writers’ lack of full comprehension of changes in the historical perspective. Such a critical reexamination of classics could also be applied to authors of the history books. In the eyes of Tang historians, there was only superficial prosperity in the field. The true situation, they held, was deplorably dull. It was against such a gloomy backdrop that historians tried to rethink and conclude the past historiography with a view to finding a way out.

Third, the Tang historians critically reviewed genres of history other than the biography-centered official history and annalistic ones (see table below).

Genres	Comments
<i>Zashi</i> 杂史 Miscellaneous History	It was usually penned by historians themselves. Generally, those produced since the Later Han dynasty were based on old works and arbitrarily adapted by the authors. As regards the contents of such adapted works, they were heterodox and even absurd.
<i>Zhiguan</i> 职官 History of Ranks/ Positions	The character of such historical narratives lay in the miscellaneousness and triviality.
<i>Yizhu</i> 仪注 History of Imperial Rites	It was shallow and incomplete, failing to shed light on the essence of imperial rites.
<i>Zazhuan</i> 杂传 Diversified Biographies	The authorship of the history greatly diversified. Such history embodied a myriad of things in their illusory and absurd narratives. In terms of its origin, it was merely a by-product of the archaic imperial historians' regular work.
<i>Dili</i> 地理 Geographical Treatises	It merely consisted of records of names of states and prefectures and was actually far from being profound and extensive.
<i>Bulu</i> 簿录 Catalogues	Liu Xiang's <i>Bielu</i> 别录 (Alternative catalogue) and his son's <i>Qiliu</i> were the two most representative works. Both were renowned for their clear analyses of books' origin and the proper classification of existing literature. But, after the two Lius, the authors of similar works merely kept account of the titles of greatly diverse genres of written literature. Being discontent with their works' disorganization and muddledness, Wang Jian and Ruan Xiaoxu melioratively produced <i>Qizhi</i> and <i>Qilu</i> respectively. By and large, such ameliorative catalogues emulated those compiled by the two Lius. Nevertheless, they were qualitatively inferior to the two Lius' works.

Fourth, the Tang historians elaborated the talents that a true historian must have, as well as setting forth the system of *shi*, or the imperial agency in charge of the work writing the official history. Generally, a true historian and staff of the imperial agency must have broad knowledge and be able to shed revealing light on the remote past. The concerned elaboration in “Jingji zhi” read,

An imperial historian must have a wide learning and a powerful memory, as well as having the ability to iron out difficulty and then to carry forward the cause [writing history.] As soon as the imperial historian is appropriately positioned, the entire team of imperial officials will be benefited. Due to the talents and work of the historian, what had been said and done in the past will be knowable; and meanwhile, the knowledge of heaven and earth will be thoroughly and effectively fathomed. Exactly for this reason, the cardinal principles regarding human ethics and moralities will be extended to extremes. Internally, the imperial historian grasps the gist of the Eight Methods [whereby the ministers and high officials could be administered], so that he can instruct the administration of the central court; and externally, he has a good command of Six Classics [guiding grand state affairs], thereby he could critically examine the act of the government. In order to make virtues more prominent, the historian keeps account the good work that humans have done or are doing; to

prevent humans from doing evil, he puts down every act that is against the virtue. [In their works, the historians] generalize the teachings of Sage Kings; highlight the prominent virtues of Sage Kings; illuminate the subtlest and most profound Ways of the Sage Kings; and delineate in detail the entire history of a dynasty. (Par Two of “Jingji zhi,” Chapter 33, in *Suishu*)

### (3) Liu Zhiji's *Shitong*

Liu Zhiji, whose courtesy name was Zixuan 子玄, was born in 661 A.D. in Pengcheng 彭城 (in present-day Xuzhou 徐州) and died in his sixty-first year. When Liu was twenty-year old, he passed the highest level of Imperial Examination and was appointed by the central court to a county-level position. In the following two decades, Liu spent all his leisure time exploring the past historiography. In his forties Liu was chosen to be one of the assistant imperial scribes, who were responsible for compiling the dynasty's official history. Unfortunately, he shuttled in and out of the Imperial Agency for History due to his disagreement with the chief supervisors. It was in 705 A.D that Liu initiated the project of *Shitong*. Five years later, when Liu was fifty-year old, his indelible monograph—*Shitong*—was finished. In the book, Liu expressed resentment towards *shiguan* 史馆, or the Imperial Agency for History, which seriously impeded the fulfillment of his political aspirations and scholarly ambitions (“Zixu 自叙” (Personal statement), in Part 10 of “Neipian 内篇” (Inner Chapter), *Shitong*). He even boldly laid bare the disadvantages of the institution of *shiguan*. His disclosure read,

Usually, the so-called *shichen* 史臣, or the imperial officials responsible for writing the official history, are transferred from other agencies [irrelevant to the work compiling history.] For this reason, the position of *zhuzuo* 著作, or the Imperial Scribe devoting themselves to history, exists in name only. In practice, the writing tasks are all left to other imperial agencies. From the Wude 武德 reign (618–626 AD) down to the Changshou 长寿 reign (692–694 AD), there were prominently good works produced by historians such as Li Renshi 李仁实, who was feared by some high officials due to his straightforwardness and veracity, and Jing Bo 敬播, who was renowned for his excellent narratives. There were also notoriously bad ones penned by authors such as Xu Jingzong 许敬宗, a distorter of historical facts and concealer of evilness, and Niu Fengji 牛风及 with the foul reputation of haughtiness and bewilderment. (“Shiguan jianzhi 史官建置” (The establishment of Imperial Agency for History), in Part 1 of “Waipian 外篇” (Outer Chapter), *Shitong*)

It was for the reason that the so-called Imperial Agency for History functioned so poorly that Liu finally decided to retreat to a position wherein he could invest all his feelings in the mission writing *Shitong*. Apart from his magnum opus, Liu authored *Liu shi jiaoshi* 刘氏家史 (History of Liu's Family), *Liu shi pukao* 刘氏谱考 (Textual criticism of the Liu's family tree), and *Shimeng* 释蒙 (Enlightening interpretations with respect to *Shitong*). He also collaboratively penned *Tangshu* 唐书 (Book of Tang), *Sanjiao zhuying* 三教珠英 (The essence of three teachings, that is, Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism), *Chongxiu Zetian huanghou shilu* 重修则天皇后实录 (The revised veritable records devoted to the Empress [Wu] Zetian), *Zhongzong shilu* 中宗实录 (The veritable records devoted to the Emperor Zhong), and *Ruizong shilu* 睿宗实录 (The veritable records devoted to the Emperor Rui). In



addition, there are a few essays written by Liu in *Tang huiyao* 唐会要 (The collection of established institutions in Tang) and *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英华 (The literary gems: An anthology).

Immediately in the wake of a systematic reexamination of the past historiography in “Jingji zhi,” another similar attempt made by Liu Zhiji in his *Shitong*. In this regard, *Shitong* was an all-around conclusion of the ancient Chinese historiography. Scholars through all ages had intensively worked on the monumental work. Despite this, the present-author contends that Liu’s book is still worthy of furthered explorations. In other words, present-day researchers shall grasp how Liu understood history, where the perspective from which Liu discussed changes taking place in historiography lay in, and what his suggestions about the future growth of Chinese historiography were.

Liu had quite a good command of the studies in classics and historical narratives. For this reason, he formulated significant concepts such as *jia* 家 (school), *lei* 类 (genre) and *liu* 流 (trend/stream). At the very beginning of his *Shitong*, Liu explicitly stated that *liu*, or the trend of historiography, was consisted in six *schools*—that is, *Shangshu* (*Book of History*, one of the six most basic Confucian classics), *Chunqiu* (*The Spring and Autumn Annals*, one of the six most basic Confucian classics), *Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu* 国语 (Discourses on the states, an archaic book devoted to the history of pre-imperial China), *Shiji*, and *Hanshu* (“Liuji 六家” (Six schools), in Part 1 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). It was from the six schools that the *history* evolved. The most fundamental spirit of history lay exactly in the six books. It should also be pointed out that Liu’s six schools fundamentally differed from that of Sima Tan, who fathered the well-known Six-Schools Classification that shed light on the intellectual origins of major scholarly traditions. Unlike Tan, Liu actually placed emphasis on the stylistic assortment rather than on the intellectual origin of existing history works in his effort to reexamine the past historiography.

The reason that why Liu classified *Shangshu* and *Chunqiu* into a school respectively lay in one of Confucius’s assertions. The Master’s judgment read,

If they have a wide comprehension (of things), and know what is remote and old, and yet are free from duplicity, their understanding of the Book of History [i.e. *Shangshu*] is deep. ... If they suitably adapt their language to the things of which they speak, and yet have no disposition to be insubordinate, their knowledge of the Chun Qiu [i.e. *Chunqiu*] is deep.”<sup>30</sup>

Simply put, *Shangshu* was the embodiment of the most fundamental principle reigning over the historical narrative; and *Chunqiu*, the epitome of the most basic spirit of writing history. Furthermore, in historians’ effort to “adapt their language to the things of which they speak,” they must abide by certain rules and pass judgment on the historical figures and events. Such a *disciplined* genre of history was fundamentally different from the history that was of a purely narrative nature.

As regards *Zuozhuan*, it was elevated to a school due to its excellent narratives. Liu explained,

<sup>30</sup>Liji 礼记, or *The Book of Rites*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/liji/jing-jie/ens>.

Digging into *Zuozhuan*'s interpretations of the Classic [i.e. *Chunqiu*], [readers find that] the judgment can be found in the original classic while the concerned events are discoursed in detail in concerned interpretive texts. In some cases, certain things are recorded in the Classic rather than in *Zuozhuan*; while in other cases, the situation is reversed. On the whole the narrative of *Zuozhuan* is terse and concise and the historical events in its narratives are thoroughly and extensively delineated. Indeed, *Zuozhuan* is the wing whereby the Sage's [i.e. Confucius] ideas can be better elaborated and indisputably worth being crowned with the Laureate Wreath of [Historical] Narrative. (“Liujiu,” in Part 1 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*)

Therein lay the basic requirement of a qualified history book. Simply put, the book must be able to grasp and display the meaning of the Classic by means of the terse, concise, thorough and extensive narration. Inasmuch as *Zuozhuan* was a perfect embodiment of the dreamed narrative, it was worth being classified as *jia*, or School.

Liu went further, classifying *Guoyu* into the group of *jia* in the light of the book's philological significance. He pointed out that *Guoyu* put together the forgotten literature and alternative discourses and thus made a special contribution to the Classic. *Shiji* was also included into the class of *jia* on the grounds that it not only possessed the broad and insightful vision of a general history but also groundbreakingly created *jizhuan*, or the biography/memoir-centered history (“Liujiu,” in *Shitong*). From then on, the two types of history—*jizhuan* and annals—assumed by degrees the predominance in the scholarly world. Finally, Liu explained for what reason *Hanshu* was included into *jia*. Specifically, Ban Gu, who authored *Hanshu*, devoted his work exclusively to a certain dynasty and narrated the dynasty's history in an all-embracing, refined and meticulous manner, thereby setting an example of writing the official history.

In his critical examination of the past historiography, Liu rethought the origin of historical narrative from the perspective of *jia*, or the School. Due to his effort, the birth, growth and change of historical writing in the antiquity was unambiguously displayed before readers. In this regard, he was an heir to the established scholarly tradition focusing on the critical exploration of intellecto-stylistic origin. In addition, Liu echoed the idea that the Classics and history shared a common origin. In particular, *Shangshu*, one of the most basic Confucian classics, played quite a significant role in Liu's historiographical edifice. Liu even asserted that *Shangshu* was the classic of existing seven Confucian classics and outdid all other history books (“Duanxian 断限” (Division of historical periods), Part 12 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Most importantly, *Shangshu* was exactly the origin of history. Liu contended that the course in which the history gradually grew into an independent discipline commenced from *Shangshu* and *Chunqiu*. Of course, *Shiji* and *Hanshu* also made great contribution to the process. The concerned elaboration in *Shitong* read,

In the great antiquity, *Shangshu* recorded what [sovereigns and high ministers] said and *Chunqiu* kept account of what [sovereigns and ministers] did. [The contents of the two books] were sequenced in accordance with [the position of] Sun and Moon, as well as with the chronological order of differing events. For this reason, so long as readers exposed themselves to the contents successively, they would clearly understand the past. Analogically, [one should] read the two works exactly in a manner resembling how wild geese formed into columns while flying and how the fishes organized into teams while

swimming. Then, Sima Qian broke the established formulas, created separate treatises, applied the classification to treatises and chapters, and finally wove them into a complete work. Ban Gu followed what Qian did [in the creation of his own works.] (“Bianci 编次” (Sequence), Part 13 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*)

Originally, the history and classics shared the same root. Later, the history evolved into an independent discipline. In order to intellectually reconstruct such a differentiating process, the concept of *lei* (genre/class/category) was adopted. Therein exactly lay the significance of the abovementioned Sima Qian’s ground-breaking work. In his *Shitong* Liu mentioned *lei* many times. The maturity of historical writing was furthered thanks to historians’ effort to put into effect the idea of *leiju* 类聚 (flocking together events and figures of the same categorical nature in the work writing history). According to Liu’s discourses, it was the concept and praxis of *lei* that laid the foundation of the classification and establishment of examples in the historical narrative. Even *zashi* 杂史, or the historical works that were of a miscellaneous nature, should follow the rules of classification (“Timu 题目” (Entitlement), Part 11 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Liu strongly held that the inexplicit classification would definitely made the historical narratives thoroughly disorganized. In addition, *lei* was a method whereby the historical criticism could be carried out. In this regard, Liu analogically rebuked some historians who failed to clearly categorize objectives of history and turned the narratives into a hodge-podge, just like those who was unable to make a distinction between red and violet and between orchid and weed (“Pinzao 品藻” (Evaluation), Part 23 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). In a word, the failure in putting into effect the appropriate classification of historical figures and events was diametrically against the historian’s most basic obligation to teach people how to know good from evil and abide by the established separation of superior from inferior. Generally, Liu’s discussions on the style, example and method of writing history and appraisals of historians were all specific applications of his concept of *lei*. But on the other hand, the concept of *lei* gave expression to Liu’s hierarchical thinking, identification with the feudal cardinal principles regarding the most basic ethics and moralities, and obstinate adherence to the established historiographical rules.

Recalling the times when he was writing *Shitong*, in “Yuanxu 原序,” or the *Author’s Preface* to *Shitong*, Liu explicitly indicated that the methodology he applied to the book was precisely consisted in *qufen* 区分 (the proper classification of all specific things) and *leiju*. In this regard, Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚 (1738–1801), a brilliant historian and thinker in the Qing dynasty, commended that indeed Liu had already grasped the most fundamental rule reigning over the work writing history. It is a pity that Zhang did not specify what the rule was. The present author contends that, generally, the Liu-perceived rule referred to the basic method whereby a history book could be produced, the established formula in regard to style and layout of historical narrative, and the fundamental spirit embodied in *Shitong* itself. It was no other than *leiju*, or the historian’s required and imperative effort to flock together events and figures of the same categorical nature in the work writing history.

It is worth discussing the positive elements embedded in Liu’s idea of *lei*. First, the concept did not act alone; rather, it was fused with other key ideas such as *jia* (school), all of which were also used to explore the origin of history. Second, the concept required that in the praxis of classification there must be a strict match between the name of a class and the contents that were classified into the class (“Timu,” in *Shitong*). Liu applied his idea of name and actuality to the judgment of history books, acidulously pointing out that some works—*So-and-so Shangshu*, for instance—were only superficially in harmony with the genuine *Shangshu*. Exactly for this reason, Liu refused to include such *inconsistent* works into the School of *Shangshu*. He even criticized the famous “Gujin renbiao 古今人表” (A detailed table of renowned figures in past and present) in *Hanshu*, sharp-mindedly revealing the author of *Hanshu* coercively and improperly imposed a trichotomized assortment and a hierarchical septachotomized stratification on historical figures. Third, the concepts of *jia* and *lei* were fused with the more general *liu* (trend/stream). In Liu’s eyes, the six basic schools and two fundamental styles of historical narratives were not static but dynamic. In one piece of discourse in *Shitong*, Liu illuminated that there had already been ten alternative *liu* (streams) of historiography since the antiquity (“Zashu 杂述” (Treatise on miscellaneous types of history), Part 34 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Exactly due to the combination of the two concepts of *tong* 通 (a thorough understanding of changes) and *lei*, Liu’s historical thinking grew more distinctive.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that Liu’s ideas of *tong* and *lei* was tainted by the feudal hierarchical thinking with respect to the social status, ethics and moralities. In many cases, he established *ming* 名, or names, in strict accordance with *shi* 实, or actualities, of the feudal social, ethical and moral principles. It was actually an effort to regulate the real world by means of a priori *names*. As a consequence, the good growth of his exploration of the relationship between name and actuality was reversed and his historiographical thinking based on the thorough understanding of all changes taking place in entire history was seriously weakened. To make matters worse, Liu even attempted to set some examples whereby he could put entire historiography into a fixed framework, hoping that by doing so any history work that went beyond the framework would be denounced as *impure*. Such an arbitrary aspiration might partly explain why the medieval Chinese idea/philosophy of history could not fully grow. In other words, by this time, the conclusion of historiography in the medieval China had already hit the ceiling.

One of the characteristics of Liu’s conclusion of the past historiography lay in his effort to raise questions in the perspective of the overall change of historical narratives. Generally, Liu held that present-day history works were qualitatively inferior to those produced in the antiquity. It was a theory of degeneration in the historiographical perspective. But, it must be pointed out that the *degeneration* in Liu’s theoretical discourses actually referred to the need to innovatively rehabilitate the established historiography. In order to fulfill such an innovative aspiration, Liu suggested that historians reinvigorate the good tradition of historiography in the

great antiquity. Simply put, the antique historiography could play a pivotal role in the resuscitation of its present-day cachectic counterpart.

In *Shitong*, Liu examined various aspects of historiography. He contended that the historical narratives as a whole underwent the course starting from the admixture of history and classics and ending in the clear differentiation of the two types of writing. In one piece of treatise entitled “Xushi 叙事” (Narratives), Liu briefly reconstructed such an admixture-differentiation process (Part 22 of “Neipian,” in *Shitong*). In particular, he illuminated that the quality of works devoted to history were increasingly deteriorated as time went by. In another piece of essay, he echoed this point, bitterly complaining that since the separation of history and classics the spirit and praxis of writing history unstoppably atrophied (“Shushi 书事” (Narrating events), Part 29 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Put plainly, the separation was no other than a degeneration. Specifically, in terms of the style of historical narrative, the two most basic styles—the biography-centered history represented by *Shiji* and the annals by *Zuozhuan*—had already fully grown and no one among the later generations of historians attempted to transcend them (“Erti 二体” (Two styles), Part 2 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Such a historiographical conformism substantially contributed to the decline of historical narrative. In particular, Liu criticized the annals, disappointedly showing that in more than five hundred years spanning from the Warring States Era down to the Jin dynasties the history even walked on the road to ruin even though some distinguished historians such as Gan Bao, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian tried their best to rehabilitate it (“Xuli 序例” (Synopses and examples), Part 10 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). In short, the general declining trend of historiography could not be checked, let alone reversed.

Liu went further, revealing that the historical writing had already been empty-minded and ostentatious. By contrast, the historical narratives produced in the great antiquity were pure, concise and profound. Liu held that since the Han dynasties there were not any writings worthy of being intensively examined (“Yanyu 言语” (Writings), Part 20 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Where the selection of primary sources was concerned, Liu asserted that historians in the great antiquity did a reliable and valuable work because they exposed themselves to both the past literature and excellent contemporary works as far as possible. Unlike their antique counterparts, historians in the early medieval China paid attention to novel things instead. Worst of all, in works produced in Jin dynasties there were even strange things that were fabricated by the authors. Generally, as time went on, the quality of history books became increasingly poor. All aforementioned questions indicated that it had already been imperative for historians to innovatively reform the existing historiography. In this regard, Liu proposed several ideas in *Shitong*.

First, the improper handling of historical issues in previous works should be corrected in the newly-penned books (“Zaiyan 载言” (To record what had said), Part 3 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Second, the writing methods and official designations applying to the objects of historical narrative should not be completely freed from change. Otherwise, historian would be as stupid as those who carved a mark on gunwale in a moving boat (“Yinxi 因习” [Adherence], Part 18 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Third, history books should not indiscriminately include certain contents.

For example, Liu strongly objected to create “Yiwen zhi 艺文志,” or the treatise devoted to the entire existing literature, in every history. Even if the treatise could not be excluded, the author should try his best to bring substantial changes to it (“Shuzhi 书志” (Books and treatises), Part 8 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*).

Liu discussed his all-around reform of the established historiography from the perspectives of the general trend of historical narrative and the relationship of history and time. He incisively grasped the truth that the historical narrative must be in close relation to a certain socio-political situation of a certain society. For example, he explicitly stated that the phenomenon, wherein dozens of memoir-centered and annalistic works devoted to regional regimes emerged, was recognizable and understandable (“Liujia,” in *Shitong*). In the same vein, the style of writing history would change accordingly (“Xushi,” in *Shitong*). As regards the empty-mindedness and ostentatiousness of the works produced by late generations of historians, Liu candidly acknowledged this point but meanwhile he defended it from the perspective of irresistible degenerating trend of historiography. Admittedly, Liu’s efforts to illuminate the origin of history and styles of writing history and demonstrate the necessity of historiographical reform in the light of a certain politico-cultural conditions and general trend of social change were very positive.

A critical spirit, which embodied the idea of thoroughly understanding all changes in the historical perspective and was applied to the historical criticism, penetrated Liu’s entire program of historiographical reform. First, he was strongly against the conformism and obstinate adherence to the established rules in the mission writing history. Instead, he suggested that historians in his time innovatively and flexibly learn the good tradition founded by their counterparts in the great antiquity. For example, he praised “Zaiji 载记” (Annals devoted to the unorthodox, separatist regimes) in *Dongguan Han ji 东观汉记* (The history of Later Han that was written in the Eastern Imperial Archives) as an embodiment of the innovative and flexible recreation of tradition (“Timu,” in *Shitong*). Besides this, Liu encouraged historians to select the titles of memoirs and miscellaneous treatises in the light of the concrete conditions rather than of the ossified established rules (“Timu,” in *Shitong*). Liu also selected some historians, who inflexibly followed Sima Qian and Ban Gu, both of whom paid greater attention to what renowned scholars said rather than to what they did in their works, as bad examples of the obstinate adherence to tradition (“Ziyan,” in *Shitong*). Second, Liu held that the historiographical change should be based on *shigu* 师古, or the emulation of what excellent historians did in the great antiquity. *Shigu* required that a historian be able to concurrently grasp the essence of the past scholarship and have a broad-minded vision. In order to fulfill the aspiration, historians should try to be apparently different from the predecessors while, most importantly, remaining spiritually identical with the gurus of previous ages in the creation of historical works. It was, Liu contended, the best emulation of brilliant historians in the great antiquity (“Moni 模拟” (Emulation), Part 28 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Third, Liu did not place works penned by the antique historians into black and white categories. He even shed critical light on the highly esteemed books such as *Shangshu*, *Chunqiu*,

*Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu*, *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. His dauntlessness was firmly based on his extremely good command of existing literature and profound philosophical principles. Whenever he found a fault in past works, he would never hesitate to speak out. For this reason, Liu himself was criticized by others. Some even denounced his criticism against the classics as a child's babble ("Zixu 自叙" (Author's preface), Part 36 of "Neipian," *Shitong*). In this regard, Liu regarded himself as the heir to Yang Xiong, Wang Chong 王充 and Liu Xie, all of whom were renowned for their sharp-minded scholarly criticism. In the "Author's Preface" to *Shitong*, Liu defended himself. His defence read,

For what reason I write *Shitong*? The mission may be driven by my discontent with present-day historians, whose ideas [of history] are impure. At sight of their works, I resolve to make clear what the ultimate goal of writing history and explore the stylistic rules regarding the historical narrative as far as possible. *Shitong*, on the one hand, is historiography-centric; on the other hand, it tries to shed light on the Kingly Way and human ethics, thereby assuming an all-embracing nature. [Exposing myself to all concerned literature.] I have grasped the essence of works produced since the creation of *Fayan* 法言 (Exemplary discourses) down to the completion of *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*) and intellectually have them fused into one. The book aspires to evaluate and judge historical figures, among whom I select [good and bad] examples. The book tries to explore the history as early as possible; discuss things as concretely as possible; analyze questions as profoundly as possible; and illuminate ideas as many as possible. In practice, those who devote themselves to studies in the Classics abhor those disparaging Fu Qian 服虔 [a great Confucian scholar renowned for his interpretations of *Zuozhuan*] and Du Yu 杜預 [who produced the most well-known annotated *Zuozhuan*.] Likewise those who commit themselves to the historical narrative resent those ridiculing the mistakes made by Sima Qian and Ban Gu. In this book I spend much time and energy scolding some sages in the past and disclosing the faults committed by some people in the previous ages. Exactly for this reason, I, *unavoidably*, give offences to other scholars. Despite this, I still sincerely hope that there will be some gentlemen, who would like to be my bosom friends and spare their time reading the book. ("Zixu," in *Shitong*)

Put plainly, Liu's idea of historiographical reform and spirit of critical inheritance of historiographical tradition were combined into one. Most importantly, such a combined idea was firmly based on an extremely broad vision. As a consequence, it assumed an all-embracing character.

Apart from the general ideas, Liu's historiographical reform had very specific suggestions. For example, he suggested that the innovatively-created historical works include three newly-reformulated treatises, that is "Duyi 都邑" (The Imperial Capital), "Shizu 氏族" (Clans) and "Fangwu 方物" (Local products) ("Shuzhi," in *Shitong*). "Duyi" was used to delineate in detail the history of a dynasty's capital and in doing so the sovereign could be made more magnificent; "Shizu," to display the sovereigns and nobles' family trees whereby the superiority and inferiority between families and individuals could be clearly made and the line between barbarians and the civilized be accurately drawn; and "Fangwu," which should be put on top of "Shihuo 食货," or the economy-themed treatises, would be conducive to the government's statistical work. Such novel suggestions gave expression to the new hereditary landlord class's need to rewrite history and were in harmony with the consolidation of feudal rule in the medieval China. Liu's suggestions did

convince some historians, who added the three treatises into their works. Additionally, Liu contended that in some works the treatises on astronomy, Five Elements and existing literature be deleted or fundamentally reformulated. Liu also proposed innovative ideas about the historical narrative, language and delineation of events.

On the basis of the conclusion of past historiography, Liu summarized the general rules applying to the creation of historical works. It was by such refined rules that Liu appraised history books produced in previous ages and called for a fundamental historiographical reform. The goal of Liu’s reform was to enable the *history* to play a significant role in the veneration of the Classics and sovereigns. Therein lay Liu’s most basic shortcoming and limitation. Liu’s ultimate failure in the mission fundamentally recreating the established historiography could also be used to explain for what reason the medieval Chinese idea of history was unable to find a way out.

Liu had compared his *Shitong* to Yang Xiong’s *Fayan*, or the *Exemplary Discourses*, saying that there were similarity and dissimilarity between the two works. Outwardly he wanted to show readers that he aspired to create a scholarly school of history. In fact, his true intention was much deeper and worth ruminating over. Just like the Later Han’s leading Confucians, who penned *Baihu tong* 白虎通 (A comprehensive elaboration of basic meanings of Confucian classics) and successfully turned it into the most authoritative code of feudal orthodoxy, Liu actually aspired to transmorph *Shitong* into the highest code reigning over the historical narrative. In this regard, he elaborated,

In the Later Han, renowned Confucians gathered together in the imperial Baihu Guan, or the White Tiger Pavilion, where they collaboratively and intensively discussed and debated about all existing Confucian classics and concerned interpretations. As a consequence, *Baihu tong* (A comprehensive elaboration of basic meanings of Confucian classics) was produced. Inasmuch as I finished the book when working for the Imperial Agency for History, I have it entitled “Shi tong 史通” (literally the title means that the book comprehensively elaborates the most fundamental rules of historiography). Besides, it is said the central court of Han had tried its best to find a descendent of Sima Qian and conferred the title of “Shitong zi 史通子” (The Master Who Thoroughly Understands History). Being informed this, I know that it was a long-standing practice wherein *shi* 史 (the history) could be dubbed as “tong 通” (a thorough understanding of the past). Learning widely from greatly diversified opinions, I finally make choice of *Shitong* as the official title of my work. (“Yuanxu 原序” (The original preface to *Shitong*), in *Shitong*)

The meaning of the quotation was twofold. First, Liu was eager to produce a book that could be as authoritative and orthodox as *Baihu tong*. In other words, he attached the greatest importance in the historiographical perspective to *Shitong*. Second, Liu’s ultimate choice of *tong* (a thorough understanding) as his work’s official title indicated that indeed there was a long tradition aspiring to thoroughly understand all changes in entire history among Chinese historians.

Liu rethought the most basic historiographical questions. In his rumination, he paid the greatest attention to establishing *shili* 史例, or the highest regulation stipulating how to write history. The concerned elaboration in *Shitong* read,



*Li* 例, or the regulation, is to the history what *fa* 法, or the law, is to the state. Without the law, the society will definitely grow unstable; likewise, without the regulation, the difference between right and wrong in history cannot be told. When the Master [i.e. Confucius] were revising the existing Classics, he set up general rules applying to concerned writings; in the same vein, when the Master Zuo [Qiuming] was preparing annotations and interpretations for *Chunqiu*, he unequivocally defined the related scopes. Generally, so long as the regulations [applying to the historical narratives] were explicitly defined and firmly set up, the related works will definitely be readable and understandable. (“Xuli,” in *Shitong*)

In another piece of treatise, Liu explicitly stated that only when the regulation was well established could the work be known to the later generations (“Moni,” in *Shitong*). In practice, not only did the *regulation* reign over a historian’s writing but it also served as the primary criterion whereby a history book could be evaluated. In this regard, Liu worked out a set of regulations. According to Liu, in the case of the biography-centered history, “benji 本纪” (basic annals) should be exclusively devoted to the sovereign, or the Son of Heaven (“Benji 本纪” (Basic annals), Part 4 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). Invoking *Chunqiu*, an annalistic history focusing exclusively on the acts of various dukes (that is, sovereigns of princely states), Liu asserted that “benji” in the biography-centered historical works must record only what sovereigns did. In doing so, Liu had the veneration of sovereign and Classics fused into one. Therein lay the highest and most fundamental historiographical regulation. The Grandest Regulation, which required that a history book must be in harmony with the idea and practice of venerating the sovereign and Classics, enjoyed the full freedom from the slightest change even though times kept changing. It was in the light of such an unchangeable rule that Liu criticized Sima Qian, who improperly included Xiang Yu 项羽, a powerful rival of the founding emperor of the Former Han, and the Empress Lü, the wife of the Former Han’s founding sovereign, into the mandated-sovereign-dominated “benji,” and Chen Sheng 陈胜, a leader of peasant rebellion, into “shijia 世家” (Hereditary houses), which was usually devoted to the most prestigious lords and the most prominent high officials. In the same vein, Liu rebuked Ban Gu, who placed the Empress Lü into the class of sovereign, Chen Shou, who penned the basic annals for the usurpatory rulers of Cao’s Wei, and Northern Wei’s historians, who enshrined the non-Han sovereigns into the most prestigious and exclusive *Basic Annals*. In view of this, it is safe to say that in Liu’s mind only when the Grandest Regulation kept unchangeable would the change in the historiographical perspective be allowed to take place. In addition to “benji,” other basic styles such as “liezhuan 列传” (biograph/memoir), “biao 表” (table) and “zhi 志” (treatise) must unexceptionally be created in strict accordance with the principle venerating the sovereign (“Liezhuan 列传” (Biographies or memoirs), Part 6 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*).

To sum up, there were several key points in Liu’s program reforming the existing historiography. First, the reform should be based on historians’ ability to know the history as early as possible by means of the thorough understanding [of the past] and “suitably adapt their language to the things of which they speak” (“Liujiia,” in *Shitong*). Second, the changes taking place in the work writing history should be a more extensive embodiment of all aspects of the society. Third, the

unchangeability of historiography exactly lay in the Grandest Regulation, which reigned over the creation of historical works and gave expression to the need to venerate the sovereign and Classics. The first and second points were vivid; in contrast, the third one, which played a predominant role in Liu’s idea of history, was ossified. Due to the third point, Liu’s skepticism about the Classics and the Great Antiquity was actually not a critique of Confucianism but merely a disclosure of certain contents running against the Principle or Regulation venerating the Sage and sovereign (“Yigu 疑古” (The skepticism about the Great Antiquity), Part 3 of “Waipian” (Outer Chapter), *Shitong*). Apart from something abnormal in the existing Classics, Liu’s condemnation was mainly poured upon those who use the contents that were in disharmony with the orthodoxy embodied in the veneration of the Sage and sovereign in the Classics to exonerate the licentious sovereigns, the treacherous ministers and the rebellious villains. For this reason, the positive change advocated in *Shitong* was finally strangled by Liu’s ultra-conservative unchangeability [epitomized in *shili*, or the Grandest Regulation venerating the sovereign and Classics.] Similarly, Liu’s great aspiration to thoroughly understand all changes taking place in entire history was ultimately reduced to the unity of parochialism and inconsistency. In this regard, Zhang Xuecheng, one of the towering figures in Qing’s scholarly world, sharp-mindedly pointed out that the history—the biography-centered history in particular—lasted for more than two thousand years in the Chinese land and finally degenerated into an ossified set of formulas resembling the eight-legged essay that prevailed in the Imperial Examination. Although Zhang did not directly pointed at Liu and the traditional Chinese historiography, he did shed revealing light on Liu’s and other Chinese historians’ obstinate adherence to the so-called Grand Regulation and irrational arbitrariness whereby they could easily denounce the works incongruous with the Regulation as *impure*. Unfortunately, in most cases the historians in the post-Liu era were the heirs to Liu’s obstinateness and arbitrariness in their efforts to reexamine the past historiography. The Janus-faced duality of Liu’s historical criticism reminds present-day scholars to always bear in mind that in order to correctly evaluate the significance of a historian’s idea of history they shall not only make clear what on earth his or her idea is but also carefully investigate how the idea(s) tangibly impact the historiographical growth.

In fact, many pieces of Liu’s idea of history were phenomenally self-contradictory. Nevertheless, it was understandable, taking into consideration the nature of medieval Chinese historiography. For example, Liu’s idea of *zhibi*, or the aspiration to veraciously write history, did advocate that historians have the fearless spirit in their effort to produce the veritable records; but meanwhile, it also fervently held that the ultimate goal of historical narratives was to protect and promote *mingjiao* 名教, or the Confucian cardinal principles. Worst of all, Liu even suggested historians never try to disclose the faults made by the superiors such as sovereign and father in order not to run against the basic feudal ethics. In some pieces of Liu’s writing, readers can find his enthusiastic advocacy of the spirit of *zhibi*. Two concerned pieces read,

Historians keep account of everything that is of either a good or evil nature, thereby creating the veritable records. (“Huojing 惑经” (Puzzlement of the classics), Part 4 of “Waipian,” *Shitong*)

Just like *junzi*, or the persons with a superior virtue, who devote themselves to broadening their knowledge and perfecting their understanding [of things], historians fulfill their aspiration to be lofty in the course veraciously recording history. (“Huojing,” in *Shitong*)

Historians should, Liu asserted, produce the veritable records even at the cost of their lives, thereby transforming themselves into immortal martyrs (“Zhishu 直书” (Veracious writing), Part 24 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*). *Zhibi*, or the veracious spirit and practice of writing history, was both the most basic character that a historian must have and the mission that all historian must do their utmost to fulfill. A true historian, who dauntlessly and accurately put down what the licentious sovereigns and treacherous ministers did or were doing would be feared by the evil people (“Zhishu,” in *Shitong*). Thus, the effort to put the spirit of *zhibi* into effect was indispensable to using history for reference and expostulation. Exactly in the light of the aspiration and fulfillment of *zhibi*, Liu hierarchically trichotomized the community of historians. His three-tier complex was as follows.

Some historians who act like Dong Hu 董狐 and Nan Shi 南史, both of whom fearlessly denounced the reprobates while applauding the uncorrupted even in the face of death in the pre-imperial Jin and Qi states respectively, outshine all others. As regards those sitting in the second tier, they are like the pre-imperial Lu’s 鲁 [Zuo] Qiuming and the Former Han’s Zichang [i.e. Sima Qian], both of whom produce a well-knit and indelible history book respectively. In addition, some are as erudite and renowned as Shi Yi 史佚 in the Western Zhou and Yi Xiang 倚相 in the pre-imperial Chu 楚, so that they qualitatively occupy the third tier. If the three types of historian all disappear, how can the history survive? (“Bianzhi 辩职” (The fallacy to set up Imperial Agency for History), Part 35 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*)

Despite the fact that Liu’s hierarchical trichotomization of historians was neither well-grounded nor perfectly accurate, it revealed that indeed the thinker attached particular importance to the spirit of *zhibi*. He firmly believed that only when a historian really and truly put the spirit into effect could she or he be called a Good Scribe.

But on the other hand, Liu’s advocacy of *zhibi* was premised upon the preservation and protection of *mingjiao*, or the Confucian cardinal principles reigning over the most basic human ethics and moralities. It raised a perplexing question—how to tell the difference between the distortion of historical actuality and the preservation of *mingjiao*? Liu’s answer was paradoxical, indicating that he himself was trapped in a vicious intellectual circle and could not find a way out. His ambiguous answer read,

As soon as the most basic ethics reigning over the humankind is set up, there are the Home and the State. [In answer to a Duke’s question about government, Confucius replied: “There is government,] when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son.”<sup>31</sup> In a word, there must be a clear line drawn between close and

<sup>31</sup>Lunyu, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/analects/yan-yuan/ens>.

distant [in terms of the degrees of kinship] and between superior and interior [in terms of the social status.] Meanwhile, *Lunyu* 论语, or the *Analects*, follows such a grand principle that is embodied in one of the Master’s assertions – “The father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this.”<sup>32</sup> In the same vein, *Chunqiu*, or the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, make a clear distinction between inside and outside, as well as praising virtue while concealing vice [of the sovereigns.] Therein lies the *righteousness* advocated by *Chunqiu* [as one of the most basic Confucian Classics.] Since the creation of *Lunyu* and *Chunqiu*, both are regarded as the most primary standards guiding the historical writings. In their work reconstructing the past, historians usually left unnoticed the mistakes committed by the sovereigns or their relatives. It is true that in doing so the principle of uprighteness was to some extent damaged; but it is also true that *mingjiao*, or the most basic Confucian criteria regarding the human ethics, was prevented from being completely abandoned. Of course, indeed there are some who confuse facts and whitewash crimes. For example, Yu Yu 虞预 [a private historian] vilified Wang Yin 王隐 [an imperial scribe] and Shen Yue 沈约 made an apology to Pei Ziyue [whose great-grandfather produced the most well-known annotations for *Sanguo zhi*] in exchange of a milder explanation of the execution of Shen’s father in the history book and in doing so they had the historical narratives based on pure conjectures and evaluated historical figures and events in an extremely arbitrary manner. They were all despicable and hated so much by readers. Besides, some utter empty words, creating totally ungrounded history; some produce the false history in praise of certain people, reducing the historical writing to a private favor; and some trump up a charge, abusing the knowledge to retaliate against their own enemies. For example, in his *Jinshu* 晋书 (Book of Jin) Wang Chen 王沈 abusively belittled edicts issued by the Empress Zhen 甄 and Lu Ji 陆机 exaggerated the successful resistance against Zhuge Liang’s 诸葛亮 (181–234 AD) attack in his own work. There were even allegations that Ban Gu had been bribed to write history and Chen Shou penned memoirs for those who lent rice to him. Historians who commit aforementioned acts are the traitors [of the community of genuine historians] and the perpetrators [of the evil praxis of uncandidly writing history.] Such historians as culprits even worth being paraded through the streets and thrown into the lairs of jackals and tigers. (“Qubi 曲笔” (Distortions), Part 25 of “Neipian,” *Shitong*)

To a certain extent, there were two types of distorted historical narratives in Liu’s mind. First, in order to defend *mingjiao*, the feudal historians had to, to some degree, distorted certain facts or review figures and events in a distorted way. Second, the distortion was brought about by the historians’ immorality, selfishness or by the coercive external power. Liu were strongly against the second type of distortion. By contrast, the first type of distortion was, Liu contended, actually a special genre of veracious record in the perspective of defence of the most basic Confucian ethical and moral principles. Liu even held that if a historian was unable to put into effect the preservation and protection of *mingjiao*, she or he must be a practitioner of distortion (“Qubi,” in *Shitong*). Nevertheless, Liu greatly abhorred the feudal rulers who brutally persecuted veracious historians such as Wu Zhao 吴昭 and Cui Hao. In the cases of Wu, who was active in the Three Kingdoms, and Cui, one of the most renowned scholars in the Northern Wei dynasty, not only were both executed but also the historians’ entire families were mercilessly exterminated. In view of the prominent historians’ tragic end, Liu bitterly sighed that in these conditions it was quite hard for historians to produce a veritable history (“Zhishu,”

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., <http://ctext.org/analects/zi-lu/ens>.

in *Shitong*). In the face of being fatally punished by the central court, some historians or their family members backed off in horror. For example, the descendants of Sun Sheng, a historian who authored *Jinyang qiu*, secretly revised the original work in order not to make trouble. In Liu's eyes such an effort to avoid disaster was completely understandable and pardonable ("Zhishu," in *Shitong*).

In order to spiritually free the historiography from the feudal ruler's despotic control, Liu proposed the idea of *duduan* 独断, which required that a historian *make decisions on his own* in the creation of history book. Liu strongly disagreed the setup of Imperial Agency for History, sharply pointing out that there were five disadvantages of the system ("Wushi 忤时" (Inappropriateness of Imperial Agency for History), Part 13 of "Waipian," *Shitong*). First, the efficiency of the collective work compiling history was very poor due to the redundant officials and their arrogance. Second, the imperial scribes in the Agency failed to collect the primary sources as completely as possible. Third, historians working here were usually timid and coward on the grounds that their writings might offend either the aristocrats or men in power. Fourth, so many supervisors so frequently interfered in the regular work of the Agency, just like the saying went, "Under such circumstances that there are as many as nine people shepherding as little as ten sheep and there are as many as three highest dukes supervising as few as one state, everything is at loose ends." Fifth, among the huge number of imperial historians they indulged in a blame game and aimlessly drifted along. In these conditions, Liu's great aspiration for *zhibi* could by no means be fulfilled. Exactly for this reason, he finally concluded, "Those, who have broad knowledge and deep understanding [of past and present] and have already grasped the truth of the reality, retreat to *place* affording peace and quiet, live a reclusive life, and *make decisions on his own* [in their efforts to write history]" ("Bianzhi," in *Shitong*). The aspiration to *make decisions on his own* was actually an intellectual resistance against the feudal state's attempt to control the historical narrative. It was a lofty quality that should be possessed by a true historian. Among the three most basic abilities<sup>33</sup>—that is, *shishi* 史识 (the ability to insightfully ruminate over history), *shixue* 史学 (the ability to research into history), and *shicai* 史才 (the ability to put down history)—the first, or *shishi*, referred exactly to the aspiration and ability to *make decisions on his own*. Liu strongly believed that in the Chinese historiography *duduan* was a good tradition whereby the most brilliant ancient historians such as Zuo Qiuming, Sima Qian, Dong Hu and Nan Shi could produce indelible works ("Wushi," in *Shitong*).

It was almost a mission impossible to veraciously write history in the ancient China. In this regard, Han Yu 韩愈 (768–824 AD) and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819 AD), two leading intellectuals in the late Tang, had intensively debated about the issue. Han even proclaimed that writing history was a dangerous job in

<sup>33</sup>See: Chapter 102, or "Liu Zixuan zhaun 刘子玄传" (The life of Liu Zixuan [i.e. Liu Zhiji]), in *Jiu Tang shu* 旧唐书 [Old book of Tang] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975); or Chapter 64, in *Tang huiyao* 唐会要 (The collection of established institutions in Tang).

his “Da Liu xiucailunshi shu 答刘秀才论史书” (In reply to Mr. Liu, an Excellent Scholar, as regards the issue of history). His analysis read,

Humbly I hold that the grand principles whereby historians can pass judgment on historical figures and events have already been fully exhausted in *Chunqiu*, or the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Among later generations of historians, they produce works in straight accordance with the true records that shed light on good and evil at the same time. Even such a direct and easy reconstruction of the past cannot be finished by the historians who are shallow-minded and intellectually lazy, let alone the high mission to judge [right and wrong of events.] [How dangerous writing history is!] When Confucius, the Sage, was editing *Chunqiu*, he incessantly suffered humiliations in states such as Lu, Wei 卫, Chen 陈, Song 宋, Qi and Chu and finally died a humble death. In order to veraciously finish the task recording what was taking place in the central court of Qi, the imperial scribe and his brothers were almost all killed [by a high minister committing the regicide.] Zuo Qiuming fulfilled his dream of thoroughly annotating and interpreting *Chunqiu* at the cost of his sight. Sima Qian wrote [the indelible] *Shiji*; nevertheless, he was humiliatingly emasculated. Ban Gu [who authored *Hanshu*] tragically met his end in prison. Chen Shou, [the creator of *Sanguo zhi*,] had ups and downs in life and finally was abandoned [by the central court.] Wang Yin 王隐, [who had penned a book devoted to the history of Jin dynasty,] was seriously vilified and had to die in seclusion. Xi Zuochi 习凿齿, [who was renowned for his historical criticism and defence of the established orthodoxy,] lost one of his feet. Cui Hao, [a brilliant historian,] and Fan Ye, [the father of *Hou Han shu*,] were executed by the ruling aristocrats. Wei Shou, [the author of *Weishu*,] was childless. Song Xiaowang 宋孝王, [a reputable historian of the Northern Qi,] was put to death [due to his involvement in an uprising.] Even Wu Jing 吴兢 [one of the most renowned Tang historians] you mentioned was unable to make his descendants known to the public even though he himself was amazingly prominent. It is thus can be concluded that historians are either engulfed by man-made calamities or punished by Heaven. For this reason, how can a person be so recklessly fearless that she or he rushes to write history? (Part 1 of “Wenwai ji 文外集” (A supplement to the *Selected Works*), in *Han Changli wenji* 韩昌黎文集 (Selected works of Han Changli [i.e. Han Yu]))

In this essay, Han explained for what reason historians had to meet with catastrophes. First, some persistently tried to veraciously write history. Second, some unswervingly attempted to judge historical figures and events in the light of grand principles. Han even arbitrarily asserted that whenever a historian adhered to the principle of *zhibi*, she or he would definitely be persecuted by people in power. Han’s assertion—“Historians are either engulfed by man-made calamities or punished by Heaven”—was, however, not well grounded; nor could it be universal. In the same letter, Han even said that he himself was aging, so that it would be better for the young scholars rather than for old ones like himself to write history. Such disappointing words laid bare the Confucian apologist’s cowardice and selfishness.

At sight of Han’s essay, Liu Zongyuan felt angry. He immediately penned a letter to Han, refuting the conservative’s idea of history. Liu pointed out that it was actually commonplace to see a few historians adhering to the principles of veraciously recording and judging figures and events in the historical perspective and the upright high ministers in the service of the central court suffering from unfair persecutions. In this regard, Liu ridiculed that if Han Yu was as mediocre as historians who dawdled away their time in the Imperial Agency for History, he would definitely be able to live a safe life. Liu’s sarcastic refutation read,

[You allege.] “Historians are either engulfed by man-made calamities or punished by Heaven.” [Such an arbitrary allegation is, however, ungrounded.] It is actually bewildering to fabricate charges against the historians in previous ages. Generally, for any historians or ministers, if they resolve to unswervingly follow the Way of Uprightness, they will sacrifice their lives to protect the Way from being ruined. On the contrary, if they choose to yield [to the pressure], they’d better leave their positions as soon as possible. It was for the reasons that the entire era wherein Confucius lived was dark and sovereigns were universally incapable that the Master had to suffer humiliations in the sates of Lu, Wei, Chen, Song, Cai 蔡, Qi and Chu. And, the reason that why Confucius died a humble death did not lie in his compilation of *Chunqiu* at all. In other words, even if the Master did not work on the History, he would unavoidably die a humble death. In contrast, the Duke of Zhou and Shi Yi, both of whom were known to later generations because of their historical works, were all politically and culturally prominent. Thus, it is unfair to allege that Confucius got himself into trouble by compiling *Chunqiu*. In the case of Fan Ye, even though he did not work on history, he would be executed and his entire family exterminated on the grounds that he himself was delusional and rebellious. Sima Qian was humiliatingly punished by the central court because of the offence he gave to the emperor [rather than of his creation of *Shiji*.] Ban Gu failed to strictly tie his servant, [so that he was jailed.] Cui Hao challenged the ferocious ruling aristocrats by means of a veracious but ostentatious writing [and as a consequence he and his entirely family was brutally purged.] In these cases, neither Qian nor Gu, nor Hao, did act in harmony with the Golden Mean. Zuo Qiuming lost his sight due to an eye disease. It was [not the result of writing history but] a bad luck. Zixia 子夏, one of the Master’s disciples, was also blind, though he was not a historian at all. Thus, you should not choose Zuo Qiuming’s creation of *Zuozhuan* as an example [demonstrating the causality between mishaps and writing history.] As regards other cases you mentioned in your letter, there was not the direct relationship [between the effort to produce historical works and miseries the historians had to endure] at all. If a historian chooses to retreat from the Agency, she or he shall not leave the Way of Uprightness behind. Rather, the historian shall adhere to the Way and never attempt to scare him/herself. In the *place* affording peace and quiet, the things that a historian fears most are not the so-called heavenly punishments and man-made calamities but the failed grasp of the Way and the failure in putting into effect the uprightiness. (Chapter 31, or “Yu Han Yu lun shiguan shu 与韩愈论史官书” (Review of Han Yu’s ideas of history and historian), in *Liu Hedong quanji* 柳河东全集 (Complete works of Liu Hedong [i.e. Liu Zongyuan])

It smells of an unshakable uprightiness in Liu’s words. In Liu’s mind, no matter what a person wanted to be—a historian, or an imperial official, she or he must be an adherent and practitioner of the Way of Uprightness. It was not anything else but the Way that determined the person’s success or failure. Liu convincingly fused *zhibi* and the Way into one. Although Liu’s Way was ultimately used to consolidate the feudal rule, indeed it was ideologically superior to the thought of Han Yu. Due to such an ideological superiority, the theory of *zhibi* was raised to new heights. In comparison with the idea of Liu Zhiji, that of Liu Zongyuan was much more theoretical.

Now returning to Liu Zhiji and his historical criticism. Overall, Liu’s idea of history was an extension of Liu Xie’s systematic conclusion of historiography. Comparatively, Liu Zhiji’s elaboration was more intellectually abundant and more broad-minded. Liu encyclopedically discussed the basic spirit of writing history, stylistic rules, the Grandest Regulation reigning over the historical writing, requirements of historical narrative, the selection of primary sources, the most basic qualities and conditions of being a historian, and the general trend of Chinese

historiography. On the basis of such deep discussions, Liu created his own historiographical edifice. Positively, he dreamed a historiographical innovation and in particular the restoration of the praxis of *duduan* whereby the historians could *make decisions on his own* in the creation of history book and rehabilitate the good tradition of the Chinese historiography. But on the other hand, Liu failed to find a way out for the medieval Chinese historiography due to his excessively obedient intellectual exposure to the feudal *mingjiao* and veneration of the sovereign and Classics. In the medieval China, before the rise of a new philosophy, the theoretical rumination over and summarization of historiography could not make a substantial breakthrough. In the case of Liu Zhiji, his theory/idea of history was much less *principled* in comparison with those developed in later ages; and moreover, quite a few inspiring points of view were buried in his excessive sermons about the ossified rules and regulations applying to the production of history books. As a result, it is difficult for present-day scholars to precisely research into the essence of his theory and then illuminate the inlaid intellectual gems. In hindsight, the limitation of Liu's idea of history was actually an embodiment of the limitation of his time.

Finally, the present author repeats several key points of Liu's idea of history. First, the most basic aspiration of historian was to know the remotest history by means of a thorough understanding of the past and adjust the historical narrative to be in harmony with the objects of history. Second, the most basic method of writing history was the strictest accordance with the Grandest Regulation, which required that history must be used to venerate the sovereign and Classics. Third, historians should set *examples* in the course putting together things that of the similar nature. Then, they employed such chosen *examples* to standardize the historical writing and make all history books be in line with the Grandest Regulation. In a word, the final product of historical narrative must be pure and could be employed to venerate the sovereign and Classics. Fourth, the aspirations to preserve the cardinal Confucian principles in regard to the most basic human ethics and moralities and veraciously write history must be fused into one. Fifth, historians should put into effect *duduan* and in doing so they criticized the feudal regimes' monopoly on the historical narratives and brought to light the persecution that historians had to endure due to the cultural despotism. Unfortunately, among the later generations of historians many were not the heirs to Liu's positive and innovative spirit but merely the successors of the Regulation and *examples* advocated by Liu. As a result, the restraint imposed on the creative spirit of Chinese historiography was furthered.

### 3 Conclusion of History

Generally, each history book is a conclusion of history. In comparison with books produced in previous dynasties, those penned in Sui and Tang dynasties had some new features in terms of the reexamination of the past. First, the conclusion of history was carried out in a much more magnificent manner. It was embodied in the



impressive number of official history books, through which the sovereigns of the Tang Empire gained insight into the rise and fall of past dynasties. Second, since the mid-Tang the conclusion grew in the direction of a vertically thorough understanding of the past. Third, some thinkers philosophically rethought history through the prism of *tongbian*, or the thorough and all-around understanding of all changes taking place in entire history.

It was in the early Tang that the central court spent much time and energy producing official history for the immediate past dynasties. The results were expressive (see table below).

Year of completion	Title	Notes
636 A.D.	<i>Liangshu</i> 梁书 (Book of Liang)	The five books were collectively known as the “History of Five Dynasties”
	<i>Chenshu</i> 陈书 (Book of Chen)	
	<i>Bei Qi shu</i> 北齐书 (Book of the Northern Qi)	
	<i>Zhoushu</i> 周书 (Book of Zhou)	
	<i>Suishu</i> 隋书 (Book of Sui)	
648 A.D.	<i>Jinshu</i> 晋书 (Book of Jin)	
656 A.D.	<i>Wudai shizhi</i> 五代史志 (Annals of Five Dynasties)	It was attached to <i>Suishu</i>
659 A.D.	<i>Nanshi</i> 南史 (The southern history)	The author was Li Yanshou 李延寿
	<i>Beishi</i> 北史 (The northern history)	

In three decades, the Tang government finished eight pieces of official history, accounting for one third of the most influential Twenty-Four Official History. For what reason the Tang historians devoted themselves to the reexamination of history? The answer lay in the past three thousand and five hundred years, wherein China underwent tremendous changes and transformations. From the founding of the Western Jin dynasty (265 AD) down to the collapse of Sui dynasty (618 AD), so many dynasties rose and fell and the class and ethnic contradictions inseparably tangled together. In the face of such an interesting and complicated history, the sovereigns of Tang Empire, which was the heir to the Sui dynasty that was smashed by the huge peasant rebellions, were eager to learn the experience and lessons from the vicissitudes of the immediate past.

The primary goal of writing history in the early Tang was to produce books that delineated prosperity and decline in the historical perspective and could be used for reference. In this regard, Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583–666 AD) had suggested the founding emperor initiate imperial projects producing history books, without which the sovereign could not learn useful lessons from the past (Chapter 73, or “Linghu Defen zhunan” (The life of Linghu Defen), in *Jiu Tang shu*). The founding emperor was convinced by Linghu’s words and ordered the concerned officials and

departments to start the work. It is a pity that the first Tang sovereign's effort did not succeed. In 629, the Emperor Tai (r. 626–649 AD) launched the large-scale program compiling history for the immediate past dynasties. Leading imperial officials and renowned historians enthusiastically participated in the unprecedented project (see table below).

Officials/ historians	Titles	Notes
Linghu Defen 令狐德芬	<i>Zhoushu</i> 周书 (Book of Zhou)	He was actually the leading historian, who had the right to determine the basic stylistic rules (Chapter 73, in <i>Jiu Tang shu</i> ).
Cen Wenben 岑 文本	<i>Zhoushu</i>	
Li Baiyao 李百 药	<i>Bei Qi shu</i> 北齐书 (Book of the Northern Qi)	
Yao Silian 姚思 廉	<i>Liangshu</i> 梁书 (Book of Liang)	
	<i>Chenshu</i> 陈书 (Book of Chen)	
Wei Zheng 魏 征	<i>Suishu</i> 隋书 (Book of Sui)	Both served as the chief supervisors of entire project.
Fang Xuanling 房玄龄		
Cui Renshi 崔 仁师	<i>Zhoushu</i>	He was also partially responsible for coordinating the entire project.

It should be pointed out that Linghu Defen played quite a significant role in the efforts to organize and carry out the huge project and set up the basic regulations disciplining the writing. Meanwhile, Wei Zheng was appointed by the Emperor to the position guiding, supervising and polishing all written works. Besides this, Wei Zheng himself wrote all pieces of *xulun* 序论 (Introductions) in *Suishu* and *zonglun* 总论 (Pandects) for *Liangshu*, *Chenshu* and *Bei Qi shu* (Chapter 71, or “Wei Zheng zhuan 魏征传” (The life of Wei Zheng), in *Jiu Tang shu*). Undoubtedly, he himself was a Good Historian. It also could be said that such official history was an embodiment of Wei's thinking, which laid stress on the useful lessons taught by the rise and fall of past dynasties. In this regard, it should be pointed out that apart from treatises that were indubiously signed Wei's name the genuine authorship of some pieces of writing is still open to discussion. In the course of the compilation of the official history books, even the Emperor Tai 太, who might be the most brilliant sovereign in the medieval China, penned in person a treatise for *Jinshu*, in which he emphatically talked about the importance of reexamination of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective and being well prepared for danger in times of peace. Wei Zheng echoed the Emperor's idea in his own writings. In addition, it was worth mentioning Li Baiyao, the son of Li Delin 李德林, who was a renowned historian. Not only was Li an experienced historian who was good at analyzing the

rise and fall of dynasties but he was also a reputable man of letter. For this reason, he as a historian was respected by many contemporaries (Chapter 72, or “Li Baiyao zhuan” (The life of Li Baiyao), in *Jiu Tang shu*). Foregoing discussions indicated that in the early Tang the enlightened sovereigns, prominent ministers and renowned historians all devoted themselves to rethinking the history. As a consequence, they collaboratively produced a remarkable idea of history that was endowed with special characters of the Tang Empire.

First, authors of the Tang-style official history paid much greater attention to collecting predecessors’ discourses on prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. It was most intensively embodied in *Jinshu* and *Suishu* (see table below).

<i>Jinshu</i>	
Chapter No.	Discussions and concerned treatises
5	Gan Bao, a reputable historian in the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420 AD).
46	Liu Song 刘颂, a high imperial official in the Former Han dynasty (202 BC–8 AD).
48	A man surnamed Duan 段, who was from a powerful family in the Western Liang 凉 dynasty (400–421 AD).
50	Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361 AD), one of the most renowned calligraphists in the ancient China and a prominent military officer in the Eastern Jin, discussed issues such as taxation and governance during war time.
54	Lu Ji 陆机 (261–303 AD) and his treatises entitled “Bianwang 辩亡” (Analyses of the fall), “Haoshi 豪士” (On the extraordinary people), and “Wudeng 五等” (Five classes).
56	Jiang Tong 江统 (?–310 AD), a famous scholar-official in the Western Jin dynasty (265–316 AD) and the author of “Xirong lun” 徙戎论 (Treatise on the migration of barbarians) and “Jian Taizi shu” 谏太子书 (An expostulatory memorial to the Crown Prince).
60	Zhang Fangzhi 张方, a leading general in the Western Jin.
65	Wang Dao 王导 (276–339 AD), one of the most powerful high ministers in the early Eastern Jin.
68	Ji Zhan 纪瞻, an influential leading minister of the Eastern Jin in its incipient stage.
69	Dai Ruosi 戴若思, a renowned scholar-official in the Eastern Jin.
72	Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324 AD), who was one of the towering scholars in the Eastern Jin and rethought the vicissitudes of history in the light of the <i>Book of Change</i> .
85	A wide array of historical figures reexamined the past in the two chapters.
87	
<i>Suishu</i>	
48	Some shed revealing light on rise and fall of dynasties in the two chapters.
67	

From the era when *Shangshu* was compiled down to the dynasties wherein the indelible *Shiji* and *Hanshu* were created, Chinese historians had firmly established the tradition taking the reexamination of prosperity and decline of past dynasties as

the motif of all historical narratives. It was exactly in the tradition that the driving force of sovereigns' effort to write history lay. The reason that why the spirit of *zhibi* could be preserved should also be attributed to the tradition. In most ancient Chinese historians' eyes, history was so hardhearted that if a historian did dare to distort the historical actuality it would be impossible for her or him to summarize the valuable experience that could be used by sovereigns for reference. To put it another way, the spirit of *zhibi*, or veraciously writing history, must be preserved and put into effect. Therein lay the greatest value of the medieval Chinese historiography.

Second, adhering to the traditional historiographical rules, historians in the early Tang Empire enthusiastically reexamined the remote and immediate past and drew useful lessons.

- (1) Being well prepared for danger in times of peace was very significant to the sovereigns. The Emperor Tai explained this point in “zhi 制,” or the concluding remarks, that he penned for “Wudi ji 武帝纪” (Basic Annals of the Emperor Wu) (Chapter 3, in *Jinshu*). In particular he pointed out if a sovereign remained completely ignorant of the potential dangers threatening his dynasty the politics could by no means become constantly stable. The Emperor shared his conclusion of history with members of the royal family. In the meantime, Wei Zheng wrote four memorials to the Emperor Tai, admonishing the sovereign not to forget the tragic end of past dynasties. In the third memorial, for instance, Wei sincerely said,

Only in quiet waters does a person mirror her/himself, thereby grasping the truth whether she or he is pretty or ugly. Only from the collapse of a dynasty does a sovereign learn useful lessons, thereby precisely perceiving what safety and danger are. [The author of] the *Book of Poetry* says,

The beacon of Yin [i.e. the Shang Dynasty] is not far-distant; –

It is in the age of the [last] sovereign of Xia.<sup>34</sup>

[Analogically, the author furthers,]

In hewing an axe-handle, in hewing an axe-handle,

The pattern is not far off.<sup>35</sup>

[Enlightened by the poems revealing the significance of learning from the past,] I, a humble subordinate, suggest Your Majesty rethink the present situation against the backdrop of the collapse of Sui in immediate past and thereby gaining insight into the secret of rise and fall of dynasties. If Your Majesty is seriously prepared for danger in times of peace, the country will be safe, sound and stable; and moreover, if Your Majesty profoundly explores for what reason the past dynasties collapsed, the country will be well governed. ...One piece of assertion of the *Book of Changes* reads,

<sup>34</sup>*Shijing* 诗经, or *Book of Poetry*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-poetry/decade-of-dang/ens>.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-poetry/odes-of-bin/ens>.

Therefore the superior man, when resting in safety, does not forget that danger may come; when in a state of security, he does not forget the possibility of ruin; and when all is in a state of order, he does not forget that disorder may come. Thus his person is kept safe, and his states and all their clans can be preserved.<sup>36</sup>

What an inspiring, insightful and indisputable assertion [the Master makes]! Your Majesty, you shall ruminate over it. (Chapter 71, in *Jiu Tang shu*)

Wei's sincere advice indicated that both the sovereign and minister shared a similar view of history. For them, in history indeed there was an iron law, which required the ruling elites never forget the potential dangers and lessons of collapse of past dynasties even when the country was still stable, safe and sound, if they really aspired to bring the long stability and prosperity to a state. Only when the ruling elites assumed such an investigative attitude towards history would they like to completely, dispassionately reexamine prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. In the same vein, the forty-eighth chapter of *Jinshu* included a long treatise discussing the rise and fall of dynasties. The author of the treatise was Duan Zhuo 段灼, a general in the Western Jin. He shed revealing light on the vicissitudes of history with a view to admonishing the Emperor Wu (r. 265 A.D.–290 A.D.) not to forget the fall of past dynasties and be wildly optimistic. The inclusion of Duan Zhuo's harangue into *Jinshu* was also an embodiment of the imperial historians' painstaking efforts to help the sovereigns grasp the essence of history.

- (2) Sovereigns should be well aware of the advantages and disadvantages of *fengjian* 封建, or the system of enfeoffment. Historians pointed out that the rise of a dynasty must be dependent on the remarkable contributions made by close and capable assistants (Chapter 65, or “Wang Dao zhuan 王导传” (The life of Wang Dao), in *Jinshu*). In order to consolidate their supports to the sovereign, the enfeoffment whereby members and relatives of royal family, senior ministers and leading generals could be endowed with the prestigious ranks and huge lands was not a bad choice. Digging into the fall of Cao's Wei, authors of *Jinshu* demonstrated the importance of enfeoffment. But on the other hand, history unambiguously indicated that it was exactly for the reason that the royal sons and nephews, all of whom were enfeoffed high Lords or Kings, covetously strove to grab more political power that directly brought about the decline of the once powerful Western Jin. The imperial officials and historians who produced *Jinshu* asseverated that the eight rebellious enfeoffed kings be mainly responsible for the serious decline of the central courts though the sovereign himself was not completely innocent (Chapter 59, or “Liezhuan xu 列传序” (Preface to the *Collection of Memoirs*), in *Jinshu*). This point was repeated in another piece of memoir (Chapter 60, or “Zhang Fang zhuan 张方传” (The life of Zhang Fang), in *Jinshu*). In view of the dual nature of enfeoffment, the Tang

<sup>36</sup>Zhouyi 周易, or *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-cixia/ens>.

historians suggested that it would be much better for the central court to flexibly and expediently apply the system to the politics. Li Baiyao had penned *Fengjian lun* (On the enfeoffment), elaborating his own idea about the perplexing issue of central-regional power configuration. Historians in Tang and their counterparts in the past dynasties, however, greatly differed from each other in this regard. In practice, the Tang sovereigns still produced many powerful enfeoffed lords scattering all over the empire. As a result, the internal conflict within the central court never ceased. It was in the ceaseless power struggle that the Great Tang declined gradually.

- (3) History was summarized in the perspective of *tongbian*, or the thorough understanding of all changes taking place in entire history. Not only did the history books produced in Tang concluded specific lessons but they also paid attention to the changing conditions and made altered suggestions. After a systematic reexamination of the immediate past, historians in Tang summarized several key points as regards the effort to draw lessons from history. The points include the selection of talented people, the implementation of grand principles such as benevolence and righteousness, the idea and practice of putting the people first, and so on. In particular, in their conclusions the Tang historians tried their best to rethink the past through the prism of *tongbian*. For example, Wei Zheng laid stress on *shi* 时, or the timing, which required that if a political effort was untimely there should be necessary adjustments or changes made to it (Chapter 141, in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Complete collection of Tang essays)). In short, when a sovereign put the useful experience into effect, he must take into consideration changes taking place in a differing time. The authors of *Suishu* asserted that a sovereign's great talent and bold vision was embodied in his or her ability to accommodate policies to circumstances (Chapter 67, or "Yu Shiji zhuan 虞世基传" (The life of Yu Shiji), in *Suishu*). In *Jinshu*, historians put forward the concept of *yi* 义, or the art of rectifying abuses, which should be adopted according to the changing situation (Chapter 68, or "Ji Zhan zhuan 纪瞻传" (The life of Ji Zhan), in *Jinshu*). The Emperor Tai ideologically raised the concerned conclusion to new heights. In the concluding remarks he penned for the "Basic Annals of Emperor Xuan," the Emperor illuminated that all political efforts be in harmony with *li* 理, or the Principle governing incessant alterations of prosperity and decline in history (Chapter 1, or "Xuandi ji 宣帝纪" (Basic Annals of Emperor Xuan), in *Jinshu*). Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that in comparison with Sima Qian's reexamination of history, Qian's counterparts in Tang were much less rationally and intellectually powerful. As a consequence, sometimes when the Tang historians were bragging about *tongbian*, their analyses were actually against the basic principle. For example, although Li Baiyao strongly objected to the obstinate adherence to the past experience in the issue of enfeoffment, his delineation merely approvingly reconstructed what sovereigns in previous ages did. Of course, historians as a whole in the early Tang inherited the intellectual legacy of *tongbian*.

It should be pointed out that among historians at that time the conclusions of history were actually greatly diversified. For example, some discussed the prosperity and decline of dynasties through the prism of the ideas contained in a certain edition of *Book of Change*; some investigated the vicissitudes of the past in the light of Confucian principles; and some politically explained the rise of a dynasty by means of the mystical calendric pattern. Thus, a kaleidoscopic array of ideas of history were presented before readers. We shall also always bear in mind that the motives driving historians to rethink the rise and fall of dynasties of every hue greatly differed from each other. Historically, after the devastating chaos caused by the Rebellion (755–763 AD) collaboratively led by An Lushan 安祿山 and Shi Siming 史思明, two powerful generals of barbarian origin, the Tang Empire began to go downhill. Thus, the existing social and ethnic crises were seriously deepened. In the face of the declining Empire, politicians, historians and thinkers tried to ruminate over historical changes in a more profound manner. Unlike their counterparts in the early Tang, who suggested the sovereigns be prepared for danger in times of peace, they focused instead on varying types of crises on the grounds that the peaceful days had been gone. Under such circumstances historians were given the opportunity to further their reexamination of the historical growth and social contradictions. In their work, they intellectually interconnected past, present and future and in doing so they took the idea of *tongbian* to a new level. Such a historically investigative effort and achievement was embodied in *Tongdian* 通典 (The encyclopedic collections of imperial institutions through all ages) authored by Du You 杜佑 (735–812 AD).

### Du You

Du, whose courtesy name was Junqing 君卿, was born in the present-day Xi'an in the twenty-third year of the Kaiyuan 开元 reign (713–741 AD) and died in the seventh year of Yuanhe 元和 reign (806–820 AD). At first, he was appointed to several lower local positions. In the Zhenyuan 贞元 reign (785–805 AD), he became a high imperial official in the Capital. In 806, or the first year of Yuanhe, the central court conferred the prestigious title of *Qiguo gong* 岐国公, or the Duke of the State of Qi, upon Du. As regards Du's political career, the author(s) of *Jiu Tang shu* alleged that Du was not good at handling the border issues. It was, however, unfair. The reason that why historians in the Latter Jin 晋 (936–947 AD) made such an ungrounded allegation might lie in the fact that Du disagreed with the Emperor Xian (r. 805–820 AD) who preferred a military expedition against the northwestern border areas (Chapter 147, or “Du You zhuan 杜佑传” (The life of Du You), in *Jiu Tang shu*). In hindsight, although the Emperor Xian refused Du's sober suggestions as regards the border affairs, Du's program was actually more feasible and more conducive to the empire in the long run.

As a high imperial officer, Du was very busy. Even though, he was an extremely diligent scholar. Du was politically as prestigious as the leading general or prime minister. Despite this, he used every inch of time to read and study (Chapter 147, in *Jiu Tang shu*). Apart from his monumental *Tongdian*, Du produced the ten-volume *Lidao yaojue* 理道要诀 (Key points of the Way of Principle), two-volume *Guan shi*

*zhilüe* 管氏指略 (An interpretive sketch devoted to *Guanzi*), and one-volume *Binzuo ji* 宾佐记 (An assistant's accounts). It is a pity that the latter three works had long been lost.

Du infused fresh elements into the traditional Chinese idea of history. As regards the creation of *Tongdian*, Du said inasmuch as he himself was much less interested in the traditional Confucian teaching, he aspired to produce a book whereby useful ideas, suggestions and programs of differing schools could be put together in a single work and then politically put into effect (Chapter 1, in *Tongdian*). Therein lay the fundamental difference existing between the Du-style scholarship and the conventional Confucianism and *xuanxue*, or the Mysterious Learning. Exactly due to Du's creative scholarly work, the historiography characterized by *jingshi* 经世, or being conducive to the statecraft, grew increasingly prominent. Stylistically, Du's *Tongdian* could be regarded as an heir to "shu 书" (book) and "zhi 志" (treatise) in *Zhouli* 周礼 (Book of Rites of [the Western] Zhou [dynasty]) and the biography-centered history respectively.

Intellectually, *Tongdian* remarkably differed from its predecessors. To be specific, the author of *Tongdian* had shifted the scholarly focus from the political struggles taking place in the top echelons of the society to concrete methods whereby the central governance and social administration could be substantially bettered. To put it another way, being equipped with a much broader vision, Du, a high-imperial-officer-turned scholar, shed critical light on problems existing in all aspects of the Chinese society. Some critics sharp-mindedly grasped the truth that in comparison with the traditional Confucian scholars, who worked too broadly and too inefficiently to produced anything practical, Du adopted a totally different methodology and successfully put it into effect (Li Han 李翰, "Yuanxu 原序" (The original preface to *Tongdian*), in *Tongdian*). Therein lay the key feature of Du's own historiography.

Du gave primacy to *shihuo* 食货, or foods and goods, both of which were the embodiments of *economy* in the ancient Chinese politico-economic terminologies. *Shihuo*, or the economy, was the most basic foundation of a state. It was on the basis of *shihuo* that *jiaohua* 教化, or the Confucian dream politics wherein the people were all perfectly moralized, could possibly be carried out. The nucleus of Du's idea of history exactly lay in his critical reexamination of the feudal social administration through the prism of *shihuo*. At the very beginning of *Tongdian*, Du illuminated this point. His illumination read,

The praxis of the Way of Principle is premised on the moralization of the people; and likewise, only when there are adequate foods and goods can the program moralizing the people be put into effect. [The Classics and the Sage affirmed this point.] The *Book of Changes* asserted that when there was a gathering of people from which the fortune would grow; among the eight most significant programs in relation to the governance *foods and goods* ranked the first and the second respectively; and the Master Guan 管 concluded that there were the full granaries there were the people knowing well the etiquettes and in the same vein there were adequate foods and clothes there were the people telling the difference between honor and disgrace. Even Confucius held that the moralization could be well applied to the wealthy persons. The implementation of moralization was dependent on the establishment of systems of official ranks and positions; the creation of ranks and positions,



on the screening of talented people; and the screening work, on the refined procedure of selection. In order to rectify the social customs, the system of rites must be created; and, to harmonize the bosom of humankind, the music must be produced. Therein lay the greatest methods whereby the Sage Kings could perfect the politics. Thus, when the systems of official ranks and positions is well established, the rites and music will vibrantly grow. Accordingly, the penalties should never be tried unless the work of moralization was a fiasco. As regards the nationwide division of states and prefectures, it aspires to enable regions to be well administered; and the actualization of border defence, to effectively resist the invasions of barbarians. In view of foregoing analyses, it can be concluded that in terms of the significance to a state, *shihuo*, or the economy, ranks the first; the selection of talented people, the second; the systems of official ranks and positions, the third; the rites, the fourth; the music, the fifth; the penalties, the sixth; the divisions of states and prefectures, the seventh; and last but not least, the border defence. At sight of such a hierarchical array, readers will immediately grasp the leitmotif of my work. (“Xu 序” (Author’s preface), in *Shitong*)

The quotation clearly indicated that Du attached the greatest importance to economic issues in his effort to analyze various problems inflicted upon the feudal Chinese society, even though the rite-centered records accounted for half of the two-hundred-volume *Tongdian*. In fact, Du had explained for what reason there was such a huge collection of institutions of rites. It lay in the author’s aspiration to collect as many as established rules and regulations of rite in preparation for the consulting use (Chapter 41, or “Li 礼” (Rites), in *Shitong*).

Inheriting the scholarly tradition of investigation of origin, Du delineated and analyzed changes taking place in the development of each type of institution. For example, in the Chapter devoted to the rites he pointed out the system of imperial rites that was set up in the Kaiyuan reign was actually based on the three rounds of augment and abatement done to the archaic classics of rites; and moreover, in the concerned chapter Du draw some indelible conclusions regarding gains and losses of policies of border defence through all ages. Generally, in Du’s reexamination and conclusion of institutional changes there are several points worthy of furthered discussions.

First, changes in the institutional perspective were to some extent inevitable. Du, for instance, critically pointed out that the border defence, which in the pre-Xuanzong (Emperor Xuan) period was stable and solid, was seriously changed since the Emperor Xuan’s enthronement. He precisely reconstructed what really took place when the most elite troops were actually in the hands of two powerful non-Han generals supervising the western and northeastern borders (Chapter 148, or “Bing 兵” (Troops), in *Tongdian*). Rethinking the immediate past, Du revealingly demonstrated that *fanzhen*, 藩镇, or the strategic regions under the control of separatist and powerful military strongmen, in the reign of Emperor Xuan had grown into a *force* fundamentally threatening the security of the central court. Such an almost irresistible *force* could theoretically serve as the *principle* dictating some inevitable changes.

Second, the present would definitely be superior to the past due to some inevitable changes. For example, he confidently asserted that even the legendary Three Dynasties (that is, Xia, Shang and Zhou) paled next to the brilliance of the

Tang Empire (“Zhiguan shisan: Wanghou zongxu 职官十三·王侯总序” (An overall description about the enfeoffed kings and lords in the thirteenth part of Official Ranks and Positions), in Chapter 31, *Tongdian*). In addition, Du lavishly praised the imperial book of rites that was compiled in the Kaiyuan reign (Chapter 41, in *Tongdian*) and remarkable music produced in Tang (Chapter 141, or “Yue 乐” (Music), in *Tongdian*). In particular, Du strongly held that changes in the historical perspective referred to the consecutive alterations of *zhi* 质 (nature/quality) and *wen* 文 (form). In other words, he believed that there should be timely reforms in response to changes taking place in the course of history. The *zhi-wen* alteration was of a cyclic nature, so that it could serve as the theoretical foundation of Du’s idea of innovation. In this regard, Du was an heir to Sima Qian’s thought as regards the historical change. Take his reexamination of changes taking place in the systems of selection of talented people in past dynasties for example. He progressively illuminated that although after the Three Dynasties the system in Han was worth being applauded, it was greatly outshone by its counterpart in the Tang Empire (“Xuanju liu: Pingyue 选举六·评曰” (Concluding remarks in the sixth part of Systems of Selection of Talented People), in Chapter 18, *Tongdian*).

Du went further, saying,

Under the circumstances that the humankind is born with desires, [the society] will definitely be chaotic if there is not a sovereign [guiding and supervising humans.] [In his or her governance,] a sovereign will not entirely monopolize the power, but instead appoints hundreds of officials [whereby the good governance can be put into effect.] (Chapter 18, in *Tongdian*)

He echoed this point in somewhere else, asserting,

Man is the most intelligent among the myriad things. Nevertheless, the hands and teeth that Man has cannot enable them satisfy all their desires; nor can Man’s abilities to walk and run grant them the full freedom from being hurt; nor does Man have adequate hairs and feathers to resist cold and hotness. In these conditions, Man has to enslave a myriad of things in order to survive. [To fulfill the goal,] Man make use of wisdom rather than of force. [Exactly for this reason, Man becomes the most intelligent creature.] [Moreover,] if Man is not of a benevolent nature, they will not gather together; and if they cannot gather together, Man will be unable to trump things. Those who can gather together the people are the sovereigns; those, to whom the people choose to subordinate themselves, are the kings, too. Inasmuch as Man lives in communes, there are inevitably internal strives brought about by differing emotions and conflicting interests. Consequently, the penalties are set up and concerned criteria whereby the severity [of crimes] can be judged are created. (Chapter 163, or “Xing 刑” (Penalties), in *Tongdian*)

It was through the prism of material desires that Du shed light on how various institutions emerged and grew and reconstructed the historical course, wherein the predecessors formed groups from which the Lords and Sovereigns rose to prominence and meanwhile punishments were adopted due to the conflicts within the groups. In the entire course of history, Du concluded, prosperity and decline were dependent the moralization of the people, which in turn relied on *shihuo*, or the economy. Du’s discourses actually elucidated the Principle dictating the historical movement. Therein lay the most profound meaning of Du’s historical thinking in a

dynamic perspective. Intellectually, Du carried forward the positive elements existing in ideas of history that were developed by prominent thinkers such as Xun Zi. In the long Chinese intellectual history, exactly thanks to his unique vision Du successfully set up a distinct school of historical narrative.

Third, the general trend existing in past and present differed from each other. In Du's eyes, there was a progressive process from the past down to the present, so that past and present could by no means be identical with each other. Being discontent with the popular discussions focusing on the difference existing in the progressive course, Du furthered the investigation by reexamining concrete things in the perspective of *shi* 勢, or the general trend of historical development. For example, Du strongly disagreed with those who invoked the change of locations of the imperial city in the Western and Eastern Zhou dynasties and suggested the Tang sovereign relocate the Capital from Chang'an 长安 (present-day Xi'an) to Luoyang 洛阳, convincingly demonstrating that the site of the Capital could not be changed when the concerned geographical and financial situations and the state of border defence were fully taken into consideration ("Fengsu: Yiyue 风俗:议曰" (Remarks on social customs), in the fourth part of "Zhoujun 州郡" (States and Prefectures), or Chapter 174, *Tongdian*). Overall, Du took a critical stance against the assertion that it was the past rather than the present that was worth being emulated ("Gonghong shidafu hunli: Yiyue 公侯士大夫婚礼:议曰" (Remarks on the m rules applying to aristocrats and scholar-officials, in the eighteenth part of "Li," or Chapter 58, *Tongdian*).

Du's conclusions of history as a whole were profoundly thorough. In comparison with Sima Qian, who was renowned for the idea of "chengbi tongbian 承敝通变" (being the heir to faults of precedent dynasties and endeavoring to completely rectify them) but meanwhile suffered from a limited vision on the grounds that he could only rethink changes taking place in the history from the Warring States Era down to the early Former Han dynasty, Du reexamined multifarious social contradictions that emerged in the history of feudal China, which stopped rising in the mid-Tang, in a more complete and deeper way. Consequently, Du raised the Chinese idea of history to new heights. Among conclusions Du made in *Tongdian* the foundational role *shihuo* played in the governance and the significance of military affairs and border defence to the state were the most important ones. In contrast, the issue of rite was relatively less important, even though writings devoted to rites were the most numerous. In this regard, it is understandable, in particular taking into consideration the fact that in Tang the social crisis was most intensively embodied in the problems in relation to land, tax and border defence, all of which directly contributed to the prosperity and decline of the Empire.

Du was strongly against the concentration of landholding on the grounds that the crisis of land directly threatened the political stability. He revealingly discoursed,

The continuity of human life depends on grains; the production of grains, on the land; and the governance of a sovereign, on the people. If the production of grains is sound and adequate, the fiscal resources of the state will be secure; if the farmland is clearly and correctly demarcated and distributed, the people will be all freed from starvation; and if every household is precisely registered, the voluntary labor will be fairly arranged among

all residents. So long as the three foregoing jobs are well perceived and done, the politics will be perfected. ... According to the principle reformulated by the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, neither are the high lords allowed to monopolize the enfeoffment; nor can senior officials exclusively control the farmland. In the case wherein the wealthy and powerful persons excessively occupy the land and consequently become as rich as the high lords, it is actually the monopoly of enfeoffment; and likewise, the unchecked sale and purchase of land is tantamount to the exclusive control of farmland. When the land is monopolized and farmland exclusively controlled [by a few people], the residents have to suffer dislocations and endure hardships. (“Tianzhi shang 田制上” (Part One of the land system), in the first part of “Shihuo,” or Chapter 1, *Tongdian*)

Since the mid-Tang, two methods were employed by the wealthy and powerful people to grab land. The first method was the coercive occupation of land and the second the unlimited purchase of land. The first method always existed in the feudal China from the beginning. The second one was one of the products of the developed commodity economy and grew increasingly prominent as time went on. Despite his revealing descriptions of serious problems in relation to the land, Du failed to find any viable solutions to such devastating problems. His solution, in which the legendary system of *jingtian* 井田 (lit. the well-field system) was restored and thus the peasants would be bound to land and the society grow stable, was too old-fashioned to be politically attractive and practically applied. In Du’s mind, inasmuch as the agriculture played the most foundational role in the governance the praxis wherein peasants paid rent in the form of money should not be adopted. Such a resolute refusal of the money rent was, however, an embodiment of Du’s limited vision. Nevertheless, present-day readers of *Tongdian* shall always bear in mind that Du actually used the refusal to oppose the wild concentration of landholding in his time.

Apart from the concentration of landholding, the oppressive taxation notoriously contributed to the crises engulfing the Chinese society since the mid-Tang. Du recalled the light taxation and corvee in the incipient phase of the Empire, pointing out that both laid the foundation of the Restoration in the reign of Emperor Su 肃 (r. 756–762 AD) (Chapter 12, or the twelfth part of “Shihuo,” in *Tongdian*). By contrast, the oppressive taxation hurt the feeling of the people and thus created the conditions wherein the brute despots such as Zhou 纣, the last king of the Shang dynasty, and Huhai 胡亥, the second sovereign of the Qing Empire, were bred. Invoking the remote history of the archaic Three Dynasties and the immediate past reigns witnessing Tang’s prosperity and decline, Du demonstrated the universal significance of light taxation and corvee to the long stability of a dynasty. Of course, Du as one of the leading high imperial officials, knew much well that the light taxation contradicted the Empire’s staggeringly huge public expenditure. Thus, in his eyes, promoting the light taxation without viable solutions was merely an empty talk. In order to make possible the abandonment of heavy or oppressive taxation, Du, first of all, pointed out that the key whereby the light taxation could be fulfilled lay in the *thrift* and then suggested the central court reduce taxes and cut down unnecessary expenses as far as possible (Chapter 12, in *Tongdian*). Simply put, the tax reduction and spending cuts played a pivotal role in the praxis of *thrift*.

As regards the state's fiscal administration, Du advised the sovereign and concerned departments to fully take into consideration the good tradition of the past and the realistic needs of the present and find a viable solution. His suggestion was another embodiment of the idea of *tongbian*. What was more interesting was the dual nature of Du's suggestion. To put it another way, it was an inseparable unity of the aspirations to thoroughly understand changes and practically contribute to the statecraft.

It is worth furthering the discussion about Du's idea of money. He nodded in agreement with the great role money played in the economic circulation. The concerned elaboration in *Tongdian* read,

How profound and far-reaching the idea of creating money is! The myriad things are not innumerable. Thus, there must be something reigning over them. In this regard, [the precious metals such as] gold and silver are too frequently used as utensils and decorations; and likewise, [the daily necessities such as] grain and silk are too fragile, as well as being hard to transport. In contrast, money is the only thing that can be freely sold and bought, perfectly resembling the spring from which the water livelily and inexhaustibly runs. [In the economic practice,] if grain and silk are used [as the money], none of them can be as accurate as the metallic currencies, let alone their intrinsic fragility and the transportation hardship both involve. ("Qianbi shang 钱币上" (Part One of the treatise on money), in the eighth part of "shihuo," or Chapter 8, *Tongdian*)

Simply put, the emergence of money was an economic inevitability. Du himself agreed with the idea that the sovereign should employ the money as a method of balance, through which he could encourage the people work harder on the agriculture. By doing so, the sovereign, Du firmly believed, would be able to transform his or her country into a wealthy, stable and powerful empire (Chapter 8, in *Tongdian*). But on the other hand, some greedy sovereigns and ministers either produce adulterated currencies or excessively manufactured coins and moreover they severely punished those who counterfeited coins. As a result, the society was thrown into an economic instability. In view of this, Du suggested the sovereign creatively avail himself of the money to persuade the people to spend more time and energy cultivating the land and make the social production stable and orderly. Therein lay the key points of Du's idea of economic innovation. He had already grasped the truth that the money could concurrently separate and unite the peasants and land. Therefore, he inspiringly suggested that the fusion of peasants and land could be fulfilled again by means of money. Such a seemingly self-contradictory theory reflected the true situation of the developing commodity economy in Du's time.

As regards the high ministers renowned for their efforts to better the fiscal administration, Du placed the laurel wreath on six persons' heads. The six awardees included Jiang Ziya 姜子牙, who made great politico-economic contributions to the rise of Western Zhou dynasty; Guan Zhong 管仲, the Prime Minister of the State of Qi in the Spring and Autumn era and the architect of Duke Huan's hegemony; Li Kui 李悝, one of the towering figures of the Legalist School in the pre-imperial China and the leading minister innovatively transforming the State of Wei into a power in the early Warring States era; Shang Yang 商鞅, whose systematic reforms caused the State of Qin to be the most powerful hegemon and finally unify the

entire China; Su Chuo 苏绰, who promoted the tax reduction and light corvee in the Latter Zhou 周 (951–960 AD); and Gao Jiong 高颙, one of the most meritorious strategists in the early Sui dynasty (“Lunyue 论曰” (Remarks), in Chapter 12, *Tongdian*). It is worth pointing out that Du explicitly objected to the assertion that high officials known to the later generations for their economic work were all greedy officials advocating heavy taxes. Instead, Du contended that those who endeavored to better the fiscal administration fundamentally differed from those who devoted themselves to amass wealth by fair means or foul. The former, Du asseverated, adhered to the lofty aspiration to increase the wealth and the power of a state and stop the wealthy and powerful people grabbing fortunes of the ordinary residents by force or trickery (“Pingzhun 平准” (The balanced standard), in the eleventh part of “Shihuo,” or Chapter 11, *Tongdian*).

Apart from the economic issues, Du attached great importance to the military affairs and border defence. Comparatively, he held that the early Tang’s military actions and positive preparations for the border defence had long-term goals; but meanwhile, the Empire since the Kaiyuan reign mistakenly strove for the expansion (Chapter 148, in *Tongdian*). Invoking the praxis in the remote great antiquity, when the Five Sage Kings devoted themselves to bettering the governance by means of the moral perfection rather than the military expansion, Du warned that the sovereigns, who territorially expanded regardless of the consequences, would definitely bring the devastating chaos and unendurable hardships to his country. It was one of the most significant lessons that all sovereigns must learn and grasp. The concerned exposition in *Tongdian* read,

Heaven grant the myriad people *life*. It is for the reason that selecting one person to govern for the people rather than causing the people to serve one person that Heaven appoint some to the position of sovereign. [The true sovereign] is not troubled with fears of failing to [militarily] distinguish himself, but is troubled with fears of being unable to grow morally prominent. Since the Qin and Han dynasties, [the sovereigns almost unexceptionally] aspire to enrich the country by means of the heavy taxes; empower the troops by means of the exhaustive conscription; aggrandize themselves by means of [the military] expansions; and ennoble themselves by means of the establishment of tributary system as far as possible. When they are battling for a city, the city will be filled with the corpses of the slaughtered; and when they are violently vying for a territory, the land will be covered by the dead bodies of the killed. In order to grab the land that is entirely uncultivable, they are even ready to mercilessly shed blood. But in doing so, the sovereigns will, at best, turn the country over which they reign into one piece of bandit-ridden land that is brimming with bitter resentments; and at worst, have their own families completely exterminated and bring on themselves everlasting disgrace. How ridiculous such expansionist sovereigns are! (Chapter 171, or “Zhoujun,” in *Tongdian*)

Besides, invoking the historical actualities in relation to the wars and *heqin* 和亲 (the rapprochement by means of marriage) between the two Han dynasties and the Xiongnu 匈奴 people, Du demonstrated that it was not war but *heqin* that made the border areas more stable and peaceful (“Xiongnu 匈奴” (The Xiongnu people), in the tenth part of “Bianfang” (Border defence), or Chapter 194, *Tongdian*).

The idea of border defence and the ethnic thinking were closely related to each other in Du’s monumental work. As regards his ethnic thinking, the most

remarkable feature lay in his bold assertion that the Chinese in the great antiquity was not different from present-day barbarians. It was on such an inspiring assertion that Du went further, concluding that there was no fundamental distinction made between the Han people in the traditional Central Plains and barbarians living in the eastern, western, southern and northern borders (Chapter 185, or “Bianfang,” in *Tongdian*). Merely due to the differing geographical conditions, the people in the Central Plains and border areas walked on the different paths of development. In his discussions, Du implied that neither the radical idea that the ethnic groups in the border areas were fundamentally different from the Han people nor the militaristic expansionist policies could be conducive to the country. Digging into the history of past dynasties, he criticized sovereigns—for example, the First Emperor of Qin, the Emperor Wu 武 of the Former Han, Wang Mang 王莽 (the de facto ruler of the Former Han in its final phase), and the Emperor Yang 炀 of the Sui dynasty—who unduly devoted themselves to wars and territorial expansions and thus brought about instability and disasters, while applauding the Emperor Guangwu 光武 of the Later Han who resolutely abandoned military actions in the border areas and bent himself to the perfection of moralities (Chapter 185, in *Tongdian*). In particular, Du asserted that the Emperor Guangwu had already grasped the key of good governance. It was against the backdrop of the positive and negative historical experience that Du straightforwardly pointed out that the central court of Tang made a mistake in its choice of resorting to arms in the northeastern border in the Kiyuan and Tianbao 天宝 (742–756 AD) reigns.

### **Liu Zongyuan (773–819 AD)**

Slightly later than the time of Du You, Liu Zongyuan, one of the eight most renowned men of letter in the Tang and Song dynasties, concluded history in a more profound and more philosophical manner. Thanks to Liu’s effort, the traditional Chinese idea of history witnessed a giant growth, which in turn heralded the coming of a new stage of the Chinese historiography.

In the late Tang, wherein the social crisis was deepening, a remarkable scholarly thinking emerged. Liu, to a great extent, was an epitome of the new trend. As regards the general scholarly trend, he set forth,

In recent decades there are so many persons who devote themselves to the elaboration of Way of Principle. Nevertheless, among them no one is able to put forward a theory in harmony with the Principle of Great Impartiality. Where their discourses are concerned, they are too tortuous and too extensive to be understandable, even though they are all based on the Confucian teaching. Some are too complicated, too rigid and too critical in the investigation of things, so that they cannot make analyses and explanations in an unhurried manner but instead have to cease to advance. Some even go to extremes, indulging themselves in unorthodox teachings whereby they can invoke Heaven and supernatural beings. [In such extreme cases,] at first glance they are extraordinary and effective, but actually too ambiguous and too random to be grasped. In these conditions, the Great Way [that is, the Principle of Great Impartiality,] cannot be made known to the entire country and accordingly there are very few scholars who genuinely grasp it. (“Yu Lü Daozhou Wen lun *Fei Guoyu shu* 与吕道州温论非国语书” (Discussions about *A Refutation of*

*Discourses on States* with Lü Wen, the Imperial Inspector Supervising the Prefecture of Dao), in Chapter 31, *Liu Hedong quanji*)

It is worth pointing out that the embodiments of the general trend Liu mentioned above greatly diversified. For example, there were Han Yu's idea of *daotong* 道统 (the penetrating intellectual threads constituting the Confucian orthodoxy), Liu's own theory of *lido* 理道 (the Way of Principle, which was primarily based on Confucianism and concurrently open to Buddhism and Daoism), an eclectic variant of Liu's *lido*, and so on. Undoubtedly, such a highly diverse intellectual trend influenced the idea of history at that time.

It is worth briefly discussing the main features of Liu's thinking. First, although Liu thought very highly of Confucianism, he still required that scholars innovatively work on the established teaching after a thorough investigation of the past scholarship ("Yu Liu Yuxi lun *Zhouyi* jiliu shu 与刘禹锡论周易九六书" (Discussions about the meanings of Nine and Six in *Book of Changes* with Liu Yuxi, a renowned poet), in Chapter 31, *Liu Hedong quanji*). Second, he objected to the obstinate exclusion of Buddhism and Daoism from the orthodox Confucian, proposing a bold program of *bushou menhu* 不守门户, or open-mindedly opening the door to differing intellectual schools ("Song Yuan shiba shanren nanyou xu 送元十八山人南游序" (A farewell letter to a recluse surnamed Yuan, who is the eighteenth children of the Family and making a tour of the south China), or Chapter 25, in *Liu Hedong quanji*). In this regard, Liu's intellectual open-door strategy was diametrically against Han Yu's apologetic (Confucian) close-door stance. For example, he had ridiculed Han who stubbornly refused to incorporate Buddhist elements into the established Confucian teaching ("Song seng Haochu xu 送僧浩初序 (A farewell letter to Haochu, a monk), or Chapter 25, in *Liu Hedong quanji*).

In history of the traditional Chinese scholarship, the debate between Liu and Han had caused a sensation among the educated elites. In his famous apologetic treatise entitled *Yuan Dao* 原道 (What Is the True Way?), Han clearly indicated that he would unswervingly adhere to the Way formulated by ancient sages such as Yu 禹, Tang 汤, the King Wen, the King Wu, the Duke of Zhou, Confucius and Mencius and do his utmost to prevent non-Confucian scholarship from infiltrating the orthodox Confucianism. One piece of his tough statement read,

What should be done now? I say that unless [Taoism and Buddhism] are suppressed, the Way will not prevail; unless these men are stopped, the Way will not be practiced. Let their priests be turned into ordinary men again, let their books be burned and their temples converted into homes. Let the Way of our former kings be made clear to lead them, and let the widower and the widow, the orphan and the lonely, the cripples and the sick be nourished. Then all will be well.<sup>37</sup>

In view of this, the present author holds that in order to safeguard the so-called orthodoxy Han even was prepared to *burn* all alleged heterodox books just as the

<sup>37</sup>Theodore de Bary, et al., eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 434.



founding sovereign of Qin Empire had done in one thousand years ago. Han's scholarly toughness was actually an intellectual extension of Dong Zhongshu's hegemonic proposal whereby all non-Confucian schools could be totally banned in the early mid-Former Han dynasty. Even in the face of Liu, one of his best friends, Han chose not to make any ideological concessions. In contrast, Liu explicitly showed his open-minded and tolerant stance on the intellectual syncretism. To be specific, any writings that could be intellectually interconnected with the most basic Confucian classics—namely, the *Book of Changes* and the *Analects*—would possibly be integrated into the established (Confucian) teaching. Undoubtedly, Liu's scholarly spirit gave expression to the aspirations to syncretize all existing intellectual schools and create an independent thinking. It epistemologically embodied the unerring trend of scholarly development.

It should also be pointed out that Liu's adoption of Buddhism was highly selective. Apart from those that could be intellectually fused with teachings of the most basic Confucian classics, it was the Buddhist theoretical threads—the ideas of Asvaghosa (Maming 马鸣) and Nagarjuna (Longshu 龙树), for instance—that greatly interested Liu. Additionally, he held that in the course of the dissemination of Buddhism in China the elaborations of Zen Buddhism be mostly castigated (“Long'an Hai chanshi bei 龙安海禅师碑” (Inscriptions penned for the tablet in honor of Hai, a Zen Master in Long'an), or Chapter 6, in *Liu Hedong quanji*). In this regard, the present author furthers his discussion. In his effort to reformulate Confucianism at that time, Liu selectively rather than uncritically borrowed the key Buddhist elements. Such a *compromised* recreation of Confucian thinking indicated that Liu's perception of Buddhism was actually of a limited nature. Despite this, Liu's proposal fusing Buddhist and Daoist theoretical threads with Confucianism was still an inspiring embodiment of the future of Chinese scholarship, wherein the great Three Teachings—namely, Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism—would seamlessly syncretize each other. Admittedly, the tremendous changes taking place in Confucianism in the two Song dynasties (960–1279 AD) and the birth of *lixue*, or the Learning of Principle in particular, were the extension and furthered growth of Liu's scholarly spirit. In view of this, it is safe to say that Liu's thinking indeed heralded an epoch-making Confucian transformation that was premised on the Liu-style syncretism of all existing major systems of thought rather than on the ossified *daotong* alleged by Han Yu. Put plainly, Liu's fusion of differing types of theoretical threads should be objectively reexamined and evaluated in the historical perspective.

Putting several Liu's treatises—*Zhenfu* 贞符 (On the Omen of Impartiality), *Fengjian lun* 封建论 (On the system of enfeoffment), *Tiandui* 天对 (In answer to Heavenly Questions), *Fei Guoyu* 非国语 (A refutation of *Discourses on States*), and so on—together, the present author finds that Liu's reexamination of history and concerned conclusions were of a strong philosophico-theoretical nature. For example, Liu contended that, inasmuch as nature and society were fundamentally different from each other, Heaven and mankind could by no means interfere in each other. In his letter to Liu Yuxi, Liu drew a clear line between nature/natural phenomena and mankind/human affairs (“Da Liu Yuxi *Tianlun shu* 答刘禹锡天论书”

(A reply to Liu Yuxi's treatise on Heaven), in Chapter 31, *Liu Hedong quanji*). As regards for what reason the abundant and famine years and the stability and instability incessantly alternated, he asserted that they were all concurrently created in nature and society respectively. It should be pointed out that Liu actually acknowledged that indeed there was a relation existing between Heaven/nature and mankind/society. Nevertheless, he resolutely denied Heaven's right to reward and punish [humans in accordance with their performances.] Therein lay in the most fundamental difference between Liu and Han Yu. Han held that due to humans' repeated imploration, Heaven put into effect punishments or rewards by means of natural disasters. Liu ridiculed Han, metaphorically saying that the omnipotent Heaven and Earth, the  *yuanqi*  元气 (the most primordial vital breath) interconnecting Heaven and Earth, and the mystical and powerful forces of  *yin*  and  *yang*  were nothing but the aggrandized fruits, ulcers and plants respectively ("Tianshuo 天说" (On Heaven), in Chapter 16, *Liu Hedong quanji*).

It is particularly worth mentioning that Liu asserted that prior to the creation of Heaven and Earth there was only  *yuanqi*  in entire universe ("Tiandui 天对" (In answer to Heavenly Questions), in Chapter 14, *Liu Hedong quanji*). It was the idea of  *yuanqi*  that laid the foundation of Liu's edifice consisted in the idea of history and cosmology. The concept of ( *yuan* ) *qi*  could be used to explain for what reason humans were different from each other. The answer lay in the differences intrinsically existing in  *qi*  ("Tianjue lun 天爵论" (On the Nobility of Heaven), in Chapter 3, *Liu Hedong quanji*). It was against the inherently differing  *qi*  that a distinction was made between sage and layfolk. Later, the Song Confucians carried forward Liu's concept and developed the idea that the difference between sages could be measured in the light of the degree of purity of  *qi* . The stratified  *qi*  was an extension or variant of Liu's creative thinking.

Where the driving force of historical development was concerned, Liu dubbed it  *shi*  势, or the predominant trend of social development. For example, in his well-known  *Fengjian lun* , a revealing treatise analyzing the system of enfeoffment in past and present, he pointed out that the setup or abandonment of enfeoffment was not dependent on the will of sage but on the general, predominant trend of social growth. The concerned elaboration in the treatise read,

[In the great antiquity,] even brilliant sovereigns, who were as sage as Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, the King Wen and the King Wu, could not remove the system of enfeoffment. The reason that why they were unable to abandon it lay in the irresistible trend rather than in their unwillingness. As early as the beginning of the human society, there was such an irresistible trend, right? If the incipient stage of human society did not exist, the system of enfeoffment would be totally ungrounded. [Put plainly,] the [setup and abolishment of the] system did not rely on the will of sage at all. ("Fengjian lun," in Chapter 3, *Liu Hedong quanji*)

In the light of foregoing discussions, the present author contends that Liu's historical thinking could be regarded as a special theory of  *qi-shi*  气势 (the primordial vital breath  *plus*  the general trend).

Among ancient Chinese thinkers—the author(s) of "Xici 系辞" (Grand explanations) of  *Book of Changes* , Han Fei who epitomized the entire thinking of

Legalist School, for instance—many had already developed an *evolutionist* understanding of the great antiquity. Liu was one of them. In such *evolutionist* historians' eyes, the human society began with an era wherein humans and animals lived together; then it developed by degrees; and finally a truly civilized human society dawned. Liu inherited and carried forward such an evolutionarily incremental idea of history. For example, he did not disagree with Dong Zhong's idea that Heaven grant a founding sovereign the Mandate, but argued instead that the Mandate of Great Tang was given by *shengmin* 生民, or the people in the earliest times. In the treatise entitled *Zhenfu* (On the Omen of Impartiality), Liu discussed this point in detail (Chapter 1, in *Liu Hedong quanji*). In comparison with the similar ideas reformulated in previous ages, he contributed three refined points. First, *shengmin* grew by degrees in their struggle with nature. Most importantly, Liu unambiguously demonstrated that it was not *shengren* 圣人, or the sages, but *shengmin*, or the ordinary people living the most primitive times, who led the mankind out of the savage state. Second, the basic top-down social organization was created in the earliest people's struggles of all forms. Obviously, Liu had discarded the Arcadian illusion in his reexamination of the past. Third, after the emergence of the top-down social organization resulted from endless struggles, there were sages such as the Yellow Emperor, Shun, Yu, and so on. It implied that the Mandate enthroning late sovereigns was given by the earliest people rather than by Heaven. These points of historical analysis were of an almost revolutionary nature in the history of Chinese idea of history. In *Fengjian lun*, Liu reconstructed the life of ancestors in the great antiquity in a much more detailed manner, illuminating that the creation of significant systems such as rites, music, penalties, politics and enfeoffment were all embodiments of the *historical inevitability* (Chapter 3, in *Liu Hedong quanji*).

More inspiringly, Liu held that the *change* taking place in history was another type of inevitability, just like the circumstances wherein the object of history had no alternative but to inherit something bequeathed to him or her. For example, in the case that the First Emperor of Qin abolished the system of enfeoffment and replaced it with the systematic division of *junxian* 郡县, or prefectures and counties, Liu, unlike the overwhelming majority of historians who criticized the Emperor's break with the tradition that had lasted for thousands of years, rethought the groundbreaking system of *junxian* in the perspective of *change as inevitability* (Chapter 3, in *Liu Hedong quanji*). In this regard, he even concluded that it was the Emperor who made the historic, unprecedented effort to create a system whereby the public benefits could be fulfilled. Indeed, such an unorthodox conclusion was uniquely distinctive.

Last but not least, Liu explicitly said no to the popular idea that there were mystical mutual responses between natural calamities and human affairs. He had specially penned a treatise, in which the thinker vehemently criticized *Guoyu*, or *Discourses on States*, an embodiment of the mystical popular idea (Chapter 44, in *Liu Hedong quanji*). Of course, the praxis of divination could not escape from Liu's critical radar and was denounced as something harmful to the Great (Confucian) Way. In *Zhenfu*, Liu even exposed the fallacy of the theory of Mandate of Heaven, ridiculing that the so-called auspicious omens were actually deceitful and shameful

(Chapter 1, in *Liu Hedong quanji*). Despite this, it must be pointed out Liu still remained open to the belief in the imperishableness of the soul. Such an intellectual disadvantage might be resulted from the ambiguous attitude he assumed towards Buddhism.

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# Chapter 7

## *Lixue*, or the Learning of Principle, and Ideas of History

### 1 The Interactions of *Lixue* and History

Fundamentally, the change of idea of history in a certain time mirrored the social contradictions at that time. Undoubtedly, the social reality influenced the idea of history in two significant aspects. First, the realistic contradictions constituted a force driving historians to rethink the past. In this sense, not only was the reality the object of historical studies and one of the constituents of the idea of history, but it also played a decisive role in the clarification of the nature of historical thinking. If times changed, even the meaning of the same question would alter accordingly. The discussions about prosperity and decline in the historical perspective in the post-Song era, for instance, could by no means be the same as those in the two Song dynasties (960–1279 AD).

Second, the general trend of philosophy in a certain time definitely influenced the historiography and the idea of history in particular. It is quite understandable that the idea of history itself was one of the constituents of philosophy. Generally, the basic ideas and way of thinking in the philosophical perspective affected how people understood, interpreted and wrote history and how people perceived the significance of history to the society. The philosophical influence on history was, in the final analysis, an embodiment of how the reality concurrently acted on the historiography and historical thinking. Thus, unsurprisingly, in certain times when the society was economically vibrant and filled with contradictions, neither the historiographical praxis nor the idea of history was worth being commended due to the paucity of philosophy. Therefore, one of the key tasks of present-day scholars in their reexamination of the traditional Chinese historiography and idea of history was to analyze both in the light of the philosophical trend in differing historical periods.

Does it mean that the idea of history was no more than a passive reflection of the reality, or something submissively exposed to the influence of philosophy? Of course not. The idea of history could, however, *counterreflect* the society and philosophy. With the dissemination of historical works, certain *ideas* were spread all over the country. Consequently, the historical thinking exerted real influence on

people's understanding of the reality, their efforts to find solutions to practical problems, as well on how they perceived what would lie ahead. Additionally, in the feudal China, the sovereign and high imperial officials always handled state affairs and launched reforms in the light of a certain type of understanding of history. And likewise, historians almost unexceptionally attempted to advocate a certain idea or program, hoping that by doing so they would be able to "rectify what is wrong in the sovereign's mind."<sup>1</sup> If their efforts worked, the idea of history would definitely affect the social development. Besides, some explicitly stated that they wrote history with an exclusive view to preparing references for the sovereign. Looking back at history, the present author finds that there were so many cases wherein certain ideas or views of history influenced social reforms to differing extent. In particular, from the standpoint of a sovereign, if history or philosophy could be used to demonstrate that his or her reign was in harmony with the Heavenly Principle, as well as being used for reference, she or he would like to advocate and disseminate it.

As regards the philosophical influence on history in the two Song and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties, it was embodied in the Principle-Learning's remarkable effect on the historical narratives. As mentioned above, the idea of history was part and parcel of philosophy. In fact, it, conversely, affected the emergence and growth of *lixue*, or the Learning of Principle. Digging into the history of *lixue*, readers might find that the reason that why Cheng Hao 程颢 (1032–1085) and Cheng Yi 程颐 (1033–1107), the two brothers who laid the foundation of *lixue*, failed to be the epitome of the Learning lay exactly in their failure in grasping the significance of history, even though both did shed light on the *principle* reigning over the rise and fall of past dynasties. Such an intended or unintended nonaction in the exploration of history was un conducive to the two leading thinkers' building of their *lixue* edifice. In contrast, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), who was not only the most creative heir to the Cheng brothers' thinking but also indisputably epitomized the entire *lixue*, paid much greater attention to history and even attempted to fuse history, together other disciplines, with his own intellectual system. One of keys of his reexamination of history was the purification of historical narratives by means of the teaching of Principle. As regards the Song-Ming *lixue*'s influence on the traditional Chinese historiography, the present author concludes several points.

First, *lixue* influenced the understanding of history. The *lixue* gurus held that nature and social movements were actually the embodiments of the prevalence of the Heavenly Principle and the ebb and flow of the *yin* and *yang* forces. The Cheng brothers, for instance, asserted that changes taking place in nature were no other than the embodiments of the Principle; that pairs of phenomena, such as prosperity and decline, beginning and end, and day and night, could not be separated; and that differences existing between humans and social customs in past and present were brought about by the wax and wane of *qi* (the vital breath), which was as natural as the intrinsic thickness and thinness of *qi* (Chapter 15, *Ercheng yishu* 二程遗书

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<sup>1</sup>*Mengzi* 孟子, or *Mencius*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/mengzi/li-lou-i/ens>.

[A posthumous collection of Cheng Hao's and Cheng Yi's works]). Being an heir to the Cheng brothers' ideas, Zhu Xi carried such ideas forward.

In their discussions about the relationship existing between Heaven and mankind, the *lixue* gurus employed the Principle to profoundly generalize universe, nature, history and society. Due to their metaphysical reformulation, the human society was philosophically turned into one of the constituting parts of the *universe as a holistic process*. One of the landmark features of *lixue* guru's thinking with the ultimate goal of grasping the Principle lay in the ambition to thoroughly understand the entire universe consisted in Heaven and Earth and the entire history consisting of past and present. For example, Zhou Dunyi 周敦颐 (1017–1073), a renowned thinker in the early Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), tried to find the origin of the unity of Heaven and mankind in his famous profound and abstruse *Taiji tu* 太极图 (An interpretive diagram of the Supreme Ultimate) (Chapter 9, in Wang Fuzhi's 王夫之 *Zhangzi Zhengmeng zhu* 张子正蒙注 [An annotated *The Rectified Basic Knowledge* by the Master Zhang]). Besides Zhou, Zhang Zai 张载 (1020–1077), one of the leading scholars of *lixue* in the Northern Song, philosophically demonstrated that mankind and nature were united and the myriad things and people were the embodiments of *qi*. He went further, asserting that due to the pristineness, taintedness, dimness and brightness intrinsically existing in the original *qi*, there were people of every hue. Thus, in his well-known treatise entitled *Ximing* 西铭 (The Western inscription), Zhang inspiringly proclaimed that the universal love be indiscriminately applied to all humans and all things. Generally, the *lixue* gurus in this era created a very special *qihua shilun* 气化史论, or the *qi*-related-interpretation-turned idea of history. Apart from Zhou and Zhang, Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077), one of the five most talented *lixue* masters in the Northern Song, metaphysically reconstructed the natural development and human history into a unified process whereby he could create a periodic motion beginning with *kaiwu* 开物 (the incipience of the growth of the myriad things) and ending in *biwu* 闭物 (the finality of the extinction of the myriad things).

Thanks to such brilliant thinkers' efforts the traditional Chinese idea of history was greatly carried forward. Such a remarkable growth in the historical thinking was clearly embodied in historians' aspiration to completely and thoroughly understand the past. For example, in Hu Hong's 胡宏 (1102–1161) *Huangwang daji* 皇王大纪 (Grand annals devoted to great kings in the antiquity) and Su Zhe's 苏辙 (1039–1112) *Gushi* 古史 (History of the great antiquity), the movement of universe, the origin of life and the birth and growth of human society were all discussed with a view to developing a total understanding of all natural and social phenomena and proving the apriority and immutability of Heavenly Principle. In the same vein, Sima Guang 司马光 (1019–1086), Liu Shu 刘恕 (1032–1078), Huang Zhen 黄震 (1213–1281) and Jin Lüxiang 金履祥 (1232–1306) produced *Jigu lu* 稽古录 (Inquiries into the great antiquity), *Tongjan waiji* 通鉴外纪 (A supplement to *Zizhi tongjian*), *Gujin jiyao* 古今纪要 (Records devoted to the reigns of the Emperors Li 理 and Du 度) and *Zizhi tongjian qianbian* 资治通鉴前编 (A supplement keeping account of the history prior to the beginning year, with which *Zizhi tongjian* begins), respectively. Some pointed out that aforementioned works all consulted existing historical literature and works as many as possible and had the basic meanings of the

(Confucian) Classics run through their entire writings (“*Huangwang daji* ba 皇王大纪跋” [Postscript to *Huangwang daji*], in Chapter 45, *Pushu ting ji* 曝书亭集 [Writings in Pavilion of Drying Books in the Sun] by Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709)). Additionally, Zheng Qiao 郑樵 (1103–1162), one of the most eminent historians in the two Songs, in his magnum opus entitled *Tongzhi* 通志 (General treatises on history) did his best to comb through all existing literature and penned “Sanhuang benji 三皇本纪” (Basic annals of the Three Emperors) delineating the incipient stage of human society. Most importantly, he attached greater importance to “Benji” than he did to other chapters in *Tongzhi*. As regards the quality of such writings aspiring to explore the history as early as possible, some left us wonderful delineations, depictions and interpretations, even though in some cases the writings were not very solidly grounded. Such ambitious writings as a whole embodied the growth of the idea of *history of antiquity*, which was particularly significant to the traditional Chinese historiography.

Invoking the theories of Principle and *qi*, the *lixue* gurus attempted to intellectually penetrate past and present; and moreover, they divided history into differing periods in the light of the degree of the prevalence of Heavenly Principle. Among the *lixue*-guru-turned historians, they generally held that the Chinese history be dichotomized into the pre-King/Three Dynasties and post-King/Three Dynasties eras. The two eras differed from each other in fundamental respects. According to the Cheng brothers, in the pre-King era sovereigns reigned over the world by means of *Dao*, or the Way; and in contrast, in the post-King era the *law* played a crucial role in the consolidation of the political rule. Shao Yong used four symbolic terminologies—namely, *huang* 皇 (Lord), *di* 帝 (Emperor), *wang* 王 ([the Sage] King), and *ba* 霸 (Hegemon)—to summarize changes taking place in the Chinese history. Zhu Xi regarded history as a *process*, through which the Principle permeated. Moreover, he pinpointed where the watershed of Chinese history lay in. It was exactly in the Three Dynasties. In the legendary Three Dynasties (i.e. the Xia, Shang and (Western) Zhou dynasties), Zhu contended, the Heavenly Principle remained almost unchallengedly predominant; but in later ages such as Han and Tang, human desires grew too wild to be controllable. In this regard, even renowned historians such as Sima Guang and Ma Duanlin 马端临 (1254–1323) thought very highly of the Three Dynasties. In Ma’s case, although he knew well that the restoration of the great antiquity was a mission impossible due to the timely institutional changes, the brilliant historian judgmentally and hierarchically trichotomized the history into the golden pre-Three Dynasties age when the world belonged to all the people, the deteriorating age initiated by the Xia dynasty (c. 2100–1600 B.C.) wherein the entire world was possessed by a single family, and the fully corrupted age beginning with the late Warring States Era when a single person, step by step, annexed all other states in the world.

In the *lixue* gurus’ eyes, it was the Heavenly Principle that played a decisive role in the prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. The Principle referred exactly to *gangchang* 纲常, or the most cardinal and most constant guides/regulations reigning over the most basic ethics and moralities in the feudal China. From the perspective of *gangchang*, or the Principle, the *lixue*-guru-turned



historians critically looked back at history and drew useful lessons from the vicissitudes of the past. For example, Sima Guang concluded that the most fundamental way of stabilizing the country was the consolidation of the feudal hierarchy based on *gangchang* and *mingfen* 名分, or the system of official titles in strict accordance with the differentiations existing in the social status. Generally, imperial historians at that time discussed historical events and figures and the rise and fall of past dynasties exclusively through the prism of Heavenly Principle.

Since the Northern and Southern Song dynasties, the criticisms against the teachings of *chen-wei* and strained interpretations of the relationship of natural disasters and human affairs were greatly furthered. Being quite discontent with the farfetched explanations of changes taking place in the history in light of the superstitious *chen-wei* teachings, the *lixue* gurus employed the much refined Heavenly Principle to reexamine the past. In their discussions, they seldom analyzed the rise and fall of a certain dynasty through the prism of Mandate of Heaven, though they never attempted to totally deny the Mandate. Beside, they strongly disagreed with those who explained the historical changes in the perspective of the alleged interconnection of natural disasters and human factors. Rather, they asserted that the analyses of disasters and abnormalities must be based on the commonsense and basic principles. Such a *principled* idea of history prevailed among historians at that time. In comparison with their counterparts in past dynasties, historians in the era of *lixue* paid equal attention to the role the human effort played in the development of history as they did to the predominance of Heavenly Principle; and meanwhile, they did not entirely abandon the Mandate of Heaven. For instance, Ouyang Xiu, who played a leading role in the production of several highly acclaimed copies of official history, explicitly stated, "Could it be said that not only the Mandate of Heaven but also the human effort affects the rise and fall [of a dynasty?]" ("Linguan zhuan 伶官传" [Lives of imperial musicians], or Chapter 37, in *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史 [New history of the Five Dynasties]).

Second, *lixue* influenced the traditional Chinese historiography. The influence was embodied in changes taking place in the rules, examples and styles of writing history. It is particularly worth mentioning the study in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the two Songs. At that time many *lixue* gurus intensively explored and interpreted *Chunqiu* and consequently they created a special genre of scholarly inquiry. The study in *Chunqiu* exerted an extensive influence on the historiography. For example, the *lixue* gurus made *Chunqiu bifa* 春秋笔法, or the *Chunqiu*-style elaboration of the profound meaning through subtle historical narratives, much more conspicuous. Of course, the terminology of *Chunqiu bifa* was not invented by Song scholars. Nevertheless, quite a few *lixue* gurus in the Northern and Southern Song spent much time and energy reinterpreting it and thus created an intellectual trend based on the profound inquiries into the judgmental rules of *Chunqiu*. Generally, the Song gurus held that Confucius passed judgment on events and figures in *Chunqiu*; and some even went to extremes, seriously and solemnly declaring that each word in *Chunqiu* had either a commendatory or derogatory connotation. To put it another way, they did believe that the Master, or Confucius, took great pains to select every word for his *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Apart from

*bifa*, the gurus laid particular stress on *zhengtong* 正统, or the established, unaltered *orthodoxy* in harmony with the most basic Confucian spirit. The *orthodoxy* required historians must make an extremely strict distinction between the truly and falsely orthodox sovereigns and between the civilized and the uncivilized.

Additionally, the Song gurus attached great importance to *Chunqiu yili* 春秋义例, or the application of prime purport and principles adopted by *Chunqiu* to historical narratives. Inspired by such a supreme *yili*, the Song historians in their historiographical praxis endeavored to establish *shili* 史例, or the highest regulation stipulating how to write history. For example, Lü Xiaqing 吕夏卿 (1015–1068) systematically explained *shili* of *Xin Tang shu* 新唐书 (New book of Tang) authored by leading scholars such as Ouyang Xiu in his *Tangshu zhibi* 唐书直笔 (The veracious style of writing history in [Xin] Tang shu); Xu Wudang 徐无党 (1024–1086) expounded the writing rules of *Xin Wudai shi* in the annotations he prepared for the original work; Zhu Xi attempted to hindsightly reformulate a set of rules regarding Sima Guang's monumental work in *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* 资治通鉴纲目 (A detailed outline of *Zizhi tongjian*); and Yin Qishen 尹其莘 discovered Zhu Xi's rules reigning over the historical narratives. *Shili*, however, did not always accord with the real intention of the original work. It should be pointed out that the ultimate goal of the creators, re-formulators and discoverers of *shili* was to enable the Heavenly Principle to be predominant in historical narratives and have the teachings of *lixue* permeate through the entire edifice of history.

Last but not least, the stylistic changes of historical narrative indicated that *lixue* had already encroached the traditional historiography. At that time, the work devoted to the history of scholarship witnessed a rapid growth. The reason might lie in *lixue* guru's enthusiasm for the reexamination of past scholarship in a *principled* perspective. For example, Zhu Xi produced *Yi Luo yuanyuan lu* 伊洛渊源录 (Speeches and acts of the towering figures of *lixue* since the Northern Song); and Li Xinchuan, 李心传 (1166–1243), *Daoming lu* 道命录 (A history of the lifeblood of the Great Way [of *lixue*]). Both works were used to advocate the basic ideas of *lixue*, and lay a genealogical foundation of the setup of *daotong* 道统, or the penetrating intellectual threads constituting the Confucian orthodoxy. Such an ambitious and apologetic aspiration was also embodied Zhu Xi's and his disciples' collaborative effort to adapt *Zizhi tongjian* into *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*, which was exclusively employed to advocate the impartiality of Heavenly Principle.

The growth of *lixue* paralleled with the development of historiography. Such a synchronic evolution was also an embodiment of *lixue*'s influence on historiography. Renowned historians in Song were almost unexceptionally prominent masters of the Learning of Principle. Nevertheless, in some cases both conflicted with each other. The *lixue* gurus attempted to turn history into an appendage to the Learning of Principle. In order to fulfill it, they proposed the humiliating idea that the (Confucian) Classics were refined while history was crude. The reason that why *lixue* gurus despised history as something crude might lay in the historiographical praxis. Specifically, when historians interpreted the past in the light of the principles reformulated by *lixue*, they did not stop at empty talks advocating the Heavenly Principle, but instead summarized lessons from the vicissitudes of past dynasties on

the basis of historical actualities. Exactly for this reason, some complacent *lixue* gurus ridiculed history, alleging that historians were in fact unable to investigate things in a subtly abstruse manner. Historians, however, put forwards opinions that were diametrically against *lixue*. Due to historians' epistemological resistance, some *lixue* gurus' wild plan to make history to yield to the Learning of Principle was completely thwarted. Luckily, in the medieval China, history was not reduced to a maidservant of the predominant *lixue*.

From the Northern Song down to Ming, the growth of traditional idea of history could be roughly divided into two phases. The first phase covered the two Songs, Liao (916–1125) and Jin (1115–1234); the second, Yuan (1271–1368) and the early Ming. In the first phase, the edifice of *lixue* was built and constantly renovated and meanwhile the idea of history witnessed the most vibrant growth. In the second phase, the vitality of historical thinking dwindled by degrees in the wake of the central court's ideological reconstruction whereby *lixue* was elevated to the state ideology reigning over the entire scholarly and intellectual communities. Then in the mid-Ming, the emergence of *xinxue* 心学, or the Learning of the Mind, and its rapid rise to prominence brought something fresh and inspiring to the scholarly world. Apart from *xinxue*, *shixue* 实学, or the practical learning, the historical thinking aspiring to be conducive to the statecraft, and historical criticism sprang up all over the academia and they collaboratively infused new elements into the established scholarship. As regards the development of idea of history in the two Songs, it could be divided into four stages. In terms of the changes taking place in history itself, the Luling 庐陵 Scholarship represented by Ouyang Xiu marked the beginning of an encouraging stage, wherein vibrant historical ideas and historiographical praxes competed with each other and in contrast, the rise of Zhu Xi's Kaoting 考亭 Scholarship heralded a dull stage, in which the historical thinking grew very slowly and the historiographical praxis was filled with much less inspiring debates about the so-called orthodoxy or *shili*. Exactly as mentioned above, such a course beginning with vibrancy and ending in dullness paralleled with the development of *lixue*.

Indeed there were the influence exerted by history on *lixue*. First, the idea of history was indispensable to *lixue*. Only when the *lixue* gurus successfully reexamined past and present and exposed themselves to speeches and acts of historical figures as far as possible, would their aspirations to grasp the Principle be fulfilled. Besides this, in their efforts to justify the Heavenly Principle, the gurus must demonstrate that the feudal hierarchy was immutable and the feudal ethical and moral rules were the embodiments of Heavenly Principle. Whether the demonstration could be successfully done depended on the convincibility of concerned historical explanations. Without historical explanations, the gurus' Principle-*qi* theory would be incomplete; and likewise, being devoid of history, *lixue* would be disemboweled. For this reason, the masters of Learning of Principle had to recur to history whereby they could solidly build their edifice, though they belittled history and insultingly alleged that the Classics be given preferential treatment and history actually was notoriously renowned for the crudeness. Most importantly, taking into consideration the fact that the ultimate goal of *lixue* was to be used to better the

statecraft and consolidate the feudal governance, it could hardly be accepted by sovereigns, if the theories formulated by gurus of *lixue* were not testified and verified by history. The foregoing discussions might explain for what reason some tried to make history be submissive to *lixue*.

Second, history interconnected and conflicted with *lixue*. For example, Zhu Xi, the epitome of the Learning of Principle, on the one hand, attempted to rectify the shortcomings of Sima Guang by adapting the latter's giant work—that is, *Zizhi tongjian*—into *gangmu* 綱目, or a detailed outline. But on the other hand, he recognized Sima's great achievement and imbibed nutrients in *Zizhi tongjian* as far as possible. It should also be pointed out that although Zhu Xi was ideologically against Zheng Qiao, he appreciated very much quite a few intellectual threads of Zheng's historical criticism and even integrated them into his own thoughts.

To sum up, there were two key points as regards the idea of history in the two Songs. First, the historical narratives were indeed Neo-Confucianized to some extent. Historiographically, *lixue* permeated through works devoted to the history of great antiquity and historical criticism. Zhu Xi's Kaoting Scholarship was the most intensive embodiment of *lixue*'s influence on the historiography. Second, despite *lixue*'s predominance in the scholarly world, the dissenting Sushui 涑水 Scholarship represented by Sima Guang, Shuzhong 蜀中 Scholarship by Li Xinchuan and Li Tao 李焘 (1115–1185), and Zhezhong 浙中 Scholarship aspiring to be conducive to the statecraft, were not voiceless. The historiography in Song should not be simplistically reduced to the Neo-Confucianization or a reverse process. It was true that historical narratives at that time was metaphysically Neo-Confucianized by degrees; but it was also true that many historians pragmatically laid stress on the textual criticism and practical purposes. As a consequence, in the historical scholarship in the two Songs, the historiographical Neo-Confucianization embodied in the reevaluation, reinterpretation and reorganization of history coexisted with the historiographical pragmatization represented in historians' assertion of the roles history played in the personal cultivation of the mind and the state politics. It is particularly worth mentioning the independent, creative scholarship developed by Zheng Qiao. Zheng was a strong opponent of the Neo-Confucianization of historiography. It was in the conflicting interactions that *lixue* and history evolved. Present-day students in the field of *lixue* studies shall pay enough attention to this point.

## 2 The Theory of Heavenly Principle and Insight into Prosperity and Decline in the Historical Perspective

The present author has the history of ideas of history in Song, Liao and Jin dynasties quatrotomized. The watershed for the first and second phases lay in the first year of Qingli 庆历 reign (1041–1048). In fact, the idea of history in the Five Dynasties should not be left unnoticed. The Five Dynasties (907–960 AD) were

consisted in some small regimes that inherently were of an unstable nature. Even so, some in these regimes tried to draw useful lessons from history. Imperial historians of the Latter Liang 梁 (907–923 AD), for instance, suggested the sovereign prepare historical works in honor of the ministers and scholar-officials renowned for their loyalty and talents (“Modi benji xia 末帝本纪下” [The second part of basic annals devoted to the last sovereign], or Chapter 10, in *Jiu Wudai shi* 旧五代史 [Old history of the Five Dynasties]). Besides, Li Fang 李防, an imperial officer supervising the work writing history in the Latter Zhou 周 (951–960 AD), required that historians veraciously produce records with a view to shedding light on the key factors influencing a state’s security. In the Latter Tang 唐 (923–936 AD), sovereigns attached importance to the work keeping account of what took place in the central court on a daily basis (“Shizong benji yi 世宗本纪一” [The first part of basic annals devoted to the Emperor Shi], or Chapter 114, in *Jiu Wudai shi*). Sovereigns in the Latter Tang were did not act alone. The founding emperor of the Latter Zhou encouraged imperial historians to produce works whereby the sources of good governance could be explored and the keys of self-cultivation and social administration be displayed (“Shizong benji yi 世宗本纪一” [The third part of basic annals devoted to the Founding Emperor], or Chapter 112, in *Jiu Wudai shi*). Due to the sovereigns’ tolerance and encouragement, some historians—Zhao Ying 赵莹, Jia Wei 贾维, Liu Yun 刘昫, Zhang Zhaoyuan 张昭远, for instance—rose to prominence in such a chaotic era. It is worth mentioning that Jia Wei, who was praised by Zhao Ying as an extraordinarily talented people, was dubbed the Iron Mouth due to his uncompromising evaluations of history. The effort to produce historical works in this era had two practical purposes. First, the works were used to prepare useful lessons for the sovereigns. Second, the works as a whole served as an authoritative tool whereby the short-lived dynasties in this era could also be recognized as the legitimate and orthodox heirs to the Mandate of Heaven. Overall, the idea of history and concerned historiographical praxes laid the foundation of the historical enterprise in the Northern and Southern Song. In particular, in the wake of the rise of *lixue*, the Song-style rumination over prosperity and decline in the historical perspective was intellectually raised to new heights.

The Northern Song dynasty was founded in 960 A.D. Then in eight decades, the sovereigns annihilated separatist regimes scattering all over the country. In doing so, the new dynasty remarkably consolidated the centralization of political power. The idea of history in the early Song gave expression to such a drastic change, emphatically highlighting the *Chunqiu*-style ideas of Great Unification and *zunwang rangyi* 尊王攘夷 (Reverence for the King and Expulsion of Barbarians). The central government produced four encyclopedic works—that is, *Taiping yulan* 太平御览 (Imperial reader in the Reign of Great Peace), *Taiping guangji* 太平广记 (Comprehensive records of the Reign of Great Peace), *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英华 (Gems of literature), and *Cefu yuangui* 册府元龟 (A huge collection of significant references prepared by the Imperial Library for sovereigns) and the official history such as *Jiu Wudai shi*. Such central-court-sponsored giant books were all used for reference, as well as being employed to promote the idea and practice of venerating the sovereign.

It is a pity that aforementioned official works were much less academically innovative. Pi Xishui 皮锡瑞, a renowned Qing scholar, criticized that studies in the Classics in Tang and the early Song obstinately adhered to archaic interpretations and thus grew intellectually ossified.<sup>2</sup> Pi's revealing criticism could also be applied to the historical narratives produced at that time. In the same vein, an imperial historian working for the central court of Qing sharp-mindedly pointed out Xue Juzheng's 薛居正 (912–981 AD) work—*Jiu Wudai shi*—devoted to the history of Five Dynasties was stylistically tedious and intellectually weak (“*Jin Jiu Wudai shi biao* 进《旧五代史》表” [An interpretive recommendation of *Jiu Wudai shi*]). The Qing historian embarrassingly revealed the paleness of historical works in the early Northern Song.

But on the other hand, indeed there were something fresh in the early Song's idea of history, which was actually the brainchild of intellectual changes taking place in this field since the mid-Tang. Among historians, some objected to the traditional practice wherein a scholar spent all his life exclusively exploring one piece of Classics, while aspiring instead to create an independent thinking on the basis of thorough understanding of Buddhist and Daoist works and great mastery of the (Confucian) Classics and history (Chapter 46, in Wang Chen's 王偁 *Dongdu shilüe* 东都事略 [Brief accounts of the Eastern Capital]). Some echoed this point, analogically saying that those who obstinately and exclusively worked on merely one Classic were exactly the persons who could not see the wood for the trees (“Yu Fan Tianzhang shu 与范天章书” [Letter to Fan Tianzhang], in Sun Fu's 孙复 *Suiyang zi ji* 睢阳子集 [Selected works of the Master Suiyang]). When the aspiration for and practice of the elaboration of profound meanings of Classics and the skeptical historiography aiming at the great antiquity were fused into one, there was the mutation of traditional Confucianism, from which *lixue* grew as a consequence.

In the Liao dynasty (a. k. a. the Great Liao or the Great Khitan), the ruling aristocrats paid great attention to learning from history. There were even some prominent historians such as Shifang 室防 and Xiaohan Jianu 萧韩家奴. In particular, historical works produced in Tang and the well-known *Zhenguan zhengyao* 贞观政要 (Key points of the politics of the Zhenguan reign [627–649 AD]) interested greatly the Khitan sovereigns and high officials. In this regard, the Khitan kingdom was not inferior to the Great Song. Unfortunately, due to the incessant wars, *lixue* failed to rise to prominence in Liao as it did in Song. Accordingly, the idea of history could not be philosophically deepened. In comparison with Liao, Jin, or the kingdom founded by the Nuchen people, had a more advanced historiography. Some Nuchen sovereigns—for example, the Emperor Shi 世 (r. 1161–1189)—was known to us for the importance he attached to history just as his counterpart—that is, the Emperor Sheng 圣 (r. 982–1031)—did in Liao.

The second phase of the development of idea of history in Song began with the commencement of the Qingli reign and ended in 1127, or the second year of

<sup>2</sup>Pi Xirui 皮锡瑞, *Jingxue lishi* 经学历史 [History of studies in Confucian classics] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 220.

Jingkang 靖康 reign, when the Northern Song was tragically wiped out by the rising Nuchen regime. Where the situation of China in this era was concerned, the social contradictions were unprecedentedly exacerbated. In order to free itself from the deepening crises, the central court made efforts—for example, issuing new policies in the Qingli reign, launching the reform proposed by Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), and so on—to rehabilitate the lethargic Great Song. It was also in this era that *lixue* witnessed a giant growth, which was embodied in the scholarship founded by the Five Masters, namely, Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, Shao Yong, Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi. In the meantime, thinkers and historians offered a kaleidoscopic array of theories about prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. Among the theorists, Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang, Lü Zuqian 吕祖谦 (1137–1181) and Jin Lüxiang were worthy of furthered discussions.

### Ouyang Xiu

Ouyang's courtesy name was Yongshu 永叔. He was born in Yongfeng 永丰 of the Prefecture of Ji 吉 (present-day Ji'an 吉安, Jiangxi). When he was twenty-four-year old, he passed the highest level of Imperial Examination and was appointed to the position of imperial librarian. Later, due to his active participation in the Qingli Reform led by Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052), Ouyang was humiliatingly demoted and appointed instead to inferior local positions. At the very beginning of the Zhihe 至和 reign (1054–1056), he was recalled to the central court and became one of the high imperial officials. Nevertheless, when the Emperor Shen 神 (r. 1067–1085) was enthroned, some vilified Ouyang and consequently the agitated Emperor punitively transferred him to lower positions of prefectures outside the Capital. In 1071, Ouyang as a senior imperial consultant retired from the politics. Next year, he passed away in the Prefecture of Ying (present-day Fuyang 阜阳, Anhui). As a politician, Ouyang had to endlessly deal with shifting sands. Even so, he never abandoned his original aspirations. His life was actually the unity of the political endeavor, the exploration of history and the innovative re-creation of ancient prose.

As regards his production of historical narratives, immediately in the wake of his successful performance in the highest Imperial Examination, Ouyang started independently writing *Xin Wudai shi*. He spent twenty-five years finishing the work. Even in the hard time when he was humiliatingly driven out of the Capital, the politician- and essayist-historian did not stop writing. In the imperial agency, Ouyang as the leading historian devoted himself to the project of *Xin Tang shu*. In the meantime, he displayed his political activism in the central court, where Ouyang remained in his post—the prestigious Hanlin, or Imperial Academician—for eight years. He was known to the political circles for his outspokenness.

Ouyang's works devoted to history was neither an embodiment of his political complacency nor an outlet of his political dejection. Rather, (writing) history was, to a certain extent, one of the parts of his political life. Digging into the past, he ruminated over how to find a solution to the social crises greatly disturbing Song. Ouyang had revealed for what reason he decided to write a book exploring the history of the immediate past Five Dynasties. His revealing words read,

In an instant, eighty years has passed since the founding of the Great Song. Externally, the usurpatory regimes are all exterminated, so that no one dares to confront our country. Internally, the separatist regional warlords are all crushed, so that no rebellious ministers can be strong enough to challenge the central court. For these reasons, the entire country has been unified, stable and peaceful. What a long life the country has! How vast the country is! [Nevertheless, the truth may differ.] Fiscally, even before the state is well financed, the local has already been in straitened circumstances. Militarily, even though the troops have not been powerful enough to deter foreign powers, the generals have already been bloated with pride. Institutionally, notwithstanding the existing institutions are far from being perfected and indelible, they have already grown excessively complicated and overloaded. The country as a whole aimlessly drifts along. [If things continue this way,] how can the country distinguish itself from its counterparts in the [chaotic] Five Dynasties? (“Benlun 本论” (Exploring the root), or Chapter 9, in *Jushi waiji* 居士外集 [A supplement to the *Selected Works of Ouyang Xiu*])

Put plainly, in the eyes of Ouyang Xiu, a thoughtful and discerning politician-historian, there was a huge hidden crisis beneath the dazzling power, prosperity and peace of the complacent Great Song. It was such a threatening crisis and consequent worries about the fate of the dynasty that motivated Ouyang to probe into the vicissitudes of Tang and Five Dynasties. Therein lay the renowned historian’s sense of history and sense of the times.

Acting as the liaison, Ouyang founded an academic group consisting of an array of scholar-officials, among whom most were the supporters of Ouyang’s political activism. Quite a few scholars and officials at that time respected very much Ouyang’s writing, scholarship and character. Thus, he was venerated as the Grand Master of the generation. In such an elitist group, there were eminent scholars such as Mei Yaochen 梅尧臣 and Yin Zhu 尹洙. Revolving around Ouyang, they academically complemented each other, politically advocated new policies or reforms, and, most importantly, set the new fashions in literature and history.

Ouyang was exactly the trailblazer of the new scholarly trend. Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–1755), one of the most renowned scholars in the early and mid-eighteenth century in China, echoed this point, asserting that Ouyang was one of the most reputable vanguards of *lixue* in its incipient stage.<sup>3</sup> Ouyang was worthy of the name. He made remarkable contributions to literature, history, epigraphy, philology and calligraphy. Most importantly, he infused fresh elements into the lifeless scholarship at that time. As regards his achievements in the historical study, his works—*Xin Wudai shi*, *Xin Tang shu*, for instance—played quite an important role in the history of traditional Chinese historiography. His rumination over prosperity and decline in the historical perspective not only gave expression to the conscientious historians’ sincere care for the social reality but also marked the new heights that the idea of history could reach at that time.

Invoking the two most fundamental concepts—the Way and the Principle, Ouyang shed revealing light on the vicissitudes of history. In Ouyang’s

<sup>3</sup>Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲, *Song Yuan xue'an* 宋元学案 [A case-by-case exploration of lives and ideas of renowned scholars in the Song and Yuan dynasties] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), vol. 1, p. 134.



historiographical edifice, the Way was supreme and it administered the myriad things by means of the Principle. Both the Way and the Principle were invisible and predominant (“*Dao wu changming* 道无常名” [The Way has neither enduring nor unchanging name], in Ouyang Xiu’s *Bishuo* 笔说 [Sketches and notes]). As regards the Way, not only did it control nature but it also dictated the human society. But on the other hand, the fulfillment of the control or dictation depended on the Principle. The most basic nature of the Principle was *change* (Chapter 42, in Ouyang Xiu’s *Jushi ji* 居士集 (Selected works of an indoors-scholar [i.e. Ouyang Xiu])). Confucians should, Ouyang held, try their utmost to emulate the Sages, who grasped the Principle whereby they could investigate the myriad things (Chapter 41, in *Jushi ji*). In particular, he furthered his discussion about the significance of *change* (*Yi tongzi wen* 易童子问 [A boy’s inquiries into the *Book of Changes*]). Ouyang asserted that the existence of the myriad things was premised on *change*; and that the Sages had already grasped the truth that *change* was absolute even though the form of *change* was naturally and socially diverse. It raised another question—Was *change* the evolution? In this regard, Ouyang remained silent.

It should be pointed out that Ouyang actually did not create his own system of *lixue*. He, however, did not systematically elaborate the Principle, let alone the key Principle-related concepts such as *qi*, *xing* 性 (nature) and *ming* 命 (fate). Indeed, Ouyang mentioned *qi* and *xing*, saying that the mankind was the most intelligent because it was endowed with the *qi* of Heaven and Earth and that *xing* could not be enlightened without learning (Chapter 3, *Jushi waiji* 居士外集 [A supplement to *Jushi ji*]). But, he stopped right there. He never attempted to expound the relationship existing among the Principle, *qi* and nature. Such a tiny sip of *lixue* indicated that Ouyang’s intellectual system in regard to the Learning of Principle was far from being mature. Exactly for this reason, he could only make a preliminary contribution to *lixue*.

Ouyang contended that it was the human Principle that determined the prosperity and decline of a certain society. The human Principle was no other than the aforementioned *gangchang*, or the most cardinal and most constant guides reigning over the most basic ethics and moralities. Where the immediate past Five Dynasties were concerned, he concluded that it was an utterly chaotic era, wherein *gangchang* was completely abandoned. Most importantly, he asserted that it was not the human Principle but the sovereigns’ abandonment [of *gangchang*] that brought about the havoc (Chapter 17, in *Xin Wudai shi*). As soon as *gangchang* was thrown away, the country immediately collapsed (Chapter 54, in *Xin Wudai shi*). Therein lay Ouyang’s generalization of *gangchang* through the prism of *li*, or the Principle. The Principle, he held, played the decisive role in the force determining the rise and fall of a certain dynasty. Whenever there were changes taking place in *gangchang*, history would change accordingly. Thus grand principles such as morality, benevolence and righteousness were the keys of good governance and laws and orders played the crucial role in the protection of the good governance from being ruined (Chapter 46, in *Xin Wudai shi*). In the light of the Principle, Ouyang decided that the Five Dynasties belong to the category of *chaotic and failed state*, wherein the law

and order were entirely destroyed and the instability and corruption unstoppably deepened (Chapter 46, in *Xin Wudai shi*).

Readers may go further, raising another question—if *gangchang* ideologically constituted the Principle, what could affect such a *gangchang*-centric Principle? Ouyang's answer was actually Janus-faced. On the one hand, he emphatically talked about the role the human effort played in changes taking place in the Principle, even rhetorically questioning that “wouldn't it be better explicitly stating the prosperity-or-decline-determining Principle in the garb of Mandate of Heaven is actually the human effort?” (Chapter 37, in *Xin Wudai shi*). Inspired by Kang Cheng's 康澄 idea that what should be feared and what should not be feared in the politics, Ouyang concretized the Principle into five occasions of dauntless confrontation with natural disasters and despicable slanders and six types of corruption in human affairs, of which the sovereigns and high ministers should be really afraid and try their utmost to prevent them from happening (“Tang benji 唐本纪” [Basic annals devoted to the Latter Tang], or Chapter 6, in *Xin Wudai shi*). Ouyang suggested the sovereigns always bear in mind Kang's inspiring assertions.

In order to strengthen his discourse on the human Principle, he vehemently criticized the alleged interrelation of natural disaster and human affairs that was based on the superstitious and mysterious *tianren ganying*, or the mutual responses between Heaven and man. He pointed out that the true reason that why Confucius kept account of natural disasters in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* lay in cautioning sovereigns against doing evil rather than establishing a mysterious interconnection of natural calamities and human efforts; and that since the Former Han many Confucians—among whom there were eminent ones such as Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, Liu Xia 刘向 and Liu Xin 刘歆—turned a blind eye to the Master's true purpose and stupidly devoted themselves instead to distorted and farfetched interpretations interconnecting natural disasters and human affairs (“Wuxing zhi yi 五行志一” [The first part of Treatise on Five Elements], or Chapter 38, in *Xin Tang shu*). Nevertheless, although Ouyang resolutely closed his door to the idea that the Heavenly Intention played the decisive role in the alternation of prosperity and decline, he still opened the door to the Mandate of Heaven. In this regard, he proposed the theory of *dual existence*, which concurrently emphasized that the human effort could neither be completely independent of Heaven nor be measured against the Heavenly criterion (“Sitian kao er 司天考二” [The second part of Criticism of the Celestial Exploration], or Chapter 59, *Xin Wudai shi*).

Ouyang paid particular attention to *dezheng* 德政, or the moral politics. It was one of features of his emphatic discourses on the human effort. He firmly believed that only when a sovereign was morally superior could he be the true King (Chapter 1, *Xin Tang shu*). Invoking the immediate past history of Sui and Tang, Ouyang tried to convincingly prove his assertion (Chapter 31, *Xin Tang shu*). The key of the moral politics lay in the effort to concurrently benefit the people and attach greater importance to them. Ouyang had imagined a perfected governance whereby the people could enjoy peace and happiness (Chapter 38, in *Xin Tang shu*). In contrast with the perfected governance, there was the most decadent rule. The stability and prosperity of a dynasty depended on whether there were the sovereign's love for the

people, the sovereign's effective efforts to benefit the people and the benign interactions between the sovereign and the people (Chapter 51, in *Xin Tang shu*). Ouyang went further, putting forward a radical idea of *sunjun yimin* 损君益民, or benefiting the people at the expense of the sovereign's interests, which basically required the sovereign try his utmost to refrain from excessively exploiting and hurting the people and simplify existing institutions as far as possible (*Yi tongzi wen*). Put plainly, a sovereign should lighten the people's burden to the best of his ability. In doing so, his love for the people and aspiration to benefit the people would be fulfilled. In order to make his radical idea more solidly grounded and convincing, Ouyang brought to light the cruel exploitation the brute sovereigns of Five Dynasties imposed on the people. In view of this, the present author suggest readers take Ouyang's *Xin Wudai shi* as an embodiment of the spirit of *zhibi* 直笔, or veraciously producing veritable historical records.

In addition, two points in Ouyang's theory of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective are worth being mentioned. One was the role the military affairs played in the vicissitudes of the history. Looking back at history, Ouyang found that since the Warring States era and Qin and Han empires, seldom did sovereigns give up using violence in the politics. In view of this, he concluded that the military affair played an irreplaceable role in the governance (Chapter 50, *Xin Tang shu*). In particular, taking into consideration the devastating havoc wreaked by the powerful, separatist and—worst of all—strongly armed regional lords in the Tang Empire and Five Dynasties, Ouyang realized that how significant the centralization of military power to a dynasty was. To be specific, he pointed out that, in Tang, the threat was mainly from regional lords, who were in possession of powerful troops and inherently of a capricious and treacherous nature (Chapter 64, *Xin Tang shu*); and that in the Five Dynasties, apart from the rebellious regional warlords, the imperial guards grew more uncontrollable and thus constituted a new threat to the central court. In the Northern Song, although the vexing problem of armed regional lords was successfully solved, the expanding troop of imperial guards was another headache. In view of this, Ouyang cautionarily pinpointed the Imperial Guard Agency's abnormal monopoly of the right deploying troops stationed inside and outside the Capital against the backdrop of the complete devoidness of capable high generals in the central court (Chapter 27, in *Xin Tang shu*).

The other was the problem of *pengdang* 朋党, or the (alleged) cliques formed within the ruling elites. In the Qingli reign, with the help from the emperor, Fan Zhongyan, the leading minister, launched a political reform. Immediately after the promulgation of a series of new policies, the conservatives accused reformists of immorally and illegally forming cliques under the leadership of Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu. Ouyang defended the reform-minded officials including himself in his historical works. He inspiringly asserted that the so-called *pengdang* was actually dichotomized into the good ones consisting of gentlemen with superior moralities and extraordinary talents and the evils ones filled with persons of poor ability and vile character. Ouyang also pointed out that *pengdang* had already been reduced to a tool used by some to attack their rivals and seize the central power (Chapter 35, in *Xin Wudai shi*). His discourses on the problem of *pengdang* indicated that he

himself was not divorced from the reality but still politically down-to-earth. In other words, Ouyang did not attempt to advocate his human Principle in an imagined political vacuum. As a politician-historian, Ouyang was eager to find a way out for the increasingly lethargic dynasty. Overall, Ouyang himself and his works, embodied the growing influence of *lixue* on the historiography, even though he did not have a systematic, *lixue*-cored thinking.

### Sima Guang

*Zizhi tongjian* was indisputably the most indelible magnum opus produced in the two Songs. It was authored by Sima Guang. Sima's courtesy name was Junshi 君实. He was born in Sushui in Shanxi in 1019 and passed away in his sixty-eighth year. In the Baoyuan 宝元 reign (1038–1040), Sima passed the highest level of Imperial Examination and entered the imperial political circles. Later, his parents died in succession. He had a three-year mourning period, wherein he read hard behind closed doors and produced inspiring treatises and eighteen historical reviews that were later included into *Zizhi tongjian*. In the Zhiping 治平 reign (1064–1067), Sima finished the five-volume *Linian tu* 历年图 (A diagrammatic annals) outlining significant events taking place in the long period from the Warring States era down to the Five Dynasties. Besides this, he also penned the eight-volume *Tongzhi* 通志 (A short general history) devoted to the history beginning with the reign of the King Weilie 威烈 (r. 425–402 B.C.) and ending in the third year of the Second Emperor of Qin (r. 210–207 B.C.). *Tongzhi* constituted the first eight chapters of *Zizhi tongjian*.

It was in the third year of Zhiping reign that Sima was appointed to a more prestigious imperial position. In the same year (1067), the emperor set up Chongwen Yuan 崇文院, or the Imperial Academy Promoting Refined Literature, and put it under the charge of Sima. In the Academy, Sima was responsible for convening a team consisting of high-caliber historians and instructing them to compile *Lidai junchen shiji* 历代君臣事迹 (A detailed record of deeds of sovereigns and high officials in past dynasties) for the central court. When the Emperor Shen mounted the throne, Sima was conferred the most prestigious academic title—*Hanlin*, or the Imperial Academician. It was in this autumn that *Lidai junchen shiji* was finished and presented before the new emperor. After reading it, the emperor praised that the book was solidly based on history and could be used to better the governance. Not only did the Emperor granted the work the name *Zizhi tongjian* 资治通鉴, or *Comprehensive Historical Records in Aid of Governance*, but he also penned a preface to the magnum opus himself.

Politically, Sima was a staunch anti-reformist. He strongly disagreed with Wang Anshi, who was renowned for his bold plan rehabilitating the Great Song. Due to the unbridgeable political gap between the two leading scholar-officials, Sima chose to leave Kaifeng 开封, or the (Eastern) Capital, and moved in the Western Capital, or Luoyang 洛阳, where he never mentioned the politics but instead spent all time and energy writing and polishing *Zizhi tongjian*. In 1085, *Zizhi tongjian* was entirely finished. Due to his unmatched contribution to the indelible work, Sima was

conferred a more prestigious title—*Zizheng Xueshi* 资政学士, or the Imperial Academician *cum* Senior Mentor. Next year, the Emperor Zhe 哲 (r. 1085–1100) acceded to the throne. The new sovereign appointed Sima to the post of prime minister. Sima remained in his post for eight months, wherein he used all his skills to abolish all new policies adopted by Wang Anshi. His effort to entirely erase Wang's political legacy is still worthy of further debates. Nevertheless, it did not detract from his brilliance embodied in the production of *Zizhi tongjian*.

The 294-volume *Zizhi tongjian* delineated a 1,362-year history (403 BC–959 AD). In this book, the consciousness of concluding prosperity and decline in the historical perspective was very conspicuous. Sima had explained for what reason he decided to produce such a giant work in “*Jin Zizhi tongjian biao* 进资治通鉴表” (An interpretive recommendation of *Zizhi tongjian*). His explanation read,

I do often worry about such an embarrassing situation, wherein historical works produced since the times of Sima Qian and Ban Gu are too voluminous to be consumed even by the commoners, let alone the sovereigns, who has to attend to a myriad affairs daily and thus can by no means be able to read them either. In view of this, I, for so many times, overate myself and presumptuously aspire to condense all existing works and handpick the cream of them. Such carefully selected records, all of which exclusively focus on the rise and fall of past dynasties, the joys and sorrows of the people, and the examples of good and evil [political] acts, will be adapted into an *annals*.

In view of Sima's own explanation, an eminent modern Chinese scholar sharp-mindedly pointed out that the towering Song historian's guiding ideology lay exactly in *zizhi* 资治, or being conducive to the betterment of governance.<sup>4</sup>

Sima attached much greater importance to the role the sovereign played in the rise and fall of a dynasty. He contended that the quality, ability and (moral) character of a sovereign directly affected the vicissitudes of history. A sovereign should, Sima held, paid particular attention to *xiuxin* 修心, or the perfection of the mind. *Xiuxin* was consisted in three types of endeavor, that is, *ren* 仁 (being benevolent), *ming* 明 (being enlightened), and *wu* 武 (being militarily ready). In this regard, Sima developed a concise elaboration, which read,

[If a sovereign] unites benevolence, enlightenment and military readiness, his country will definitely be well governed and powerful. If one constituent of the trinity [of benevolence, enlightenment and military readiness] was lost, the country would decline; two, be endangered; and three, totally collapse. Such a Principle [of change] had never been altered since time immemorial. As regards the governance, there are three keys. The first is *guanren* 官人, or appointing people to the post for which they are the most fit; second, *xinshang* 信赏, or rewarding people in strict accordance with their merits; and *bifa* 必罚, or punishing people in a fair and impartial manner. (“*Chuchu Zhogncheng shangdian zhazi* 初除中丞上殿札子” [A memorial to the throne that was written when just assuming the office of Central Imperial Censor], or Chapter 36, in *Wenguo Wenzheng Sima gong wenji* 温国文正公司马文集 [Selected works of Sima Guang, the Moral, Erudite and Impartial Lord of the enfeoffed State of Wen])

<sup>4</sup>Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, “Shuo ‘liutong’ 说六通” (A preliminary examination of *Tongdian*, *Tongzhi*, *Wenxian tongkao*, *Zizhi tongjian*, *Shitong* and *Wenshi tongyi*), in *Shixueshi yanjiu* 史学史研究 (Studies in the history of historiography), no. 4 (1983), p. 2.

Therein lay the gist of Sima's historical thinking that was refined from his life-long exploration of history.

The two pairs of trinity—*ren* (benevolence), *ming* (enlightenment) and *wu* (military readiness), and *guanren* (the meritocratic selection), *xinshang* (the merit-based rewards) and *bifa* (the fair punishments)—interrelated with each other. Internally, the first trinity constituted a sovereign's inner quality. Externally, the second trinity was the embodiment of a sovereign's execution of the political power. In the light of this, Sima concluded that a dynasty's fate entirely depended on the sovereign's inner quality and external execution of power (“Jin xiuxin zhiguo zhiyao zhazi 进修心治国之要札子” [A memorial to the throne that discussed the essence of the perfection of the mind and governance], or Chapter 46, in *Wenguo Wenzheng Sima gong wenji*). Simply put, it was *junxin* 君心, or the mind of sovereigns, that decisively influenced the vicissitudes of history.

*Junxin* was embodied in *li*, or the propriety. Furthermore, *li* served as the most primary criterion whereby the selection [of the talented people], rewards and punishments could be properly carried out. Thanks to *li*, the abovementioned external and internal trinities were fused into one. Sima had elaborated the significance of *li*. His elaboration read,

I hear that the most important duty of a sovereign lies in [protecting] the propriety [from being ruined.] [The core of] the propriety is the differentiation. The kernel of the differentiation is [the social] status or [official] title. What on earth is the propriety? It refers to the [well-established] social order and law. What does the differentiation mean? It exclusively focus on the [hierarchical gap between] sovereign and minister. How is the status/title constituted? It embodies [aristocrats such as] Lord and Marquis and [bureaucrats such as] minister and high official. [Put plainly, the propriety was, Sima implied, fundamentally consisted in the differentiation and system of status/title. The historian went further, explaining the relationship existing among the propriety, differentiation and status/title.] The propriety is used to differentiate noble and ignoble, clarify close and distant, judge the myriad things, and handle multifarious affairs. Only when the [system of] status/title is well established, will the propriety be remarkably known to the public. And likewise, the propriety will be tangible only if the vessels [that are congruous with the rites] are properly made and displayed. [In reality,] the order reigning over superior and inferior can be clearly established, when people are designated in strict accordance with the system of status/titles and distinguished from each other in the light of the ritual vessels in use. Therein lies the root of the propriety. If the system of status/title and [the regulations regarding the use of] ritual vessels went extinct, how could possibly the propriety exist alone? (“Zhouji yi 周纪一” [The first part of the Eastern Zhou], or Chapter 1, in *Zizhi tongjian*)

Having the program based on his own wishful thinking, Sima tried to safeguard the grand feudal hierarchy and order by applying the stratified propriety to the real political lives of sovereigns and ministers. The truth was, however, embarrassing; that is to say, neither *ming* 名 (name/title or the grand concept it concretely symbolized) nor *qi* 器 (ritual vessels or the concrete things they metaphorically stood for) could be well maintained, let alone the propriety. Philosophically, the relationship of *ming* (concept) and *shi* 实 (reality) had turned topsy-turvy in Sima's metaphysical edifice. As a result, his thought was left in a haze of confusion.

Later generations of historians noticed that despite his sincere effort to fulfill stability and prosperity by means of the application and extension of the feudal

propriety of a hierarchical nature, Sima actually failed to realize the impracticality of his program nor did he attempt to creatively rethink the problem. As regards the relationship of the feudal hierarchy and the social stability and prosperity, Sima tautologically discussed it in a much less attractive and innovative manner. For this reason, the present author contends that apart from his idea that the human effort should be attached greater importance, Sima's ideological reexamination of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective was actually very poor. Combing through entire *Zizhi tongjian*, there were more than two hundred pieces of "Chen Guang yue 臣光曰," or Sima's hackneyed conclusions of history, among which few intellectually interested readers. In view of this, we might say the value of *Zizhi tongjian* primarily lies in the narration of rather than in the analysis of history.

It should be pointed out that the present author never attempts to simplistically deny the significance of Sima's idea of history. As mentioned above, his idea that the human effort played quite an important role in the vicissitudes of history was worthy of furthered discussions. He had specified *junxin*, or the mind of a sovereign, which was an intensive embodiment of the role the human effort played in the alternations of prosperity and decline. On the basis of the elaboration of *junxin*, Sima divided sovereigns into five groups, each of which exerted differing influence on history (Chapter 16, *Jigu lu*). In the first group, there were sovereigns who had the intelligence and valor far outshining their contemporaries and founded a dynasty; the second, sovereigns who succeed in maintaining the great achievements of their predecessors in spite of their much less brilliant talents; the third, sovereigns who was neither politically enlightened nor abstinent from excessive pleasures even though they were actually incapable persons; the fourth, sovereigns who not only had extraordinary abilities but also knew well the weal and woe of the people and thus amazingly rehabilitated a declining dynasty; and the last, sovereigns who were no more than despotic rulers and spelt an end to their own dynasties. Sima confidently held that such a pentachotomized category could be applied to sovereigns of every shade since time immemorial.

Sima laid particular stress on the role *yongren* 用人, or the meritocratic selection of imperial officials, played in the governance. He asserted that nothing could be more important than *yongren* in the betterment of governance; and that even in the eyes of great sages how to perfectly carry out *yongren* was a challenging work (The first year of the Jingchu 景初 reign of the Emperor Ming 明 of [Cao's 曹] Wei 魏, in Chapter 73, *Zizhi tongjian*). In *Zizhi tongjian*, Sima summed up several points as regards to *yongren*.

First, the selection and appointment of imperial officials must be based the specific requirements of concerned posts and the candidates be appraised in strict accordance with their actual performances. For example, in one piece of record he explained in detail how to select and assess candidates for offices such as imperial scribe, law enforcer, fiscal supervisor and military superintendent (The first year of the Jingchu reign of Emperor Ming of [Cao's] Wei, in Chapter 73, *Zizhi tongjian*).

Second, the family background of candidates should not play a significant role in the selection of talented people. Sima pointed out the Wei- and Jin-style praxis where in the family background rather than the true ability was given priority was

greatly disadvantageous to the betterment of governance (“Chen Guang yue 臣光曰” (Sima Guang says), in Chapter 140, *Zizhi tongjian*). In the historian’s mind, whether a person was an extraordinarily superior gentlemen or merely a vile character depended not on the person’s official position but on his morality and ability. His progressive idea reflected the truth of Song society, wherein seldom were the imperial officials from the hereditary houses nor were the aristocratic prerogatives based on the blood relation as rampant and aggressive as they were in the Wei 魏 and Jin 晋 dynasties (220–420 AD). Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out that when Sima put into effect his idea of *yongren*, he did not open the door to the reform-minded people at that time.

Third, the selection of a candidate should not be affected by the degree of kinship. The unswerving adherence to the fairness doctrine was crucial to the selection work. Sima suggested the leading ministers in Song emulate their ancient counter parts who were renowned for their unshakable impartiality in the selection and appraisal of candidates for imperial offices (The fourteenth year of the Dali 大历 reign of the Emperor Dai of Tang, in Chapter 225, *Zizhi tongjian*). Such a grand aspiration for an impartial selection was, however, unrealistic. Taking into consideration his rabidly anti-reformist eight-month premiership, even Sima himself was unable to put into effect the fairness doctrine.

Fourth, the sovereign should be broad-minded and tolerant of the talented people from enemy states. Sima in his writings numerated cases—such as You Yu 由余 (who was originally in the service of a nomadic tribe and later became a top official assisting the Duke Mu (682–621 BC) of Qin), Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (who suffered so great unfair treatment in his homeland—Chu 楚—and finally help Wu 吴, one of Chu’s rivals, militarily crushed Chu), Chen Ping 陈平 (who had joined Xiang Yu’s 项羽 troop and later was employed by Liu Bang, a deadly foe to Xiang, as the chief strategist), and Xu You 许攸 (who helped Cao Cao 曹操 decisively defeated *Yuan Shao* 袁绍, Xu’s former master)—and in doing so he demonstrated that even the capable persons who were originally hostile to a dynasty could make great contributions to their new masters (The fifth year of the Taihe 太和 reign of the Lord of Haixi 海西, in Chapter 102, *Zizhi tongjian*).

Fifth, the sovereign should never suspect the selected candidates. Sima ridiculed those who appointed some to senior positions while having misgivings about them and warned that in all probability such ungrounded suspicion would incur danger to the central court (The eleventh year of the Yonghe 永和 reign of the Emperor Mu 穆 of [the Eastern] Jin, in Chapter 100, *Zizhi tongjian*). Overall, *yongren*, or the meritocratic selection of officials was crucial to the imperial politics. The sovereigns should, Sima suggested, try their best to create an environment, wherein the officials could give full play to their ability and loyalty and thus enable their masters to enjoy a full freedom from the fear of political collapse (Sima Guang, *Gongming lun* 功名论 [On merits and fame]).

Sima’s formula attaching greater importance to the human effort was also embodied in his strong opposition to the mystical and farfetched interpretation of abnormal phenomena. According to *Zizhi tongjian*, in the second year of Kaiyuan reign (713–741 AD), *Taishi* 太史, or the Grand Scribe, mistakenly said there would



be an eclipse of the sun. Inasmuch as the alleged inauspicious eclipse did not take place, Yao Chong 姚崇 (651–721 AD), a reputable leading minister, wrote a congratulatory missive to the throne and suggested the imperial historian keep account of it. The emperor approvingly nodded. In the same year, one of the guest officials in the service of the Crown Prince presented a giant caldron made in the reign of Empress Wu Zetian 武则天 (r. 690–705 AD). Inside the caldron there were inscriptions, among which the two words—隆 (*long*) and 基 (*ji*)—were found. “隆基” (Longji) was no other than the given name of the Emperor Xuan 玄 (r. 712–756 AD). For this reason, Yao Chong wrote another congratulatory missive to the throne, alleging that the two inscribed words exactly constituted the auspicious omen predicting that it was Li Longji (i.e. the Emperor Xuan) that would be endowed with the Mandate of Heaven. Thus, Yao, the leading minister, required imperial historians to record it and disseminate it nationwide. Sima severely rebuked Yao, denouncing the Eclipse Incident as a slander against Heaven and the Caldron Farce an insult to the Emperor (The second year of the Kaiyuan 开元 reign of the Emperor Xuan of Tang, in Chapter 211, *Zizhi tongjian*).

Sima's eclectic philosophy sadly made his idea of history self-contradictory and heterogeneous. Besides his ultra-conservative political thinking unfavorably affected his assiduous reconstruction of the past. Intellectually, it was true that Sima severely criticized the alleged interrelationship of natural disasters and human efforts in the mystical context of *tianren ganying*; it was also true that the historian never attempted to question the assertion that Heaven was the force mastering the human society. In fact, he ideologically kowtowed to Heaven, servilely saying,

Heaven, is the Father of the myriad things. No son dares to disobey his father's order; nor does any minister venture to act against what the sovereign demands. ...Those who disobey Heaven's order must be punished by Heaven; by contrast, those who are obedient to Heaven's order will definitely be rewarded by Heaven. ...The sovereign shall be enlightened; minister, loyal; father, loving; and son, filial. It is what the human society is supposed to be! If some arrogantly challenge Heaven, there must be disasters befalling [them as the punishment]; and if some usurpatively act against [the established ethics], there must be punitive manmade calamities. (“Shize 仕则” [Rules reigning over the official circles], in Sima Guang's *Yushu* 迂书 [Treaties advocating the adherence to old rules])

Obviously, Sima's ideas with respect to the basic feudal ethical and moral systems were ultimately dependent on the Mandate of Heaven. Frankly, Sima as a brilliant historian was philosophically shallow. Exactly for this reason, the *lixue* gurus such as Cheng Yi was discontent with his work.

Indeed, it is a pity that Sima, who was renowned for his reexamination of the vicissitudes of history from a realistic, pragmatic and practical perspective, did not attempt to raise his conclusions to philosophical heights. It might explain for what reason the complacent gurus of Learning of Principle looked down upon him. Moreover, the *lixue* guru's belittlement of Sima also resulted from the historian's inconsistency in applying the Heavenly Principle to the appraisals of historical figures. Foregoing discussions indicated that Sima's thinking and *lixue* concurrently interconnected with and contradicted each other. As a consequence, apart from Cheng Yi, who poured veiled criticism against Sima, even Fan Zuyu 范祖禹

(1041–1098), one of the contributors to *Zizhi tongjian*, separately penned *Tang jian* 唐鉴 (An expostulatory reconstruction of the history of Tang) narrating the history in a manner greatly differing from that of Sima. Undoubtedly, Zhu Xi, the epitome of *lixue*, also joined the ranks of Sima critics. Humiliatingly, Zhu enshrined Sima into the temple dedicated to the Six Masters of Learning of Principle, but meanwhile he sneered at Sima, alleging that his scholarship was crude due to the lack of a metaphysically subtle investigation of things.<sup>5</sup>

### Lü Zuqian

Unlike Zhu Xi, who emphatically asserted that the Principle of Heaven was unchallengeably predominant and retrogressively held that the Han and Tang dynasties were qualitatively inferior to the archaic Three Dynasties due to the weakened predominance of the Principle, Lü tried to rethink the vicissitudes of history from the perspective of the historical movement per se. Zhu was ideologically mad at such a dissenting academic exploration, criticizing that Lü paid unduly equal attention to history and the (Confucian) Classics and consequently weakened the supremacy of the Classics. Zhu even ridiculed Lü for inappropriately elevating Sima Qian to be as sacred as Confucius (“Lü Bogong 吕伯恭” (Lü Zuqian), or Chapter 122, in *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子语类 (Selected Master Zhu’s speeches with varying themes)). Therein, however, exactly lay Lü’s greatness. Being an heir to the tradition of Sima Qian, Lü historiographically did an excellent job in the work discoursing on the alternations of prosperity and decline and raised the *principled*—or *lixue*-style—idea of history to new heights.

Lü set up the principle of *tongti* 统体, which required historians to reexamine history from a holistic perspective. His explanation read,

History shall be treated in a holistic manner. Holistically looking back at changes taking place in the social order, customs, peace and instability of a dynasty, [historians may] conclude that Qin was inherently despotical and [the Former] Han tolerant. The despoticalness and tolerance are the precise holistic description of the most basic character of the two dynasties. (Of course, the discussions about advantages and disadvantages of the two dynasties shall be furthered.) The holistic approach shall also be applied to the reconstruction of the life of a sovereign. The Emperor Wen of the Former Han, for instance, could be holistically regarded as a lenient sovereign; and in contrast, the Emperor Xuan 宣 was renowned for his draconianness. ... The holistic approach sheds light on the most basic character of a historical period. Such a basic character was usually unchangeable, even though there were exceptional cases. For example, a dynasty that was of a tolerant and lenient nature could by no means be overall despotical or draconian, if one or two sovereigns were exceptionally stern; and likewise, the dynasty renowned for draconianness or despoticalness could not possibly be open to tolerance and lenience, even if it occasionally show mercy. [But we shall always bear in mind that, generally,] the holistic approach [and a dynasty’s most basic character that it aspires to reveal] are not words but meanings [that can only be subtly perceived and grasped.] (“Dushu zazi san 读书杂记三” [The third part of *Miscellaneous Reading Notes*], in Chapter 14, *Bieji* 别集 (A supplement to *Donglai wenji* 东莱文集 [Selected works of Lü Zuqian]))

<sup>5</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Song Yuan xue’an*, vol. 1, p. 275.

Apart from the principle of *tongti*, Lü formulated the doctrine of *jikuo* 机括, which suggested historians try their best to find for what reason a dynasty or a reign rose to prominence or declined into oblivion by means of the analyses of varying social phenomena. He defined *jikuo* as the delicate things that were contained in a kaleidoscopic array of phenomena and could be able to herald the alternations of prosperity and decline (Chapter 5, in *Dashiji jiti* 大事记解题 [The explanatory notes on *Chronicle of Events*]). Historians could grasp the key of rise and fall of a dynasty through the prism of *jikuo*. For example, Lü pointed out that if the observers could understand how inefficient and irresponsible the multi-headed central court of the pre-imperial State of Chu 楚 was, they would understand that Chu, a colossus with feet of clay, was doomed to collapse (“Wuzi wen Wu Yun 吴子问伍员” [The Viscount of Wu asks Wu Yun for advice], or Chapter 17, in *Zushi zhuan shuo* 左氏传说 [Furthered interpretations of *Zuozhuan*]).

Therein lay Lü’s aspiration to find the most profound reason of the alternation of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective. He suggested historians rethink for what reason a time became prosperous and then went downhill, a dynasty rose and then fell, a sovereign perfected and then ruined the politics, and a person incessantly transformed, in their reexamination of historical works such as *Zuozhuan* 左传 (The Master Zuo’s commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*). In doing so, the historians could, Zuqian believed, grasp the grand principles established beforehand and appraise the work’s gains and losses (“Kan Zuo shi guimo 看左氏规模” [The pattern of *Zuozhuan*], in *Zushi zhuan shuo*). In his reformulated interpretations of *Zuozhuan*, he developed an idea of interlinked prosperity and decline. For example, he shed revealing light on how the rise and fall of regimes founded by barbarian groups surrounding China influenced the vicissitudes of kingdoms in the Central Plains. Such a historical thinking and historiographical praxis proudly had a remarkable depth. Lü went further, dividing the alternations of prosperity and decline into several *jie* 节, or periods. Take *Zuozhuan* for example. Lü trichotomized the history covered by *Zuozhuan* into the pre-Five Hegemons, Five Hegemon and post-Five Hegemon periods (“Qi Xiaobai ruyu qi 齐小白入于齐” [Xiaobai, or the future Duke Huan of Qi, returned to Qi], or Chapter 17, in *Zushi zhuan shuo*).

As regards the relation of Heaven and humankind, Lü, on the one hand laid stress on the predominance of Heaven and the Principle and metaphysically asserted the existence of the Supreme Principle was not anything tangible but something transcendental (“Fushi 赋诗” [The poetry], in *Donglai boyi* 东莱博议 [Miscellaneous discourses of Lü Zuqian]). But on the other hand, he attached greater importance to the human effort. In this regard, he proposed four points. First, the rise of a dynasty and the perfection of its governance were dependent on the sovereign’s own endeavor. Put plainly, the sovereign could rely on nothing but himself. Lü warned that if a sovereign chose to depend on someone else rather on himself, his or her dynasty would be seriously endangered (“Zheng Hu cihun 郑忽辞婚” [Hu, a prince of the State of Zheng, declines an offer of marriage], in *Donglai boyi*). Second, a sovereign should grasp the cardinal principle reigning over the peace and instability, as well as trying his utmost to enable his ministers to give full

play to their talents. Third, a sovereign should cultivate a permanently good general mood of society. For example, the earliest sovereigns of the Western Zhou did an excellent job in this regard, so that the dynasty had many loyal and upright high officials who worked collaboratively to make Zhou peaceful, powerful and prosperous. Fourth, Lü asserted that an auspicious thing paled next to an auspicious talent and likewise an extraordinary talent definitely outshone an extraordinary thing. Lü actually did not entirely deny the mystical interconnection of natural disaster and human effort; but meanwhile, he thrust the role the human effort played in the vicissitudes of history into the limelight. It was Lü who raised the theoretical discourse on the alternations of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective to new heights. Nevertheless, due to the eclectic nature of Lü's scholarship and the intellectual elements in particular attributed to the Learning of the Mind, many pieces of allegation of the mystical interrelationship of natural disaster and human effort remained intact in the historian's works.

### **Jin Lüxiang**

Jin was a historian living in the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Apologetically, he criticized that historians such as Sima Guang and Liu Shu had their discussions about prosperity and decline in the historical perspective epistemologically based on the teachings of diverse intellectual schools rather than on the Classics. Exactly due to their nonadherence to the orthodoxy, the works they produced were not in harmony with the teaching of the Sage; nor were they authoritative enough to be trusted and handed down. In order to rectify what the historians had mistakenly done, Jin penned *Zizhi tongjian qianbian* in strict accordance with the spirit of Confucian classics. He even fervently disseminated the orthodox idea of history among his disciples, in particular denouncing some non-Confucian teachings—the thought of Legalist School, for instance—as something detrimental to the governance (Chapter 189, in *Yuanshi* 元史 [History of Yuan]). In this way, Jin attempted to infuse the basic ideas of *lixue* into historical narratives. The consequence of his effort was disappointing, on the grounds that his ideological compromise made concerned discourses on the vicissitudes of history more epistemologically eclectic. In the post-Song era, as late as the Ming-Qing transition, Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), a renowned philosopher and historian, made a breakthrough in this field.

## **3 Orthodoxy and Historiography**

The medieval Chinese *zhengtong lun*, or the idea with respect to the established orthodoxy, was a *a priori* theory of historical interconnection. It directly influenced how historians handled primary sources and, most importantly, wrote history. *Zheng tong lun*, together with stylistic rules reigning over historical narratives and a varieties of forms of historical writing, constituted the historiographical thinking. *Zheng tong lun* originated from the concepts of *santong* 三统 (Three Orthodoxies)

and *wuyun* 五运 (Five Trends). Then it ideologically developed in the incessant debates in the Three Kingdoms, Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern dynasties. Finally it was epistemologically systematized in the Northern and Southern Song dynasties.

### Ouyang Xiu

Ouyang defined *zhengtong* 正统, or the orthodoxy, as something whereby sovereigns could legitimately and authoritatively unite the people and govern the country (“Zhengtong lun: Xulun 正统论: 序论” [Preface to *Treatise on the Orthodoxy*]), in Chapter 16, *Jushi ji* 居士集 [Selected works of Ouyang Xiu]. To put it another way, Ouyang employed the grand ideas of Great Unification and the veneration of the King to lay an ideologico-theoretical foundation of *zhengtong lun*. The Ouyang-style *zhengtong* differed from that base on the conventional distinction made between the civilized and the uncivilized. In the light of his own doctrines, Ouyang divided the dynasties in conformity with *zhengtong* into three groups. The first group included Yao 尧, Shun 舜, Xia 夏, Shang 商, Zhou 周, Qin 秦, Han 汉 and Tang 唐, all of which were in possession of the *orthodoxy* and successfully unified entire country. The second group consisted of dynasties such as Jin 晋 and Sui 隋, both of which could put into effect the Grand Unification even though they failed to maintain the *orthodoxy*. The last group was represented by the Eastern Zhou reigned by the King Ping 平 (r. 768–718 BC), who legitimately possessed the *orthodoxy* but meanwhile could not prevent the Grand Unification from being ruined by the ambitious regional regimes such as Wu 吴 and Xu 徐.

There were heated debates on *zhengtong* in transitional periods such as the Zhou-Qin transition, Jin-Wei transition and Five Dynasties-Song transition. How to make sure which dynasty was the orthodox heir to the Mandate of Heaven in such chaotic and drastically changing periods? The answers greatly differed from each other. Ouyang shed light on for what reason there were such conflicting ideas as regards *zhengtong*. First, historians, who adhered to the unorthodox teachings, wrote history from purely selfish motives. For example, among historians working on the history of Southern and Northern Dynasties, some preferred the Eastern Jin, so that they established a penetrating thread of orthodoxy between Jin and Sui; meanwhile, some favored [the Latter] Wei and thus asserted that the Tang’s Mandate of Heaven was actually from Wei (The first part of *Zheng tong lun*, in Chapter 16, *Jushi ji*). In order to defend their own dynasties, historians spared no expense to make allegations of the establishment and transfer of *orthodoxy*. In extreme cases, historians even verbally abused each other. For example, those who wrote history in defence of the Southern Dynasties accused the Northern regimes of being illegal and barbarous; in retaliation, historians in the service of the Northern Dynasties dealt a counterpunch, ridiculing regimes in the South China for being founded by uncivilized tribes. Second, historians made coercive and farfetched arrangements regarding the transfer of *zhengtong* in the light of the theory asserting the endless transmutations of Five Elements. Ouyang was strongly against such a cyclical Five-Element theory and denounced it as a heterodox teaching (The first

part of *Zhengtong lun*, in Chapter 16, *Jushi ji*). In fact, aforementioned distorted discourses on *zhengtong* were unexceptionally driven by selfish motives. To put it another way, sovereigns tried their utmost to justify their reigns by means of historical narratives proclaiming that they were exactly the heirs to Mandate of Heaven. It was actually an embodiment of the alternative nature of traditional Chinese historiography. Ouyang's in-depth analyses pointed at the crux of the problem existing in the *zhengtong*-centered theories developed by past historians. To be specific, such biased historians, on the one hand, fabricated a sequence of the transfer of *zhengtong* among dynasties by means of the Heaven-man allegations based on the transmutations of Five Elements; and on the other hand, they arbitrarily created a *zhengtong* that was tainted with the ethnic prejudices.

As regards the transfer of *zhengtong*, Ouyang asserted that it had broken and resumed three times respectively. His concerned elaboration read,

*Zhengtong*, or the orthodoxy, was established in the times of Yao and Shun. Then it successively went through Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qian and Han, when it gradually fell into oblivion. In the wake of the rise of [the Western] Jin, the orthodoxy was restored. [Since the country was divided and thrown into chaos again, *zhengtong* was neglected accordingly.] Later, Sui and Tang rose to prominence and remarkably rehabilitated the orthodoxy. In view of this, it is safe to say that *zhengtong* underwent three sessions of ups and downs since the great antiquity. Due to the repeated vicissitudes, right and wrong are impartially judged and giving or seizing fairly executed. In doing so, the orthodoxy is unmistakably and magnificently displayed. (The second part of *Zhengtong lun*, in Chapter 16, *Jushi ji*)

Ouyang's idea of *zhengtong* was brimming with the veneration of the King and freed from the distorted interpretations. Unsurprisingly, it was ultimately applied to the glorification of the Great Song. Ouyang explicitly stated, "What Song remarkably did—striving to unify entire country—even cannot be outdone by what Yao, Shun and [sage kings of] Three Dynasties did [in the great antiquity]" ("Preface to *Zhengtong lun*," in Chapter 16, *Jushi ji*).

In his effort to reconstruct the history of Five Dynasties, Ouyang encountered a Gordian knot—how to evaluate such a chaotic history sitting in between Tang and Song? Among Song historians, some did not recognize the Latter Liang's heirship to the Mandate of Heaven and thus contemptuously called the regime merely a pseudo-dynasty. Such a radical historiography, however, caused an ideological trouble. Specifically, if the Latter Liang was falsely orthodox, the dynasties successively following it—that is, the Latter Tang, Latter Jin, Latter Han and Latter Zhou—were unorthodox, too. If true, what Zhao Kuangyin 赵匡胤 (927–976 AD) founded—the Great Song—would be deprived of the orthodoxy on the grounds that the founding emperor rose from the historiographically unorthodox Latter Zhou. Right here Ouyang's idea of *zhengtong* came in. According to Ouyang's periodization of the history of *zhengtong*, the era between the collapse of Tang down to and the rise of Song—that is, the Five Dynasties—was exactly the period when the Mandate of Heaven, or the embodiment of *zhengtong*, fell into oblivion. Simply put, inasmuch as there was not the genuine *zhengtong* at all, the dynasties including the Latter Zhou in this era should not be called pseudo-dynasties (The second part of *Zhengtong lun*, in Chapter 16, *Jushi ji*).

Some hardliners, who disagreed with Ouyang's innovative elaboration of *zhengtong*, ridiculed the historian for being against the spirit of *Chunqiu* and showing undue leniency towards those committing the unpardonable regicide. Ouyang did not care what they said at all. He acrimoniously pointed out that the so-called *Chunqiu*-style historiographical rules that were fabricated by later generations of scholars actually made the *Book*'s genuine aspiration for the fulfillment of poetic justice much less conspicuous. Analogically, he portrayed his critics as those who threw more clays into a muddy river with a view to clearing the water ("Da Xu Wudang diyi shu 答徐无党第一书" (The first letter in reply to Xu Wudang), in Chapter 18, *Jushi ji*). It is worth mentioning that Ouyang strongly opposed making ungrounded allegations of *shufa* 书法, or the highly ideological rules reigning over the historical narratives. For example, Xu Wudang 徐无党, one of Ouyang's disciples, had proclaimed that in *Xin Wudai shi* his master formulated historiographical rules whereby historical events could be properly praised or censured. Ouyang himself was, however, critical of his disciples' meaningless effort. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that in *Xin Wudai shi* indeed there were many pieces of writing voicing Ouyang's innermost thoughts. It was exactly on the basis of such thought-provoking comments that the disciples meaninglessly re-invented their master's historiography. Xu set a very bad example, seriously distorting his own master's original scholarship in exchange for fame. On this account, the present author suggest readers always bear in mind that what interests them in Ouyang's historical works is not the alleged *shufa* but the strong sense of history, the sense of the times, and the simple but powerful style of writing.

### Sima Guang

The leading historian of the Northern Song contended that the *zhengtong*-themed ideas in previous ages were overall driven by the selfish motives [of sovereigns] and thus far from being thoroughly impartial (The second year of the Huangchu 黄初 reign of the Emperor Wen 文 [of Cao's 曹 Wei 魏], in Chapter 69, *Zizhi tongjian*). Invoking the history from the Former Han's replacement with the Qin Empire down to the chaotic Five Dynasties, Sima convincingly revealed the fallacy of *zhengtong lun*, or the ideologico-theoretical elaborations of the gain and loss of orthodoxy embodied in the Mandate of Heaven. In doing so, Sima displayed a remarkable pragmatic historical thinking and a commendable broadened ethnic idea. The concerned wonderful statement in *Zizhi tongjian* read,

I, Your Majesty's humble servant, am so stupid that I cannot make clear that among past dynasties which one was orthodox and which one was contrastingly unorthodox. I personally hold that for sovereigns, he is no more than the Son of Heaven in name, so long as he cannot unify entire country. Due to the differences existing in differing times, dynasties in the history differed from each other in a greatly diverse manner. For example, some were founded by the Han people while some by the non-Han ethnic groups; some were of a benevolent nature while some inherently despotic; and some were powerful while some weak. Despite this, such a diverse array of dynasties were not fundamentally different from the princely states in the great antiquity. For this reason, it is totally unreasonable to exclusively venerate one dynasty as [the embodiment of] orthodoxy while denouncing the

others as usurpative regimes. If each dynasty called itself the only heir to the Mandate of Heaven and the sole possessor of orthodoxy, how could the Southern Chen 陈 dynasty founded by the Chen Family be justified and how could the Northern Wei 魏 dynasty of the non-Han Tuoba 拓跋 people be the receiver of the Mandate? If the criterion judging the false and genuine orthodoxy of a dynasty is whether the dynasty is located in the traditional Central Plains, the regimes founded by the families of non-Han origin—the Liu's 刘 [from Xiongnu], the Shi's 石 [from the Jie 羯 people], the Murong's 慕容 [from the Xianbei 鲜卑 people], the Fu's 苻 [from the Di 氐 people], the Yao's 姚 [from the Qiang 羌 people], the Helain's 赫连 [from Xiongnu], for instance—should be heirs to the Mandate on the grounds that they all occupied the capitals of either the Five Emperors or the Three Kings. If the orthodoxy is determined by the moral principle, there must be sage sovereigns in a tiny state; and likewise, there must be evil rulers in the great Three Dynasties (i.e. Xia, Shang and Zhou). In view of the foregoing discussions, I, Your Majesty's humble servant, hold that none of the discussions about the so-called *zhengtong*, or the orthodoxy, in all ages was clearly defined and beyond a doubt. (The second year of the Huangchu reign of the Emperor Wen, in Chapter 69, *Zizhi tongjian*)

Unlike many historians, who were caught up in the issue of *zhengtong*, Sima devoted himself instead to exploring for what reason there were incessant alternations of prosperity and decline. In this regard, he stated,

What I aspire is only to delineate the rise and fall of past dynasties and joys and sorrows of the people. Being exposed to my delineations, readers themselves judge good and evil and gains and losses. My writings as a whole served as an expostulation. I never attempt to produce a *Chunqiu*-like work formulating grand principles whereby people can pass judgment on [historical events and figures] and most importantly clarify all confusions and set all things right. I do not dare to interfere in the judgment of orthodoxy and unorthodoxy. I merely produce veritable records in strict accordance with the genuine achievements a dynasty had made. (The second year of the Huangchu reign of the Emperor Wen, in Chapter 69, *Zizhi tongjian*)

Sima acted on what he said. For example, he suggested historians should not unduly belittle the late stage of Zhou, Qin, Han, Jin, Sui and Tang, all of which were dynasties that had unified entire China; and moreover, Sima sincerely hoped that the history of the chaotic Southern and Northern dynasties and Five Dynasties, wherein the country was in disintegration, be faithfully reconstructed in the light of historical actualities rather than the so-called *zhengtong*. In particular, Sima pointed out that the adoption of regnal title in the reconstruction of the history of a dynasty or an era was not used to venerate or belittle the dynasty or era, or to judge the genuine or false orthodoxy, [but to veraciously keep account of what really took place in the past] (The second year of the Huangchu reign of the Emperor Wen, in Chapter 69, *Zizhi tongjian*).

In *lixue* gurus' eyes, Sima's history was impure, on the grounds that he failed to appraise the past in strict accordance with the *impartiality* of Heavenly Principle and the *righteousness* of *Chunqiu* even though his pragmatic writings met the need of veneration of the Song dynasty. Such an ideologico-historiographical discrepancy between Sima and other *principled* scholars was intensively embodied in Fan Zuyu's *Tangjian* (A critical history of Tang). Fan was one of Sima's assistants. Nevertheless, Fan's idea of history was fundamentally different from his director.



For example, in his *Tangjian*, Fan resolutely denied the legitimacy of the reign of Wu Zetian. In the face of the historical actualities that Emperor Zhong 中 (r. 684; 705–710 AD) was dethroned [by Wu Zetian] and relocated to the Prefecture of Fang (房), Fan chose not to use Wu's regnal title but to adhere to the reign of the orthodox—albeit dethroned—emperor, inventing a peculiar title—“Di zai Fangzhou 帝在房州” (When the Emperor is in the Prefecture of Fang). He straightly regarded the Emperor Zhong's dethronement as a disaster brought about by the usurpative Empress Dowager. When the dethroned emperor was sent back to the central court, Fan revised the invented title into “Di zai Donggong 帝在东宫” (When the Emperor is in the Eastern Palace). In doing so, Fan indicated that he himself unswervingly adhered to the grand principle of *Chunqiu* and the chronological order of history must be sequenced exclusively according with the time of an orthodox reign. By contrast, Sima more realistically incorporated Wu's twenty-one-year reign into the official *Annals of the Empress Zetian*. Interestingly, in past studies in the traditional Chinese historiography, few works, intentionally or unintentionally, casted light on the huge ideologico-historiographical discrepancy between Sima and his chief assistant. Obviously, Fan was a favorite son of the most renowned *lixue* gurus. For example, Cheng Yi praised Fan's historiographical rule as something *indelible*. Chen's disciples even found that many pieces of remarks were in harmony with the spirit of their master (Chapter 12, *Chengshi waishu* 程氏外书 [A supplement to the *Selected Work of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi*]). It is worth mentioning that Cheng Yi, one of the leading thinkers of *lixue*, and Sima Guang, a towering historian in the Northern Song, were different each other as regards their evaluations of renowned people such as the Emperor Tai and Wei Zheng.

### Zhu Xi

Zhu disliked Sima Guang's magnum opus entitled *Zizhi tongjian*, on the grounds that Sima's guiding ideology was not the impartial Heavenly Principle but his own understanding of orthodoxy. Zhu, the epitome of *lixue*, went further, criticizing Sima's disadvantages in the historiographical pattern. To be specific, Sima's writings were incongruous with *gangchang*; nor was the layout clear and easily searchable. Zhu, for instance, ridiculed Sima, alleging that the historian made no effort to historiographically rectify the enfeoffed lords' usurpation of the prestigious title of King in the late Eastern Zhou and unreasonably disparaged Zhuge Liang's 诸葛亮 (181–234 AD) military expedition against unorthodox regimes as an *offensive invasion* (Chapter 22, in *Zhu Wengong wenji* 朱文公文集 [Selected works of Zhu Xi, or the Lord of Wen Cultural Attainment]). In one of his letters, Zhu even radically proclaimed that writings deviating from the Righteousness and Principle were of a heterodox nature (Chapter 35, in *Zhu Wengong wenji*). Therein lay the starting point of Zhu's criticism against Sima and adaption of *Zizhi tongjian*. Li Fangzi 李方子, a staunch adherent of Zhu Xi's teaching, shed light on what the purposes of Zhu's adapting effort were (Liu Fang's “Houxu 后序” [Epilogue to *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*]). Zhu tried to rectify *Zizhi tongjian*'s three fundamental mistakes—the unorthodox narratives such as justifying the usurpative Cao's Wei and illegitimizing the actually orthodox Liu Bei's 刘备 Han, the writings that could

not play the role of reward and punishment as *Chunqiu* did, and the poor layout of contents.

As regards the result of Zhu's adapting effort—*Zizhi tongjian gangmu*, it was collaboratively finished by Zhu Xi and his disciples. The genuine authorship of the book's "Fanli 凡例" (Guides) is still open to discussion. Consulting other literature, the present author confidently holds that indeed the book was an intensive reflection of Zhu's thinking. The guiding ideology penetrating entire book lay in *zhengtong*. In one of his speeches, Zhu explained his motive for compiling the book. Specifically, being strongly discontent with Sima Guang's historiographical praxis, wherein Zhuge Liang's righteous military action was denounced as an *invasion* just like ridiculously reversing the sequence of putting on cap and shoes, Zhu aspired to fundamentally rectify *Zizhi tongjian* ("[Zizhi] Tongjian gangmu" in Chapter 105, *Zhuji yulei*).

In *Zhuji yulei* and other writings, Zhu clearly indicated his idea of *zhengtong*. He dichotomized the Chinese history into two types of circumstances. In the first type of circumstances, the country was unified; the regional lords, submissive; and the laws, fairly put into effect. Put plainly, *zhengtong*, or the orthodoxy, was firmly established. The circumstances could be further dichotomized. In some cases, *zhengtong* was not established from the start; but later it was gained and consolidated. Thus, it could also be called the *beginning* of the orthodox. For example, at first Qin did not possess *zhengtong*; later, or in the wake of Qin's annexation of other princely states, Qin successfully obtained *zhengtong*. Similar cases could be found in the Western Jin, which was endowed with *zhengtong* after the reign of Taikang 太康 (280–289 AD), and Sui, whose Mandate of Heaven was justified immediately after leaving the previous Chen dynasty buried in ruins. Even the Northern Song was not completely orthodox until the Northern Han 汉 dynasty was annihilated. In other cases, the dynasties had *zhengtong* in the first place; but afterwards, they were deprived of the orthodoxy. For this reason, it could be called the remnant of *zhengtong*. Liu Bei's Han and the Eastern Jin were the perfect embodiment of the remaining orthodoxy. Exactly because Liu Bei's Han was in possession of *zhengtong*, Zhu was extremely mad at Sima Guang's accusation that the military expedition led by Zhuge Liang, the leading minister of Han, was an invasion. So improper, Zhu condemned, was Sima's accusation that it was diametrically against the Righteousness and Principle.

In the second type of circumstances, *zhengtong* entirely disappeared. For example, in the eras of Three Kingdoms, Southern and Northern Dynasties and Five Dynasties the country was in entire disintegration and none of dynasties could be the genuine heir to the Mandate of Heaven. Against the historical backdrop of an entirely disintegrated China, Sima Guang reconstructed the history in a unique way. In his writings, Sima gave priority to a certain side and called the concerned sovereigns *Di* 帝 (emperors) their death *beng* 崩 (an euphemistic form of death); by contrast, the historian called sovereigns of other sides *zhu* 主 (lords) and their death *cu* 殂 (a less euphemistic form of death). Such an unorthodox style of writing infuriated Zhu. Zhu even denied Sima's chronological order applying to the

sovereigns and suggested instead historians capitalize the numerical chronological order and have the regnal title of concerned sovereigns appended to the order (Chapter 105, in *Zhuji yulei*).

Zhu had explained his motive for writing *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*. His explanation read,

If the seasons soundly alternate above, the Heavenly Way will be illustrious. If the orthodox is rectified below, the Humane Way will be established. [Where the historiographical praxis is concerned,] if *gangmu*, or the General Guides, are clearly formulated, the roles – such as the expostulation and being used for reference – that history plays will be made clearer and more conspicuous; and likewise, if the patterns, styles and layouts [of historical narratives] are fully and properly set up, the most profound meaning of history will be remarkably discernible. Thus, anyone who aspires to gain the true knowledge by means of the thorough investigation of things shall be aware of [the basic rules reigning over the historical narrative.] (“Xuli 序例” [Synopsis & examples], in *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*)

Zhu’s aspiration to rectify the misconceived and misrepresented *zhengtong* served as the penetrating and reigning thread in the production of his *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*. But it should be pointed out that in the “Fanli” (Guides) there were seven sets of *shufa*, or the grand rules reigning over the historical writing. The seven sets actually included dozens of regulations, all of which were invented by Zhu’s disciples and unduly complicated. Such arbitrarily made rules or regulations were not in harmony with the spirit of their master (“Ji Xisi ‘Shufa’ xu 揭傒斯书法序” [Jie Xisi’s preface to “Rules of Writing”], in *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*). It was true that Zhu was against the so-called *Chunqiu shufa* 春秋书法 (the *Chunqiu*-style rules reigning over historical narratives), which proclaimed that each word in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* played a role in the judgment of good and evil, even though indeed he aspired to make *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* a judgmental tool.

As regards the stylistic characteristics of *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*, Zhu proposed four points (“Xuli,” in *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*). First, the numerical chronological order was added to a certain year when significant events took place. Moreover, if there was “jia 甲” (the first heavenly stem) or “zi 子” (the first earthly branch) in the numerical chronological order, *jia* or *zi* should be written in vermilion ink. The numerical chronological order was also applied to the years that there were not important events. Second, the particular years of an orthodox dynasty were written immediately under the numerical chronological order. In contrast, the years of an unorthodox regime were indicated in two separate lines. Third, the summary as regards significant events taking place in a certain year was capitalized. Fourth, the separate annotations explained concerned events in detail, as well as including insightful reviews. Simply put, Zhu sincerely hoped that his work would be not only a rectified and complete representation of *Zizhi tongjian* but also the trinity of the original author’s thinking, the ideas embedded in Hu Sanxing’s 胡三省 (1230–1302) highly innovative and profound annotations on *Zizhi tongjian* and recent leading Confucians’ more balanced comments on the *Book* (“Daotong wu 道统五” [The fifth part of “Penetrating Thread of Orthodoxy”], in Chapter 56, *Yuzuan Zhuji quanshu* 御纂朱子全书 [The imperially produced complete works of the Master Zhu Xi]).

Zhu, one of the most significant thinkers in the medieval China, made painstaking efforts to absorb the advantages of contemporary leading historical works and ideologically fuse them into one. Then, he applied the fusion to his own creative writing. In doing so, he successfully turned the idea of *zhengtong* into a powerful ideology guiding the historiographical praxis and transformed historical works into intensive embodiments of *lixue*, or the Learning of Principle. Due to his ideological and practical efforts, a new historiographical pattern—*gangmu*, or the General Guides, which to a certain extent gave expression to a certain politico-academic idea—was created. In the wake of the creation of the pattern of *jishi benmo* 纪事本末 (a themed essay delineating entire course of an event), *gangmu* rose by degrees to prominence in the traditional Chinese historiography. In the post-Song era, a kaleidoscopic array of *gangmu*-style history books were displayed in the garden of historical narratives.

How the idea of *zhengtong* influenced the historiography in the Yuan dynasty?

The debates on *zhengtong*, or the orthodoxy, directly affected the production of the official history devoted to the immediate past Song, Liao and Jin dynasties in Yuan. In the reign of the Emperor Shi 世 (r. 1259–1294), Yu Ji 虞集 was appointed to the position supervising the production of books devoted to the history of the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties. Nevertheless, the work was seriously affected by competing ideas in regard to *zhengtong*. To be specific, among the historians at that time, some contended that the history of Song be the center and those of Liao and Jin supplements; and some held that inasmuch as the founding of Liao was earlier than Song the history of Liao and Song be combined into a single *Northern History*, which could be dichotomized into the *History of Song* spanning from the reign of Emperor Tai 太 (r. 960–976 A.D.) down to the Jingkang reign (1126–1127) and the *History of Southern Song* beginning with the Jianyan 建炎 reign (1127–1130) and ending in the total collapse of Song. In this regard, historians firmly held their own ground respectively, none of them yielding.

In the third year of the Zhizheng 至正 reign (1341–1370), the emperor in one of his edicts required imperial historians to prepare the history devoted to Liao, Jin and Song respectively. Tuotuo 脱脱, the leading minister in the central court, was appointed the chief supervisor of entire work (“Tuotuo zhuan 脱脱传” [The life of Tuotuo], or Chapter 138, in *Yuanshi*). Zhang Qiyang 张起岩, Ouyang Xuan 欧阳玄 and Jie Xisi 谢希逸 play a significant role in the work. According to *Yuanshi*, Ouyang was responsible for rectifying writings in strict accordance with established criteria; Zhang judged and polished concerned manuscripts on the basis of his extremely good command of historical knowledge and *lixue*; and Jie even bent himself to the task unto death (Chapter 182, in *Yuanshi*). Ouyang’s and Zhang’s resoluteness and wide knowledge and Jie’s devotion decisively contributed to the creation of the tri-history—*History of Song*, *History of Liao*, and *History of Jin*.

As regards Jie’s devotional work, one piece of records delineated it in detail (Chapter 181, in *Yuanshi*). Apart from Ouyang, Zhang and Jie, Tiemuier Tashi 铁木儿塔识, who was a senior imperial officer supervising the work writing history and renowned for his orthodoxy and impartial mastery of teachings of *lixue* gurus, and He Weiyi 贺惟一, unremittingly recorded deeds of talented people all over the

country, were commendable historians at that time (Chapter 140, in *Yuanshi*). Overall, high-caliber historians were not seldom seen among the Mongol people and they collaboratively worked on the production of the tri-history. It was particularly worth mentioning that the historians as a whole made a breakthrough in the ideological reconstruction of *zhengtong*. The tri-history—that is, *History of Song*, *History of Liao*, and *History of Jin*—was independent of each other. To put it another way, each dynasty was historiographically endowed with *an* orthodoxy. The trichotomization of the originally monotonous and inseparable *zhengtong*, or the established unchallengeable orthodoxy, was, to some extent, of a historiographically revolutionary nature. Of course, it did not mean that the traditional historiography in Yuan had already enjoyed the full freedom from the conventional idea of *zhengtong*.

#### 4 The Idea of Vicissitudes in the Historical Perspective

In the two Songs, the social contradictions were increasingly complicated and exacerbated. In the face of deepening social crises, historians, together with thinkers, proposed multifarious change-themed ideas whereby solutions to the crises could be formulated. Such ideas and solutions gave expression not only to the historians' and thinkers' ideas of history but also to the role the historical thinking could play in a society. Therein exactly lay an important aspect of the social significance of historiography. The present author proposes two points in regard to the *vicissitudinous* ideas formulated by the communities of historians and politicians and by the intellectual group predominantly consisting of *lixue* gurus. Generally, historians and thinkers at that time almost unexceptionally ruminated over the deepening social crises and tried their best to find a way out for the dynasty. Some indirectly or directly set forth the view of reform, or even participated in reformative efforts; and some conveyed their visions of social reform by means of the reexamination of history. Among them, Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang, Wang Anshi, Shao Yong and the Cheng brothers were renowned for their ideas of reform; Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian discussed the social reform in a differing perspective; and Ma Duanlin, a reputable historian living in the Song-Yuan transition, rethought change and reform in his effort to conclude the history of the two Songs.

##### Ouyang Xiu

Ouyang was one of the core members who proposed and implemented the reform in the Qingli reign. His idea of vicissitudes in the historical perspective was intensively embodied in his theory of *tongbian* 通变, or the thorough and all-around understanding of all changes taking place in entire history. Ouyang held that *change* was one of the grandest laws reigning over the movements of heaven, earth, sun, moon and all other things. Moreover, *change* played a decisive role in the progress, retrogression, survival and downfall of the human society. In Ouyang's discourses,

*change* was metaphysically tantamount to *li*, or the Principle. His elaboration of *change* read,

If anything fails to change when it reaches its pinnacle, there must be disadvantages. If the timely changes take place, the thing will grow more smoothly. For this reason, *change* is of an auspicious nature. As a rule, there is not anything that cannot be changed; and likewise, there is not any phenomenon wherein things will not grow smoothly after timely changes. It is what the Heavenly Principle concurrently determines. (Chapter 18, *Jushi ji*) [Ouyang went further, asserting.] When the hardship reaches its limit, the prosperity is bound to come. It is what the Principle works. [It is also what the assertion that] “When a series of changes has run all its course, another change ensues” [exactly means.]<sup>6</sup> (Chapter 2, in *Yi tongzhi wen*). [Finally he concludes,] Whenever a thing grows to a certain limit, a change in the opposite direction will inevitably take place. In the same vein, the number will definitely change, whenever it arrives at the apex. It is exactly what the Principle usually plays. (Chapter 18, *Jushi ji*)

On the basis of his elaborations of *change*, Ouyang worked out a series of proposals of reform. For example, in his well-known *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史 the importance he attached to the people and the moral politics and the insight into the dual nature of *pengdang* 朋党 (the political cliques) were all reform-minded.

It is worth mentioning that Ouyang reasonably casted doubt on the role *Zhouli* 周礼 (Book of rites of [the Western] Zhou) could play in the society. His doubts were not only philologically but also socio-politically significant. Basically, Ouyang strongly objected to put into effect the social administration in accordance with *Zhouli* (Chapter 48, *Jushi ji*). There were three points in his doubts. First, *Zhouli* was too complicated to be practically used. Second, despite necessary modifications, the multifarious institutions as a whole basically followed their counterparts in the Qin dynasty since the Qin-Han era. Second, history showed that any reign that politically acted in accordance with *Zhouli*—Wang Mang’s 王莽 New Regime (8–23 AD), the Northern Zhou 周 (557–581 AD), for instance—unexceptionally collapsed rapidly.

### Wang Anshi

Unfortunately, what Ouyang worry about—that is, the obstinate adherence to the teachings of *Zhouli* in the politics—did come true. In the Xi’ning 熙宁 reign (1068–1077), Wang Anshi, the leading minister advocating a systematic reform, repeated the mistake committed by the New Regime and Northern Zhou. The story of Wang Anshi and his reform corroborated two points. First, a certain type of historical thinking could substantially influence the social reform. Wang had boldly asserted, “Changes taking place in the heaven shall not be feared; nor is what the ancestors did worth being emulated; nor is any gossip genuinely a fearful thing” (“Wang Anshi zhuan 王安石传” (The life of Wang Anshi), or Chapter 327, in *Songshi* [History of Song]). Therein lay his great aspirations to break the tradition and launch a reform. Second, the great antiquity served as the origin of Wang’s political inspirations. As a matter of fact, Wang did formulate his programs on the

<sup>6</sup>*Zhouyi* 周易, or *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-xia/ens>.

basis of *Zhouli*. The ancient classic—*Zhouli*—was actually the blueprint of the New Policies promulgated in the Xi'ning reign. In this regard, Wang paradoxically stated, “The key [of the politics] lies in the emulation of the great antiquity, even though the ways of sage kings differ from each other” (Chapter 56, *Linchuan xiansheng wenji* 临川先生文集 [Selected works of Wang Linchuan]).

Wang was the main author of *Sanjing xinyi* 三经新义 (Innovative interpretations of the three Confucian classics), which served as the ideologico-theoretical basis of his idea of reform. Qiu Hansheng 邱汉生, a modern Chinese historian, in his preface to one of the annotated Wang Anshi's works sharp-mindedly pointed out that *Sanjing xinyi* was remarkably politically teleological and a hundred-percent tool promoting the New Policies.<sup>7</sup> *Sanjing xinyi* consisted of *Shiyi* 诗义 (The meaning of *Book of Poetry*), *Shuyi* 书义 (The meaning of *Book of History*), and *Zhouguan yi* 周官义 (The meaning of *Book of Rites of The Western Zhou*). Apart from Wang, other scholars such as Lu Dian 陆佃 and Shen Jichang 沈季长 and even Wang's son—Wang Xiu 王秀—contributed to the book. It took them eight years to finish *Sanjing xinyi*. Wang himself penned *Zhouguan yi*, which most directly affected the New Policies and laid the theoretical foundation of his reform.<sup>8</sup> As regards the relationship existing between *Zhouguan yi* and *New Policies*, Chao Gongwu 晁公武, a reputable scholar in the Southern Song, explained in detail in one of his treatises and in particular pointed out that Wang tried his best to produce innovative interpretations whereby he could theoretically justify the reform and silence his opponents (The first part of Chapter 1, in *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡斋读书志 [The catalogue of Chao's private collection of books]).

Indeed, the prototypes of Wang's many innovative policies—*qingmiao* 青苗 (the state loans available for the commoners), *bao-jia* 保甲 (the community-based system of social administration), *muyi* 募役 (paying cash in exchange for being freed from the corvee labor), *fangtian junxun* 方田均税 (the fair taxation based on the accurate and even-handed measurement of farmland), and *shiyi* 市易 (the imperial supervision of market with a view to curbing tycoons' monopoly of commercial activities), and so on—could be found in *Zhouli*. In fact, apart from the aspiration to have his new policies authoritatively based on the practice of the great antiquity, Wang had to invoke *Zhouli* to justify his groundbreaking efforts on the grounds that at that time if a reform could not be traced back to the (Confucian) Classics, it would be hard to be put into effect. It should also be pointed out that Cai Jing's 蔡京 (1047–1126) rehabilitation of Wang's reform was actually an evil effort to plunder the wealth of the people in the name of the resuscitation of *Zhouli*. Cai was a notoriously corrupt minister and his misdoings greatly contributed to the collapse of the Northern Song. Wang's *Zhouguan yi* had long been lost. The extant edition is based on Qing scholars' collection of fragments of the original book.

<sup>7</sup>See: Qiu Hansheng 邱汉生, “Xu 序” (Preface), in Wang Anshi 王安石, *Shiyi gouchen* 诗义钩沉 [Exploring the profound meaning of *Book of Poetry*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), p. 442.

<sup>8</sup>Hou Wailu 侯外庐 et al., *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中国思想通史 [General history of Chinese thought] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), vol. 4, p. 442.

Nevertheless, at any rate, Wang's *Zhouguan yi* was regressive in terms of the view of history. In the "Author's Preface" to the book, Wang wrote,

There has been more than one thousand years from the decline of the Zhou dynasty down to the present. Sadly and helplessly, the residuals of the Great Peace have already vanished into thin air. Even scholars cannot fully understand the Classics [delineating the lost Great Peace.] It was at this moment that I resolve to shed revealing light on the genuine meaning [of the Classics] and carry forward the teachings [of the Classics]. Indeed, such an ambitious aspiration goes beyond my depth. I do realize that how difficult it will be for me to fulfill it. It is true that the effort to creatively interpret the Classics and carry forward the concerned teachings was almost an mission impossible; it is also true that the (re)establishment of the politics and the rehabilitation [of the praxes in the antiquity] cannot be easily fulfilled. ... [Regardless of the difficulty and hardship,] I presumptuously carry out the programs on the basis of the observation of the reality and the reexamination of the past. It is an embodiment of the see-and-know doctrine.

Hou Wailu 侯外庐, the towering figure in modern studies in the Chinese intellectual history, analyzed Wang's "Preface," pointing out that the ancient Classic—*Zhouli*—justified the New Policies and the Policies in turn corroborated the practicability of ancient classics.<sup>9</sup> In Hou's eyes, the reform led by Wang was totally theoretically based on Wang's reinterpretations of the Classics. Due to Wang's clinginess to the archaic teachings, the Wang-style reform was no more than a vain attempt to resuscitate the lost Great Peace of great antiquity. *Zhouli*, one of the most respectable Confucian classics, might be, however, a pseudograph. If it was not falsely fabricated, it must be adulterated with a great number of idealized contents authored by scholars living in the eras much later than the Western Zhou. In view of this, it is safe to say that Wang's innovative rehabilitation of the dynasty was in the garb of old traditions and guided by an old ideology. Wang, paradoxically and ridiculously, hoped that he could remold the reality into a new world by virtue of something obsolete. It was actually an embodiment of the thinker's confusion about the way out of crises and inability to put into effect the reform. The history of Wang's fruitless reform indicated that a genuine *reform* must be ideologically guided by a *new* historical thinking, which should be powerful enough to push forward the reform. Thus, the present author suggests researchers analyze a great politician's view of history in the perspective of philosophy of history.

The methods whereby the historical study could play a role in the society were multifarious. For example, with the help of educational tools, the historical knowledge and thinking contained in literary and artistic works could be turned into certain ideas or ideologies affecting peoples' actions and behaviors. As regards the historians and politicians, the former participated in the reality in light of their own understanding of history and the latter put into effect the political administration and reforms. In doing so, they vividly showed that how the idea of history gave expression to and acted on the social reality at the same time. In the case of Wang Anshi, at the first glance the politician looked down on history. But on the other hand, he had to resort to history in his efforts to design and carry out the reformative

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 443.



programs. In this sense, the success and failure of Wang's Xi'ning New Policies were all interconnected with history.

During the Song-Yuan transition, Ma Duanlin, a renowned historian at that time, produced his indelible work entitled *Wenxian tongkao* 文献通考 (A comprehensive examination of existing literature). As an adherent of the collapsed Great Song, Ma heartfully concluded Wang's reform. On the one hand, Ma praised Wang's fearless spirit guiding the effort to put into effect new policies and in particular affirmed the brilliant job Wang did in the rehabilitation of the national finance (Chapter 12, in *Wenxian tongkao*). On the other hand, Ma disclosed the disadvantages existing in the New Policies. He criticized that Wang's reform was ideologically unable to adapt to the time. For example, Wang's *bao-jia* system was based on the ancient practice wherein the registered residents were conscripted. But, such a practice that worked well in ancient times was actually not applicable to Wang's time. In view of this, Ma concluded that the obstinate adherence to outdated programs could not be conducive but detrimental to the governance (Chapter 153, in *Wenxian tongkao*). A similar case could be found in Wang's policy of *muyi* (paying cash in exchange for being freed from the corvee labor). Ma's comments as a whole indicated that on the one hand Wang's (political) thoughts were pragmatic, innovative and even materialistic; but on the other hand, his idea of history was confined to a certain obsolete ideological paradigm. Put plainly, Wang was ideologically devoid of the idea of *tongbian*. Ma as a brilliant historian did not miss the point in his critical reexamination of Wang's reform.

### Ma Duanlin

Ma's surname was Guiyu 贵与. He was born in Leping 乐平 in the Prefecture of Rao 饶 (in present-day Jiangxi). When Ma's magnum opus—*Wenxian tongkao*—was published, he had already been sixty-nine-year old. Apart from the 348-volume *Wenxian tongkao*, he also authored the 153-volume *Duoshi lu* 多识录 (Miscellaneous records), three-volume *Yigen moshou* 义根墨守 (The unswerving adherence to the root of righteousness) and *Daxue jizhuan* 大学集传 (An intensively annotated *Great Learning*), all of which were unfortunately lost. His father—Ma Tinglun 马廷鸾, who was a high official in the central court—was also a historian and penned the work entitled *Dushi xunbian* 读史旬编 (Reading notes compiled in every ten-day session). Father's work directly influenced the son's historiography. Of course, there were conflicting ideas between them.

*Wenxian tongkao* consisted of twenty-four chapters (see table below).

Themes	Chapter titles
Economic system	Land Tax
	Monetary System
	Household Registration
	Corvee Labor
	Commodity Tax and the State's Monopoly of Sale
	The State's Effort to Purchase Grains
	Articles of Tribute
	State Expenditure

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Themes	Chapter titles
Political system	Selection of Talented People
	Educational Institute
	Official Ranks
Imperial rites	The Grandest Imperial Sacrifices
	Imperial Ancestral Temples
	Kingly Rites
	Imperial Music
Military/legal system	Military Regulation
	Penal System
Cultural classics	Classics and Literature
Imperial lineage	Lineages of Sovereigns
	Enfeoffment
Celestial/geographical phenomena	Movements of Celestial Bodies
	Abnormal Things
	Territorial Investigation
Border Area	Ethnic Groups

Ma produced an all-embracing conclusion of the feudal Chinese society in the twenty-four chapters. In this regard, Bai Shouyi called Ma's magnum opus a panorama of the feudal China.<sup>10</sup>

Ma shed revealing light on the dynamics of the history of the two Songs. Readers should pay particular attention to the *tongbian* perspective that run through Ma's conclusion of history. Inspired by the idea of *tongbian*, Ma criticized some Song officials who attempt to solve exacerbating social problems by means of the restoration of archaic praxes such as *fengjian* 封建 (the enfeoffment) and *jingtian* 井田 (the well-field system). His criticism read,

Indeed, sovereigns in the Great Antiquity employed *fengjian*, or the institutionalized enfeoffment, to create the perpetual stability and prosperity. But, in present-day world the public spirit and good laws have gone with the wind. Under such circumstances, forcibly putting into effect the [outdated] *fengjian* merely because of its good fame is neither conducive to the sovereign; nor does it benefit ministers and commoners. It is ridiculous that at present some are blaming that *fengjian* cannot be effectively implemented. Such [an unreasonable] blame is nothing but [an ideological] product of the pedantic Confucians, who are completely ignorant of the significance of *tongbian*, or thoroughly understanding changes taking place in entire history. (Chapter 275, in *Wenxian tongkao*)

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 842.

The Song-style historical conclusions as a whole were drawn in the perspective of *tongbian*. It is one of the basic characteristics of the reexamination of vicissitudes of history in the Northern and Southern Song dynasties.

### The *lixue* gurus

The leading gurus such as Shao Yong, the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi had their discussions about the *vicissitudinous* history centered on the Heavenly Principle, which served as the highest criterion dictating the social changes. Due to the full ideological submission to the Heavenly Principle, the *lixue* gurus indulged in empty talks about the role the Principle played in the rectification of human mind and social customs, as well as in the restoration of the alleged perfect governance in the Three Dynasties. None of them could, however, propose any feasible programs rehabilitating the Song society. Ironically, it was the time when the Emperor Li 理 (r. 1224–1264) was enthroned and *lixue* gurus such as Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178–1235) politically rose to prominence that the Southern Song rapidly declined. Of course, the present author does not mean that such *principled* gurus could neither be able to put forward ideas worthy of attention nor perform a valuable reexamination of the vicissitudes of history. As regards *lixue* gurus' theories applying to the *vicissitudinous* history, there were several key points.

First, in order to follow the Great Way, history should change/move with the times. Cheng Yi most intensively discussed this point. Analogically saying that the general situation of Song in his time was not very different from that of a person who was lying on the bed sitting on a pile of faggots under which a fire was put, Cheng in one of his memorials to the throne warned that the dynasty must embrace timely changes (“A memorial presented to the Emperor Ren 仁,” in Chapter 5, *Chengshi wenji* 程氏文集 [Collected writings of the Cheng brothers]). The thinker even said he was always frightened at the thought that there would be a devastating chaos [if the dynasty failed to change with times.] As regards the *change*, Cheng held that the thorough investigation of the great antiquity and the creative independence of the convention must be fused together. In another memorial he prepared for one of the Empress Dowagers, Cheng pointed out that some vulgar Confucians' misunderstanding of the aspirations to adhere to the Way and investigate the great antiquity might intellectually confuse the sovereign (“The second memorial presented to the Grand Empress Dowager,” in Chapter 6, *Chengshi wenji*).

According to Cheng's theory, *jigu* 稽古, or the thorough investigation of the great antiquity, was the method whereby the restoration of the perfect governance in the Three Dynasties could be successfully done and meanwhile the work of *jigu* should be in harmony with the Sage's spirit requiring that the antiquity-oriented investigation assume a creative independence of the established convention. In Song, some—for example, thinkers such as Zhang Zai and Li Gou 李覯 and politicians such as Wang Anshi—suggested the government resuscitate archaic praxes such as the enfeoffment and well-field system to alleviate the land crisis or better the land taxation. Cheng thought very differently, sharp-mindedly pointing out that those who were genuinely good at learning from the past tried their best to grasp the sages' spirit rather than their acts that were of an expedient nature

(The first part of Chapter 22, in *Chengshi yishu* 程氏遗书 [Posthumous collections of the Cheng brothers' writings]). Cheng agreed with Liu Zongyuan's 柳宗元 idea that the implementation of *fengjian*, or the enfeoffment, was an embodiment of the *general trend*. Nevertheless, Cheng did not use the terminology—*shi*, or the general trend—but coined a new one—*budeyi* 不得已, or the conditions wherein people had no alternative but to do something. Therein lay the difference existing between Cheng Yi and Wang Anshi. Such a basic difference was of an economic nature. To be specific, Wang's *jingtian*-inspired financial reform challenged the basic economic interest of big landlords and commercial tycoons. Exactly for this reason, Wang's New Learning fundamentally ran counter to the established Learning of Principle, to which gurus such as Cheng Yi obstinately adhered. Some conservatives even blamed Wang's teaching for being detrimental to the human spirit. The present author contends that such a scathing accusation gave expression to the bitter hatred caused by Wang's reform damaging the interest of the establishment. In these conditions, Wang's tragic end was almost inevitable.

Second, the effort to bring about *change* should be cautiously carried out. It was an idea put forward by Cheng Yi, who held that *change* was quite an important thing that must be decided and done after much deliberation (Chapter 4, in *Zhouyi Chengshi yizhuan* 周易程氏易传 [Cheng's furthered interpretations of *Book of Changes*]). Besides this, Cheng contended that *change* be put into effect by degrees and with the times; and that the *change* in relation to aristocrats and men in power must be implemented in an especially careful manner. In particular, he warned that if the financial reform that could damage the interests of powerful and wealthy families were not carefully implemented, rather than the stability and prosperity but only the loss of strong support would be resulted in (Chapter 1, in *Zhouyi Chengshi yizhuan*). In view of this, the present author argues that Cheng Yi's reexamination of the *vicissitudinous* history was no more than an ideological protection of the aristocratic, the powerful and the rich. In the conservatives' discourses, all of which strictly conformed to the Heavenly Principle, the reformers such as Wang Anshi were denounced as greedy evildoers ruining against the human spirit. Put plainly, the conservatives regarded *change* embodied in the reform as something detrimental to the interests of the establishment. Cheng's warning actually served as a prohibition whereby the aristocrats and men in power could avoid being unfavorably affected by Wang's New Policies. Therein unambiguously lay the genuine nature of Cheng's idea of the vicissitudes of history.

Third, the purpose of *tongbian* was to grasp the most fundamental principle of change. It was developed by Zhu Xi, who carried forward the Cheng brothers' teachings and became the indisputable epitome of *lixue*. As regards the idea of vicissitudes of history, Zhu basically agreed with the Cheng brothers' opinion that the governance should conform to the Principle. But on the other hand, Zhu's idea of *tongbian* had its own characteristic. For example, he asserted that if Confucius had the opportunity to resume the governance of [the Western] Zhou, the Sage would simplify the *change* to the core and make it to be easily grasped ("Lun zhidao 论治道" [On the governance], in Chapter 108, *Zhuzi yulei*). Zhu went further, soberly pointing out that the program having present-day laws entirely replaced with ancient ones could not benefit the politics at all and most importantly it was totally infeasible.

Zhu did not think that the archaic praxes such as the enfeoffment and well-field system could wake in the effort to solve Song's social problems. He particularly pointed out that *fengjian*, or the enfeoffment, was behind the time when the conventional enfeoffed states had long given way to the much more appropriate system of prefectures and counties (Chapter 108, in *Zhuzi yulei*). Generally, Zhu was a proponent of Liu Zongyua's idea of *fengjian*; but meanwhile, he disagreed with Liu's total denial of the practicality of *fengjian*. Zhu contended that Liu's evaluation and negation of the archaic system of enfeoffment was merely a rumination about the history; and that the key of the resuscitation of the ancient praxis did not lie in the enfeoffment itself but in the archaic system's spirit—that is, the sovereign's aspiration to lighten the people's load as far as possible. He even boldly suggested the sovereign abolish all excessive taxes and corvee before putting into effect the rehabilitation of ancient systems (“Lun min 论民” [On the people], in Chapter 111, *Zhuzi yulei*). In practice, Zhu had been regional officials for nine years, and he tried his utmost to put into effect his ideas. To be specific, when he was appointed to the leading position in the Prefecture of Zhang 漳, the great thinker substantially benefited the poor peasants by means of the fair and correct demarcation of the farmland. Unsurprisingly, Zhu was vilified by some wealthy and powerful people in the central court. In view of this, the present author concludes that Zhu's idea of vicissitudes of history was not the same as that of Cheng Yi.

Fourth, the discussion about the vicissitudes of history should be combined with a thorough understanding of all changes taking place in entire history. Such an intellectual fusion could be better understood in the pragmatic political dimensions. According to Shao Yong's writings, for instance, the perfect governance required that the politics must not obstinately adhere to a certain pattern but change with the times, just like the winter and spring could by no means be mixed up (The first part of Chapter 11, in *Huangji jingshi shu* 皇极经世书 (The book of highest principles ordering the world)). Simply put, every person should have the consciousness of *change* on the grounds that *change* in the historical perspective was inevitable. Shao went further, dividing the *change* into four types (see table below).

Types	Characteristic	Endurance	Embodiment
The highest mandate	The full freedom to change or remain unchanged	Ten thousand generations	Confucius
The orthodox mandate	The intact inheritance [of the orthodoxy]	One thousand generations	Three High Sovereigns
The received mandate	The remolded inheritance [of the orthodoxy]	One hundred generations	Five Emperors
The changed mandate	The inheritance of the changed orthodoxy	Ten generations	Three Kings
The incepted mandate	The remolded inheritance of the changed orthodoxy	One generation	Five Hegemons

Source: The 45th section of “Guanwu pian 观物篇” (Observation of the things), in the first part of Chapter 11, *Huangji jingshi shu*.

Shao Yong laid particular stress on *yin* 因, or the effort to continue the convention as before. For this reason, his idea in regard to the vicissitudes of history was of a conservative nature. But on the other hand, he had emphatically said the efforts to adhere to the established praxes or bring changes to them were entirely dependent on particular circumstances. He even contended that if vicissitudes in the historical perspective were brought about in accordance with the general trend of history, there would be the perpetual peace. In view of this, the present author holds that Shao actually employed some Daoist threads to remold the Confucian idea of gains and losses. It raises another question—how to successfully put into effect Shao’s idea of timely change or adherence? In this regard, Shao formulated the principle of *shan* 善, or being humane/benevolent, whereby the people could be *hua* 化 (moralized), *jiao* 教 (taught), *quan* 劝 (encouraged), and *shuai* (led). According to Shao’s theory, *hua*, *jiao*, *quan* and *shuai* were all methods, or the embodiments of *yong* 用 (specific functions); and meanwhile, *ti* 体, or the essence, was embodied in the more metaphysical *dao* (Way), *de* (morality), *gong* 功 (efficacy) and *li* 力 (force). Overall, the Shao-style idea of vicissitudinous history was extensive, flexible and sensible; but on the other hand, it was conservative, empty and sterile. Thus, Shao’s theory ultimately and much less innovatively stopped at the perpetual unchangeability of the Heavenly Principle and Way.

## 5 The Utilitarian Learning and Learning Aspiring to be Conducive to the Statecraft

The almost endless sessions of reform failed to find any effective solutions to the deepening social crises in the Northern and Southern Song dynasties. Nor could the *lixue* gurus’ eloquent talks focusing on Heaven, humankind, nature and mandate work. Unlike such high-sounding gurus, some thinkers concurrently focused instead on the moral principle and utilitarian aspiration rather on the meaningless nature and mandate. A few historians tried hard to combine history with social reality with a view to finding specific solutions to existing social problems. Among them, those who came from the Eastern Zhejiang School and devoted themselves to the utilitarian learning and Lü Zuqian and his disciples were representatives. In this regard, a renowned Qing scholar pointed out that such utilitarianism-oriented schools could be placed on a par with the highly influential schools founded by Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan 陆九渊 (1139–1193).<sup>11</sup> As regards the utilitarian school, the Yongjia 永嘉 branch represented by Xue Jixuan 薛季宣 (1134–1173), Chen Fuliang 陈傅良 (1137–1203) and Ye Shi 叶适 (1150–1223), Yongkang 永康 branch by Chen Liang 陈亮 (1143–1194) and Lü’s teaching were all intellectually utilitarian and fundamentally different from Zhu Xi’s school. For this reason, they

<sup>11</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Song Yuan xue’an*, vol. 3, p. 1738.

were collectively called *zhexue* 浙学, or the Zhejiang Scholarship, even though indeed there were differences existing among them.

Zhu Xi regarded *zhexue* as an academic enemy. He strongly disagreed with *zhexue*'s exclusive focus on the increasingly influential utilitarianism, which might be more ideologically dangerous than the Zen Buddhism (Chapter 123, in *Zhuzi yulei*). Where Lü Zuqian's teaching was concerned, Quan Zuwang, a leading Qing scholar, called it *wuxue* 婺学, or the Wu 婺 Scholarship, on the grounds that Lü was born in the Prefecture of Wu (present-day Jinhua 金华, Zhejiang), and praised Lü as the epitome of the Scholarship. Quan revealingly pointed out that it was in the reign of the Emperor Xiao 孝 (r. 1162–1189) that *wuxue* was in full flush of its popularity.<sup>12</sup> Besides, he observed that differing thinkers of *wuxue* shared the same academic characteristic even though there was not any intellectual interdependence among them.<sup>13</sup> Taking into consideration the differences existing among thinkers and the lack of academic exchange, the present author does not think that such utilitarianism-oriented scholars had already formed an independent intellectual *school*. Generally, in *zhexue* Lü's teaching enjoyed an indisputable predominance, which was embodied in Quan's assertion that [the teaching of] Donglai 东莱 (i.e. Lü Zuqian) was almost all-embracing.<sup>14</sup>

As regards the characteristics of *zhexue*, the present author proposes three points. First, *zhexue* paid equal attention to the Classics and history and laid stress on the utilitarian moral accumulation. For example, renowned thinkers such as Chen Liang and Ye Shi remarkably rethought and reviewed history and attempted to fuse history with reality. Ye had explained this point in detail. His explanation read,

Those who have already been enlightened by the Way know well right from wrong, while being ignorant of past and present. Those who have genuinely grasped the highest learning are very different from them. In the latter's mind, if the past was not deeply explored, the future could by no means be well perceived beforehand; and likewise, if the present was not scrutinized, the past would impossibly be well understood. Even the Sage aspired to grasp past and present at the same time and in doing so He could rehabilitate the Great Way. [Ye goes further, saying,] The ancient people knew well what had been said and done in the past, so that they could increase the moral accumulation; in contrast, people in recent times grow increasingly narrow-minded and more poorly informed because they exclusively endeavor to fully understand mind and nature and almost completely abandon the historical knowledge. Such a biased effort is actually detrimental to the moral accumulation.<sup>15</sup>

Chen had a similar idea. Furthermore, he assumed a more radical stance, being diametrically against the Learning of Principle. Quan Zuwang noticed this point, asserting that unlike Ye Shi's Yongjia branch, which was ultimately intellectually traced back to the thoughts of the Cheng brothers, the Yongkang branch represented

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 1954.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ye Shi 叶适, *Shuixin wenji* 水心文集 [Collected works of Ye Shuixin (i.e. Ye Shi)] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), p. 603.

by Chen Liang was *entirely* utilitarian.<sup>16</sup> Echoing Quan's comments, another Qing scholar pointed out that Chen's teaching exclusively focused on the pragmatic dimension of the Confucian study.<sup>17</sup> The author of *Songshi* even praised Chen as a brilliant scholar overthrowing the entire established scholarship and broadening the human mind to the fullest (Chapter 436, in *Songshi*). Indeed, one of Chen's most remarkable ideological characteristics exactly lay in his utilitarian reexamination of history.

In the meantime, Lü Zuqian, one of Chen's contemporaries, also advocated the moral accumulation in the pragmatic perspective, seriously suggesting,

[People shall do their best to] know what was said and done in the past. Investigating what was done, they can draw useful lessons; and rethinking what was said, they can explore the innermost part of the mind. In doing so, people will be able to successfully fulfill the moral accumulation. If people are not good at performing the moral accumulation, they may sap their will to make progress by seeking excessive pleasures.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Zhu Xi, who gave priority to the Classics rather than to history and looked down on history, Lü attached the same importance to both. Lü as a *historian* boldly proclaimed that the discussion about nature and mandate must be dependent on the investigation of history.<sup>19</sup> Among his works, history was predominant (see table below).

Titles	Details	Overall description
<i>Dashi ji</i> 大事记 (Chronical of events)	It was a twelve-volume annalistic book beginning with 481 B.C. and ending in 90 B.C.	The three works were systematically interconnected with each other.
<i>Dashi ji jieti</i> 大事记解题 (Explanatory notes on <i>Dashi ji</i> )		
<i>Dashi ji tongshi</i> 大事记通释 (Comprehensive interpretations of <i>Dashi ji</i> )	The three-volume work widely consulted ancient writings such as “Dazhuan 大传” (Great explanations) of the <i>Book of Changes</i> , “Preface” to the <i>Book of History</i> , “Preface” to the <i>Book of Poetry</i> , <i>Confucian Analects</i> , Liu Xiang's 刘向 “Preface” to <i>Zhanguo ce</i> 战国策 (Strategic discourses produced in the Warring States era), “Author's Preface” to <i>Shiji</i> , <i>Shiji</i> and the posthumous collections the Cheng brothers' writings.	

(continued)

<sup>16</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Song Yuan xue'an*, vol. 3, p. 1830.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1832.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1654.

<sup>19</sup>Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚, *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通义 [All-embracing delineations of literature and history] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), pp. 523–524.



(continued)

Titles	Details	Overall description
<i>Zuoshi zhuan shuo</i> 左氏传说 (Interpretations of <i>Zuozhuan</i> )		
<i>Zuoshi zhuan xushuo</i> 左氏传续说 (A sequel to <i>Zuoshi zhuan shuo</i> )		
<i>Donglai boyi</i> 东莱博议 (Miscellaneous discourses of Lü Zuqian)		

Lü Zuqian himself explained the purpose of the production of *Dashi ji* and the work's relation to *Jieti* (Explanatory notes) and *Tongshi* (Comprehensive interpretations) (Chapter 1, in *Dashi ji*). The three books as a whole were the embodiment not only of Zuqian's guiding ideology advocating the moral accumulation but also of his *lixue*-style thinking. Besides this, the three works were all remarkably annalistic and the fusion of the concurrent investigation and reexamination of history. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that in Lü's works the writing style whereby the reconstruction of history and metaphysical rumination about history could be independent of each other inevitably created a sense of separation.

Second, *zhexue* advocated the scholarship that could be conducive to the statecraft. Such a pragmatic political aspiration was not solely embodied in the utilitarian moral accumulation. In this regard, Huang Zongxi, one of the three most renowned philosophers during the Ming-Qing transition, had pointed out that the Yongjia branch taught people to grasp the essence of the utilitarian teaching by means of the investigation of specific affairs and tried its best to make the teaching practically feasible.<sup>20</sup> Lü Zuqian also revealed that Xue Jixuan, one of the founders of the Yongjia branch, had worked very hard on the practical affairs such as taxations, topography, irrigation and military regulations.<sup>21</sup> Apart from Lü, Ye Shi much more straightforwardly stated that if what people studied could not be practically applied to the social reality, [the Confucian] reading and writing would be entirely useless.<sup>22</sup> Overall, *zhexue* did an excellent job in the elaborations of fiscal and military affairs and the everyday life.

Among scholars with utilitarian aspirations, Lü Zuqian was undoubtedly the most brilliant one. His utilitarian scholarship was quite conspicuous and attractive. He firmly and explicitly stated that all scholars must have a utilitarian aspiration (Chapter 5, in *Zuoshi zhuan shuo*). Lü set an example in the effort to practice what one advocated. For example, he discussed twelve types of institutions from the utilitarian perspective in *Lidai zhidu xiangshuo* 历代制度详说 (Detailed interpretations of institutions through all ages). The book, together with his other works,

<sup>20</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Song Yuan xue'an*, vol. 3, p. 1696.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 1802.

shared the same utilitarian spirit. It shed revealing light on a kaleidoscopic array of institutions and regulations with respect to the selection of officials, education, official ranks, taxations, government income, water transportation of grain, salt sales, alcoholic prohibition, mintage, wasteland development, flood protection, farmland distribution, garrison agriculture, military administration, war horses, penal codes, administrative affairs, and so on. The Zuqian-style pragmatic scholarship were inherited by latter generations of historians such as Wang Yinglin 王应麟 and Huang Zhen 黄震. In the post-Song ear, the utilitarian historiography grew rapidly and rose to prominence.

Third, *zhexue* enjoyed a great diversity. In this regard, a Qing scholar pointed out that among reputable utilitarian thinkers, Xue Jixuan was renowned for his diverse and practical mastery of various genres of knowledge<sup>23</sup> and Chen Fuliang was known to us for being the heir to Xue's utilitarian spirit and practice. But on the other hand, such a highly diverse feature was denounced by some scholars as *impurity*. For example, unlike Ye Shi, who was relatively epistemologically pure, Lü Zuqian, whose thoughts were actually an assemblage of teachings of Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan, the Hunan 湖南 Scholarship, ideas of governance, and even Buddhist intellectual threads, was, to some extent, academically mixed and disorderly. Take his *Donglai boyi* for example. Although there were remarkable elaborations of and comments on history, the guiding ideology of the book were unduly eclectic. Such an excessive eclecticism unfavorably affected Lü's historiographical praxis. As a consequence, his historical thinking failed to grow into an independent intellectual school. Exactly for this reason, few scholars paid due attention to Lü's historiography when they were examining historical works produced in Song. It should also be pointed out that apart from the eclecticism *lixue* elements also played quite a significant role in Lü's production of history books.

Ideologically, the utilitarian idea could by no means be in accord with the Heavenly Principle's impartiality asserted by the leading *lixue* gurus such as Zhu Xi. Such a fundamental discordance existing between the two intellectual communities was intensively embodied in the debates on the Kingly and Hegemonic Ways, as well as on righteousness and profit, between Zhu Xi and Cheng Liang. Chen entirely disagreed with Zhu's idea of Heavenly Principle. By contrast, Zhu unswervingly asserted that the great antiquity was perfectly governed due to the prevalence of the Principle and the present-day world grew irrevocably decadent because of the rampancy of human desires. Against the contrasting scenarios of the great antiquity and present-day world, Zhu earnestly suggested scholars enthusiastically advocate the impartiality of Heavenly Principle while abstaining themselves from promoting the vulgar utilitarianism.

Chen intellectually ran counter to Zhu. In one treatise, he elaborated his idea.<sup>24</sup> In his elaborations, the dissenting and utilitarian thinker cried out for justice on behalf

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 1691.

<sup>24</sup>Chen Liang 陈亮, *Chen Liang ji* 陈亮集 [Selected works of Chen Liang] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), p. 281.

of the history from Han and Tang dynasties down to the present, which was denounced by *lixue* gurus as a decadent, wild-desire-ridden era. Rather, the *history* evolving from Han and Tang was, Chen contended, an era in—a *hidden*—harmony with the Heavenly Principle and sovereigns such as the brilliant emperors of Han and Tang were as outstanding as the Sages in the great antiquity. Put plainly, Chen disproved Zhu's degenerate idea of history. In another treatise, Chen responded to Zhu's reproach, furthering the idea that the fulfillment of the Great Way could be independent neither of specific circumstances nor of the humankind.<sup>25</sup> The ideologically furthered inseparability of the Way and the specific circumstances/human effort more convincingly justified the scholarly utilitarianism. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the idea of Chen Liang was not thoroughly utilitarian. For example, although Chen recognized the magnificent work done by sovereigns of Han and Tang, he denied the value of capable high lords such as Cao Cao, who was the de facto sovereign in North China in the twilight years of the Later Han. In view of this, we might conclude that in Chen's mind there were merely a handful of sovereigns indiscernibly conforming to the Heavenly Principle in the past one thousand and five hundred years and the country were overall poorly governed. Therein exactly lay Chen's ideological soft underbelly on which Zhu could repeatedly attack. The foregoing discussions indicated that the ideologico-intellectual gap existing between *zhexue* and the more orthodox teaching of Zhu Xi was greatly being widened.

## 6 The Historical Criticism and Zheng Qiao's *Tongzhi*

In the Northern and Southern Song dynasties, there were abundant works devoted to the historical criticism. For example, Hu Hong's *Huangwang daji*, Fan Zuyu's *Tangjian* and Lü Zuqian's *Donglai boyi* were known to us. Generally, the historical criticism could be applied to both history and historiography. The contents of such a dual criticism were so diverse that the origin of antiquity, praxis of enfeoffment, well-field system, figures *plus* events, Heavenly Principle, cardinal ethico-moral rules, vicissitudes in the historical perspective and so on, could be included. Among scholars devoting themselves to the historical criticism, Zheng Qiao was the most prominent and his two-hundred-volume *Tongzhi* was the most representative work in this field. Liang Qichao, the towering figure in the scholarly world of the late Qing, though very highly of Zheng, lavishly asserting that Zheng Qiao, Liu Zhiji 劉知几 and Zhang Xuecheng were the three most brilliant historians embodying the ancient Chinese historiography.<sup>26</sup> The present author does not think it is appropriate that Liang juxtaposed the three scholars against the same backdrop of the historiographical significance. The three renowned historians were, however,

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>26</sup>Liang Qichao 梁启超, *Zhongguo lishi yanjiufa* 中国历史研究法 [Methodological expositions of studies in the Chinese history] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), p. 24.

historiographically different from each other. Specifically, Zheng emphatically worked on the historical criticism; Liu, on the historical methodology; and Zhang, on the historical significance. Where the Zheng-style historical criticism was concerned, the present author proposes several points.

First, it was so extensive that almost all renowned historians and concerned scholars were put under Zheng's critical searchlight (see table below).<sup>27</sup>

Historians/works	Zheng's criticisms
Confucius/ <i>The Analects</i>	Although Zheng respected very much Confucius, he denounced <i>The Analects</i> as a book of empty talks.
Sima Tan, Sima Qian/ <i>Shiji</i>	<i>Shiji</i> was less extensive due to Sima Qian's limited access to primary sources. The writing of <i>Shiji</i> was less refined on the grounds that the linguistic style was not consistent and slang could be occasionally found in the book.
Ban Gu/ <i>Hanshu</i>	<i>Hanshu</i> exclusively focused on the Former Han dynasty, so that the history was factitiously severed. Digging into the book, readers could not know well gains and losses taking place in various institutions running through all ages. Ban Gu's allegation that Han was the heir to the Mandate bestowed on Yao, one of the greatest Sage Kings in the great antiquity, was totally ungrounded. Ban Gu forcefully and hierarchically divided renowned people in past and present into nine groups in the concerned "Tables." In doing so, he went against Sima Qian's original intention setting up the <i>tables</i> . Ban Gu was epistemically less independent. First, the primary sources in relation to eras before the Emperor Wu 武 were from <i>Shiji</i> ; and those concerned with the period from the Emperor Zhao 昭 down to Emperor Ping 平, from writings of Jia Kui 贾逵 and Liu Xin. Besides, it was Bao Zhao 班昭, Gu's younger sister, who finally finished <i>Hanshu</i> . Second, the reputable <i>Yiwen zhi</i> 艺文志 (Treatise on literature) was actually primarily based on Liu Xiang and Liu Xin's <i>Qilüe</i> (Seven catalogues). In comparison with <i>Qilüe</i> , Ban Gu's original writings were much poor. Ban Gu was ignorant of predominant institutions in a certain dynasty.
Dong Zhongshu	The prominent thinker unreasonably advocated the theory alleging there was a mystical interconnection between inauspicious omens and natural disasters.
Liu Xiang	Not only did both acted as Dong Zhongshu had done, but they also paid much less attention to the special technique of illustrative plate, which was finally unluckily lost.
Liu Xin	
Fan Ye	Both obstinately adhered to Ban Gu's historiography and produced historical works in a much less innovative manner.
Chen Shou	
Medieval historians	Historians in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern, and early Tang dynasties did not attempt to correct the defects of works devoted exclusively to a certain dynasty. To make matters worse, they arbitrarily passed judgment on historical events and figures.

(continued)

<sup>27</sup>Zheng Qiao 郑樵, "Zongxu 总序" (General Preface), in *Tongzhi ershi lue* 通志二十略 [The twenty treatises in *Tongzhi*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 1–12.

(continued)

Historians/works	Zheng's criticisms
Liu Zhiji	It was unfair to revere Ban Gu while despising Sima Qian. Just the same as Sima Qian, who merely had a very poor genealogical knowledge, Liu committed quite a few mistakes in his delineations of changes taking place in the familial names.
Ouyang Xiu	"Tables" in Ouyang's <i>Xin Tang shu</i> were based on existing family trees, among which many were unreliable.
Sima Guang	In Sima's <i>Zizhi tongjian</i> , the chronological order was too complex due to the adoption of the ten Heavenly Stems and twelve Earthly Branches.

Second, Zheng's criticisms gave expression to his idea of history and historiographical thinking, both of which were renowned for the theoretical profundity. Such a theoretical profundity was embodied in Zheng's inquiries into the origin of the world and the fundamental changes taking place in the great antiquity.

1. The origin of the world. Zheng asserted that the world originated from the Five Elements, all of which incessantly kept changing. In the light of such a fundamental assertion, the historian criticized the Learning of Principle to the fullest. He ridiculed those, who obstinately devoted themselves to the exploration of the meanings of grand moral principles, for being the stupid people searching for sound in an empty valley.<sup>28</sup> Most thought-provokingly, Zheng severely rebuked the alleged mystical interconnection between omens and disasters, boldly denouncing such an ungrounded teaching as an evil scholarship deceiving the supreme Heaven, as well as disclosing the theoretical absurdness embedded in treatises such as "Celestial Phenomena," "Five Elements" and "Auspicious Omens" in *zhengshi* 正史, or the formal, standard and orthodox history officially produced by the imperial agency. In this regard, Zheng had offered a wonderful criticism. The criticism read,

Thus, the Grand Principle reigning over the myriad things cannot be independent of Five Element; and meanwhile, the Principle of Five Elements is the most changeful. For example, [the hexagram of] *li* 离 originally has the element of *fire*. But meanwhile, indeed there is the element of *water* in it. And likewise, there is the element of *fire* in [the hexagram of] *kan* 坎, thought it intrinsically embodies the element of *water*. [In view of this,] it is unreasonable that people exclusively regard the flood in the autumn as the confirmation of the movement of the Element of Water and the conflagration in an imperial hall of Luoyang [in the Eastern Zhou] as the confirmation of the movement of the Element of Fire. Besides, the [Western] Zhou dynasty had the auspicious omen embodied in the Red Bird, [a symbol of Fire,] even though it was in possession of the Virtue of Wood; and the [Former] Han dynasty witnessed the auspicious Yellow Dragon [symbolizing the Earth,] in spite of being endowed with the Virtue of Fire. How could these be reasonably explained?<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>*Tongzhi ershi lue*, vol. 2, p. 1827.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1905–1906.

There were two key points in the quotation. First, the Principle could by no means be independent of the specific Five Elements and changes taking place in Five Elements were not mechanical. Second, invoking the philosophical *unity of opposites*, Zheng successfully destroyed the mystical basis on which the totally ungrounded interconnection between omens and disasters was alleged. Outstandingly and more convincingly, Zheng pointed out the conflicting matters actually included each other. Thus, his thoughts as a whole were more concise and more dialectic.

2. The inquiry into the great antiquity. Zheng theoretically formulated a *penetrating* history, whereby he could more profoundly reexamine changes taking place in the great antiquity. As regards the origin of humankind, he pointed out that humans and animals were of the same origin; that the bipedalism played quite an important role in the birth and growth of humankind; and that the humankind was the most intelligent due to the fusion of advantages of animals and plants.<sup>30</sup> In comparison with Shao Yong's, Cheng Yi's and Zhu Xi's discussions about the origin of humankind, Zheng shed true light on the great antiquity while entirely abandoning the *principled* teaching. He went further, delineating specific circumstances of the human society in its incipient stage ("Sanhuang ji 三皇纪" (Annals of Three High Lords), or Chapter 1, in *Tongzhi*). His delineation was similar to concerned contents in "Xici 系辞" (Great Treatise) of the *Book of Changes*. It, meanwhile, was fundamentally different from the ancient classic, taking into consideration the fact that Zheng's delineation had already been freed from the aspiration to create a supreme teaching "in accordance the spirit-like way."<sup>31</sup> Zheng also ideologically and historiographically differed from Sima Guang, the leading Song historian, who in the beginning chapter of his *Jigu lu* emphatically portrayed Fuxi 伏羲, a renowned common ancestor of the Chinese, as the King that was endowed with the Virtue of Wood and Mandate of Heaven and in doing so he justified the divine power of sovereigns. If compared with concerned works of Hanfei 韩非 and Liu Zongyuan, Zheng's *Tongzhi* included more contents such as the emergence of writing system and the birth of civilization. Overall, Zheng described changes taking place in the great antiquity as an interruptedly evolving process. He went further, even sharp-mindedly—albeit unscientifically—perceiving that there was a *qualitative* change in the basic pattern of governance from the remotest antiquity when the importance was attached to supernatural beings rather than to humans down to the earliest civilization wherein it was not the spirits but the humankind that was given priority ("Wudi ji 五帝纪" (Annals of Five Emperors), or Chapter 2, in *Tongzhi*). Apart from aforementioned ideas of history, Zheng shed unconventional light on the periodization and the vicissitudinous feudal society in a unique manner.

<sup>30</sup>*Tongzhi ershi lue*, vol. 1, p. 349.

<sup>31</sup>See: *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/guan1/ens>.

Third, in his criticisms Zheng put forward the theory of *huitong* 会通, or the enlightening rumination about the “common action and special nature” of the driving movements.<sup>32</sup> Zheng used *huitong* as the criterion whereby he could judge existing historical works. His judgments gave expression to the Zheng-style ideas of history and historiography. *Huitong* was actually an intellectual system. At the very beginning of *Tongzhi*, Zheng explicitly asserted that *huitong* was historiographically important.<sup>33</sup> Inspired by the idea of *huitong*, he suggested in their works historians reflect such a true course that all historical periods were interlinked and interdependent. For this reason, Zheng praised highly the works of *tongshi* 通史, or the general history, while despising those focusing exclusively on a certain dynasty. The latter, he held, severed or fragmented the originally complete and unbroken history. In this regard, readers should always bear in mind that if the history devoted to a single dynasty was produced by a *huitong*-inspired historian, it could also prominently delineate the dynasty's vicissitudes and thus become a brilliant and thought-provoking work.

Fourth, Zheng strongly disagreed with the so-called *tianren ganying*, or the mystical mutual responses between Heaven and humankind and *Chunqiu bifa*, or the *Chunqiu*-style elaboration of profound meanings through the subtle historical narratives. He really abhorred the historiographical praxis, wherein historians arbitrarily passed judgement on historical events and figures. Zheng boldly denounced the alleged *Chunqiu*-style historiography as the scholarship intellectually benighting the people.<sup>34</sup> He had resentfully said the idea that each word in *Chunqiu* was of a judgmental nature abhorrently made the original Classic epistemically indigestible.<sup>35</sup> Zheng contended instead that the main duty of historian lie in the production of a veritable reconstruction of the past rather than in the voice of praise and censure. He confidently asserted that whenever the veritable and reliable records were produced, good and evil would be autonomously distinguished from each other.<sup>36</sup> For this reason, Zheng suggested historians abandon the traditional “zan” 赞 (the author's judgment at the end of historical narratives) in their works. In his eyes, “zan” was merely applicable to the imperial examination.<sup>37</sup> A historian, he held, should be fair and impartial in the work writing history and try his or her best to avoid being arbitrary.<sup>38</sup> Of course, in the medieval China, the purely objective historiography was actually a nonexistence. Even so, Zheng's fearless disclosure of the deceiving nature of feudal historiography and sincere expectation of a veritable history were applaudably progressive.

<sup>32</sup>See: *ibid.*, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/ens>.

<sup>33</sup>*Tongzhi ershi lue*, vol. 1, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>*Tongzhi ershi lue*, vol. 2, p. 1905.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>*Tongzhi ershi lue*, vol. 1, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 107.

Moreover, Zheng shed critical light on the past philology and recommended the method of *leili* 类例, or the assortment *plus* setting examples. Analogically, he said the philological study should be done in a manner resembling the effort to regulate the troops or hear a case.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, Zheng methodologically explained *leili* in detail.<sup>40</sup> Overall, Zheng laid stress on the significance of assorted academic and philological investigations; and moreover he emphasized that the assortment must be solidly based on a thorough investigation of the origin and change of existing literature. Zheng's *leili* was very important to the traditional Chinese philology. For example, Zhang Xuecheng explicitly pointed out that it was Zheng who laid the methodological foundation of the philological investigation of the origin of literature.<sup>41</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Zheng's rigid criticism incurred fierce counter-criticism. For example, Chen Zhensong 陈振孙, a scholar living in the Southern Song, ridiculed Zheng for aggrandizing himself by disparaging predecessors, as well being self-righteous, even though Zheng did create an independent historiographico-intellectual school.<sup>42</sup> Among renowned Qing scholars, some—Qian Daxin 钱大昕, Wang Mingsheng 王鸣盛, Dai Zhen 戴震, Zhou Zhongfu 周中孚, for instance—abhorred very much Zheng's academic criticism, contemptuously denouncing him as a scholar deceiving the people by talking big (Chapter 18, in Zhou Zhongfu's *Zhengtang dushu ji* 郑堂读书记 (Reading notes written in the Zheng's Hall)). Some even accused Zheng's scholarship of being detrimental to the Classics and the Way (Chapter 9, in *Dai Zhen wenji* 戴震文集 (Selected works of Dai Zhen)). Such denunciations and accusations were actually *unfair*. By contrast, Zhang Xuecheng fairly treated Zheng and his scholarship, criticizing that the conservatives were ignorant of the value and significance of the Zheng-style historiography and their censure were entirely unworthy of being mentioned.<sup>43</sup>

In retrospect, indeed Zheng's criticisms brought fresh air into the scholarly community at that time. Zheng himself had stated that his goal of reexamination of the past scholarship was to fundamentally change the situation wherein studies in the Classics were muddled and historical works absurd.<sup>44</sup> He also defended himself, sincerely saying that his criticism was not the weapon whereby he could attack the past scholarship but the key opening the closed doors of differing schools and making a clear distinction between right and wrong.<sup>45</sup> In a word, thanks to efforts made by innovative historians such as Zheng there was a giant historiographical

<sup>39</sup>*Tongzhi ershi lue*, vol. 2, p. 1828.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1805, 1807.

<sup>41</sup>Wang Zhognmin 王重民, *Jiaochou tongyi tongjie* 校讎通义通解 [Comprehensively annotated *Jiaochou tongyi* (A survey of textual emendation)] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), p. 63.

<sup>42</sup>Chen Zhensun 陈振孙, *Zhizhai shulu tijie* 直斋书录题解 [Explanatory notes on the titles of books preserved in the Study of Impartiality] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), p. 38.

<sup>43</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, p. 463.

<sup>44</sup>*Tongzhi ershi lue*, vol. 1, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 911.



growth in the Northern and Southern Song dynasties. It is particularly worth mentioning that under the circumstances that the Learning of Principle was ideologically predominant, Zheng independently acted and held fast to the practical learning, thereby having an anti-*lixue* flavor.

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# Chapter 8

## Ideas of History in Ming and Qing Dynasties: Historical Criticism and Aspirations to Change

### 1 Ideas of History During the Ming-Qing Transition

#### (1) *Shixue* 实学, or the Practical Learning and the historical thinking aspiring to be conducive to the statecraft

*Shixue*, or the Practical Learning, was a good Chinese tradition. It witnessed a new growth in the specific circumstances of Ming-Qing transition. As we know, it was in the late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1912) that the feudal China entered its twilight years. Historically, whenever there was a huge social transformation in China, Chinese thoughts would change accordingly. Hou Wailu 侯外庐, one of the most prominent modern scholars exploring the Chinese intellectual history, shed light on this point, asserting that Chinese thinkers always sharp-mindedly concluded the times when the fundamental socio-historico-intellectual changes took place.<sup>1</sup> In particular, he revealed that in such timely conclusions not only were the conventional thinking critically reexamined but the new trends were also set.<sup>2</sup> Generally, during the Ming-Qing transition, the Chinese society, on the one hand, witnessed the birth and slow growth of the capitalist sprout; and on the other hand, it was increasingly aged, embodying in the serious obstacle that was imposed on the social progress by the outdated relation of production. Interestingly but unsurprisingly, in such a fundamentally changing era, it was the *dead* that hindered the *living*. *Shixue* in this era gave expression to the social reality. Specifically, the historical criticism at that time was tinted with an aspiration to the restoration of the antiquity; new programs of reform were still based on the *old* teachings; and the philosophical thinking was not yet corroborated

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<sup>1</sup>Hou Wailu 侯外庐, “Lun Ming Qing zhiji de shehui jieji guanxi yu qimeng sichao de tedian 论明清之际的社会阶级关系与启蒙思潮的特点” (The characteristics of socio-class relationship and enlightenment thoughts during the Ming-Qing transition), in *Hou Wailu shixue lunwen xuanji* 侯外庐史学论文选集 [Selected historical papers penned by Hou Wailu] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1987), vol. 2, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

by the experimental science even though it had reached the acme of ancient Chinese philosophy. Overall, *shixue* in the transitional period had several characteristics.

First, *shixue* intellectually ran counter to the popular scholarship that was of an empty nature. Of course, the assertion that the Ming scholarship was generally empty-minded is still open to discussion. Nevertheless, in Ming, scholars' ignorance of established teachings and indulgence in ungrounded talks were undoubtedly the symbol of a declining scholarship. Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–1755), one of the most reputable Qing scholars, incisively revealed that as early as the mid-Ming the disadvantages of established scholarship had already crept in ("Yongshang Zhengren Shuyuan ji 甬上证人书院记" [One piece of writing devoted to the Academy of Remonstrance in Ningbo]). Gu Yanwu 顾炎武 (1613–1682), one of the three most prominent thinkers during the Ming-Qing transition, explained for what reason the Ming scholarship sharply declined. His explanations were threefold.

- (1) The desires for wealth, fame and power ruined the pure scholarship. In particular, Gu pointed out that the rise of the system of imperial examination was actually detrimental to the scholarship and the social morality, on the grounds that some basic test methods adopted by the system were impartial in name only but on the contrary they were exploited by those ignorant and incompetent candidates.<sup>3</sup> He even radically criticized that the highly ideologically rigid eight-legged essay was metaphorically the mass grave wherein hundreds of Confucian scholars were buried alive by the First Emperor of Qin.<sup>4</sup>
- (2) *Qingtán* 清谈, or the Pure Talk, greatly contributed to the scholarly shallowness. Gu explained,

The confusion brought to China by the five barbarian tribes [or Liu Yuan 刘渊] and Shi Le [石勒]] originally arose out of the prevailing calamity of pure talk; everyone knows this. But who knows whether the pure talk of the present day is not worse than that of former times? The pure talk of former times concerned Lao [老] and Zhuang [庄], while that of the present day concerns Confucius and Mencius. [Scholars] who have never attained the essential points go ahead and transmit a rough outline; those who have never looked into the basic principles go ahead and speak of the secondary aspects [nonessentials]. They have never studied the writings of the Six Classics, nor have they examined the documents of the "hundred kings." They do not give due attention to the affairs of their own times but raise the great principles of the Master's discussions of scholarship and government, and without questioning them at all speak of "the one thread" and of "no words," using the empty words of pure mind and original nature as a substitute for the true learning of cultivating the self and governing people. This means that the arms and legs grow weak, and yet the ten thousand things are neglected; it means that the talons and teeth are lost and the four kingdoms fall into confusion. The nation itself is unsettled and agitated, and the ancestral

<sup>3</sup>Huang Rucheng 黄汝成, *Rizhi lu jishi* 日知录集释 [Collected annotations on Gu Yanwu's *Rizhi lu* (*Record of Daily Knowledge*)] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), vol. 2, pp. 937, 944. This edition was fully collated by messieurs Luan Baoqun 栾保群 and Lü Zongli 吕宗力.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 946.

temples fall into ruin. Formerly, Wang Yan [王衍], who was well versed in profound and abstruse doctrines, compared himself to Zigong [子贡]. When he was on the point of death at the hands of Shi Le, he turned and said these words: “Ah, alas! Although we are not like the men of old, still if we had not given undue attention to what is insubstantial and empty but had labored together to restore the empire, then it remains possible that affairs would not have reached their present pass.” Among the noble men of today, who could help but feel shame on hearing these words?<sup>5</sup>

In Gu’s mind, *shixue* was not purely *xue*, or academic. Rather, it had a more profound significance to the country. Simply put the *scholarship* should be practically applied to the politics, being conducive to the lofty mission preventing the country from collapsing. He went further, implying that the critical reexaminations of the history and social reality be firmly combined with each other. In this sense, the general scholarly aspiration, to a certain extent, was the mirror of the general mood of society. Thus, it is safe to say that the shallow scholarship exactly symbolized the declining society. The reason of social decadence, Gu asserted, lay nowhere but in scholars’ vulgar abandonment of *shixue* and excessive pursuit of profit, power and privilege.<sup>6</sup>

- (3) Scholars’ excessive exposure to the Zen Buddhism also should be responsible for the decadence of scholarly community. His delineation of such a Zen-related decadence read,

The statements that the sages of ancient times used in teaching people were as follows: their conduct should be filial and fraternal, loyal and trustworthy; their duties should be sprinkling and sweeping, answering and responding, and advancing and withdrawing; their reading should be of the *Odes*, the *Rites* [*San Li* 三礼], the *Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*; their use of themselves should lie in taking up office, retiring from office, and social intercourse; their service to the world should lie in carrying out official orders, influencing others by teaching, and administering penalties and punishments. Although “a harmonious conformity [to virtue] is realized within and the blossoming display of it is conspicuous without,” there is also the division between theory and practice [substance and function] that intersects with the theory of “not using the heart within.” This began from the study of Lao and Zhuang as practiced in the Warring States period, and there was the “beyond *yi* [right action, righteousness, justice]” of Gao Zi [告子], as well as the “beyond the world, beyond things, and beyond life” of Zhuang Zi [庄子]. From this, lofty and intelligent scholars rejected and slighted the *Odes* and *Documents*, taking them to be the dregs of what former kings used to bring good order to the world. Buddhism later entered China, and the theories they spoke of about peace, tranquility, and compassion were of the sort to move the affections and inclinations of the men of the times, and the various noble men of the Six Dynasties followed and embraced it. Taking the theory of quiet, tranquil, and free of delusion and extending this to the limit, they come to the perfection of no life and no death, and then entering Nirvana. This, then, is Yang Zhu’s [杨朱] egotism. Taking the theory of being kind, merciful, and benefiting things and extending this to the limit, they come to the perfection of saving all sentient beings and releasing them from the sea of suffering. This, then, is Mo Di’s universal love. What the world says is that if there is not a

<sup>5</sup>Gu Yanwu 顾炎武, *Record of Daily Knowledge and Collected Poems and Essays: Selections*, trans. Ian Johnston (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017), pp. 66–67.

<sup>6</sup>Huang Rucheng, *Rizhi lu jishi*, vol. 2, p. 1043.

return to Yang, then there is a return to Mo, and Buddhism combines the two.<sup>7</sup> [Consequently, in Ming, scholars] spend the whole day talking about human nature and the *dao* [Dao 道] of Heaven without realizing that they, themselves, have fallen to the level of *chanxue* 禅学 [Chan Buddhism].<sup>8</sup>

Obviously, Gu strongly disagreed with *xinxue* 心学 (the Learning of the Mind) that was decisively founded and fervently advocated by Lu Jiuyuan 陆九渊 (1139–1193) and Wang Yangming 王阳明 (1472–1529). In the meantime, he strove to promote the practical scholarly aspiration by means of the criticism against the empty-minded learning. Gu was actually the epitome of the general trend of academic criticism among the learned people during the Ming-Qing transition. In the same vein, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) and Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲 (1610–1695) criticized the emptiness of scholarship in the late Ming and early Qing as Gu did.

Gu, whose courtesy name was Ningren 宁人, was born in Kunshan 昆山, Jiangsu. He was a leading intellectual and produced numerous books, among which *Rizhi lu* 日知录 (*Record of Daily Knowledge*) was the embodiment of his ideas of *shixue* and *shixue* 史学, or the historiography. As a great proponent of the Practical Learning, Gu explicitly stated that the superior persons had the lofty goals of illuminating the Great Way and saving the country in their academic pursuit; and that those who aspired to master trifling skills such as seal cutting did not deserve mentioning at all.<sup>9</sup> Driven by such lofty aspirations, Gu penned *Rizhi lu*, which was trichotomized into Part One devoted to studies in the Classics, Part Two to the statecraft, and Part Three to miscellaneous things.<sup>10</sup> As regards the characteristics of the Gu-style *shixue*, Pan Lei 潘耒 (1646–1708), who was very probably Gu's only disciple, elaborated them in "Yuanxu 原序" (The original preface) he penned for his Master's magnum opus—*Rizhi lu*.<sup>11</sup> There were two key points in Pan's heartfelt elaboration.

- (1) The main thrust of Gu's scholarship lay in the care about the contemporary era, national welfare and the people's livelihood. His *shixue* included not only studies in ancient classics and historical works but also practical knowledge such as veritable records, memorial to sovereigns, fieldwork reports and even anecdotes. Methodologically, Gu suggested scholars carefully read existing literature and solidly do fieldwork. Metaphorically, he said the scholarly work was the same as *caitong* 采铜, or the copper mining.<sup>12</sup> The key point of his metaphor lay in the emphasis that scholars should try his utmost to grasp

<sup>7</sup>Gu Yanwu, *Record of Daily Knowledge and Collected Poems and Essays: Selections*, pp. 136–137.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup>Gu Yanwu 顾炎武, *Gu Tinglin shiwen ji* 顾亭林诗文集 [Collected poems and essays of Gu Tinglin (Yanwu)] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 98.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Huang Rucheng, *Rizhi lu jishi*, vol. 1, "Pan Lei's Original Preface," p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Gu Yanwu, *Gu Tinglin shiwen ji*, p. 93.

primary sources, extremely cautiously use secondary sources, and resolutely turn down the ungrounded ones. It was actually the methodological foundation of the Gu-style *shixue*. In this regard, the present author suggest that readers understand Gu's *copper-mining* methodology from a much broader perspective of the Practical Learning rather than from the relatively narrower perspective of academic pursuit. Gu himself, Pan Lei recalled, put into effect his idea in all his born days.<sup>13</sup> Quan Zuwang echoed this point in one piece of writing devoted to Gu ("Gu Tinglin xiansheng shendao biao 顾亭林先生神道表" (Inscriptions on the tomb tablet in praise of Gu Tinglin [i.e. Gu Yanwu])).

- (2) The Classics and history were attached the equal importance in Gu's scholarship. Opinions in regard to the relationship existing between classics and history greatly differed from each other. Nevertheless, the general trend in the scholarly world was that more and more scholars paid greater attention the role history played in the society. In this regard, Gu asserted that studies in history could help people thoroughly understand the politics in past and present and thus make them the talents that could possibly benefit the country.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Zhu Xi, who looked down on history, Gu fairly treated the studies in history. He himself thought highly of the Master Zhu's teachings. It is said that as early as ten-year old Gu read *Zuozhuan* 左传 (The Master Zuo's commentary on *Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Guoyu* 国语 (Discourses of states) and *Zhanguo ce* 战国策 (Strategic discourses of Warring States) and then spent three or four years perusing *Zizhi tongjian* 资治通鉴 (Comprehensive historical records in aid of governance). In the wake of the collapse of the Great Ming, Gu intensively exposed himself to the twenty-one official history and more than one thousand county/prefecture gazetteers and anthologies. In doing so, he prepared abundant primary sources for his well-known works such as *Tianxia junguo libing shu* 天下郡国利病书 (Advantages and disadvantages of prefectures all over the country) and *Zhaoyu zhi* 肇域志 (A comprehensive survey of national geography). The thinker paid particular attention to history, confidently asserting that history could rectify the present by teaching us lessons of the past.<sup>15</sup> Later, in the reigns of Qianlong (1736–1795) and Jiaqing (1796–1820), the Gu-style perception of the relationship of classics and history was furthered. When Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚 (1738–1801) rose to prominence in the scholarly world, he developed it into the much well-known idea—*liujing jieshi* 六经皆史, or the six most primary Confucian Classics were all history. Foregoing discussions indicated that indeed in the scholarly world there was an incremental cognizant course as regards the social role the historical knowledge could play. To be specific, first, the educated people realized that the moral accumulation could be more effectively implemented by learning more what was said and done in the past; then, those who devoted themselves to the

<sup>13</sup>Huang Rucheng, *Rizhi lu jishi*, vol. 1, "Pan Lei's Original Preface," p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Huang Rucheng, *Rizhi lu jishi*, vol. 2, p. 958.

<sup>15</sup>Gu Yanwu, *Gu Tinglin shiwen ji*, p. 138.

Practical Learning attached greater importance to history; and finally, driven by the aspiration to make historiography be conducive to the statecraft, towering scholars concluded that all classics were unexceptionally the embodiments of historical narrative.

Third, just as embodied in Gu's scholarship, one of the important aspects of *shixue* during the Ming-Qing transition lay in the pragmatic scholarly aspiration, which served as the starting point of entire academic pursuit. Huang Rucheng 黄汝诚 (1799–1837), who was renowned for his in-depth inquiries into *Rizhi lu*, explained this point in his preface to the annotated edition of *Rizhi lu*. Huang's explanation read,

Gu deeply explored the profound meaning of the subtly composed texts of classics and history, as well as shedding revealing light on the good laws and policies buried beneath the records. He strove to illuminate what did constitute the origin of the basic cultural, political, moral and legal institutions with a view to grasping the deepest rule reigning over changes. [In his explorations and elaborations.] Gu deeply fathomed the opposite sides of principles and thoroughly examined the main thrust [of all principles.] As regards the taxations, farmland, official ranks, selection of talented people, coinage, metric system, water conservancy, waterways, transportation of grain by water, salt/iron monopoly, manpower, military affairs, all of which were directly related to the vicissitudes of the county, he thoroughly understood what their advantages and disadvantages were and what caused their rise and fall and emotionally delineated the grand rule regulating changes in such basic institutions and systems.<sup>16</sup>

In comparison with other scholars, Gu knew much well the social reality and comprehensively investigated the politico-economic-cultural aspects of the Chinese society. In doing so, he disclosed the serious disadvantages of the Ming dynasty and proposed his own programs of reform. Exactly for this reason, his Practical Learning was quite outstanding.

In the late Ming, thinkers of *shixue* were epistemologically superior to their counterparts in the previous dynasties. Conventionally, Confucius had required his disciples to know the names of animals and plants as many as possible. Therefore, quite a few scholars merely aspired to be acquainted with a huge number of insignificant—albeit practical—things. Although some indeed suggested scholars pay due attention to history, none of them elaborated it from the higher ideologico-intellectual perspective of *shixue*. Such a trifling aspiration and naïve suggestion paled next to Gu's much more profound epistemology. For Gu, one of the greatest thinkers in the twilights of the feudal China, the academic pursuit must have lofty goals. In this regard, he said,

The investigation of things is more than just becoming well versed in the names of birds and beasts, plants and trees. Those who know truly know; they direct their attention to what is most important.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Huang Rucheng, *Rizhi lu jishi*, vol. 1, “Huang Rucheng’s Preface,” p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Gu Yanwu, *Record of Daily Knowledge and Collected Poems and Essays: Selections*, p. 61.



To put it another way, the ultimate goal of academic pursuit lay not only in the revealing elaboration of the Great Way but also in the effort to save the country from crises. In Gu's mind, the personal scholarly aspiration and the lofty idea of saving the nation did not conflict with each other at all. For example, he had said the academic pursuit should not be independent of the social reality, but instead be used to illuminate the Way, veraciously record the politics, discover the hidden facts and feelings among the people, and advance the goodness.<sup>18</sup> As regards the Confucian self-cultivation, Gu held that all aspects of such a Confucian practice—the efforts to cultivate basic virtues such as the filiality, loyalty and trustworthiness, perform routine duties, and do studies in the Classics, for instance—be applied to the practitioners themselves and the country at the same time. It was no other than the idea of *shixue*. Practically, Gu attempted to externalize the traditional Confucian aspirations to cultivate persons, regulate families, order states, and harmonize the world. Due to the drastic changes taking place in their times and the deepening national crisis in particular, the Practical Learning was gradually centered on the more political and reality-oriented idea of *jingshi* 经世, or the scholarly aspiration to be conducive to the statecraft. Thus, *jingshi* became the ideologico-intellectual core of *shixue* at that time.

*Tianxia junguo libing shu* (Advantages and disadvantages of prefectures all over the country) was another intensive embodiment of the Gu-style *shixue*. Having his discussions based on the solid historico-geographical study, Gu shed critical light on the inseparable unity of history and reality in this highly acclaimed book. Digging into the book, readers can find records with respect to practical affairs such as transportation of grain by water, grain tax, horse administration, grazing land, salt administration, garrison farmland, irrigation, taxations, corvee labor and household registration, reports about the situation of occupation and annexation of land, descriptions of the tax collection in various regions, and historical investigations of water conservancy facilities. Fusing the reexamination of the history with the social reality, Gu criticized the maladministration of Ming and advocated his idea of reform. In the “Preface” he penned for the book, Gu explicitly stated that his sincere expectation of a bettered governance was injected into the book and *Zhaoyu zhi* (A comprehensive survey of national geography). Simply put, the two books were all the embodiments of his practical aspirations to perfect the governance and save the country. In the same vein, Gu Zuyu 顾祖禹 (1631–1692), who was younger than Gu Yanwu, wrote the famous *Dushi fangyu jiyao* 读史方輿纪要 (Elaborations of the essence of geographical treatises through all ages), articulately giving expression to the ambition of being conducive to the statecraft. Wu Xingzuo 吴兴祚 (1632–1697) in his “Preface” to Gu Zuyu's magnum opus explained this point. His explanation read,

In order to reconstruct in detail the founding and abandonment [of prefectures or cities,] Gu provides a thorough records of old and new local units; to accurately demarcate varying regions, he carefully delineates the origin of rivers and mountains. Aspiring to clearly show

<sup>18</sup>Huang Rucheng, *Rizhi lu jishi*, vol. 2, p. 1079.



the lynchpin of the control of entire situation by illuminating what was going on, as well as displaying gains and losses of the politics by veraciously keeping account of vicissitudes of the history, Gu produces historical narratives that were concise, comprehensive, understandable and visionary. His writings can be the rule worthy of being treasured up and extensively applied to various matters. [Moreover, such invaluable writings are the embodiment of his effort to] reexamine the history as early as possible, explore things as thoroughly as possible, and keep alert as deeply and extensively as possible. Thus, the book is the genuine mirror whereby past and present can be fairly reflected and the prescription that can be used to rectify and perfect the governance. For anyone who aspires to practically contribute to the country, he cannot fulfill his aspiration without being epistemically exposed to the book.<sup>19</sup>

The two Gus—Gu Yanwu and Gu Zuyu—confirmed the above conclusion that *jingshi* had already been the essence of the Practical Learning during the Ming-Qing transition.

## (2) The trend rethinking and concluding vicissitudes of history

As a rule, whenever a fundamental transformation took place in the Chinese history, there must be great thinker or historians who began rethinking the past and drawing useful lessons from the rise and fall of past dynasties. One of the most distinct characteristics of great thinkers' conclusion of history during the Ming-Qing transition was their successful work raising the critical reexamination of history to new—or *philosophical*—heights. Such a philosophical elevation of the historical conclusion was not only the development but also the end of the traditional Chinese philosophy of history. Wang Fuzhi was the epitome of the last philosophico-historiographical eruption in the ancient China. Wang, whose courtesy name was Ernong 而农 and the alternative courtesy name Jiangzhai 姜斋, was born in Hengyang 衡阳, Hunan. In his twilight years, he lived in seclusion in the foothills of Mt. Shichuan 石船. For this reason, some called him Mr. Shichaun (Stone Boat). Wang had taken the Imperial Examination in the reign of Chongzhen 崇禎 (r. 1628–1644) and finally passed the provincial-level test.

Later, when the peasant revolt broke out and the rebels occupied Hengyang, Wang chose to retreat into the deep mountains. In the wake of Qing's replacement of Ming in 1644, the philosopher continued to be a hermit in his Xumeng An 续梦庵, the Thatched House of Living Dream. Four years after the founding of the Manchu Empire, Wang even organized a rebellion against Qing. Then, he went to the central court of the Southern Ming (1644–1662), which was founded by members of the overthrown royal family of Ming. Disappointed at the Southern Ming's corruption, he left there. In the early Kangxi reign (1661–1722), he spent all his time and energy writing the well-known books such as *Du Tongjian lun* 读通鉴论 (Reading notes on *Zizhi tongjian*), *Song lun* 宋论 (Treatises on the history of the two Song dynasties) and *Zhang zi Zhengmeng zhu* 张子正蒙注 (Annotations on

<sup>19</sup>Gu Zuyu 顾祖禹, *Dushi fangyu jiyao* 读史方輿纪要 [Elaborations of the essence of geographical treatises through all ages] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), vol. 1, “Yuanxu er 原序二” (The second original preface), p. 10.

Zhang Zai's *Zheng Meng* [Rectification of naivety and ignorance]). He did not leave the thatched house until his death.

The author(s) of “Wang Fuzhi zhuan 王夫之传” (The life of Wang Fuzhi) in *Qing shi gao* 清史稿 (The draft of history of Qing) comparatively discussed Wang's scholarship. The concerned segment read,

Where Wang Fuzhi's scholarship was concerned, it could be analogically said the Han Confucian scholarship was the *door* and the teachings of Five Masters of Song the *inner chamber*. [Besides, Wang] exorcized the sermon of *zhi liangzhi* 致良知, or the rehabilitation of the moral intuition [advocated by *xinxue*, or the Learning of the Mind.] in defence of the [more orthodox] teaching of Master Zhu [Xi]. In particular, Wang did an inconceivably brilliant research into *Zheng Meng* (Rectification of naivety and ignorance) authored by Zhang Zai 张载. (Chapter 267, in *Qing shi gao*)

In the light of the quotation, it is safe to say that one of the characteristics of the Wang-style scholarship lay in the equal importance he attached to the Han and Song scholarship. As regards the Song scholarship, apparently Wang thought highly of both Zhu Xi and Zhang Zai (1020–1077). But in fact, he paid greater attention to Zhang's teachings. In a unique way, with the help of Zhang's idea of *qi* (breath/ether), Wang epistemologically reconstructed Zhu Xi's *Principle-qi* theory into one of his own intellectual threads. He had lavishly praised Zhang, venerating him as the unprecedented heir to Confucius and Mencius, the bright sun illuminating all dark corners of human mind, and the one that even could not be replaced with the resurrected Sage.<sup>20</sup>

According to *Zheng Meng*, one of the most representative works of Zhang Zai, the *noumenon* of the universe lay in *qi* and the fusion and separation of *qi* gave birth to the myriad things consisting mainly of heaven, earth and humankind. The trinity of heaven, earth and humankind was exactly the Heavenly Nature or Principle. The Principle could by no means be independent of *qi*. In this regard, Wang explained Zhang's assertion in detail.<sup>21</sup> Zhang also implied that the reexamination of human history be based on the exhaustive investigation of the Principle. Overall, Wang was the heir to Zhang's thinking. Specifically, Wang held that matters were all consisted in *qi*; that the fusion and fission of *qi* was exactly the embodiment of the objective movement of matters; and that it was in the dynamic processes that matters grew increasingly abundant and were constantly renovated.

Wang objectively—albeit critically—treat intellectual elements other than the Confucianism. In his academic praxes, the thinker bitterly rebuked Buddhism and Daoism; but meanwhile, he was methodologically open to the two philosophical schools and even objected to regard both as intellectual dissents (“Yuanxu 原序” (Author's preface), in Wang Fuzhi's *Huang shu* 黄书 (The golden book)). Wang suggested scholars first investigate the core of Buddhism and Daoism and then

<sup>20</sup>Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, *Zhang zi Zhengmeng zhu* 张子正蒙注 [Annotations on Zhang Zai's *Zheng Meng* (Rectification of naivety and ignorance)] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), “Xulun 序论” (Preface), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 240–241, 243–244.

discard the dregs and imbibe the essence (“序” (Preface), in Wang Fuzhi’s *Laozi yan* 老子衍 (Interpretive texts devoted to *Laozi*)). In one piece of writing, he boldly asserted that the teaching of Zhuangzi 庄子, one of the most prominent founders of the Daoist School, could be the path jointing the grandest Confucian way (“Xu序” (Preface), in Wang Fuzhi’s *Zhuangzi tong* 庄子通 (Thorough interpretations of *Zhuangzi*)). It should also be pointed out that it was not Wang Yangming’s teaching as a whole but the wild Zen-inspired ideas attributed to Wang’s School that was vehemently criticized by the leading thinker. For this reason, Wang could by no means be sectarian, but instead be a powerful opponent of the vulgar scholarly sectarianism. The thinker himself was an epitome of the syncretism. For example, his philosophy of history was actually based on the eclectic unity of Principle and *qi*.

Wang discussed the inevitability of vicissitudes of history from the perspectives of *li* (Principle) and *shi* (trend). In his magnum opus entitled *Du Tongjian lun*, the thinker pointed out that there must be a *principle* reigning over the stability, chaos, survival or collapse of a dynasty.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, he shed revealing light on the irresistibility of *shi* in his analysis of the endurance of the system of prefecture and county.<sup>23</sup> In Wang’s discourses, *li* dominated and ran through entire movements of the myriad things and *shi* consisted of the inevitable historical movements. *Li* and *shi* were inseparable. In other words, whenever a movement was *principled*, it would grow into *shi*; and meanwhile, the inevitability of *shi* exactly gave expression to *li*, or the Principle.<sup>24</sup> Occasionally, Wang called *li* the Way, which determined incessant sessions of the alternation of stability and chaos and rise and fall of dynasties.<sup>25</sup> Gu Yanwu had similar idea, asserting that just like the sun would fall on the western side of the sky in afternoon and the lunar eclipse would take place after the full moon, the history was *innately vicissitudinous*.<sup>26</sup>

It should be pointed out that Wang’s idea of vicissitudes in the historical perspective was of a bit evolutionary nature. For example, he had delineated in detail the human society in its incipient stage, wherein humankind was not very different from animals and evolved by degrees from barbarism thanks to the bipedalism.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, he criticized Shao Yong’s 邵雍 (1011–1077) quatrochotomization of the evolution of history into eras represented by Emperor, Lord, King and Hegemon respectively, pointing out that Shao’s cyclical periodization excessively and obstinately conformed to the alleged Great Antiquity while unduly looking down on the present.<sup>28</sup> In particular, Wang laid stress on the role the humankind played in

<sup>22</sup>Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian lun* 读通鉴论 [Reading notes on *Zizhi tongjian*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), vol. 8, pp. 1971–1972.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Wang Fuzhi, *Du Sishu daquan shuo* 读四书大全说 [Reading notes on the *Comprehensive Elaborations of Four Books*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), vol. 2, p. 601.

<sup>25</sup>Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian lun*, vol. 7, p. 1778.

<sup>26</sup>Huang Rucheng, *Rizhi lu jishi*, vol. 1, p. 28.

<sup>27</sup>Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian lun*, vol. 7, p. 1578; Wang Fuzhi, *Siwèn lu* 思问录 [Contemplation & questions] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), p. 96.

<sup>28</sup>Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian lun*, vol. 7, p. 1581.

the vicissitudinous history as it did to the historical inevitability. He explicitly stated that the sages, who grasped the principles reigning over Heaven and humankind, played a vital role in the fundamental social changes<sup>29</sup>; and that it was the internal factors rather than external ones that crucially contributed to rise and fall of dynasties.<sup>30</sup> In light of this, it is safe to say that the Wang-style idea of vicissitudinous history was a fusion of historical inevitability and human factors.

Wang went further, fusing his rumination about vicissitudes in the historical perspective with the realistic programs of reform. Inasmuch as Wang's reexamination of the vicissitudinous history was based on his philosophy of history, his theory of reform was renowned for a uniquely philosophical *biantong* 变通 (lit. flexibility). With such a unique thinking, Wang elaborated the theory of reform in a perspective interconnecting past and present. Invoking the idea of *biantong* in the *Book of Changes*, the thinker explained the correlation of *bian* 变 (change/reform) and *tong* 通 (free course/improved governance) in the "Preface" he penned for one of his works entitled *Zhouyi daxiang jie* 周易大象解 (An interpretive reading of great symbols of the *Book of Changes*).<sup>31</sup> According to Wang's elaborations, people could perceive the myriad things consisted in *changes* through the prism of symbols in the *Book of Changes*. As regards the *change*, Wang asserted that there was the *constancy* in *change* and *change* must be brought about by something. To put it another way, the thinker held that only when the change/reform was related to specific circumstances would it be well understood and effectively advocated. To put it another way, those, who devoted themselves to rigidly rehabilitating institutions of the great antiquity in the name of ancient sages, actually deceived themselves and the country.<sup>32</sup> Not only did the thinker object to resuscitate outdated ancient praxes in his time, but he also disapproved of the effort to leave politico-social legacies for future.<sup>33</sup>

Where the governance was concerned, Wang asserted that the key of good governance lay in *tongshi* 通识, or the thorough understanding of past and present. Being equipped with *tongshi*, sovereigns would be able to grasp the origin, growth and changes of things influencing the governance and then develop foresightful and long-term programs for the country.<sup>34</sup> In comparison with the specific historical lessons—abandoning officials with poor morality and ability, appointing talented people to due positions, giving up unchecked accumulation of wealth, protecting the people, and so on, fulfilling *tongbian* 通变, or the thorough and all-around understanding of all changes taking place in entire history, and politically putting it into effect were much more significant to the reform and betterment of governance.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., vol. 7, p. 1505; vol. 3, p. 474.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., vol. 4, p. 915.

<sup>31</sup>Wang Fuzhi, *Chuanshan quanshu* 船山全书 [Complete works of Wang Chuanshan (Anshi)] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1988), vol. 1, p. 695.

<sup>32</sup>Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian lun*, vol. 1, p. 100.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., vol. 10, pp. 2548–2549.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., vol. 7, p. 1740.

Wang even analogically implied that *tongbian* could help sovereigns insightfully observe the times and make correct decisions, just like people were being taught how to make right choice before life or death.<sup>35</sup> Of course, in the effort to fulfil *tongbian*, some were good at learning from the good governance and prosperity achieved in the past—the Three Dynasty in the great antiquity in particular, while some, by contrast, performing very poorly.<sup>36</sup>

Looking back at history, readers can find that advocating and even putting into effect archaic institutions that prevailed in Three Dynasties in an ossified manner unexceptionally ran counter to the advocators' original expectations. Put plainly, what such anachronistic efforts brought about is not peace nor good governance but instability and maladministration. Among historians and thinkers in the ancient China, some attempted to oppose the highly concentrated land ownership by rehabilitating the archaic well-land system and counterbalance the royal family's excessive monopoly of power by resuscitating the old-fashioned system of enfeoffment. Even pragmatic politicians such as Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086) earnestly hoped that they could find solutions to social crises in the mine of ancient institutions and praxes. Barring a miracle, their efforts all came to nothing. In hindsight, the reason of their failures did not lie in their original desires, all of which were ambitiously good and aspirational, but in the ossified manner they adopted to treat the historical experience. Metaphorically, such *bona fide* high imperial officials were much like those who originally wanted to enter *this* room actually crossed the threshold of *that* room. In this sense, the *history* indeed played them a trick.

Take Sima Guang 司马光 (1019–1086) for example. The leading historian in the Northern Song dynasty wrote *Zizhi tongjian*, hoping that by doing so the vicissitudes of history could be illuminated and moreover the stability, prosperity and good governance would be achieved due to the historiographical consolidation of the established rite-centered social hierarchy. However, Sima committed an ideologico-methodological mistake. The mistake referred to the historian's deviation from the basic requirement of *tongbian* in his reexamination of prosperity and decline of past dynasties. In this regard, Wang ridiculed Sima of being so ignorant of differences existing between differing times and circumstances that he mistakenly endowed the criterion judging right and wrong in a *certain* time with an anachronistic universality.<sup>37</sup> It was such a historiographical inadaptability that prevented Sima's great aspiration to produce history that could be conducive to the statecraft from being fulfilled. The thinker even said the historians who produced the history unduly assuming a universality did not fundamentally differ from those who paid excessive attention to trivialities.<sup>38</sup> Overall, compared with Wang, Sima suffered very much from the lack of a vision of *tongbian* in his critical

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 1947–1948.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., vol. 10, pp. 2330–2331.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 2101–2102.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., vol. 10, p. 2552.

reexamination of the vicissitudinous history, even though he was indisputably one of the most brilliant historians in the ancient China.

In the mind of Wang, a great philosopher, the significance of history mainly lay in the irreplaceable role it played in the work drawing useful lessons from the vicissitudes of past dynasties. The concerned elaboration in his *Du Tongjian lun* read,

For what reason the *history* is treasured up by people? Because it is able to draw useful lessons whereby [future sovereigns] could be inspiringly taught. If historians aspire to do nothing but produce records as tedious and trifling as possible while ignorantly neglecting grand methods and strategies applying to the governance, how can [future sovereigns] use the history for reference in their efforts to grasp the key elements reigning over the rise and fall of past dynasties? If true, what good is the *history*?<sup>39</sup>

As regards the learning from the past, Wang suggested people pay attention not only to successes but also to failures. No matter what the historical lesson was—success or failure, Wang explained, it could be conducive to the governance, only if the historian could properly perceive and rethink them.<sup>40</sup> In particular, the thinker pointed out that those who were good at learning from the past knew well how to effectively apply the principle of *biantong* (lit. flexibility) to the reexamination of history and finally formulated the long-range programs for the country.<sup>41</sup> Therein lay a grand principle proposed by Wang. The concerned elaborations read,

In the world, there are not any unchangeable methods; nevertheless, there is the unchangeable *principle*. Thus, what on earth is the unchangeable *principle*? It refers to [a sovereign's] abilities to know how to delegate, how to pacify the people, and how to become familiar with the meritorious people and maintain a reserve towards treacherous ones. What does the asserted nonexistence of unchangeable methods really mean? It denotes the historical actuality wherein the rise and fall [of dynasties], as well as the complexity and simplicity [of institutions], must be dependent on [the specific circumstances of] a certain time rather than be determined by the fixed law.<sup>42</sup>

Simply put, those who were genuinely good at learning from the past would always make their praxes adaptable to the times. In a word, drawing useful lessons from history could by no means be independent of the social reality. Therein lay the significance of *time* in Wang's historiographical edifice. Intellectually and historiographically, Wang raised the traditional Chinese idea of vicissitudes of history to new heights. Before Wang, such a conventional thinking underwent three phases that were respectively embodied in the aspiration to learn from the collapsed Shang dynasty in the *Book of History*, the idea of observing decline through the prism of prosperity in *Shiji*, and the historiography reexamining the rise and fall of dynasties in *Zizhi tongjian*. It was in Wang's idea of *tongbian* and reexamination of the vicissitudinous history that all such intellectual fruits were blended and refined.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 350–351.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., vol. 10, pp. 2552–2553.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 368.

### (3) Critical conclusions of history and scholarship

The critical conclusion of history and scholarship had grown into an intellectual trend in the late Ming and early Qing. For example, Li Zhi 李贽 (1527–1602), a powerful critic of the Confucian tradition, vehemently attacked history. Apart from him, Gu Yanwu, Wang Fuzhi and Huang Zongxi draw critical conclusions at the time's request. Huang was different from Gu, who rethought the past through the prism of aspirations to benefit the country, and Wang, a thinker renowned for his in-depth inquiries into key principles reigning over the vicissitudinous history by means of *tongbian*, or the thorough understanding of changes taking place in entire history. Huang was, however, an epitome of the early enlightenment movement in the late feudal China.

Huang, whose courtesy name was Taichong 太冲 and the alternative courtesy name Lizhou 梨洲, was born in Yuyao 余姚, Zhejiang. His father was a renowned member of the reputable Donglin 东林 Faction in the political map of the late Ming. In the Tianqi 天启 reign (1621–1627), the father was persecuted to death in prison due to his fierce opposition to Wei Zhongxian 魏忠贤 (1568–1627), a notoriously vicious eunuch monopolizing the central power at that time. Huang had attempted to assassinate Wei in revenge for the injustice imposed on his father. When the Manchu troops attacked the lower reaches of the Yangtse River, Huang in his hometown organized the volunteer corps and led it into battle. The militia was soon put down by the powerful Qing army. Huang had to flee to the mountains. In the early Kangxi reign, the central court established an Imperial Agency, wherein renowned historians and scholars were invited to write an official history for immediate past Ming. Huang repeatedly declined the sovereign's invitation. Finally, he died in the eighty-sixth year of his age. As a productive thinker, he authored the sixty-two-volume *Mingru xue'an* 明儒学案 (A case-by-case exploration of lives and ideas of renowned scholars in the Ming dynasty), the twenty-volume *Mingyi daifang lu* 明夷待访录 (Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince), the three-part *Nanlei wending* 南雷文定 (Selected works of Mr. Nanlei [i.e. Huang Zongxi]), the six-volume *Yixue xiangshu lun* 易学象数论 (Treatises on the symbols and numbers in the *Book of Changes*), and some parts of *Song Yuan xue'an* 宋元学案 (A case-by-case exploration of lives and ideas of renowned scholars in the Song and Yuan dynasties).

Before the discussion of Huang's historico-historiographical thinking, it is necessary for readers to give a glimpse of the criteria whereby history can be criticized and concluded. The criteria as a whole refers to the most basic idea guiding a historian's reexamination of history. It is different from the aforementioned idea as regards the vicissitudinous history. The latter lays stress on the lessons drawn from the historical actuality. The former is, however, the critical conclusion of history by the analyses of what had took place and the disclosure of corruption and cruelty in the past. Such in-depth analyses and fearless disclosure are carried out in accordance with the vision and ideological height of the times. Not

surprisingly, there even is the contemplation on the *future* in the historical perspective.

Let's return to Huang, the great thinker of enlightenment. The perspective or criteria whereby he could critically reexamine history was unique. Simply put, unlike so many orthodox thinkers and scholars, he ideologico-intellectually justified *si 私* (selfishness) and *li 利* (profit). On the basis of such an unconventional justification, he vehemently criticized the feudal despotism. His powerful discourse of justification-*plus*-criticism read,

In the beginning of human life each man lived for himself and looked to his own interests. There was such a thing as the common benefit, yet no one seems to have promoted it; and there was common harm, yet no one seems to have eliminated it. Then someone came forth who did not think of benefit in terms of his own benefit but sought to benefit all-under-Heaven and who did not think of harm in terms of harm to himself but sought to spare all-under-Heaven from harm. Thus his labors were thousands of times greater than the labors of ordinary men. Now to work a thousand or ten thousand times harder without benefiting oneself is certainly not what most people in the world desire. Therefore in those times some men worthy of ruling, after considering it, refused to become princes – Xu You 许由 and Wu Guang 务光 were such. Others undertook it and then quit – Yao and Shun, for instance. Still others, like Yu, became of old have been any different? To love ease and dislike strenuous labor has always been the natural inclination of man.

However, with those who later became princes it was different. They believed that since they held the power over benefit and harm, there was nothing wrong in taking for themselves all the benefits and imposing on others all the harm. They made it so that no man dared to live for himself or look to his own interest. Thus the prince's great self-interests took the place of the common good of all-under-Heaven. At first the prince felt some qualms about it, but his conscience eased with time. He looked upon the world as an enormous estate to be handed on down to his descendants, for their perpetual pleasure and well-being...

This can only be explained as follows: In ancient times all-under-Heaven were considered the master and the prince was the tenant. The prince spent his whole life working for all-under-Heaven. Now the prince is master and all-under-Heaven are tenants. That no one can find peace and happiness anywhere is all on account of the prince. In order to get whatever he wants, he maims and slaughters all-under-Heaven and breaks up their families – all for the aggrandizement of one man's fortune. Without the least feeling of pity, the prince says, "I am just establishing an estate for my descendants." Yet when he has established it, the prince still extracts the very marrow from people's bones and takes away their sons and daughters to serve his own debauchery. It seems entirely proper to him. It is, he says, the interest on his estate. Thus he who does the greatest harm in the world is none other than the prince. If there had been no rulers, each man would have provided for himself and looked to his own interests. How could the institution of rulership have turned out like this?

In ancient times men loved to support their prince, likened him to a father, compared him to Heaven, and truly this was not going too far. Now men hate their prince, look on him as a "mortal foe," call him "just another guy." And this is perfectly natural. ...Could it be that Heaven and Earth, in their all-encompassing care, favor one man and one family among millions of men and myriads of families?...<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Theodore de Bary et al. eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition; Vol. 2: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 2nd edition, pp. 6–7.



In comparison with critiques—the nonexistence of sovereign, for instance—produced in the past dynasties, Huang’s “Yuanjun 原君,” or “On the Prince,” was much more profound and had distinctive characteristics of the times. The thinker went further, asserting that the key of stability and chaos of a country lay in the happiness or suffering of the people rather than in the rise or fall of a family and even “all-under-Heaven” could be divided in order to benefit the people in “Yuanchen 原臣” (On the Ministership) immediately after “Yuanjun” in his highly acclaimed *Mingyi daifang lu*. The concerned elaboration read,

The reason for ministership lies in the fact that the world is too big for one man to govern, so governance must be shared with colleagues. Therefore, when one goes forth to serve, it is for all-under-Heaven and not for the prince; it is for all the people and not for one family.<sup>44</sup>

Obviously, there was a new intellectual element—that is, the *enlightenment*—in his historical thinking that was based on his idea of *yili* 义利 (righteousness and profit). Wang Fuzhi echoed this point, asseverating that the Heavenly Principle was available everywhere just as human desires existed in all places and that it was in the selfish desires that the Principle dwelled (Chapter 4, in *Du Sishu daquan shuo*; Chapter 2, in *Sishu xunyi* 四书训义 [Interpretations of *Four Books*]). Apart from Wang, Li Zhi, who was radically against the established scholarship, put forward a similar proposition that the basic ethics and principles were all consisted in the everyday life (“Da Deng Shiang 答邓时阳” (A reply to Deng Shiyang), in Chapter 2, *Fenshu* 焚书 (A book to burn)). The ideas of such prominent thinkers indicated that the Chinese history had already been at a watershed and the established feudal ideology was being seriously challenged.

The guiding ideology of the Huang-style scholarly conclusion was embodied in one of Huang’s assertions that a certain scholarship must have central tenets while enjoying the complete freedom from sectarianism. In particular, as an enlightened thinker, Huang strongly opposed to the predominance of a certain type of scholarship over others and the alleged exclusive origin of all types of scholarship. In a revised “Preface” he penned for his famous work entitled *Mingru xue’an*, he explained this point in detail. His explanation read,

What does permeate entire universe? It is the mind. Inasmuch as the humans and the myriad things including heaven and earth cannot be separated from each other, the exhaustive Principle reigning over heaven, earth and the myriad things exactly lies in the mind. Unfortunately, the later generations of scholars mistakenly understand the original intention of Sages and unreasonably hold that the Principle exists in a realm entirely independent of heaven, earth and the myriad things. Racking all my brains, I pursue such a grand—albeit ungrounded—Principle. Is it an endeavor shooting aimlessly and fruitlessly? If we do commit a mistake here, we can by no means go beyond myriads of differences and return to the Oneness. By contrast, if we intellectually work so hard that we can always stay with the mind, the differences existing among the myriad things will definitely be overcome.

Where the difference of scholarship is concerned, it is exactly the embodiment of the infinity of the body of Dao, or the Way. Nevertheless, present-day superior men must

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

ascribe [all types of scholarship] to an exclusive origin; and to make matters worse, they plagiarize the established teachings and reformulate them into the criteria whereby the scholarship in past and present can be evaluated. Worst of all, whenever there is the scholarship differing from the established ones, they immediately denounced it as a *heterodoxy*. Such an arbitrary approach prevails so much that in the scholarly world there is a pervasive monotonousness that is the same as that of a continuous thick carpet of yellow grasses or incessant rows of white reeds.

In fact, Dao, or the Way, can be likened to the immense sea. [Analogically, all types of scholarship are] major watercourses – the Yangtse River, the Huai River, the Yellow River, the Han 汉 River, and so on, as well as the smaller ones such as Jing 泾 and Wei 渭, all of which, all day and all night, strenuously and unstopably, sinuate into the arms of sea, or the Way. It is true that such huge and small rivers are watercourses independent of each other; it is also true that they fuse into a water immediately after entering the sea.<sup>45</sup>

Huang in the above quotations emphatically implied that each type of scholarship and concerned school had the *raison d'être*. Thus, the thinker was explicitly against a certain scholarship/school's dominance over others and the universal role a certain idea/ideology played in the evaluation of all types of scholarship, let alone the arbitrary denunciation of dissenting scholarship or schools as heterodoxies. In Huang's mind, the scholarly hegemonism, the alleged universality of criteria of academic evaluation and the unjustified accusation against unconventional scholarship seriously hampered the academic development.

Generally, Huang believed that the rule that could be universally applied to varying types of scholarship lay in the process wherein the scholarship of all shades would go beyond differences and fuse into one. The destination of the scholarly growth was no other than the scholarship represented by Wang Yangming. Even so, Huang never attempt to raise his own scholarship to be an absolutely correct, unchallengeable Way, next to which all schools would pale. Rather, he preferred a universally accepted and practiced scholarly equality. According to Huang's theory, Dao, or the Way, could by no means be private. In this regard, he explained,

Of course Dao, or the Way, is not private. The blood of Sage's teaching has long pervasively diffused into a kaleidoscopic array of intellectual schools. Harder people work in the extraction of the blood, purer is the extracted. What some get is pure; what someone else get, meanwhile, is less pure. Never should anyone say there is the school that is completely devoid of [the blood of] Dao, or the Way.<sup>46</sup>

Huang was strongly against the academic sectarianism. Meanwhile, he suggested scholars have the basic criterion whereby they could tell right from wrong. Scholarship could epistemically mingle with each other. Scholars, on the other hand, must have their own *zongzhi* 宗旨, or the most basic tenets. Huang asserted that *zongzhi* exactly was the point on which a scholar worked the most hard and the entrance of his or her entire edifice; and that if a scholar did not have *zongzhi*, she or he would be Zhang Qian 张骞 (164–114 BC), who was entirely pointless when he

<sup>45</sup>Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲, *Huang Lizhou wenji* 黄梨洲文集 [Collected works of Huang Lizhou (Zongxi)] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), p. 380.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

only just arrived in the exotic Western Region.<sup>47</sup> *Zongzhi* also referred to a scholar's unique academic perception. In this sense, it was in harmony with the scholar's own teaching. In this regard, Huang pointed out that scholars could successfully avoid mechanically copying the established teachings thanks to the scholarly uniqueness of *zongzhi*.<sup>48</sup> Overall, Huang encouraged scholars in his time to independently think and bravely break the given sectarian restrictions. Therein lay the great enlightened thinker's foresight and sagacity.

When Huang was active in the academia, works devoted to the history of scholarship had already risen to prominence. It was actually a celebrated historiographical school. The rise of history of scholarship was in close relation to *lixue*, or the Learning of Principle. In other words, the basic goal of the production of such books was to advocate the orthodox teaching and the orthodoxy of the teaching per se. From Song down to Ming, there were quite a few books devoted to the two topics (see table below).

Author	Title	Notes
<i>Song</i>		
Li Xinchuan 李心传	<i>Daoming lu</i> 道命录 (A history of the lifeblood of the Great Way [of <i>lixue</i> ])	Both laid the foundation of the genre of writing devoted to the history of scholarship.
Zhu Xi 朱熹	<i>Yi Luo yuanyuan lu</i> 伊洛渊源录 (Speeches and acts of the towering figures of <i>lixue</i> since the Northern Song)	
<i>Ming</i> <sup>a</sup>		
Xie Duo 谢铎	<i>Yi Luo yuanyuan lu xulu</i> 伊洛渊源续录 (A sequel to <i>Yi Luo yuanyuan lu</i> )	These were the works in praise of the teachings of Zhu Xi.
Xue Yingqi 薛应旗	<i>Kaoting yuanyuan lu</i> 考亭渊源录 (The origin of Zhu Xi's Kaoting Scholarship)	
Zhu Heng 朱衡	<i>Daonan yuanwei lu</i> 道南源委录 (The origin of [Yang Shi's 初时] Daonan Scholarship)	
Xiong Cilü 熊赐履	<i>Xue tong</i> 学统 (The orthodoxy of teachings)	
Zhang Boxing 张伯行	<i>Daotong lu</i> 道统录 (The history of the orthodoxy of <i>lixue</i> )	

(continued)

<sup>47</sup>Huang Zongxi, "Mingru xue'an fafan 明儒学案发凡" (Overall description of *Mingru xue'an*), in *Huang Zongxi quanji* 黄宗羲全集 [Complete works of Huang Zongxi] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1985), vol. 7, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

(continued)

Author	Title	Notes
Jin Benheng 金贲亨	<i>Taixue Yuanliu</i> 台学源流 (The origin of the Tai Scholarship)	It was a work in praise of the scholarship represented by Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming.
Zhou Rudeng (Haimen) 周汝登 (海门)	<i>Shengxue zongzhuàn</i> 圣学宗传 (The history of the orthodoxy of the Sages' teaching)	Both concluded the history of <i>lixue</i> .
Sun Qifeng (Zhongyuan) 孙奇逢 (钟元)	<i>Lixue zongzhuàn</i> 理学宗传 (The history of the orthodoxy of the Learning of Principle)	

<sup>a</sup>It is based on the third part of “Yiwen zhi 艺文志” (Treatise on literature) in *Mingshi* 明史 (History of Ming).

Huang was actually discontent with these works, on the grounds that there were so many deficiencies in them. For example, he criticized that Zhou Rudeng’s *Shengxue zongzhuàn* was too narrow-minded and Sun Qifeng’s *Lixue zongzhuàn* too eclectic.<sup>49</sup> In *Mingru xue’an*, the thinker shed critically revealing light on the problems in existing works devoted to the history of scholarship. In comparison with them, Huang’s own work—*Mingru xue’an*—concluded the past scholarship in quite a different manner. Qiu Zhaoao 仇兆鳌 (1638–1717), an eminent scholar, in the foreword he prepared for Huang’s work indicated that the greatest difference existing between Huang and other students of the history of scholarship lay in the thinker’s abandonment of the arbitrary acceptance or rejection that were purely based on the author’s own likes and dislikes.

In many ways, *Mingru xue’an* was the perfect embodiment of Huang’s historico-historiographical thinking. First, in this book, the thinker tried his utmost to completely abandon the scholarly sectarianism. For example, he unequivocally objected to specially prepare a treatise exclusively devoted to *lixue*. Rather, he preferred such an approach whereby *lixue* would be reexamined in the context of a much more general and extensive Confucian scholarship. In other words, in the big picture of diverse Confucian teachings as a whole, differences and similarities existing between varying genres of Confucian scholarship should not be arbitrarily discussed but left to later generations to evaluate, judge, select, and use.<sup>50</sup>

Huang’s own scholarship could be traced back to the learning founded by Wang Yangming. Even so, he never attempted to excessively revere Wang while unduly belittling Zhu Xi. In “Shishuo 师说” (A brief delineation of succession of teachings

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>50</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Huang Lizhou wenji*, p. 452.

from Masters) preceding the main body of *Mingru xue'an*, Huang clearly showed the intellectual origin of his scholarship and unambiguously stated that his own theoretical elaborations or illuminations were all based on the teachings of precedent Masters. Even the arrangement of contents of the book was used to uninterruptedly embody the basic tenets of Masters. In particular, Huang asserted that without Wang Yangming the entire scholarship would be broken; and that the scholarship would be decadent if Liu Zongzhou 刘宗周 (1578–1645), a towering Confucian in the late Ming, did not contribute to *lixue*.<sup>51</sup> The thinker even created a penetrating thread of orthodoxy, which ran from the Five Masters in the Northern Song dynasty down to Wang Yangming and Liu Zongzhou. Such thread was, Huang held, an embodiment of the Heavenly Intention.

As mentioned above, Huang did not look down on the scholarship represented by Zhu Xi. But instead, he attached great importance to Zhu, the indisputable epitome of *lixue*. Huang, for instance, regarded Wu Yubi 吴与弼 (1391–1469), a great heir to the Zhu's teaching in the early Ming, as an invaluable pioneer of the entire Ming scholarship. Metaphorically, Huang said Wu was to the Ming scholarship what the spokeless wheel was to a magnificent vehicle or the water to ice.<sup>52</sup> Evaluating Wu from the perspective of a dynamic academic growth in Ming, Huang revealed and recognized the value of Wu. For this reason, he put the case of Wu on top of the others in *Mingru xue'an*. It should be pointed out that Huang actually tried to syncretize the teachings of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming in his reexamination of the Ming scholarship. For example, he did not think the Zhu-style thorough investigation of things and the Wang-style rehabilitation of the moral intuition were incompatible with each other in his discussions about Nie Bao 聂豹 (1487–1563), an advocator of Zhu's thinking, and Ouyang De 欧阳德 (1496–1554), a renowned proponent of Wang's philosophy.<sup>53</sup> Under such circumstances that there was an irreconcilable binary opposition between the learned people who defended Wang's *xinxue* and the scholars admiring Zhu's *lixue*, Huang's inclusiveness that he applied to rival intellectual schools in his critical reexamination of the past scholarship was really unique. It is particularly worth pointing out that his concurrent inclusion of teachings of Zhu and Wang was neither an intellectual eclecticism nor an ideological indiscrimination.

Second, in *Mingru xue'an* Huang strove to illuminate the most basic tenets and unfold the grand academic spirit before readers' eyes. There were two points as regards his elaboration of the basic tenets of the Ming scholarship. First, Huang discussed the general changes taking place in entire Ming scholarship and

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 451.

<sup>52</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Mingru xue'an*, in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, vol. 7, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 414.

meanwhile he indicated his consistent perception of basic concepts such as the mind, nature and *qi*. Therein lay the *pneuma* of the Huang-style scholarship. Second, in each case of scholar/scholarship Huang did his best to grasp the academic essence, evaluate key elements of teachings, delineate scholars' lives, and compile/assort existing concerned primary sources. The present author prepares a furthered discussion of the individual chapter of *Mingru xue'an*. Each chapter was a triplex treatise consisting of preface, memoir and assortment [of concerned primary sources.] In the *preface*, Huang shed light on the successions, changes, characteristics and influence of a certain scholar/scholarship. Besides this, it also served as a complement to the main body. For example, at the very beginning of the chapter devoted to the case of Taizhou 泰州 School, Huang concisely and accurately delineated great changes taking place in the intellectual school founded by Wang Yangming and in particular pointed out that there was a drastic split within the school in the time when the Taizhou branch emerged.<sup>54</sup> Besides this, he introduced readers to Yan Shannong 颜山农 (1504–1596), a thinker who was not included in the main body of the chapter.<sup>55</sup> In the *memoir*, Huang reconstructed the life of concerned scholar(s). The Huang-style reconstruction focused on the scholar's academic spirit. In the *compilation/assortment*, Huang innovatively enumerated the scholar's representative works and other written materials, with the hope that by doing so the basic tenets of the scholar/scholarship could be highlighted.<sup>56</sup> Overall, the cases in relation to the School of Wang Yangming accounted for more than half of *Mingru xue'an*. Despite this, Huang in this book did his utmost to objectively reexamine the changes in and the development of the Ming scholarship in several centuries. Of course, readers should always bear in mind that Huang indeed showed partiality for prominent *xinxue* thinkers such as Wang Yangming and Liu Zongzhou.

Third, Huang was renowned for his exhaustive inquiry into the origin of a certain scholarship and his tolerance and inclusiveness applied to differing opinions in *Mingru xue'an*. On the one hand, the thinker endeavor to shed light on the true origin of a certain scholarship; on the other hand, he attempted to delineate the emergence and growth of subbranches of a certain scholarship. Take the intellectual changes involving the teachings of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming for example (see diagram below).

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 821.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 822.

<sup>56</sup>Huang Zongxi, "Mingru xue'an fapan," in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, vol. 7, p. 6.

Wu Yubi and Xue Xuan 薛瑄 [were heirs to Zhu's Scholarship.]



[In the time of] Chen Xianzhang 陈献章 (Baisha 白沙) [a huge intellectual change took place.]



Wang Yangming [rose to prominence.]



[The six major branches included] Zhezong 浙中 (Zhejiang), Jiangyou 江右 (predominantly in Jiangxi), Nanzhong 南中 (South China), Chuzhong 楚中 (Hubei) and North China.

[Apart from the six branches,] Li Jianluo's 李见罗 teaching [was in close relation to Wang.]



[Only the] Jiangyou Branch [adhered to and carried forward Wang's Scholarship.]

Huang thought very highly of the Jiangyou Branch, asserting that it played a crucial role in the prevention of the basic teaching of Wang Yangming from collapsing.<sup>57</sup> Besides this, the thinker revealed that the rise of Taizhou School actually did harm to the Wang-style scholarship. He finally concluded that it was exactly because of the Taizhou School and the teaching developed by Wang Longxi 王龙溪 (1498–1583), who imbibed some elements of Zen Buddhism, that the Wang-style scholarship prevailed in the country and finally lost its original aspiration.<sup>58</sup>

*Mingru xue'an* was methodologically distinctive. First, it shed revealing light on the truth that indeed there were alternations of prosperity and decline in a certain scholarship. For example, Liu Zongzhou prevented the scholarship of Wang Yangming from being ruined by advocating the theory of *shendu* 慎独, or being watchful over oneself when a person was alone. But on the other hand, Liu's innovative effort exactly indicated that Wang's School had already been on the wane. In his reexamination of the history of Ming scholarship, Huang treated *lixue* and the teaching of Wang Yangming in particular as a dynamic process undergoing emergence, growth and decadence. Meanwhile, he insightfully ascribed the rise of a certain school to specific circumstances, wherein varying intellectual schools and types of scholarship were interknitting and interacting and diverse elements contributing to the future split and disintegration of scholarship/schools. In the light of this, Huang emphatically implied that neither was the Wang-style scholarship in

<sup>57</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Mingru xue'an*, *ibid.*, p. 377.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 821.

Ming completely independent of Zhu Xi's teaching nor did it suddenly emerge in the intellectual world. Second, in *Mingru xue'an* changes taking place in the scholarship of a certain time must be a process and likewise changes in a certain school, as well as in the thought of a certain thinker, must undergo differing phases. For example, Huang divided changes taking place in Wang Yangming's thought into three stages. The concerned delineation read,

The teaching of Monsieur [Wang] Yangming began with his inquiries into poems and essays. Then, he immersed himself in the works of Zhu Xi. In doing so, he advanced his investigation of things in due order and finally found that the Principle reigning over myriads of things and the Mind were independent of each other. Finding no way out [in the established teaching,] he then invoked the Buddhist and Daoist intellectual threads. When he lived in hardships in the remote regions, he tempered himself and ruminated about how a Sage would act under such circumstances. Suddenly, he was enlightened to grasp the essence of the effort to obtain [intuitive] knowledge by means of the investigation of myriads of things and the Way of Sage. [Such essence lay in] the self-cultivation and complete fulfillment of the Mind, which enjoyed the full freedom from external things. Before grasping such essence, he underwent three sessions of deep intellectual changes.<sup>59</sup>

Simply put, Wang experienced three types of change that were embodied in *miscellaneity*, *eclecticism* and *mastery* respectively. Later, Wang, the epitome of *xinxue*, or the Learning of the Mind, underwent another round of tri-session of intellectual changes and finally reached the acme of his philosophy.<sup>60</sup> In some chapters, although there was no any explicit statement about the periodization of a certain scholarship, readers still could understand the *process* of intellectual changes by insight.<sup>61</sup> Overall, Huang laid stress on changes and transformations taking place in the thoughts of *lixue* thinkers.

Fourth, Huang subtly and profoundly made distinctions between differing schools and between differing subbranches within the same school (see table below).

<i>Differences existing between predominant schools</i>	
School founded by Zhu Xi	Both were quite distinct from each other.
School founded by Wang Yangming	
<i>Within Zhu's School</i>	
Wu Yubi	He paid attention to the inner cultivation.
Xue Xuan	He laid stress on the moral practice.
<i>Within Jiangyou Branch of Wang's School</i>	
Zou Shouyi 邹守益	He suggested people be always watchful over themselves and have the sense of awe.
Luo Hongxian 罗洪先	He preferred the intellectual tranquility.
Nie Bao	He held that people return to solitude.

(continued)

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 482, 822.



(continued)

*Within Zhezong Branch of Wang's School*

王畿 Wang Ji (i.e. Wang Longxi)	Compared with Qian Dehong, he was less practical but more insightful.
Qian Dehong 钱德洪 (i.e. Qian Xushan 钱绪山)	Compared with Wang Ji, he was less insightful but more practical.

The purpose of making subtle and profound distinctions between schools/subbranches was to detect the differences buried in ostensible similarities. For example, Huang convincingly pointed out that Chen Xianzhang's idea, which seemingly was tinted with Zen Buddhism, was actually fundamentally different from such a highly indigenized Buddhist thinking.<sup>62</sup> It should also be pointed out that the ultimate goal of Huang's effort did not lie in the creation of a sectarian identity. Take his delineations of the schools of Wang Yangming and Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466–1560), a renowned *lixue* thinker and educator, for example. Huang compared the relationship of the two thinkers to that of Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan, implying that both intellectually depended and acted on each other while being organizationally independent of each other.<sup>63</sup> In the thinker's mind, difference and inseparability, and development and differentiation, were all organically interlinked. In view of this, it is safe to say that the method/ology adopted by the analytical school represented by Huang was of a *dialectic* nature.

Fifth, Huang in his brilliant *Mingru xue'an* macroscopically pointed out that there were the mainstream and nonmainstream threads in the intellectual trend of the times and both were interlinking and interacting. It was from such an interknitting perspective that Huang attempted to ideologico-intellectually syncretize intellectual schools of every hue. In Ming, the teachings of Zhu Xi were predominant in the map of thought; but in the meantime, the intellectual school founded by Wang Yangming emerged and witnessed a rapid, nationwide growth. As a consequence, the schools of Zhu and Wang constituted the mainstream scholarship in Ming. According to *Mingru xue'an*, the Zhu-style Chongren 崇仁 branch founded by Wu Yubi was the pioneer of Ming scholarship; Yaojiang branch of Wang's School, the major trend; and Liu Zongzhou's community, the reserve strength. Overall, not only did the book depicted the growth and change of the mainstream scholarship in the Great Ming but it also shed revealing light on the vicissitudes of nonmainstream intellectual schools or branches. Such a syncretic historiographical vision and praxis was embodied in Huang's creative production of "Zhuru xue'an 诸儒学案" (Case studies devoted to scholars of diverse origins). According to the thinker's explanation of the motive for penning "Zhuru xue'an,"<sup>64</sup> he applied the case study not only to scholars from branches of Zhu's and Wang's schools, but also to those who had a relation with the predominant mainstream

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 100–101.

<sup>63</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Huang Zongxi quanji*, vol. 8, p. 138.

<sup>64</sup>Huang Zongxi, "Mingru xue'an fafan," in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, vol. 7, p. 6.

schools while remaining intellectually distinctive. Thus, the specially penned assorting chapter was surely the most intensive embodiment of Huang's syncretic aspiration.

Where the assortment of scholars in "Zhuru xue'an" was concerned, Huang divided the learned people into three groups. The first group consisted of those who was not taught by a master but independently and unconventionally worked on a classic; the second, those who were academically assisted by peers but meanwhile should not be regarded as intellectual dependents; and the third, those who were transient figures and had no any academic heir.<sup>65</sup> Illuminating how to interknit such a kaleidoscopic array of scholars,<sup>66</sup> the thinker indicated that he sincerely tried to syncretically—and most importantly, *equally*—handle scholarship of all shades. Indeed, in the ancient China there were quite a few scholars who asserted that intellectual schools of all forms would finally grow homogeneous. Nevertheless, what they really emphasized was merely an academic unifying centrality. Huang was fundamentally different from them. As discussed above, the thinker did not think there were any intellectual schools or branches that were entirely devoid of element of truth. Rather, each of them embodied such elements *to varying degrees*. In view of this, Huang asserted that neither should people say a school/branch was incompatible with the Way nor were they allowed to denounce a differing—and even dissenting—teaching as *heterodoxy*. Such an *equal* vision applying to the criticism and conclusion of a greatly varied types of scholarship was unprecedented, unique and brand new and exactly gave expression to the spirit of the times.

Finally, Huang conclude that the value and destination of scholarship lay in scholars' academic praxes that could be conducive to the statecraft. Invoking the history of the development of scholarship, the thinker of enlightenment discussed this point from the perspective of historical conclusion. His discussion read,

As regards the scholarship, some say, more differentiated is it, more refined will it be. By contrast, more evasive is it, more hypocritical will it be. In the eras prior to the Three Dynasties (i.e. Xia, Shang Zhou), there was only one universal designation – that is, *ru* 儒, or the learned people – applying to those who were educated. For this reason, Sima Zichang 子长 (i.e. Sima Qian) specially penned collected memoirs devoted *rulin* 儒林, or the scholars of diverse origins. In the wake of the decline of the [Former] Han dynasty, due to the influence of the idea that the true scholars should not devote themselves to trivialities, the masters of literary writing were excluded out of the community of *rulin* in case they would bring confusion [to the mind of the people.] Then, in Song, there were quite a few *ru*, or Confucians, who were [notoriously] renowned for their utilitarian aspirations. In view of this, the author(s) of *Songshi* (History of Song) specially created [the assortment of] *Daoxue* (the orthodox Confucian learning of Dao, or the Way), whereby the orthodox teaching could distinguish itself from the utilitarian one and the latter be prevented from diffusing too extensively. Before long, there were even dissenting groups within *Daoxue*; and moreover, Deng Qiang 邓潜谷 (i.e. Deng Yuanxi 邓元锡, 1529–1593) dichotomized Confucianism into *lixue* (the Learning of Principle) and *xinxue* (the Learning of the Mind). By this time, the *scholarship*, which was originally an integral whole, was divided into the

<sup>65</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Huang Zongxi quanji*, vol. 8, p. 331.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

literary masters, Confucians, gurus of *lixue*, and men of *xinxue*. Isn't the quatrochotomization an embodiment of the aspiration to refine the scholarship as far as possible? Unfortunately, in the present time those, who devote themselves to the Learning of the Mind, neither seriously read books nor exhaustively probe into grand principles; and likewise those, who advocate the Learning of Principle, read nothing but fragments produced by the frivolous studies in Confucian classics and the principle under their meticulous scrutiny is no more than an argument in regard to the meaning of a word. Worst of all, they always despise the literary works and obstinately adhered to the established teaching in all their life. As a consequence, they refuse to make progress and their vision even cannot go beyond a simple chapter of the classic. When they handle matters, they are as naïve and narrow-minded as children and despicable men. When there is a drastic change taking place in the society, they pretend that it does not concern them at all and keep uttering in empty talk. Isn't such [stupid] adherence to *Daoxue* an embodiment of the growing hypocrisy of the [decaying] scholarship?<sup>67</sup>

To sum up, Huang's conclusion of scholarship went beyond the sectarianism and dogmatism of *lixue* or *xinxue* and typically gave expression to the thinker's most basic idea—a genuine scholarship must be completely freed from the sectarian vision and embody *zongzhi*, or a set of the most fundamental tenets. Therein exactly lay his aspiration to be conducive to the statecraft.

## 2 The Historiographical Aspiration to Change and *Wenshi Tongyi*

### (1) Changes in the Qing historiography

Abandoning the conventional idea that the Qing historiography was no more than the rigid textual criticism, some students of the history of historiography and scholarship objectively reexamined historiographical changes in Qing. In particular, the historiography in the reigns of Qianlong and Jiaqing was under their scrutiny. For example, Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929), one of the towering scholars in the early modern China, inspiringly pointed out that the Qing scholarship was pioneered by Huang Zongxi and Wan Jiye 万季野 (i.e. Wan Sitong 万斯同, 1638–1702) and finally reached the climax thanks to Zhang Shizhai 章实斋 (i.e. Zhang Xuecheng).<sup>68</sup> Unlike many scholars, Liang did not attempt to arbitrarily separated the Qian(long)-Jia(qing) historiography from the entire Qing historiography. Most importantly, Liang used a much more commendatory word—*pioneering*—to characterize the Qian-Jia historiography. Looking back at history, it was true that historians in Qing continued to practice the conventional historiography; but it was also true that some were discontent with the status quo and strove to reform the

<sup>67</sup>Huang Zongxi, *Huang Lizhou wenji*, p. 477.

<sup>68</sup>Liang Qichao 梁启超, *Zhongguo jin sanbainian xueshu shi* 中国近三百年学术史 [The history of Chinese scholarship in the very recent three hundred years] (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1996), p. 297.

existing historiographical ideas and praxes. The Qian-Jia historiography was a perfect embodiment of the true situation in the academic world at that time. It must be pointed out that the Qian-Jia historiography consisted of diverse elements (see table below). Thus, the popular idea that historical writings in the Qian-Jia era (1736–1820) was no more than the rigid textual criticism was inappropriate and incomplete.

Genres	Author(s)/works	Explanatory notes
Memorial-centered history	Wan Sitong 万斯同: <i>Mingshi</i> 明史 (History of Ming)	On the basis of Wan's work, the history was ultimately finished by Zhang Tingyu 张廷玉 in collaboration with others in 1739.
Supplements to tables in the official history	Wan Sida 万斯大	As regards the Wan brothers' significance to the Qing historiography, there were several points. (1) Wan Sida's approach applying to the classics heralded the methodology of <i>Hanxue</i> 汉学 (the Han-style scholarship) in Qing and Wan Sitong's attitudes towards primary sources greatly influenced Zhang Xuecheng's scholarly treatment of literature and history. <sup>a</sup> It was also said that Wan Sida's approach whereby he could question interpretations and focus instead on the classics per se inspired Dai Zhen 戴震 and Ruan Yuan 阮元 in their praxes of textual criticism. <sup>b</sup> (2) Wan Sitong preferred veritable records preserved in nonofficial works such as family annals and local gazetteers (Qian Daxin's 钱大昕, "Wan xiansheng Sitong zhuan 万先生斯同传" (The Life of Wan Sitong)). Obviously, Zhang Xuecheng had a similar idea with respect to the value of local and familial records.
	Wan Sitong	
	Wang Yue 汪越	
	Qian Daxin 钱大昕	
	Qian Dazhao 钱大昭	
	Zhou Jiayou 周嘉猷	
	Hong Yisun 洪怡孙	
	Hang Shijun 杭世骏	
Gu Donggao 顾栋高		
Supplements to treatises in the official history	Hong Liangji 洪亮吉	
	Qian Yiji 钱仪吉	
	Hao Yixing 郝懿行	
	Qian Daxin	

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Genres	Author(s)/works	Explanatory notes
History devoted to the great antiquity	Ma Su 马驥: <i>Yishi</i> 绎史 (A thorough investigation of history)	It is a five-part or 160-volume work recording the history from the remotest past down to the end of Qin Empire. Apart from historical narratives, the author kept account of something in relation to celestial bodies, geography, institutions and so on. Due to his great mastery of history of the great antiquity, the author was dubbed as Ma Sandai 三代 (Ma, an Unmatchable Guru Probing into the History of Three Dynasties). Gu Yanwu praised it as an indelible work. <sup>c</sup>
	Li Kai 李贽: <i>Shangshi</i> 尚史 (History of antiquity)	It is a memoir-centered book devoted to the great antiquity. Having his own work based on <i>Yishi</i> , the author consulted existing works as many as possible.
Historico-geographical works	Gu Zuyu: <i>Dushi fangyu jiyao</i>	Gu's work marked that the traditional historico-geographical historiography reached new heights. Some pointed out that the author paid much greater attention to the vicissitudinous history in this book. <sup>d</sup> The author himself asserted that the book was conducive to the sovereign's governance and the administration of the people. <sup>e</sup>
History of scholarship	Huang Zongxi: <i>Song Yuan xue'an</i>	The work was preliminarily penned by Huang Zongxi in the ending years of Ming. In Qing, his son—Huang Baijia 黄百家—and some eminent scholars such as Quan Zuwang collaboratively completed the work.

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Genres	Author(s)/works	Explanatory notes
Works of textual criticism in the historiographical perspective	Yan Ruoqu 阎若璩: <i>Guwen Shangshu shuzheng</i> 古文尚书疏证 (Furthered interpretations of the <i>Book of History</i> written in the old script)	(1) Yan, Hu and Mao collaboratively laid the foundation of the renowned Qing-style textual criticism.
	Hu Wei 胡渭: <i>Yugong zhuizhi</i> 禹贡锥指 (Pinpointed interpretations of the <i>Tribute of Yu</i> ); <i>Yitu mingbian</i> 易图明辨 (Illuminating the diagrammatic <i>Book of Changes</i> )	(2) Defending <i>Hanxue</i> , or the Han-style scholarship, Jiang in his work sharp-mindedly pointed out that due to the empty talk prevailing in the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties and <i>Daoxue</i> in the two Songs, the orthodox scholarship was ruined.
	Mao Qiling 毛奇龄	In the Yuan and Ming dynasties, the deterioration of scholarship was furthered. It was only in Qing that <i>Hanxue</i> was substantially rehabilitated. <sup>f</sup>
	Jiang Fan 江藩: <i>Hanxue shicheng ji</i> 汉学师承记 (Accounts of the succession of orthodox teachings from masters in Qing)	(3) Generally, the style and methodology of textual criticism exerted significant influence on the Qing historiography. The textual criticism done in the historiographical perspective was part and parcel of the quite outstanding Qing-style textual criticism.
Representative works of textual criticism in the historiographical perspective	Wang Mingsheng 王鸣盛: <i>Shiqi shi shangque</i> 十七史商榷 (Critically reexamining the seventeen official history books)	Wang laid stress on catalogue, emendation and succession of teachings from masters. His review of historiography and history books were worthy of furthered discussions.
	Zhang Yi 赵翼: <i>Nian'er shi zhaji</i> 廿二史劄记 (Notes on the twenty-two official history books)	Zhao paid particular attention to categorizing the historical actualities. Besides it, he distinctively assessed history and rethought vicissitudes of the history.
	Qian Daxin 钱大昕: <i>Nian'er shi kaoyi</i> 廿二史考异 (A deep investigation of the twenty-two official history books)	Qian was renowned for his extraordinary mastery of Chinese philology and phonology. He also creatively applied his amazingly solid philologico-phonological knowledge to the investigations of institutional and geographical changes.

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Genres	Author(s)/works	Explanatory notes
	Cui Shu 崔述: <i>Kaoxin lu</i> 考信录 (Investigating the authenticity/reliability of ancient records)	Cui breathed new life into the established scholarship in the Qian-Jia era.
Reorganization and adaptation of existing history books	Qin Huitian 秦蕙田: <i>Wuli tongkao</i> 五礼通考 (A thorough textual criticism of Five Books of Rites)	
	Bi Yuan 毕沅: <i>Xu Zizhi tongjian</i> 续资治通鉴 (A sequel to <i>Zizhi tongjian</i> )	
	Li Qing 李清: <i>Nanbei shi hecho</i> 南北史合抄 (A reorganized combination of the <i>Southern and Northern History</i> )	
Comprehensive reorganization and emendation of all existing literature	<i>Siku quanshu</i> 四库全书, or the <i>Four Treasures</i>	The project of <i>Four Treasures</i> was epoch-making in the history of with written Chinese literature.

<sup>a</sup>Hou Wailu 侯外庐, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中国思想通史 [General history of Chinese thought] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1980), vol. 5, p. 408

<sup>b</sup>Ibid., pp. 408–409

<sup>c</sup>Jiang Fan 江藩, *Guochao Hanxue shicheng ji* 国朝汉学师承记 [Accounts of the succession of teachings from masters in Qing] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 18

<sup>d</sup>Gu Zuyu, *Dushi fangyu jiyao*, vol. 1, “Peng Shiwang’s 彭士望 preface,” p. 4

<sup>e</sup>Ibid., “Zongxu san 总序三” (The third part of “General Preface”), p. 18

<sup>f</sup>Jiang Fan, *Guochao Hanxue shicheng ji*, pp. 5–6

Readers must always bear in mind that there was a fierce battle as regards the Qing historiography. It was the Manchu sovereigns who firmly controlled the work writing history. Their goal was twofold. First, history should be used to ideologically consolidate the governance. For example, in the memorial regarding *Mingshi* (History of Ming) that he presented to the throne, Zhang Tingyu 张廷玉 (1672–1755) hoped that the Qing sovereigns would like to sincerely learn the lessons drawn from gains and losses of the immediate past Ming, apart from the justification of Qing’s orthodox heirship to the supreme Mandate of Heaven (Zhang Tingyu, “Shang Mingshi biao 上明史表” (The memorial recommending *Mingshi*)). Undoubtedly, the Qing sovereigns warmly welcomed such type of historiography. Second, under no circumstances would any history be allowed to advocate the restoration of Ming. Nor could any works questioning the legitimacy of Qing’s governance be allowed to circulate. History books that were labelled as being rebellious were all banned and destroyed. The concerned authors were restricted and even persecuted. *Siku quanshu*, or the *Four Treasures*, was an intensive embodiment of the Qing’s dual aspiration to regulate the historiography. On the one

hand, the *Four Treasures* was an indelible contribution to the reorganization, emendation and preservation of the invaluable Chinese literature. But on the other hand, it indeed was a tool to get rid of texts going ill with the Manchu governance. In this regard, the present author holds that the history books that were banned and destroyed at that time actually constituted an inseparable element of the Qing historiography.

Generally, there were two characteristics of the early Qing historiography. First, the production of historical narratives was actually in full flush in the early Qing. It contradicted the arbitrary allegations that there was a paucity of historiographical praxis and historians spent time and energy inquiring into trivialities in order to avoiding being landed in trouble in the Qian-Jia era. Such allegations were totally ungrounded and biased. In comparison with the historiographical achievements in the early Tang and Song, Qing in its incipient stage was not inferior to them at all. Of course, it must be admitted that indeed there was no any fundamental breakthrough in the historico-historiographical field. Overall, the Qing historians followed the conventional praxes of their counterparts in the previous dynasties. Second, the Qing historians developed differing ideas and did pioneering works. As regards the ideas of history, there were a few points worthy of furthered discussions.

First, the Qing scholars laid greater stress on the official history books rather than on the classics. Generally, they strongly disagreed with *lixue* gurus' derogatory judgment that *history* was coarse and eclectic and by contrast the classics were refined and orthodox. In this regard, Qian Daxin 钱大昕 (1728–1804) even ridicule the classics of being merely *ostensibly* refined and orthodox in the "Preface" he penned for *Nian'er shi zhaji* 廿二史劄记 (Notes on the twenty-two official history books) authored by Zhao Yi 赵翼 (1727–1814). Of course, the attitudes of Qing scholars were not monolithic. Wang Mingsheng 王鸣盛 (1722–1797), for instance, had a paradoxical stance, saying that scholars should never attempt to contradict the classics in their concerned studies but meanwhile they could criticize the mistakes committed by the historians who were even as eminent as Sima Qian and Ban Gu.<sup>69</sup> It indicated that the relatively conservative Wang suffered an epistemological limitation. But on the other hand, Wang tried to convince his readers that the studies in history was as hard as that done to the classics.<sup>70</sup> Such ideas were all extensions of Gu Yanwu's illumination of the relationship existing between classics and history from the perspective of history of historiographical thinking.

It should be pointed out that the Qing historians attached greater importance to the official history books. For example, Zhao Yi confidently asserted that the primary sources used by the official history books were highly rectified. He even boldly said there were not any reliable primary sources other than the official ones. If the textual criticism applying to history was based on unofficial literature, it must

<sup>69</sup>Wang Mingsheng 王鸣盛, *Shiqi shi shangque* 十七史商榷 [Critically reexamining the seventeen official history books] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2005), "Xu 序" (Author's preface), p. 2.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, pp. 1–3.



be *heterodox*.<sup>71</sup> Wang Mingsheng echoed this point, suggesting historians work harder on the official history books rather than waste time in unofficial ones.<sup>72</sup> Wang even ridiculed some scholars of being so epistemically poor that they could only use vulgar literary works to conceal their inability to scrutinize the official history books.<sup>73</sup> Apart from Zhao and Wang, Wang Erlü 王尔膺, a renowned scholar in the early Qing, had his exploration of history focused on the official history books and occasionally looked for collateral evidence in the *external* (i.e. unofficial) works devoted to history.<sup>74</sup> Such an uncompromising refusal to include unofficial history books into the historical study was double-edged. One the one hand, it was reasonable to call a halt to seeking novelty in historical studies and suggest historians pay due attention to the official history books; but on the other hand, the rigid exclusion of nonofficial works blocked the scholarly vision and was actually an embodiment of the one-sidedness of Qing's Han-style textual criticism.

Second, the Qing historians rethought the types of historical works and concerned stylistic rules. In their elaborations, they paid attention not only to rules and examples applying to historical narratives but also to the timely changes in historiography. Take Wang Mingsheng for example. Although Wang held that the memoir-centered history was predominant while the annalistic one being merely auxiliary, he believed that both could produce extraordinarily excellent works so long as the producer grasped the spirit of the Sage.<sup>75</sup> He went further, contending that the key of the effort to be the heir to the excellent historiographical tradition lay in the creative grasp of contents of magnum opuses produced in the past rather than in the rigid emulation of their styles.<sup>76</sup> In the light of this, readers may find that *Yishi* 绎史 (A thorough investigation of history) authored by Ma Su 马驥 (1621–1673) is an example work. Bai Shouyi, one of the leading modern Chinese historians, pointed out that Ma innovatively incorporated annals, treatises devoted to entire course of specific events, speeches of the masters of intellectual schools, and so on, into his *Yishi*, which was predominantly memoir-centered, and thus turned it into an eclectic complex.<sup>77</sup>

Third, the Qing historians developed *shixue*, or the Practical Learning, and the historiography aspiring to be conducive to the statecraft. In this regard, the Historiography of Zhedong 浙东 (the Eastern Zhejiang) was particularly worth being elaborated. Being the heir to the historiography developed by Lü Zuqian 吕

<sup>71</sup>Zhao Yi 赵翼, *Nian'er shi zhaji* 廿二史劄记 [Notes on the twenty-two official history books] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), “Xiaoyin 小引” (Short forewords), p. 1. The edition is amended and rectified by Wang Shumin 王树民.

<sup>72</sup>Wang Mingsheng, *Shiqi shi shangque*, p. 275.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>74</sup>Jiang Fan, *Guochao Hanxue shicheng ji*, p. 18.

<sup>75</sup>Wang Mingsheng, *Shiqi shi shangque*, p. 926.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 927.

<sup>77</sup>Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, *Lishi jiaoyu he shixue yichan* 历史教育和史学遗产 [The education of history and historiographical heritages] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1983), p. 170. p. 112.

祖謙 (1137–1181) in the Southern Song, the Zhedong Historiography in Qing was practically morality-centered and intellectually all-encompassing. The Zhedong-style Practical Learning consisted of multiple intellectual threads. For example, the criticism against *lixue* contributed to the rise of the school. As regards the criticism against the predominant, established *lixue*, the scholarly community represented by Yan Yuan 顏元 (1635–1704) and Li Dui 李堆, one of Yan's disciples, might be the most prominent. Yan clearly stated that the way whereby the country could free itself from the maladministration should lie in the Practical Learning rather than in empty talks; and that without practical aspirations even the most refined and complete scholarship would be a good-for-nothing.<sup>78</sup> Apart from Yan's teaching, Gu Yanwu's scholarship, which was renowned for its practical political aspiration, was part and parcel of the Zhedong *shixue*.

*Shixue* is worthy of a furthered discussion. As we know, some branches of Wang Yangming's School—the Longxi 龍溪 School, for instance—were finally tinted with the Zen Buddhism. But meanwhile, some strove to rectify deviations existing in Wang's School. Liu Zongzhou was an epitome of such an ideologically correctional effort. Liu studied the classics under the instruction of Xu Fuyuan 許孚遠 (1535–1596), who was one of the disciples of Zhan Ruoshui. Xu told Liu that the ultimate goal of scholarship did not lie in the empty knowledge but in the practice. Xu's instruction greatly inspired Liu. As a consequence, Liu paid greater attention to the practical dimension of scholarship, apart from his distinctive idea that people should always being watchful over themselves while they were alone. Specifically he put forward the ideas that it was nothing else but [the more material] *qi* that permeated entire world; and that the Great Way could by no means be independent of *qi* 器 (material things). More pragmatically, he suggested scholars select the good ones from what had been said and done in the past and put them into effect. Philosophically, Liu asserted that the essence of scholarship lay in the cultivation of the mind; but on the other hand, he pragmatically contended that the cultivation of the mind could be carried out nowhere else than in the everyday life. In view of this, the present author holds that Liu's thinking was (re-)formulated in a much more practical dimension and had already been different from the orthodox teaching of Wang Yangming.

Zhang Xuecheng had briefly and delineated the history of Zhedong Scholarship. His inspiring delineation read,

Although the Zhedong Scholarship originated from Wuyuan 婺源 [that is, the teaching of Lǔ Zuqian,] it actually intellectually followed Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 since the rise of the three Yuans (i.e. Yuan Xie 袁燮, Yuan Su 袁肅 and Yuan Fu 袁甫). As a consequence, members of the School aspired to have a good command of the classics, as well as gaining insight into the great antiquity; and meanwhile, they never uttered in empty talks about morality and nature. Thus, the School was not contrary to the teaching of the Master Zhu [Xi]. Then, the Master Wang [Yangming] rose by degrees to prominence and rehabilitated Mencius's *liangzhi* 良知 (Intuitive Knowledge), thereby creating an intellectual system going against

<sup>78</sup>Yan Yuan 顏元, *Yan Yuan ji* 顏元集 [Collected works of Yan Yuan] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), pp. 75, 76.

that of the Master Zhu. Later, on the basis of Wang's intellectual reformulation of *liangzhi*, Liu Zongzhou (re-)conceptualized the traditional idea of *shendu* 慎独 (being always watchful over oneself when alone). Neither was Liu's thinking in perfect harmony with that of Zhu Xi nor did it ideologically run counter to the orthodox *lixue*, or the Learning of Principle. Among Liu's disciples, there was Huang Zongxi, who heralded Wan Sitong's and Wan Sida's outstanding studies in classics and history. Even as late as the time of Quan Zuwang, the followers still adhered to Liu's basic style whereby one could intellectually remain loyal to Lu Jiuyuan while being not ideologically against the established Zhu-style *lixue*. There was, however, an exceptional case. It referred to Mao Qiling 毛奇龄 (1623–1716), who was renowned for his brilliant reinterpretation of *liangzhi*. Nevertheless, Mao was also notoriously renowned for his excessive and offensive sectarianism, of which even the scholars of Zhedong School did not altogether approve.<sup>79</sup>

In the light of the above quotations, it could be concluded that the caucus of the Zhedong School in Ming and the early Qing was composed of Liu Zongzhou, Huang Zongxi, Wan Sitong, Wan Sida and Quan Zuwang. Such towering figures in the academic world shared the same idea that the genuine scholarship should be practically conducive to the governance. It should be pointed out that there was actually an intellectual similarity in terms of the practical aspiration of scholarship between the Zhedong and Zhexi schools. The School of Zhexi (the Western Zhejiang) was represented by Gu Yanwu, who intellectually identifies with Zhu Xi. Zhang Xuecheng explained this point. His explanation read,

It is generally held that Gu Tinglin [i.e. Gu Yanwu] was undoubtedly the founding patriarch of the Confucian community in Qing. Gu was, however, from the Zhexi School. But, many have forgotten that in the mean time when Gu rose to prominence there was Huang Zongxi in Zhedong. Although Gu and Huang intellectually raced together bridle to bridle, the teaching of Huang could be traced back to Wang Yangming and Liu Zongzhou and was creatively inherited by the Wan brothers. In comparison with the scholarship of Gu Yanwu, Huang's was of long standing and well established. Being intellectually different from each other, Gu revered very much Zhu Xi and Huang wholeheartedly respected Lu Jiuyuan. Neither Gu nor Huang was the preacher with a strongly sectarian vision. For this reason, the two academic communities exchange praises rather than curses. Generally, a scholar should always clearly grasp his or her own intellectual origin and meanwhile she or he must not have even the slightest tinge of sectarianism. Therein lies the reason that why the two schools – Zhedong and Zhexi – were not mutually exclusive. The two schools had their own tradition. In other words, the Zhedong Scholarship was conventionally renowned for specialties and thoroughness; and Zhexi, for erudition and refinement.<sup>80</sup>

Zhang Xuecheng's insight into the Zhedong Scholarship indicated that *shixue*, or the Practical Learning, at that time was actually a confluence of differing intellectual threads. Thus, it is safe to say that *shixue* was actually an embodiment of the common intellectual aspirations of the times.

Generally speaking, not only did the predominant intellectual trend in a certain time consist of multifarious ideological elements but it also substantively influenced a great variety of scholarship. Investigating the history of Chinese ideas of history,

<sup>79</sup>Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚, *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通义 [All-embracing delineations of literature and history] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), vol. 1, p. 523.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

scholars shall pay attention to differences existing among varying constituents, as well to the common ground among them. In the same vein, in their work the confluence of intellectual threads and the ideological complex's influence on individual scholarship should all be critically reexamined. Since the mid-Ming, the historiographical thinking with the aspiration to be conducive to the statecraft emerged and grew steadily. It was under such circumstances that *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通义 (All-embracing delineations of literature and history) was produced.

## (2) *Wenshi tongyi*

The author of *Wenshi tongyi* was Zhang Xuecheng, whose courtesy name was Shizhai 实斋. He was born in Kuaiji 会稽 (present-day Shaoxing 绍兴, Zhejiang). Zhang said when he was still a young child, he had already been fond of history.<sup>81</sup> In the "Preface" he penned for *Wenshi tongyi*, Zhang Huaifu 章华绂, Zhang Xuecheng's son, revealed that it was the history rather than the classics that interested his father, who knew well what he himself really liked.<sup>82</sup> In the mid-Qianlong reign, he met Zhu Yun 朱筠 (1729–1781), a high imperial official, in Beijing. In Zhu's mansion house, Zhang exposed himself to a huge collection of books and exchanged ideas with renowned scholars. The extensive reading and inspiring exchange laid the foundation of his extraordinary scholarship.<sup>83</sup> Among his friends in Beijing, there were reputable scholars such as Shao Jinhan 邵晋涵, Zhou Yongnian 周永年, Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 and Wang Huizu 汪辉祖. In 1771, Zhang started to write *Wenshi tongyi*. Seven years later, he passed the highest level of Imperial Examination. Apart from his indelible *Wenshi tongyi*, he contributed to the production of *Hezhou zhi* 和州志 (Gazetteer of the Prefecture of He), *Yongqing xianzhi* 永清县志 (Gazetteer of the Yongqing County), *Hubei tongzhi* 湖北通志 (General gazetteer of Hubei), and Bi Yuan's 毕沅 (1730–1797) *Xu Zizhi tongjian* 续资治通鉴 (A sequel to *Zizhi tongjian*). In his twilight years, Zhang penned a 325-volume magnum opus entitled *Shiji kao* 史籍考 (A comprehensive investigation of all historical works). Unfortunately, such a great book, which intensively gave expression to Zhang's historiographical thinking, had long been lost.<sup>84</sup> Looking back at his entire life, Zhang innovatively reformulated existing theories of literature and history and boldly put into effect his new approaches. Overall, he made quite an outstanding contribution to the traditional Chinese scholarship and the historiography in particular. Due to his unconventional thinking and practice and his unbending self-containedness, he was deemed as a dissident—and even a *monster*—in the academia.<sup>85</sup> The immediate reason of his unpopularity might lie in his strict effort to rectify unhealthy praxes among scholars. In doing so, he would

<sup>81</sup>Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚, *Zhang Xuecheng yishu* 章学诚遗书 [The posthumous collection of writings of Zhang Xuecheng] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), p. 224.

<sup>82</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, "Zhang Huaifu's preface," p. 9.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Zhang Xuecheng yishu*, pp. 116–117.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

definitely offend men in power and displease the academic establishment.<sup>86</sup> Regardless of this, Zhang confidently and ambitiously believed that his writings represented by *Wenshi tongyi*, which was diametrically against the vulgar scholarly trend, could be used to fundamentally change the historiographical disorder that had already lasted for more than one thousand years.<sup>87</sup>

The historiographical thinking embodied in *Wenshi tongyi* could be found in Zhang's most famous assertion—*liujing jieshi* 六经皆史, or the six most basic Confucian classics were all history books. At the very beginning of *Wenshi tongyi*, we read,

The Six [Confucian] Classis are all history. People in ancient times did not produce works. They never [ungroundedly] talked about principles while being completely ignorant of the reality. [In view of this, it is safe to say that] the Six Classics are no other than the *political codes* of Ancient [Sage] Kings.<sup>88</sup>

Therein exactly lay the grandest principle guiding entire book. In this regard, the present author proposes several points.

First, Zhang advocated the rehabilitation of the Ancient Learning. Of course, the goal of the Zhang-style rehabilitation was not to simplistically restore the antiquity per se but to resuscitate the most basic spirit of Six Classics. As a rule, thinkers in the ancient China advocated the politico-academic innovation under the cloak of *fugu* 复古 (the restoration of the great antiquity). Of course, Zhang was not an exception. It should be pointed out that the politico-academic reform in the garb of *fugu* could be trichotomized. First, some, on the basis of shadowy evidences, fictionally (re-)created the antiquity, on which their programs were based. Second, some, according to their own political needs, re-interpreted the history of great antiquity and reformulated concerned theories into the criteria whereby they could put into effect their reform plans. Third, some seriously reexamined and concluded the ancient history and history of scholarship and by doing so they draw useful lessons, from which the theory of reform was thus deduced. The present author holds that Zhang's academic praxis might be similar to the third type. To put it another way, although Zhang's academic exploration took the form of *fugu*, he sincerely tried to make an epistemological breakthrough by means of the solid reexamination of the past scholarship. Nevertheless, readers shall always bear in mind that Zhang's ideas, to a certain extent, were too idealistic.

Second, Zhang explicitly indicated that the philosophy embodied in his historiographical praxes and academic explorations were entirely inseparable from the material reality. He had justified this point by invoking Confucius, who had all Six Classics based on decrees and regulations promulgated by ancient sage kings and never attempted to discourse principles that were completely divorced from the real life.<sup>89</sup> Zhang went further, asserting that *dao bu li qi* 道不离器, or the Way could

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>88</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, vol. 1, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

by no means be independent of the social reality. It was on the assertion—*dao bu li qi*—that Zhang’s entire ideologico-academic edifice was built. Zhang explained this point in detail. His detailed explanation read,

The *Book of Changes* says, “What is above form is called the *dao*; what is within form is called actual things and affairs (*qi* 器).” The *dao* can no more be abstracted from the material world than a shadow can be separated from the shape that casts it. Because those in later ages who accepted Kongzi’s teachings obtained them from the Six Classics, they came to regard the Six Classics as “books that set forth the *dao*.” However, they failed to realize that the Six Classics all belong to the realm of actual things and affairs. [For example,] the *Book of Changes* is a book that explains things and helps people to succeed in their undertakings. In the Zhou court the Grand Diviner was in charge of it. It is therefore clear that its use was the responsibility of a specific office and that it was classed as a government document. [Similarly,] the *Book of History* was the responsibility of the Historian of the Exterior; the *Book of Odes* was part of the charge of the Grand Preceptor; the *Book of Rites* comes from the Master of Ceremonies; for the *Book of Music* there was the Master of the Court Orchestra; and for the *Spring and Autumn Annals* of each state there was a State Recorder. In the three royal dynasties and in earlier times, the *Book of Odes*, *Book of History*, and other classical disciplines were taught to everyone. It was not, as in later times, when we find the Six Classics placed on a pedestal, treated as the special subject matter of the Confucian school, and singled out as “books which set forth the *dao*.” The reason, as I see it, was that students in ancient times studied only what was in the charge of state officials, the state’s doctrines of government, and they simply applied this learning to the ordinary problems of everyday human obligations. They saw what they found in the classics simply as things that had to be as they were. They never saw beyond this any “*dao*” set forth in these books. ... When Kongzi explained why he wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, he said, “I could have set forth my principles in empty words, but they would not have been as trenchant and clear as they are when illustrated in [concrete] actions and events.” We see clearly then that there is no *dao* set forth in the classics apart from the documents illustrating political doctrines and the day-to-day functioning of human relationships. ... Is it ever, anywhere in the world, possible to talk about the *dao* apart from actual things and affairs, or to have a shadow without a shape to cast it? When they turn away from the actual things and affairs of the world, the day-to-day working out of human relationships, and hold on to the Six Classics and speak only of “the *dao*,” then one certainly cannot talk with them about what the *dao* really is.<sup>90</sup>

Where the intellectual origin of Zhang’s scholarship was concerned, it should be an extension of the Yangmingism founded by Wang Yangming in Ming, especially taking into consideration the succession of teachings among Zhang himself, Quan Zuwang, Huang Zongxi and Liu Zongzhou. Despite this, it must be pointed out that in terms of the intellectual substance, there was merely an ostensible homogeneity between Zhang’s thinking and Wang Yangming’s *xinxue*, or the Learning of the Mind, on the grounds that the thought of Liu Zongzhou, who served as the fountainhead of Zhang’s thinking, had already deviated from Wang’s orthodoxy.

Third, Zhang contented that the classics and history were not fundamentally different from each other; and that the genuine goal of academic exploration be understood from a practical perspective. Above quotations has indicated that Zhang

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<sup>90</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *On Ethics and History: Essays and Letters of Zhang Xuecheng*, trans. Philip J. Ivanhoe (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 36, 37, 38.

tried to philosophically illuminate these points. He furthered his illumination, arguing that primary Confucian classics were all composed of political codes, all of which as a whole constituted a special genre of history that was entirely based on the everyday life. The Six Classics were, Zhang said, not empty talks [about grand principles] at all but the veritable records of what ancient sovereigns did in their efforts to perfect the governance.<sup>91</sup> He went further, asserting that the Way of Sage lay no place else but in the everyday life.<sup>92</sup> Zhang also prepared specific suggestions for those who aspired to live an academic life. The essence of his suggestions lay in his assertions that the scholarship was of a practical nature; that writings should never be empty talks; and that every style of writing must have a pragmatic dimension.<sup>93</sup> To put it in a nutshell, being divorced from the material world and social reality, the aspiration for a much refined scholarship would come to nothing.<sup>94</sup> Zhang even radically concluded that in ancient times there were not any classics but history—Confucius’s *Chunqiu*, or the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and Sima Qian’s *Shiji*, for instance—with practical aspirations.<sup>95</sup> Epistemologically, Zhang’s practical thinking was exactly premised on his bold assertion that neither could any of the Six Classics be taken out the assortment of history nor were there any classics but history. In his discourses, the specific works—*Shiji*, *Chunqiu* and so on—and the entire scholarship of Three Dynasties were all practical and concerned with the human affairs. The practical nature of works and scholarship explained for what reason later generations attached great importance to the classics and concerned interpretations. Overall, in terms of the original intention, philosophical nature and definition of *history*, Zhang’s assertion that the “Six Classics are all history” was fundamentally different from similar ideas put forward in the past dynasties. It is particularly worth mentioning that in the trend of *shixue* Zhang’s practical thinking was unconventionally of a *philosophical* nature.

Logically, Zhang asserted that the most fundamental principle reigning over the production of historical narratives exactly lay in the aspiration to be conducive to the statecraft. He quoted Confucius—who had said, “I could have set forth my principles in empty words, but they would not have been as trenchant and clear as they are when illustrated in [concrete] actions and events”<sup>96</sup>—to speak of his definition of the most basic spirit and most fundamental rule of historiographical praxis.<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately, later generations of historians neither was cognizant of nor adhered to the basic spirit and rule. Under no circumstances could the historiography enjoy even the slightest freedom from being changed. The key of the work applying a fundamental change to the existing historiography lay in the

<sup>91</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, vol. 1, p. 3.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 523.

<sup>96</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *On Ethics and History: Essays and Letters of Zhang Xuecheng*, p. 37.

<sup>97</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, vol. 1, p. 172.



resuscitation of the basic spirit and rule. Besides, Zhang pointed out that in a certain way the Six Classics gradually evolved into history.<sup>98</sup> Most importantly, Zhang concluded that all types of *history* originated from Confucius's *Chunqiu*, or the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.<sup>99</sup> The present author holds that in Zhang's historiographical edifice, the juxtaposition of the fusion of classics and history, which was most intensively embodied in his well-known assertion that the "Six Classics are all history," and the single origin of history of all shades, was particularly worthy of furthered discussions in future studies in the history of Chinese ideas of history.

Fourth, invoking the philosophical idea of *biantong* (lit. flexibility), Zhang fervently advocated the inevitability of change in the field of historiography. He discussed this point from a much broader historical perspective. Zhang analyzed changes taking place in historiographical praxes in the remote Three Dynasties and even the remoter antiquity, pointing out that the excellent historiography embodied in the ancient history books such as *Shangshu* (*Book of History*) inevitably went extinct due to the scholarly situation wherein the false materials replaced genuine ones and the form prevailed over the quality.<sup>100</sup> In the post-Three Dynasties era, *Shiji* (The Grand Scribe's historical records) and *Hanshu* (Book of Han) could still grasp and put into effect the spirit of ancient history books. Then, since the end of the times of *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, the basic spirit of Ancient Learning had long been lost. Zhang had reconstructed the history of historiographical deterioration in his indelible *Wenshi tongyi*.<sup>101</sup> According to Zhang's delineation, as time went by, the history books became increasingly long-winded and repetitious while being irrevocably less creative. Therein lay the decisive factors bringing about the historiographical deterioration. In Zhang's eyes, from *Shangshu* and *Chunqiu* down to *Shiji* and *Hanshu* there was a consistent historiographical growth; and then, history was by degrees reduced to a rigid pattern. Zhang even resolutely asserted that the history functionally *died* in the wake of the collapse of the Tang Empire.<sup>102</sup> In order to rehabilitate such a declining—and even dead to some extent—historiography, Zhang suggested historians apply the idea of *biantong* to their production of history books.

The resuscitation of the basic spirit of ancient history books played a crucial role in the rehabilitation of the decadent historiography. Inspired by the *Book of Changes*, Zhang asserted that the basic spirit of history was "versatile and spirit-like" and "exact and wise."<sup>103</sup> To be specific, the creative delineation of history should be versatile and spiritlike; and the veracious record of history, exact

<sup>98</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Zhang Xuecheng yishu*, p. 612.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, vol. 1, p. 30.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., pp. 50–51.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 471.

<sup>103</sup>*Zhouyi* 周易, or *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang/ens>.



and wise.<sup>104</sup> The two types of spirit—versatile *plus* spiritlike, and exact *plus* wise—were embodied in the historiographical growth since the great antiquity. In this regard, Zhang specially showed the readers a creative thread running through the continuous production of *Shangshu*, *Chunqiu*, *Shiji* and *Hanshu*.<sup>105</sup> Generally, the historiographical praxis should follow the two types of basic spirit. The two types of spirit could be, however, fused together in specific history books. *Hanshu*, for instance, was exactly a melting pot of versatility, spiritlikeness, exactness and wisdom in the historiographical perspective.<sup>106</sup> Simply put, the historiographical praxis should be flexible, concretely embodying the idea of *biantong*. Therein lay Zhang's famous eight-word propositions—"yinshi mingpian buwei changli 因事命篇不为常例," or writing history according to specific circumstances of events while resolutely abandoning the obstinate adherence to the established examples of historical narrative.<sup>107</sup> Such proposition actually served as the highest principle guiding entire historiographical praxis, according to Zhang's theoretical discourses.

Where *jizhuan* 纪传, or the memoir-centered style of historical narrative, was concerned, Zhang delineated the birth, growth and decadence of such a predominant historiographical praxis in the ancient China.<sup>108</sup> In order to improve *jizhuan*, Zhang suggested historians adhere to the spirit of *Shangshu*, follow examples set up by Sima Qian in *Shiji*, and grasp the *Zuozhuan*-style method of tailoring history.<sup>109</sup> What ran through his suggestions and entire historiographical thinking was the above-mentioned eight-word proposition/principle, which was actually an embodiment of the creative idea of *biantong*. Only when readers gained insight into the idea of *biantong* will Zhang's historiographical thinking be well understood. In comparison with Liu Zhiji 刘知几 (661–721 AD), who required that historians unswervingly adhere to certain historiographical rules and regulations in their work, Zhang was fundamentally different from the towering figure of historical criticism in Tang. In this regard, Zhang had explained that he devoted himself to *shiyi* 史意, or the basic intention of historiography, and Liu to *shifa* 史法, or the highest historiographical rule. Zhang's *shiyi* was no other than his idea of *biantong*.

Fifth, Zhang laid stress on the significance of *tongshi* 通识 (the comprehensive and in-depth understanding of entire historical course) and *duduan* 独断 (the independent decision in the production of historical narratives) to the historiographical praxis. He firmly held that the true value of a history book fundamentally lay in the author's understanding of history and the original, creative and independent viewpoint(s) she or he abstracted from history. Invoking Confucius's *Chunqiu*, the only origin of the traditional Chinese historiography according to

<sup>104</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, vol. 1, p. 49.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 52. See also: Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., pp. 52–53.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

Zhang's theory, he elaborated this point.<sup>110</sup> In particular, Zhang highlighted the original, creative and independent ideas of history. Such ideas were embodied in historians' understanding of history, selection of primary sources, setting up examples of narrative, and so on. Simply put, the historiographical aspiration should be the same as that of Sima Qian, who aspired to create an independent intellectual school by means of the production of historical narratives. In retrospect, it was for the reason that the aspiration and practice of *duduan* dwindled that the decline of historiography was brought about. Overall, from the eras of Sima Qian and Ban Gu down to Zhang's time, harder the historians worked, wider the gap between them and the spirit of ancient history books grew.<sup>111</sup> Historians' understanding of or insight into the history intensively gave expression to differing types of historiography, as well as influencing all aspects of historiographical praxis. Among factors—language, textual criticism, for instance—that affected the development of historiography, the idea and practice of *duduan* played the most crucial role.

*Tongshi*, or the comprehensive and in-depth understanding of entire historical course, was the epitome of *duduan* in the historiographical perspective. Zhang excluded *tongshi*, or the general history that was ostensibly in line with the ideological *tongshi*, out of his historiographical edifice. In his eyes, the genuine books of *tongshi* exclusively included works aspiring to thoroughly understand entire history and find the way out for the impeded history; nevertheless, in reality *tongshi* was first reduced to a journal account of historical events, then to a generalization of history in the service of the plausible strategists, and finally, worst of all, to the analogical excerption that was as simplistic and shallow as the Rabbit Garden Books (for children).<sup>112</sup> In the light of his understanding of *tongshi*, Zhang thought very highly of Zheng Qiao 郑樵 (1104–1162), even praising Zhen as the true heir to the genuine spirit of *tongshi* and the extraordinary founder of an independent historiographico-intellectual school.<sup>113</sup> The value and significance of Zheng Qiao's scholarship exactly lay in the historian's effort to put into effect the idea of *duduan* in his historiographical praxis. Zhang had pointed out that among the three most primary constituents—that is, *shishi* 史事 (recording events), *shiwén* 史文 (writing history), and *shiyi* 史义 (illuminating the significance of history)—of historiography,<sup>114</sup> *shiyi* was the most significant. Zheng Qiao, Zhang held, was none other than the historian who extraordinarily grasped *shiyi* thanks to his brilliant insight into history. As regards the work of *shishi* and *shiwén*, Zhang contended that both could be done respectively by those who devoted themselves to the textual criticism and were in possession of great literary skills. Readers should always bear in mind that what Zhang advocated was not the form of history—contextually, the books of *general history*—but the much deeper *duduan*-style spirit embodied in varying

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., pp. 470–471.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 463.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 374.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 463.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 464.

historiographical praxes. For example, not only did Zhang applauded *Shiji* but he also complimentarily appraised *Hanshu* on the grounds that the two monumental history books shared the same spirit of *duduan*. In this regard, Zhang explicitly stated that his discussions about the main thrust of historiography did not exclusively focus on Zheng Qiao's works.<sup>115</sup> Even the works of collation—"Yiwenzhi 艺文志" (Treatise on literature) of *Hanshu*, for instance—could be embodiments of the unity of aspirations to thoroughly understand history and create an intellectually independent school.

Zhang went further, dichotomizing the scholarship into the learning of *duduan* and the work of *kaosuo* 考索 (the investigation of primary sources). Specifically, the learning of *duduan* focused on *zhuanshu* 撰述, or the creative delineation of history; and the work of *kaosuo*, on *bici* 比次, or the collection and assortment of primary sources. In the historiographical praxis, both were not contrary to each other but were closely interknitted. Analogically, Zhang asserted that the relationship existing between *zhuanshu* and *kaosuo* was the same as that of the good wine and distillers' grains or fine grains and the fertile land.<sup>116</sup> In practice, not only *duduan* but also *zhuanshu* could by no means be independent of *bici*. Zhang pointed out that the basic method of *bici* was to leave the well-reorganized and clearly-assorted primary sources for future evaluation rather than to arbitrarily evaluate them.<sup>117</sup> Of course, indeed there were differing genres of practice within the same framework of *bici*. Overall, Zhang never attempted to look down on the seemingly less creative *bici*. He just implied that the ultimate goal of historiographical praxis should not lie in *bici*, in particular against the backdrop of the trivialized academic world, wherein quite a few narrow-minded scholars devoted themselves to the excessively meticulous investigations of specific—albeit less significant—things.<sup>118</sup>

Zhang's discussion was reminiscent of Gu Yanwu's copper-mining analogy as regards the relationship existing between the research work and primary sources. Gu had metaphorically suggested scholars mine the copper in the mountains rather than mint coins by melting and reprocessing the old ones. In comparison with Gu, Zhang deepened the perception of academic pursuits by means of the four-chotomization of the existing scholarship into *duduan*, *kaosuo*, *zhuanshu* and *bici*. In the face of such an academia, wherein a large number of scholars, who were active in the Qian-Jia era, with very limited vision, excessively worked hard on the textual catalogue and emendation, as well as on philology and phonology, Zhang hierarchically dichotomized the scholarship into *learning* and *investigation*, whereby he could concurrently rectify disadvantages of the too narrow-minded Qing scholarship and raise the historical methodology and studies in primary sources to new heights. Simply put, the hierarchical dichotomization was exactly

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 470.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 477.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 482.

the Zhang-style historiographical rehabilitation. As regards the production of history books, Zhang more specifically pentachotomized concerned works into *shikao* 史考 (the extensive investigation of history), *shixuan* 史选 (the literary reconstruction of history), *shizuan* 史纂 (the reconstruction of history through the prism of past records), *shiping* 史评 (the review of history), and *shili* 史例 (the stylistic representation of history), among which the erudite people from Tang and Song down to Zhang's time were good at *shizuan*, *shikao* and *shili* and meanwhile those who mastered the literary skills were accomplished in *shixuan* and *shiping*.<sup>119</sup> Zhang explicitly asserted that none of them was in harmony with the basic spirit of the ancient history books.<sup>120</sup> Such a negative conclusion indicated that Zhang strongly believed his grand mission lay nowhere else but in the resuscitation of the creative learning of *duduan*.

Sixth, Zhang put forward *shide* 史德, or the “virtue in an historian.” Zhang contended that the Liu Zhiji's discourses on the three basic constituents of historiography was actually limited on the grounds that Liu paid unduly excessive attention to *shishi* 史识, or the insightful understanding of history. In order to complement Liu's triplex theory, Zhang set forth the *virtue in an historian*. His detailed elaborations read,

Literary skill, learning, and insight—to possess any one of these is not an easy task, but to be equally proficient in all three is even more difficult. This is why, throughout the ages, there have been many more [great] literary men than good historians. Earlier, Liu Zhiji seems to have believed that such an explanation provides a complete account of the matter. Nevertheless, in the case of history what matters is its meaning; its medium is events, and its vehicle is literature. Mengzi said, “The events it (i.e., the *Spring and Autumn Annals*) records are those of Huan of Qi and Wen of Jin; its style is historical. As for its meaning, the master said, ‘It is I who humbly decides this.’” Without *insight*, he (i.e., Kongzi) would not have been able to determine its meaning. Without *literary skill*, he would not have been able to perfect its style. Without *learning*, he would not have been able to handle its events. These three [abilities or skills] each certainly have near relatives and semblances that prove to be false. Memorization and recitation can appear to be learning; a florid style can appear to be literary skill, and decisiveness can appear to be insight. But these are not the skill, learning, and insight of the good historian. Even Mr. Liu's discussion of skill, learning, and insight does not provide a complete account of this matter.

Now Mr. Liu says that one who possesses learning but lacks insight is like an ignorant trader who has money but doesn't know how to play the market. If we take the implications of this remark as a guide to understanding Mr. Liu's position, then [we see] his only aim is to know what to select, among the things one memorizes and recites, in order to perfect one's literary style. This is why he says, “in order to perfect their art, ancient historians withheld [accounts of] virtuous scholars who had retired from the world and advanced those of crafty scoundrels; they suppressed [accounts of] those who died for a noble cause and glossed over the faults of rulers.” He also said, “this is the way in which an individual author should proceed.” This is still [just] the insight of a literary scholar; it is not the insight of an historian. One who possesses the insight of an historian must understand the Virtue of an historian.

<sup>119</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Zhang Xuecheng yishu*, p. 612.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*

What is Virtue? It is the way an author's heart-mind works. One who writes a scandalous history thereby makes himself a scandalizer; one who writes a slanderous book thereby makes himself a slanderer. If others already regard one's everyday conduct as shameful, why would they pay any attention to what one writes? As for Wei Shou's arrogant slander and Shen Yue's concealment of wrongdoing, [since] everyone who reads their works already distrusts these men, the harm they do is not severe. What harms the way the heart-mind works is when one has the heart-mind of a cultivated person and yet fails to nourish it to refinement. To have the heart-mind of a cultivated person and yet to fail to nourish it to refinement is something that not even great worthies can [always manage to] avoid. If even such people have shortcomings in the way their heart-minds work, then anything less than Kongzi's *Spring and Autumn Annals* would not measure up. Is it not extremely difficult to hold people to such a high standard? Surely, we should not do so.

It seems that those who wish to become good historians must carefully distinguish the boundary between the Heavenly and the human [within themselves], making full use of the Heavenly without using the human to help it along. Making full use of the Heavenly [within oneself] without using the human to help it along may not result in perfection, but if one sincerely embraces such an understanding, this truly is the [proper] way for an author's heart-mind to work. Scholars of literary history vie with each other in talking about "skill," "learning," and "insight," and yet they do not know how to discern the way their heart-minds work, which would enable them to discuss the Virtue of an historian. Is this not sad indeed?<sup>121</sup>

According to above quotations, Zhang did not think Liu Zhiji had already gone beyond the vision of a parochial *wenshi* 文士 (literary scholar). Thus, Liu's theory must be complemented by *shide*. Zhang held that a true historian must simultaneously have *insight* and *virtue*. Zhang's definition of the *virtue* lay in his explanation of how a historian's heart-mind worked. As regards *xinshu* 心术, or the *practical way of heart-mind*, Zhang illuminated that it referred to the superior men's effort to refine themselves to the greatest extent. In particular, Zhang shed light on the connotations of the *practical way of heart-mind*. Such connotations required that in the historiographical praxis there must be a clear distinction between Heaven and humankind; and that the role Heaven played in such praxis be maximized while the influence of human factors being reduced as far as possible. In other words, good historians should objectively reexamine the entire world and entire history from the perspective of Heaven-humankind relationship. It was actually a difficult mission for those who aspired to be good historians. In this regard, Zhang furthered his discussion about the *practical way of heart-mind*, saying,

As for approving of Yao and Shun and condemning Jie and Zhou, these are things everyone knows to say. Revering the kingly way and rejecting the hegemon's methods are also things that scholars hold as conventional convictions. When it comes to liking the good and disliking the bad, praising the upright and hating what is depraved, all who seek immortality through literature share these sentiments. Nevertheless, the reason one must carefully consider the way the heart-mind works is that the Heavenly and the human come together in exceedingly subtle buds or sprouts [of understanding], and here one cannot rely upon petty [human] intelligence.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *On Ethics and History: Essays and Letters of Zhang Xuecheng*, pp. 76–77.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

Pondering on the Zhang-style *xinshu*, readers can grasp three key points of Zhang's thinking. First, the perception of specific things was entirely based on the insightful understanding of the relationship of Heaven and humankind. Second, the observation of the myriad things fundamentally originated from the pulse of the purest mind nestling in the innermost part of the heart (mind). Third, the observation of the myriad things should be objectively done; that is to say, the observers must, as far as impossible, intellectually rely on Heaven while preventing themselves from being influenced by human factors. In view of this, it is safe to say that Zhang's *shide* (the virtue in an historian) was a much more sublimed edition of Liu Zhiji's *shishi* (the insight into history). To put it another way, Zhang suggested historians—the good ones in particular—abandon the arbitrary subjectivism and try instead to more objectively, more reasonably, and more macroscopically reexamine history and draw conclusions.

Obviously, Zhang's *shide* was (re-)formulated in the perspective of *xinxue*, or the Learning of the Mind. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that Zhang actually adopted a revised *xinxue*, in which it was the more material *qi* that caused *xin* 心, or the mind, to change. Zhang explained this point in detail. The concerned illumination in *Wenshi tongyi* read,

Now what an historian records are events, and events must be written down if they are to be passed on [to future generations]. And so, every good historian must work on writing well. Most, though, do not realize that writing can suffer from being the servant of events. It seems that [the course of] events cannot be without instances of gain and loss, right and wrong. But as soon as there is gain and loss or right and wrong, this repeated give-and-take begins to grate [within the historian's heart-mind]. As this friction continues, *qi* builds up [within the historian]. [The course of] events cannot be without flourishing and decline, waxing and waning. But as soon as there is flourishing and decline or waxing and waning, then repeated regrets begin to flow [within the historian's heart-mind]. As this flow continues, feelings begin to deepen [within the historian]. [Now] writing alone cannot move a person; what moves a person is *qi*. Writing alone cannot enter into a person; what enters into a person are feelings.

...The meaning of history comes from Heaven, and yet historical writing must rely on human effort in order to come into being. If one is afflicted by [an imbalance of] *yin* or *yang*, one's historical writings will fall short of the universal character of the great *dao*. This gets manifested in extremely subtle ways. [Now] writing cannot exist without *qi*, but in the case of *qi* what matters is balance. While living in ease, everyone's *qi* is in balance. But *qi* is influenced by events, and when it goes amiss one becomes disordered, reckless, and arrogant and aligned with the *yang*. If writing is bereft of feelings, it will not be profound. But in the case of feelings, what matters is correctness. When idle and unengaged, everyone's feelings are correct. But feelings are influenced by events, and when they go amiss one will drift, sink, and become one-sided and aligned with the *yin*. The affliction generated from the rising and falling of the *yin* and *yang* rides along the *qi* and blood and enters into the heart-mind's understanding. Within, it silently turns and gradually spreads until it appears to be universal but actually is self-serving, appears to be Heavenly but actually is obscured by the human. Expressed in writing, it reaches the point where it injures righteousness and works against the *dao*. People [who suffer from this affliction] are themselves not even aware that this is happening. And so, I say one cannot but be careful about the way the heart-mind works.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., pp. 78–79.

There were several key points in Zhang's elaboration of the relationship of *qi* and *xin*. First, the writing, one of embodiments of *xin*, or the mind, could not move the humans, but merely to keep account of events. Second, it was only *qi* that was able to move the humans. Specifically, *qi* influenced the human emotions to such an extent that it could bring changes to the mind. Third, *qi* should always be in balance. However, due to the influence of events, *qi* could be lost and emotions disturbed, and the forces of *yin* and *yang* alternated accordingly. As a consequence, the writing that were produced in these conditions would be detrimental to the grand principle of righteousness and the Great Way. From the perspective of intellectual history, although Zhang did not give top priority to the idea that the mind was premised on the more material *qi*, his thoughts as a whole had already deviated from the orthodoxy of *xinxue* founded by Wang Yangming.

Zhang also explicitly stated that the highest criteria reigning over the judgment of orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, right and wrong, and gains and losses, exactly lay in *mingjiao* 名教, or the most basic teachings of Confucius. *Mingjiao* played a crucial role in the cultivation of the mind, as well as in the cognizance of Grand Principles and rectification of the *practical way of heart-mind*. Zhang shed revealing light on this point in his discussion of several ancient books. The concerned segment in *Wenshi tongyi* read,

How does one come to understand the great principles? How does one rectify the way one's heart-mind works? The master said, "The *Book of Odes* [i.e. *Shijing* 诗经] can serve to stimulate [one's heart-mind]." Commentators have explained this as meaning that it can serve to stimulate a heart-mind that likes what is good and dislikes what is bad. [Kongzi] feared that the heart-mind that likes what is good and dislikes what is bad might be something one seems to possess but actually does not possess. Therefore he valued having a way to cultivate it each and every day. *Encountering Sorrow* [i.e. *Lisao* 离骚] and the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shiji* 史记] are as profound as the *Book of Odes*. Their language is indirect and extremely suggestive, and yet neither ever turns its back on the great teachings [of Confucianism].<sup>124</sup>

In the light of the above quotation, the present author concludes that the nature of Zhang's *shide* exactly lay in his assertion that good historians must possess the *shishi* that was genuinely in harmony with *mingjiao*.

In particular, Zhang discussed how to fulfill the aspiration to balance the mind. The key of the work lay in the cultivation of the mind. In the treatise devoted to the virtue in a litterateur, Zhang said,

[But] if one seeks the central principle [of all literature] then it can be covered in a single phrase: "When writing, maintain reverent attention." If one maintains reverent attention then the heart-mind will be calm and spirit will have a place in which to gather. One then will naturally be able to follow along with the various changes and transformations needed to accord with the proper measure. As for history, there are three areas of needed expertise: skill, learning, and insight. To seek to produce writings in the ancient style that are not derived from actual history is [to seek to have] food and drink without relying upon [the products of] agriculture. Now insight arises in the heart-mind, skill emerges from the spirit,

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 81.



and learning comes from concentrating the heart-mind in order to nurture the spirit and refining insight in order to perfect skill.<sup>125</sup>

What Zhang advocated in the quotation—nourishing *shide* by means of the cultivation of the mind—was, however, tinged with the mysticism of *xinxue*. But on the other hand, Zhang attempted to elaborate the *practical way of heart-mind* from the perspective of the general mood of society and candidly acknowledged that indeed the decadence of the general mood unfavorably affected the production of history books.<sup>126</sup> Such effort indicated that Zhang tried to, at least to some extent, rectify the disadvantage of *xinxue*.

Seventh, Zhang paid particular attention to the production of *fangzhi* 方志, or the local gazetteers. It was evident that Zhang fused the production of local gazetteers with the effort to produce a state history. In particular, Zhang pointed out that in comparison with the state history, which was a project that was too gigantic to be easily done by individual historians, local gazetteers were much more easily operated and thus could be a perfect complement to the colossal state history.<sup>127</sup> In fact, there was an interknitting system consisting of the state history and local gazetteers in Zhang's giant historiographical edifice. In his own words, there were equally the history books devoted to all-under-heaven, to a state, to a family, and an individual; and among the kaleidoscopic array of history books the local gazetteers served as the linchpin impartially (re-)processing genealogical works devoted to individual families and preliminarily preparing works available for the higher imperial agencies in charge of the project of state history.<sup>128</sup> In this regard, Zhang resentfully asserted that in the post-Three Dynasty era the local gazetteers were too qualitatively poor to be accepted by the imperial agencies and directly contributed to the growing decadence of historiography. In view of this, Zhang included the improvement of the production of local gazetteers into his historiographical reform, hoping that by doing so he could lay a more solid foundation of the future work producing the state history. There were two points as regards Zhang's plan to improve local gazetteers. First, the (re-)production of local gazetteers should be congruous with the great aspirations to verify authenticity and seek historical truth. Second, those who were responsible for the production of state history must have a wide vision and be tolerant of local gazetteers and even genealogical works apart from the officially recognized materials. For readers, only when they grasp the unity of Zhang's theoretical representation of *fangzhi* and his historiographical thinking would they better understand the Zhang-style idea of history.

To sum up, Zhang's *Wenshi tongyi* was a theoretical, systematic conclusion of the traditional Chinese historiography in the twilight years of the feudal China. Applying the idea of *biantong* to his reexamination of historical writings in the

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid., pp. 84–85.

<sup>126</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, vol. 1, p. 239.

<sup>127</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, vol. 2, p. 642.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 588.



ancient China, Zhang tried his best to find a way out for the Chinese historiography. Proposing the well-known proposition that “Six Classics are all history,” Zhang illuminated the practical spirit of the traditional historiographical praxis in China. The towering historian also inspiringly elaborated general concepts such as *shiyi* 史义 (the meaning of history), *shishi* (the insight into history) and *shide* (the virtue in an historian); generalized the historiographical praxes in the past dynasties; and conceived of a comprehensive history devoted to the entire era. To put it in a nutshell, Zhang strove to make a historiographical breakthrough. It is also worth mentioning that Zhang had unique understanding as regards the historical literature, annotations and interpretations. At that time, when the traditional Chinese historiography had already greatly declined, Zhang’s brilliant rehabilitating effort was like a faint auroral glow igniting the hope for the future in the dispirited community of historians. Nevertheless, Zhang actually did not go beyond *mingjiao*, or the most basic teachings of Confucius. For this reason, his criticism against the conventional historiography could not be powerful enough to remake it. Worst of all, Zhang’s theories were even tainted with the mysticism of *xinxue*. Being devoid of the new philosophy of history and the novel historical methodologies, as well as being unable to enable his idea of history grow more extensively influential, the Zhang-style scholarship failed to be as prominent as the traditional ones.<sup>129</sup> To make matters worse, in his twilight years the unconventional Zhang even made concession to Qing’s conservative *Hanxue* 汉学, or a scholarly praxis identifying itself with the archaic scholarship prevailing in the two Han dynasties (202 BC–220 AD).<sup>130</sup> As a consequence, his innovative pulse gradually subsided and the Qing historians had no alternative but to harp on the old tone.

### 3 The Historico-Historiographical Review and Textual Criticism in the Historiographical Perspective

Scholars’ evaluations of the textual criticism prevailing in the Qian-Jia era differ from each other. As regards such a special scholarship, the present author proposes several points. First, it was true that in ancient times the unity of classics and history could not be split; but it was also true that classics and history were two different types of scholarship. Second, indeed the Manchu Empire’s high-handed censorship seriously impinged the scholarship; but on the other hand, under no circumstances should the textual criticism in the historiographical perspective be denounced as merely a tool whereby scholars could escape the politics and avoid being gotten into trouble. Third, in no way was the Qian-Jia textual criticism entirely trivialized, in particular taking into consideration the fact that scholars in this era syncretized varying types of scholarship in their textual investigation and reappraised history on

<sup>129</sup>Hou Wailu, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi*, vol. 5, p. 490.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

the basis of the unprecedentedly extensive collection and reasonable assortment of primary sources. It is particularly worth mentioning that the representative works of the Qian-Jia Scholarship systematically reexamined entire historiography before Qing from the perspectives of the critical emendation and reorganization of entire existing literature.

In his monumental *Wenshi tongyi*, Zhang Xuecheng clearly indicated that there was the fusion of conclusion of and criticism against historiography in the academia of the late feudal China. Therein exactly lay the underlying demand of a scholarly breakthrough. As regards the general character of the Qian-Jia Scholarship, Zhang criticized that it was much more textually exhaustive while remaining much less philosophically creative.<sup>131</sup> Chen Yinke 陈寅恪 (1890–1969), a modern Chinese scholar who was hyped in recent decades, echoed Zhang, saying that the Qing’s historiography was far inferior to that of Song (“Chongke Xiyu ren Huahua kao xu 重刻西域人华化考序” (Preface to the reprinted *Investigations of the Sinicization of peoples from the Western Region*)). Neither did the Qing historians produce any magnum opus devoted to history; nor were they able to make a stylistic breakthrough. Compared with Song, Qing’s performances were very poor in almost all aspects of historiography. Even so, we shall not simplistically asserted that the entire Qing historiography was merely a praxis of the pure textual criticism. Objectively, there were concurrently the textual criticism and in-depth explorations and reinterpretations of history in works produced by the Qing historians. For example, among the three signature works embodying the Qian-Jia historiography—that is, Qian Daxin’s *Nian’er shi kaoyi* 廿二史考异 (A deep investigation of the twenty-two official history books), Zhang Yi’s *Nian’er shi zhaji* 廿二史劄记 (Notes on the twenty-two official history books), and Wang Mingsheng’s *Shiqi shi shangque* 十七史商榷 (Critically reexamining the seventeen official history books), Qian’s was devoted to the textual criticism in the historiographical perspective; and Zhao’s and Wang’s were actually the fusion of historico-historiographical review and textual criticism.

### (1) Qian Daxin

Qian successfully created an epistemic unity of classics and history. Employing research fruits of studies in ancient classics, Qian shed inspiringly critical light on history. The Qian-style scholarship was indisputably broad and profound. Qian himself, who was renowned for his scholarly solidity and unadornedness, had quite a good command of philology, phonology, astronomy, geography, textual criticism, textual emendation, historico-institutional investigation, and so on. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), who had prefaced one of Qian’s works, pointed out in nine aspects Qian epistemically, intellectually and morally outshone his contemporaries. Specifically, first, Qian was extraordinarily indifferent to fame and wealth and wholeheartedly devoted himself to academic pursuits; second, Qian was unswervingly impartial, realistic and down-to-earth; third, Qian inquired into and

<sup>131</sup>Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi*, vol. 1, p. 161.

commentated on the classics in the strictest and most profound manner; fourth, Qian uniquely explored history books of every hue and corrected mistakes in them as many as possible; fifth, Qian incredibly grasped the abstruse astronomical and calendric knowledge; sixth, Qian made unparalleled contributions to the traditional historico-geographical study; seventh, Qian developed quite an excellent mastery of the phonological knowledge, next to which so many renowned scholars paled; eighth, Qian made unmatched achievements in the assortment of extant bronze and stone inscriptions and the reexamination of a great variety of institutions; and ninth, his literary skills—and poetry in particular—were hard to be surpassed.<sup>132</sup>

Qian's nine extraordinary academic achievements hinted at his incomparable scholarly breadth and depth. In Qian's academic cosmos, the knowledge of all shades—astronomy, geography, philology, mathematics, and so on and so forth—were all perfectly fused together. Qian's brilliance and unmatchedness shed revealing light on the true value and significance of the Qian-Jia Scholarship. Objectively, the general dimension of the Scholarship was syncretic and penetrating and successfully fused the studies in classics, history and varying intellectual schools into an integral one. In this sense, towering figures of the Qian-Jia Scholarship were far superior to those who obstinately to the alleged profound teachings buried in a few segments of Confucian classics in *Hanxue* (a scholarly praxis identifying itself with the archaic scholarship prevailing in the two Han dynasties). Nevertheless, it must be admitted that indeed Qian was much less philosophically creative. Where Qian's works were concerned, apart from the highly acclaimed *Nian'er shi kaoyi*, there were *Sanshi shiyi* 三史拾遗 (Gleanings from *Shiji*, *Hanshu* and *Hou Han shu* [Book of the Later Han]), *Zhushi shiyi* 诸史拾遗 (Gleanings from various history books), *Shijia Zhai yangxin lu* 十驾斋养新录 (Accounts devoted to the effort nourishing the fresh elements in the Assiduous-Inferior-Horse Study), *Yangxin yulu* 养新余录 (A supplement to *Shijia Zhai yangxin lu*), *Qianyan Tang wenji* 潜研堂文集 (The collection of writings in the Diving-into-Scholarship Hall), the tables and treatises complementing the official history and the works devoted to the studies in bronze and stone inscriptions.

## (2) Zhao Yi

Interestingly, evoking the movement of the more material *qi* (breath/ether), Zhao tried his best to corroborate the inevitability of drastic changes taking place in history in his highly influential *Nian'er shi zhaji*. For example, he applied the special theory of *qiyun* 气运 (the movement of *qi*) to the analyses of the collapse of Qin, the rise of Han, and tremendous socio-political changes in the Han Empire.<sup>133</sup> There were three key points as regard the Zhao-style analysis of the vicissitudinous history. First, Zhao laid stress on the inevitability of changes in history, asserting

<sup>132</sup>Qian Daxin 钱大昕, *Shijia Zhai yangxin lu* 十驾斋养心录 [Accounts devoted to the effort nourishing the fresh elements in the Assiduous-Inferior-Horse Study] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1983), "Ruan Yuan's Preface," p. 7.

<sup>133</sup>Zhao Yi, *Nian'er shi zhaji*, pp. 36–37.

that changes were determined by *shi* 勢, or the general trend. More specifically, due to the movements of *qi*, the social classes and groups of every hue came and went, rose and fell, in an ever-changing circumstance. Second, Zhao unconventionally pointed out that it was the people's will that played a crucial role in the vicissitudes of history. For example, the First Emperor of Qin abandoned the policies benefiting the people and chose instead to excessively mobilize the people and, worst of all, cruelly abuse the people. As a result, in order to survive under the despotic rule, the people grew increasingly rebellious and the country was in the danger of being extremely instable. It was in these conditions that the founding emperor of the Former Han rose, by degrees, to power. Third, sadly, Zhao believed that in history there were events and phenomena that could only be explained by some mystical forces such as Heaven. The historian, for instance, alleged that what brought about the downfall of enfeoffed kings in Han and the emergence of the system selecting talents for the central court was mystically unfathomable. For this reason, Zhao's *qiyun* theory was actually ideologically discounted.

To be frank, indeed, Zhao's idea of history was tinted with eclecticism and mysticism. For example, when he was analyzing for what reason a dynasty finally collapsed, he asserted that it was *qiyun* that played the decisive role. To be specific, when *qiyun* was in full flush, a sovereign would enjoy his or her longevity and the royal family prosper; on the contrary, if *qiyun* was in the wane, the sovereigns were frequently heirless.<sup>134</sup> Most importantly, the change taking place in *qiyun*, Zhao held, was independent of human factors.<sup>135</sup> Therein lay a mystical Mandate of Heaven. Whenever a historical phenomenon could not be reasonably explained, Zhao would definitely ask the superstition for help. He, for instance, believed that the two emperors of Khitan's Liao (916–1125), both of whom were inherently as powerful and intelligent as deities, were able to foretell the future.<sup>136</sup> As regards the popularity of Buddhism in the medieval China, Zhao said what Buddhists advocated—people could be blessed by reciting Buddhist sutras—could be corroborated by historical records.<sup>137</sup> Zhao even defend the alleged interconnection of natural disasters and Five Elements, asserting that it was not entirely ungrounded.<sup>138</sup> In Zhao's time, the superstitious thinking as regards the mystical interrelation between disasters and human factors had long been criticized and denounced. Even so, Zhao still obstinately adhered to it. Such a conservative stance indicated that Zhao's historiographical thinking was, at least to some extent, old-fashioned.

As mentioned above, Zhao prominently attached great importance to the role the will of the people could play in the state politics. Therein actually lay an implication that the sovereigns who put into effect policies damaging the interests of the people must face a furious backlash from the people. For example, digging into the official

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., p. 620.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., pp. 324, 325.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

history books, Zhao brought light to the two Songs' redundant officials and excessive expenditure, both of which seriously did harm to the people.<sup>139</sup> Specifically, one of the reasons contributing to the collapse of the Northern Song lay in the central court's extreme exploitation of the people; and then in the Southern Song the sovereigns were as greedy and exploitative as their counterparts in the Northern Song and the people were quite hard to survive.<sup>140</sup> Besides, Zhao shed light on the significance of meritocratic selection system to the country. Even though such ideas were not politically creative, they did give expression to the basic characters of the Zhao-style reexamination of the vicissitudinous history.

It is particularly worth discussing Zhao's theory of *diqu* 地气, which could be literally rendered into the vital breath of the earth and actually referred to the fundamental social changes embodied in the geographical alterations of the political center(s). In *Nian'er shi zhaji*, Zhao delineated in detail the changes of *diqu* from the mid-Tang down to Qing.<sup>141</sup> Therein lay a unique unity of the Principle and *diqu* whereby Zhao could shed revealingly interpretive light on the vicissitudes of history. In other words, it was through the prism of the alternations of *diqu* that Zhao interpreted the entire course of the Chinese history. His *diqu*-inspired conclusion was that the main stage on which the vicissitudinous Chinese history performed historically moved from the Northwest to the Northeast. Whenever *diqu* began alternating, the national politics would undergo a fundamental change accordingly. There were two points in Zhao's *diqu* theory. First, such theory was of a mystical nature. But on the other hand, it was an idea macroscopically illuminating the historical movement. For this reason, Zhao's theory should be affirmed. Second, in the light of the alternations of *diqu*, Zhao dichotomized the Chinese history and selected the Kaiyuan-Tianbao era (713–756 AD) as the watershed in the entire historical course. Zhao's interpretation basically conformed to the historical actuality. Thus, such a wide-vised idea of history was worthy of a sincere recognition. Comparatively, as late as the modern times, Western thinkers such as Montesquieu, Hegel and A. J. Toynbee employed the theories that were similar to Zhao's *diqu* to shed light on the changes of world civilizations. *Diqu* also inspired Liang Qichao, a renowned thinker-scholar in the modern China, to demonstrate that China would definitely be rejuvenated. Overall, Zhao in his works fused the textual investigation of history with the theoretical reexamination of history and discussed the vicissitudes of history from the perspective of the general trend of social development. The significance of such an extensive and profound historiographical praxis should not be biasedly downplayed.

In comparison with Sima Guang, who historiographically reexamined the vicissitudinous history by means of the annalistic reconstruction of events, Zhao tried instead to reveal the rules reigning over rise and fall of dynasties by assorting historical events and delineating entire course of specific events. In view of this, the

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid., pp. 538–539.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., p. 541.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., pp. 443–445.

present author contends that it is unfair and ungrounded to accuse the Qian-Jia Scholarship represented by Zhao and other leading Qing scholars of being cowardly indifferent to the social reality. Zhao's *Nian'er shi zhaji* was a perfect counterpunch against such an unfounded accusation. Zhao, for instance, bravely brought to light the debauchedness, ruthlessness and mercilessness of ruling oligarchs in his work (see table below).

Volume Number	Theme(s)
3	“Wudi xingfa zhilan 武帝刑罚之滥” (The Emperor Wu’s overused punishments) “Han zhuwang huangluan 汉诸王荒乱” (The debauchery and promiscuity of the enfeoffed kings in Han)
5	“Huanguan zhi haimin 宦官之害民” (Eunuchs did harm to the people)
11	“Song Qi duo huangzhu 宋齐多荒主” (There were many ridiculous sovereigns in the dynasties of Southern (Liu’s) Song and Southern Qi) “Song shi guimen wuli 宋世闺门无礼” (Improprieties were rampant among women in the royal family of Liu’s Song) “Song zisun tulu zhi can 宋子孙屠戮之惨” (Horrible massacres of royal descendants of the Southern Liu’s Song)
15	“Beiqi gongwei zhi chou 北齐宫闈之丑” (The immoral affairs taking place in the imperial harem of the Northern Qi) “Sui Wendi sha Yuwen shi zisun 隋文帝杀宇文氏子孙” (The Emperor Wen of Sui brutally purged descendants of the Yuwen Family)
26	“Qin Hui wenzi zhihuo 秦桧文字之祸” (Qin Hui’s disastrous censorship)
28	“Hailin huangyin 海陵荒淫” (The licentiousness of the Lord of Hailing) “Hu Lan zhi yu 胡蓝之狱” (The tragic incidences of Hu Weiyong 胡惟庸 and Lan Yu 蓝玉)

It is particularly worth mentioning that Zhao fearlessly disclosed the cruelty of feudal censorship in the Southern Song and Ming dynasties. According to Zhao, Qin Hui 秦桧 (1090–1155), a notoriously treacherous high minister in the central court of the Southern Song, persecuted nationwide scholar-officials who were accused of being against the politico-cultural tattoos;<sup>142</sup> and Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398), the founding emperor of Ming, arbitrarily executed some scholar-officials merely because a few words that they used were phonetically or lexically similar to the words resented by the emperor.<sup>143</sup> Zhao’s writing was quite dauntless, in particular taking into consideration the fact that how rigid and cruel the censorship in the early Qing was.

Shedding critical light on history books produced in each dynasty, Zhao systematically developed his own historiographical thinking. There were several key points in the Zhao-style historiography. First, Zhao suggested historians not

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., p. 566.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., pp. 740–741.

produce history work but try their utmost to write the works whereby they could create an independent intellectual school. He asserted that the ancient works from *Zuo zhuan* down to *Shiji* were all penned by their authors with a view to founding a school or creating a scholarly tradition and by contrast the official history books were academically and intellectually far less ambitious.<sup>144</sup> In order to achieve the lofty goal of founding an independent school, historians should spend much time and energy writing their books. Li Yanshou 李延寿 spent seventeen years penning the *Southern History* and *Northern History*. It took Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 seventeen years to write the *New Book of Tang*. Nineteen years had already passed when Sima Guang finished his *Zizhi tongjian*. The time Sima Qian invested in the production of *Shiji* was even longer. All of them paled next to Ban Gu, whose whole life was consumed by *Hanshu*. In contrast, the imperial agency of the Mongol Empire spent merely three years producing the official works devoted to Song, Liao and Jin respectively; and Ming even spent less time preparing the history devoted to Yuan. It's no wonder the official history produced in Yuan and Ming might be the qualitatively poorest.<sup>145</sup>

Second, the history book should be practically useful. Zhao disagreed with the idea that the quality of a historical work be judged in accordance with the number of words. But instead, he strongly suggested historians produce works that could be applied to practical affairs. For example, Zhao asserted that in *Hanshu* Ban Gu's treatises other than existing contents of *Shiji* were of a utilitarian nature.<sup>146</sup> He even defended Ban's substantial inclusion of the Han-style poetry into a history book, saying such handpicked literary works could inspire later generations of poets.<sup>147</sup> But on the other hand, Zhao objected to include trivialities into history. In this regard, he severely rebuked Li Yanshou on the grounds that the renowned historian in the medieval China had his works stuffed too many fantastic stories.<sup>148</sup>

Third, Zhao opposed to the distortion of history. For example, the Qing guru brought to light the falsity of *Weishu* 魏书 (Book of Wei) and denounced it as a *filthy work*.<sup>149</sup> Zhao also comparatively analyzed the *Old History of Five Dynasties* by Xue Juzheng 薛居正 and Ouyang Xiu's *New History of Five Dynasties*. He sharp-mindedly pointed out that in many cases Xue reconstructed the history with a view to concealing something and in contrast Ouyang veraciously represented what actually took place in the past. Zhao was discontent with Xue's uncritical acceptance of the so-called veritable records produced by the imperial agencies of past dynasties and meanwhile he recognized Ouyang's critical reexamination of such old accounts.<sup>150</sup> Of course, Zhao candidly admitted that occasionally Xue produced

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<sup>144</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., pp. 1–2.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., p. 457.



veritable narratives; and that Ouyang's handling of primary sources was not completely errorless.<sup>151</sup>

Fourth, the historical narrative should be impartial and well-grounded. In Zhao's eyes, Ouyang Xiu set an example to historians in his creation of the *New History of Five Dynasties*. Zhao vividly said,

Without being exposed to the *Old History of Five Dynasties*, you will be unable to imagine how comprehensive and well-grounded the *New History of Five Dynasties* is. Nor can you realize that what a concise and well-knit work the *New History of Five Dynasties* is, if the *Old History of Five Dynasties* is not presented before your eyes. Not only is the *New History of Five Dynasties* written so clearly and compactly that it can be put in the same league as *Shiji*; but it also outdoes *Shiji* by passing the *Chunqiu*-style most subtle and profound judgment on the historical events and figures in the *Memoirs*.<sup>152</sup>

Zhao's lavish praise was, however, an embodiment of his intellectual limitation. As discussed in the previous chapters, the so-called Chunqiu-style historiographical rules in the *New History of Five Dynasties* were actually *invented* by one of Ouyang Xiu's disciples. To a great extent, such invented rules reigning over the Ouyang-style historiography were not in harmony with the original thinking of Ouyang Xiu. But, from a different perspective, such an effusive praise for Ouyang did give expression to Zhao's lofty historiographical expectation.

Fifth, writings in history books must be succinct. In terms of the conciseness of writing, Zhao thought highly of *Liangshu* 梁书 (Book of [the Southern]Liang) and *Jinshi* 金史 (History of Jin) apart from Ouyang Xiu's *New History of Five Dynasties* and *New History of Tang*. In particular, Zhao asserted that *Liangshu* even could be compared to the indelible *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. Specifically, although *Liangshu* was entirely based on the official primary sources, its writing was amazingly refined and extraordinarily embodied the synthesis of power, fascination, lucidity and fluency. Overall, the book at one stride wiped out the redundancy disturbing so much the creative works in the Six Dynasties (222–589 AD). Zhao contended that the book's succinctness had reached to such an extent that even Li Yanshou, who penned the *Sothern History* that was renowned for its conciseness, could neither add nor reduce a word to it. Zhao even boldly concluded that it was not Han Yu 韩愈 (768–824 AD) but Yao Cha 姚察, the author of *Liangshu*, and his son who pioneered the Movement of Ancient Prose.<sup>153</sup>

Sixth, the history book should include tables as many as possible. In this regard, he commended that *Liaoshi* (History of Liao) set an example to other works. Zhao said although the author(s) of *Liaoshi* merely prepared slightly more than one hundred memoirs for a two-thousand-year period and consequently it must miss many significant people, they successfully made up for the *loss* by creating a large number of tables.<sup>154</sup> The importance that Zhao attached to the tables of *Liaoshi* was

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., pp. 458, 463–464.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p. 460.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., pp. 586–587.



actually an embodiment of the special scholarly trend wherein one after another Qing scholars complemented existing history books by penning treatises and tables.

Seventh, Zhao paid particular attention to the method whereby history could be narrated. Among Qing historians, Zhao consciously worked on the *narration method* applying to the historical narratives. It inspires us to comprehensively research into the *methods* with a view to pushing forward studies in the historical literature. Where Zhao's discussion about the *historical narration method* was concerned, it focused on three types of narrative (see table below).

Types	Dis/advantages
Combined memoirs devoted to a figure and his or her descendants	In fact, Zhao objected to the combined memoirs, in which children and grandchildren of a historical figure were added into the original contents. Such an integrative <i>narration method</i> , Zhao held, originated from “Shijia 世家” (Hereditary Houses) of <i>Shiji</i> . <sup>a</sup> Then in <i>Weishu</i> , the combined memoirs excessively grew into the family-tree-like treatises. <sup>b</sup> Finally in the <i>Southern History</i> and <i>Northern History</i> , the memoirs were too inclusive to be easily grasped. <sup>c</sup>
Assorted narratives devoted to a special genres of people	In this regard, Zhao said Fan Ye 范曄, who authored <i>Hou Han shu</i> , set an example to others. In the face of some historical figures, who could not enjoy an independent memoir devoted to themselves but meanwhile they were indeed influential, historians could pen a memoir for one person and then include those who shared the common feature with the <i>protagonist</i> . In this way, a succinct memoir, which was freed from wasteful duplication in other memoirs, was created. <sup>d</sup>
Associated narratives devoted to historical figures	Neither were some worthy of an independent memoir nor should they be left oblivion. Under such circumstances, historians could produce short biographies for them in the memoir devoted to a specific figure. In this way, the history book could avoid being too lengthy; and in the meantime, it could prevent some people being completely forgotten as time went by. <sup>e</sup> Indeed, there was a speck of similarity between the assorted and associated narratives. But both were substantially different from each other, especially taking into consideration the fact that one was <i>assorted</i> into a memoir while the other was <i>associated</i> with a memoir.

<sup>a</sup>Ibid., p. 202

<sup>b</sup>Ibid., p. 203

<sup>c</sup>Ibid., pp. 203–204

<sup>d</sup>Ibid., pp. 81, 191

<sup>e</sup>Ibid., pp. 184–185

Zhao incorporated the critical metaphysical reexamination of the vicissitudinous history into his historico-historiographical textual criticism. In order to achieve the

grand incorporation, he did utmost to put together events of the same or similar nature and delineated them from soup to nuts. In doing so, the Qing guru shed revealing light on gains and losses, advantages and disadvantages, of past dynasties. As a consequence, Zhao produced some treatise-like subchapters, wherein he did detailed and in-depth studies in some specific historical phenomena (see table below).

Volume number	Theme(s)
5	It discussed a common practice, wherein people of all origins strove to uphold <i>mingjie</i> 名节, or reputation and integrity, in the historical period spanning from the Warring States era down to the Later Han dynasty. Zhao inspiringly pointed out that the lack of <i>mingjie</i> would definitely further the decline of a dynasty. <sup>a</sup>
7	It delineated <i>shanrang</i> 禅让, or the peaceful abdication of one sovereign and his peaceful handover of the throne to another person, as well as other types of replacement of sovereignty through all ages. Zhao concluded that the crown was born either in the peaceful <i>shanrang</i> or in violent killings; and that the adventurous powerful people who conspired to illegally grab the state power would be admonitorily denounced as the perpetrators of unpardonable crimes such as usurpation and regicide. <sup>b</sup>
13	It portrayed the fourteen well-known retired emperor in the Chinese history and analyzed concerned discussions of the past scholars. <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Ibid., p. 104

<sup>b</sup>Ibid., p. 143

<sup>c</sup>Ibid., pp. 278–283

Such analytical treatises were, the present author contends, actually the historical commentaries in the garb of historical textual criticism.

Zhao's *Nian'er shi zhaji* interested his contemporaries. Qian Daxin, the towering figure in the community of Qing scholars, had prefaced Zhao's work. In the foreword he penned for *Nian'er shi zhaji*, Qian not only lavishly poured praise on Zhao's brilliant scholarship but also put forward the famous assertion that classics and history could by no means be epistemically independent of each other.<sup>155</sup> Qian even claimed that he had the same scholarly interest as that of Zhao. His academic spirit was, however, less prominent than Zhao's. For example, Qian contradicted the epistemic actuality that classics and history were indeed separated, alleging instead that the unity of classics and history was inseparable. In the foreword, Qian implied that as late as the Eastern Jin (317–420 AD) the unity of classics and history was forcibly broken due to Li Chong's 李充 fourpartite categorization of the entire written literature. It sounds, at least to the present author, inscrutable. Did the towering guru meant that prior to the Liu-style assortment the works such as *Shiji* and *Hanshu* were not *history* at tall but merely a hodgepodge of classics and history? If true, Zhao's outstanding *Nian'er shi zhaji* would be nothing but an

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., pp. 885–886.

assemblage of nonsense, right? As regards the arbitrary assertion that the primary sources other than the official history books were entirely unreliable and could by no means be applied to the investigation of history, the present author contends that it was merely an embodiment of the extremely narrow-minded perception of historical materials. As a matter of fact, Zhao in many cases criticized that the official history, state history, and the so-called veritable records produced by imperial agencies, were not totally reliable. Zhao subtly hinted at such an embarrassing truth that if the primary sources on which an official history was based was worth being fully trusted, the textual criticism in the historico-historiographical perspective would count for nothing. In this sense, Qian's opinions were questionable.

### (3) Wang Mingsheng

Wang's representative work was *Shiqi shi shangque*. In comparison with the works authored by Qian Daxin and Zhao Yi, Wang, one of the members of the triumvirate reigning over the realm of historical textual criticism in Qing, paid greater attention to reexamining the past scholarship and historiography in particular, as well as reviewing history books produced in the previous dynasties. Where the scholarly tradition was concerned, Wang laid stress on *shifa* 师法, or the principles with respect to the succession of teachings from masters in studies in the Classics. In particular, he pointed out that since the mid-Tang the decadent practice wherein *shifa* was denied had become rampant.<sup>156</sup> Among scholars who were active in the Qian-Jia era, Wang was most enthusiastic defender of the tradition of *Hanxue*. But on the other hand, Wang never blindly rejected *Songxue* 宋学, or the Song Scholarship, which was generally regarded as an epistemologico-practical antithesis of *Hanxue*. He even held that the rise of *Songxue*, to a certain extent, rectified the general academic trend, wherein scholars spent excessive time and energy producing literary works, by means of the elaboration of profound principles of Confucian classics.<sup>157</sup> Wang dreamed a scholarly Han-Song fusion excluding Buddhism and Daoism, asserting that the Song gurus' exhaustive exploration of the deep meanings of Confucian principles was actually a practical extension of the spirit of *Hanxue* and that the two types of scholarship be combined into an ideologico-intellectual force resisting the heterodoxies of every hue.<sup>158</sup>

In the Wang-style historiography there were several points worthy of furthered discussions. First, Wang, as mentioned above, suggested historians critically reexamine entire existing history books while remaining unswervingly loyal to the Han-style scholarly handling of Confucian classics.<sup>159</sup> Second, historians should rely exclusively on the well-emended works.<sup>160</sup> In this regard, Wang's suggestion was actually an erudite aspiration based on the veneration of the Han

<sup>156</sup>Wang Mingsheng, *Shiqi shi shangque*, p. 191.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., p. 522.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., "Author's Preface," p. 2.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid.

Scholarship. Third, the bibliographic study should be attached greater importance in the scholarly praxis. Wang explicitly stated a good command of bibliography and catalogue served as the gateway through which one could enter the scholarly world.<sup>161</sup> He also pointed out that the academic pursuit that was not based on the solid knowledge of bibliography and catalogue would definitely be misleading.<sup>162</sup> In this regard, Wang laid particular stress on “Yiwenzhi” of *Hanshu*. In order to indicate the significance of “Yiwenzhi,” he quoted one piece of contemporary’s assertion, which read,

Before reading books scattering all over the country, one must have a good command of “Yiwenzhi” (Treatise on literature) of *Hanshu*. The *Treatise* is the main thread illuminatingly running through the entire scholarship, as well as being the gateway to the production of creative works.<sup>163</sup>

Most importantly, Wang strongly objected to arbitrarily passing judgment on the events/figures in historical narratives and preferred instead to literally investigate what really took place in the past. In the “Preface” he penned for *Shiqi shi shangque*, Wang suggested historians devote themselves to thoroughly investigating the birth, growth and change of all institutions and veritably reconstructing all historical event, rather than to rashly and arbitrarily making judgments.<sup>164</sup> Therein exactly lay the Way of Scholarship. The concerned elaboration in the “Preface” read,

The Way of Scholarship does not lie in the pursuit of things of an illusory nature but in the grasp of [the historical] actualities. The [subjective and even arbitrary] evaluation and judgment [of history] are actually delusive. The goals of genuine writers and readers of history are all onefold. To put it another way, they write or read history with a view to finding the historical actualities; apart from which, both do not expect anything.<sup>165</sup>

Wang echoed this point in his discussion of the historiographical representation of the history of Tang.<sup>166</sup> Overall, Wang’s ideas as a whole challenged the established historiographical rules and examples and the ideologies based on the alleged orthodoxy and social hierarchy. In this sense, it was progressive. Nevertheless, it was actually impractical. The absolute freedom from any types of subjective evaluation and judgment in the historiographical praxis did not exist at all. Was not Wang’s *Shiqi shi shangque* itself a review of the past historiography? In order to be methodologically freed from such an embarrassing paradox, Wang put forward the concept of *fenxi lunlei* 分析伦类 (the analytical methodization).<sup>167</sup> Therein however raised another question—what on earth could the *analytical methodization* be

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<sup>161</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., “Author’s Preface,” pp. 1–2.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., p. 860.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., p. 460.

applied to? Wang did not answer it. Was Wang's concept practical? It was in his discussion of the narratives regarding the rebellion (291–306 AD) launched by the eight enfeoffed kings in the Western Jin dynasty that Wang formulated such a concept. Paradoxically, if there were not any judgments telling the good from the evil, the eight treacherous regional lords would be *equally* narrated in the history book. Was it historiographically im/proper?

Wang went further, proposing the idea of *shiquan* 史权 (the expedient handling of history). He held that Ban Gu was a perfect epitome of *shiquan*. Wang accused Sima Qian of being neither orthodoxly ethical nor reasonably classificational on the grounds that Sima juxtaposed Gongsun Hong 公孙弘 and Zhufu Yan 主父偃 in the same memoir and classified Zhang Tang and Du Zhou, both of whom were one of the highest imperial lords, into the memoir devoted to *kuli* 酷吏, or the imperial officials who put into effect the draconian laws. On the contrary, Ban Gu, Wang pointed out, reshuffled the concerned memoirs and explained such a structural change at the end of the treatises. In view of this, Wang commended that Ban's expedient handling of existing historical narratives could be favorably compared with Sima's extraordinary writing skill.<sup>168</sup> However, Wang's idea of *shiquan* contradicted his strong opposition to the arbitrary evaluation and judgment of history. The reason that why there was such a methodological contradiction within Wang's own theory might lie in the dual nature of the traditional Chinese historiography.

Last but not least, unlike Zhao Yi, who did not think there were any nonofficial history books that were worth of being consulted, Wang was by contrast tolerant of the works other than official ones in his effort to thoroughly investigate history, even though he did suggest historians have their works primarily based on the official primary sources. Wang acknowledged that in order to better his investigation of history, indeed he had expose himself to a kaleidoscopic array of nonofficial written literature such as works by masters of varying intellectual schools, fictions, *biji* 笔记 (book of anecdotes), Buddhist and Daoist writings, and so forth.<sup>169</sup>

Besides the above-mentioned efforts, Wang shed light on the style of historical narrative. In his analysis of "Yiwenzhi," Wang briefly delineated the origin and growth of basic styles—the annals, the memoir-centered ones, for instance—of historical narrative and explicitly stated that although the annals was more archaic it should never be obstinately followed.<sup>170</sup> He himself agreed with a Tang scholar's assertion that historians flexibly choose either the annalistic or memoir-centered style of narrative, so long as their writings were intellectually in harmony with the spirit of the Sage (Huangfu Shi 皇甫湜, "Biannian jizhuan lun 编年纪传论" (On

<sup>168</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., "Author's Preface," p. 2.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., pp. 925–926.

history in the annalistic and memoir-centered forms)). By contrast, Wang disapproved of some scholars' opinion that the annals enjoy the historiographical orthodoxy.<sup>171</sup> In view of this, it is safe to say that Wang assumed a very flexible attitude towards the selection of style of narrative in the historiographical praxis, perfectly giving expression to the aspiration to bring a fundamental stylistic change to the established historiography in the Qing dynasty.

Wang's idea of history was also embodied in his review of history books produced in past dynasties (see table below).

Works	Criticism/commendation
<i>Songshu</i> 宋书 (Book of song)	1) Wang's criticism focused on history books— <i>Songshu</i> , <i>Nanshi</i> , <i>Beishi</i> , for instance—produced in the Southern and Northern Dynasties. For example, he criticized that the authors of <i>Songshu</i> and <i>Nanshi</i> superstitiously kept account of alleged auspicious omens; and that the history devoted to the individual dynasties of the Southern and Northern Dynasties should <i>not</i> be replaced with the more comprehensive <i>Nanshi</i> and <i>Beishi</i> . 2) <i>Nanshi</i> and <i>Beishi</i> , both of which were authored by Li Yanshou, were the two blacksheep in Wang's historiographical criticism. He severely rebuked Li on the grounds that (1) the medieval historian relied excessively on the combined memoirs dedicated to individuals and turned the official history into a family tree; that (2) Li inappropriately deleted many contents reflecting the national economy and the people's livelihood; and that (3) Li arbitrarily modified original books and brazenly plagiarized the existing history devoted individual dynasties. In view of this, Wang radically denounced Li as a <i>truly shameless</i> historian. <sup>a</sup> 3) But on the other hand, Wang objectively shed light on the strength of Li's works. For example, Li in his <i>Nanshi</i> included some materials that did not appear in the history devoted to Song; <sup>b</sup> and that Li contributed a good memoir devoted to Gao Yang 高洋, the founding emperor of the Northern Qi dynasty, and several wonderful pieces of commentary.
<i>Nanshi</i> 南史 (The southern history)	
<i>Beishi</i> 北史 (The northern history)	
<i>Xin Tang shu</i> 新唐书 (New history of Tang)	Wang recognized its value while refraining himself from lavishly praising it.
<i>Zizhi tongjian</i> 资治通鉴 (Comprehensive historical records in aid of governance)	
<i>Tangjian</i> 唐鉴 (A critical history of Tang)	

(continued)

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., p. 927.

(continued)

Works	Criticism/commendation
<i>Shitong</i> 史通 (A comprehensive disquisition about historiography)	
<i>Shiguo chunqiu</i> 十国春秋 ( <i>Spring and Autumn Annals of the Ten Kingdoms</i> )	

<sup>a</sup>Wang Mingsheng, *Shiqi shi shangque*, p. 566<sup>b</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 400

Cui Shu 崔述 (1740–1816).

Cui created a special genre of scholarship—*kaoxin* 考信, or investigating the authenticity/reliability of historical records in relation to the great antiquity. He agreed with that idea that in the great antiquity classics and history were integrally fused together and could not be separated.<sup>172</sup> Generally, Cui respected very much the Confucian classics. Nevertheless, the unconventionally critical scholar casted reasonable doubt on the Classics and later annotations and interpretations incongruous with the original classics in particular; and in doing so he revealed that some annotations and interpretations did harm to the orthodoxy of the Classics. In comparison with Wang Mingsheng, who resolutely asserted that the Classics could by no means be questioned, Cui assumed a fundamentally different attitude. For example, he made a great effort to thoroughly investigate the *Book of History*, one of the most authoritative Confucian classics. It was a de facto *antiquity-doubting* act. Cui had ridiculed those who blindly believed in the antiquity of being too epistemically shallow and ossified to be enlightened.<sup>173</sup> Cui's reasonable and well-grounded doubt on the Classics and the entire antiquity in a broader sense was quite eye-opening and thought-provoking.<sup>174</sup> Most importantly, Cui's novel approach could be applied to the work disentangling the truth of the Classics from the falsehood brought about by the ungrounded annotations and interpretations.<sup>175</sup> It was a pity that the scholarship of Cui, who was the heir to the tradition doubting antiquity since Tang and Song, did not rise to prominence in the Qian-Jia era. The Cui-style scholarship, however, laid the foundation of the modern scholarly trend of *yigu* 疑古 (doubting antiquity) spearheaded by Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚, a highly inspiring modern Chinese scholar who collected extant writings of Cui as many as possible and then turned them into the book entitled *Cui Dongbi yishu* 崔东壁遗书 (The posthumous collection of works of Cui Dongbi [i.e. Cui Shu])

<sup>172</sup>Cui Shu 崔述, *Cui Dongbi yishu* 崔东壁遗书 [The posthumous collection of works of Cui Dongbi [i.e. Cui Shu]] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), p. 395.

<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 478.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*

*Siku quanshu*, or the *Four Treasures*

The production of *Siku quanshu* was an unprecedented, magnificent cultural work. The *Four Treasures* was also a conclusion of the traditional Chinese historiography since the pre-imperial age. Such a grand conclusion was most intensively embodied in “Zongxu 总序” (General preface) of *Shibu* 史部 (History). The ideas in “Zongxu” were, however, not very epistemologically brilliant, but merely were similar to historians at that time. What it said—the history book aspired to be as succinct and thoroughly investigative as possible; there was no work that could be as succinct as *Chunqiu*; nor were there any books that could be as thoroughly investigative as *Zuozhuan*, for instance—was known to all. Besides this, some conclusions—the historians in Song and Ming were wild about the arbitrary evaluations and judgments and the sectarian identity, for instance—did not come to the point at all. Despite this, the *Four Treasures*, after all, systematically reorganized and assorted all existing history books. It should be pointed out that some modern historiographical works were exactly based on the synopses devoted to *Shibu* of the *Four Treasures*. Later, in the same vein, Ruan Yuan systematically reorganized all exiting Classics/history.

To sum up, the historiography in the Qian-Jia era must be holistically reexamined. Only by doing so could the Qing scholarship be displayed before readers as it really was. Generally, among Qing’s historians, the strong aspiration to make a historiographical breakthrough could be found in their theoretical inquiries, as well as in the criticisms against or conclusions of the past scholarship. Nevertheless, due to the paucity of a new, original philosophy of history, which marked the giant intellectual growth in the two Song dynasties, together with the tight political control over scholarly activities, the aspirations of Qing historians could not be fully fulfilled. The dawn of a new historiography was yet to come.

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## Chapter 9

# Ideas of History in Modern China

It is true that the modern Chinese historiography was different from its counterpart in the ancient China; it was also true that the interconnection between the ancient and modern Chinese historiography was actually *not* broken. In the previous chapter, the present author points out that the far-sighted historians in the late feudal China had already shown growing discontent with the established history that was increasingly dogmatic and inflexible. Such enlightened students of history advocated instead that history be (re-)written in an innovative manner. Zhang Xuecheng (1783–1801), one of leading theory-builders of history and literature, explicitly stated that the well-established, biography-centered traditional history had already been much less creative and fettered by outdated conventions (“Shujiao xia 书教下” [Part two of the teaching of written literature], *Wenshi tongyi* [All-embracing delineations of literature and history]). Zhang desperately expected that the *perfected and intelligent* spirit of historiography could be rehabilitated and the *way of change* whereby history would be rejuvenated found. Such inspiring ideas regarding history and historiography still witnessed a significant growth in the reigns of Jiaqing (1796–1820) and Daoguang (1821–1850). It should be pointed out that significant changes taking place in the fields of history and historiography were closely related to the drastic social transformation.

At that time the global situation significantly changed. Western capitalist powers violently opened the door of China and impinged on the country so greatly that the entire Chinese society was shaken. Under such circumstances, the Chinese historiography made a new choice. After the Opium War (1840–1842), China entered a brand-new historical period, wherein the nature of Chinese society and social contradictions were all completely changed. In the face of the growing national crisis Chinese historians generally assumed the patriotic stand and aspired to save the country from crises by means of the historical studies that were based on the traditional idea *in aid of the statecraft*. In such a pervasive course ideas that history could be used for reference and employed to grasp changes through all ages witnessed a vibrant growth. In their studies, many Chinese historians tried their best to

interpret the rise and fall taking place in the Chinese history from the perspective of world history.

At the turn of the twentieth century a great variety of Western thoughts and methodologies in relation to the historical study were introduced into China. Such *new* ideas were incorporated into the traditional Chinese thinking of historical growth and research methods applying to historical studies. As a consequence, a new genre of historical thinking emerged in China. The traditional Chinese history focusing on the textual criticism of historical literature was fundamentally reconstructed. Most importantly, the Marxist ideas of history were employed to interpret the Chinese history and predict what would lie ahead for the Chinese nation. Finally, the materialist view of history prevailed in China. The historiographical growth in the modern China could be well examined in such epistemic changes. Overall, in the modern China differing ideas and methods as regards historical studies interlinked with and acted on each other. It was the big picture of the science of history in the modern China.

## 1 The Patriotic Historical Thinking Aspiring to Saving the Country

The growth of patriotic view of history underwent three phases. The first phase started from the 1840s and ended in the 1880s; the second, from the late nineteenth century down to the 1920s; and the third, from the 1930s down to the late 1940s.

### 1. The First Phase

Around the First Opium War (1840–1842) there were enlightened and farsighted Chinese intellectuals—Wei Yuan, Lin Zexu, Yao Ying, Xia Xie, He Qiutao, Zhang Mu, Xu Jishe and so on—who devoted themselves to the historico-geographical studies in order to lay an epistemic foundation of the work against imperialistic invasion. It was the first peak of studies in the history and geography of Chinese frontiers. Historians and scholars devoting themselves to the field shared some common characteristics and styles. They actually formed a new academic group. Differing from traditional communities of scholar, the new group aspired to seek the national wealth and strength rather than to the group's own interest. And moreover, new historians were open to the changing world and rethink the future of China from a global, transforming perspective. The core of patriotic idea of history lay in the sense of crisis. The embodiments of such a patriotic idea of history were aspirations for the successful resistance against the foreign invasion and an effective rehabilitation of the country.

Historians at that time tried their best to strengthen the aspiration to protect the Chinese frontiers from being encroached. Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857) had pointed out that the characteristic of the imperialistic invasion of China lay in the integration of military and commercial means. In their attempts to open the door of China, the Western powers employed war, opium and goods at the same time. In view of this, the

Chinese historians spent much time and energy advocating the significance of frontiers to China and awakening the people's consciousness of safeguarding frontiers. Such patriotic intellectual endeavors were embodied in Wei Yuan's *Shengwu ji* 圣武记 (Records of the imperial military affairs), *Daoguang yangsou zhengfu ji* 道光洋艘征抚记 (The account of sea battles in the reign of Daoguang) and *Haiguo tuzhi* 海国图志 (The illustrated treatise on the maritime kingdoms), Yao Ying's 姚莹 *Kangyou jixing* 康輶纪行 (An illustrated travelogue depicting the southwest China), Zhang Mu's 张穆 *Menggu youmu ji* 蒙古游牧记 (A journey to Mongolia), He Qiutao's 何秋涛 *Shuofang beicheng* 朔方备乘 (Detailed account of a trip to the north China), Xia Xie's 夏燮 *Zhongxi jishi* 中西纪事 (The history of Sino-Western relations in the reigns of Daoguang and Xianfeng) and Xu Jishe's 徐继畲 *Yinghuan zhilüe* 瀛寰志略 (An introduction to the global geography). Despite differences existing among such enlightening books in terms of their contents and styles, they all aspired to awaken the Chinese to pay greater attention to frontiers by means of the studies in the history and geography. Yao Ying (1785–1853) had shed light on this point, saying,

Since the reign of Jiaqing (r. 1796–1820), I strive to purchase foreign books with a view to completely understanding [the Western] countries. In recent years I gradually acquire a systematic knowledge of the globe. Digging into the facts in relation to foreign powers, Catholicism, Islam and Buddhism, I penned an illustrated book. In doing so, I attempt to tell all Chinese what is really taking place in the world. After being equipped with the true knowledge of the global situation, the country will be able to adopt correct policies to handle foreign affairs. It is the true motive for writing the book. Put plainly, I do hope that China can wipe out the humiliation, improve the coastal defence, and really enjoy the freedom from being subjugated [by foreign powers.] (Chapter 8, in *Dongming wen houji* 东溟文后集 (A supplement to *Dongming wenji* [Collected writings with respect to the East China Sea]))

The aspirations for the “freedom from humiliation and the improvement of coastal defence” actually constituted the intellectual foundation of frontier studies in the early modern China. He Qiutao 何秋涛 (1824–1862) echoed this point in one of his writings (Chapter 20, in *Xu beizhuan ji* 续碑传集 (A sequel to *Beizhuan ji* [Collected inscriptions on monuments])).

Chinese scholars of the historico-geographical study learnt lessons not only from some Asian and African countries, all of which were tragically subjugated by Western powers, but also from neighboring countries such as Vietnam and Myanmar, both of which had successfully resisted the barbarous invading British army. Most importantly, they tried their best to integrate the efforts to learn from foreign powers and resist aggressive developed countries. Wei Yuan had said, “Those who are good at learning from ‘barbarians’ [i.e. foreign countries] will be able to bring them under control; in contrast, those who are not good at learning from ‘barbarians’ will definitely be subjugated by others” (Chapter 37, in *Haiguo tuzhi*). He suggested China sincerely study the science, technology and other good things of the West. In his well-known *Haiguo tuzhi*, Wei Yuan provided a detailed introduction to the Western battleship, steamer, gun, mine, printing, watch, telescope, calendar, mathematics, steam engine and so on. Apart from Wei Yuan, Yao Ying had visited a British battleship in Taiwan and was shocked at the UK seamen's strong aspiration for the modern knowledge such as geography, astronomy and mathematics (Chapter 5, in *Kangyou jixing*).

Such enlightened historians soberly observed the world and were strongly against the outdated, blind rejection of foreign things. Wei Yuan criticized that quite a few Chinese had already forgotten the old saying that “however strong you are, there is always someone stronger.” He desperately hoped that the country and her people would be open to the world and strive for the rehabilitation of the nation. At that time, apart from the Western sciences and weapons, some Western politico-economic institutions also interested Chinese elites such as Liang Tingtan 梁廷枬 and Xu Jishe.

## 2. The Second Phase

The phase began from the 1880s and ended in the 1920s. The characteristic of the patriotic idea of history in this phase lay in the intellectual efforts to prevent the country from collapsing and achieve the national rehabilitation. There were three points regarding the Chinese historiography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

First, the primary goal of the patriotic history at that time was to intellectually prevent China from being carved up by the avaricious imperialistic powers. In other words, the patriotic historians desperately made an effort to help the county avoid being India and African countries that were all tragically turned into the colonies of the Western powers. Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929), one of the leading thinkers in the early modern China, sharp-mindedly pointed out that the ferocious enemy of the Chinese nation could knock at the door at all times and the country be perished at any time (“Nanxuehui xu 南学会序” [The exordium of oration devoted to the Society of Southern Learning]). China at that time was actually at the crucial moment of life and death. Inheriting the spirit of the students of the historico-geographical studies of Chinese frontiers in previous decades, historians used the *history* for reference and (re-)examined the country from a global perspective. Wang Tao 王韬 (1828–1897), for instance, penned *Pu Fa zhanji* 普法战纪 (The Franco-Prussian War) and *Faguo zhilüe* 法国志略 (An introduction to France); and Huang Zunxian 黄遵宪 (1848–1905), *Riben guozhi* 日本国志 (An introduction to Japan). Such open-minded historians brought the history and experience of foreign countries before the Chinese with a view to reviving the nation. Moreover, they pointed out that the *law of the jungle* prevailed in the globe and only stronger ones could win the competition and enjoyed the full freedom from being conquered.

Second, the role history could play in the patriotic effort to save China were thrust into the limelight. In his *Xin shixue* 新史学 (The new history), Liang Qichao explicitly said that history was the fountainhead of the patriotic feeling. Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869–1936) also pointed out that history was the foundation of the love for the country (“Lishi zhi zhongyao 历史之重要” [The importance of history]). In addition, an author of one piece of writing published in *Zhejiang chao* 浙江潮 (The tide of Zhejiang) asserted that it was history that was the nucleus of the national soul (Volume 7 of *Zhejiang chao*). Besides, political reformers employed the world history to advocate political innovations in China. For example, Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927) penned treatises on Peter the Great and Meiji

Restoration, whereby he could taught the Emperor Guangxu the importance and necessity of the political reform in China in the late nineteenth century. The traditional idea that history could be used for reference was still significant to the early modern China, as well as being reformulated from a higher and broader perspective.

Third, historians attempted to fuse the historical education with the popular anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles. For example, penning the widely-circulated *Gemingjun* 革命军 (The Revolutionary Army), *Menghuitou* 猛回头 (Suddenly returning) and *Jingshizhong* 警世钟 (The warning bell), Zou Rong 邹容 (1885–1905) and Chen Tianhua 陈天华 (1875–1905) fervently advocated the patriotism and aroused the people to fight for the country. It should be pointed out that such patriotic writers had already abandoned the outdated traditional discrimination between the Chinese and the barbarians. Their brilliant works played quite a significant role in the missions rehabilitating the national spirit and helping the people understand the nature of imperialism. Thanks to such outstanding authors and their great efforts the patriotic idea of history witnessed a rapid growth.

### 3. The Third Phase

In the 1930s, the imperialistic Japan furthered its invasion of China and ambitiously attempted to turn China into a colony that was fully and exclusively occupied by the brute and sadistic Japanese Empire. The Sino-Japanese conflict had become the predominant element determining the course of modern China. In the face of the deepening national crisis the Chinese became increasingly patriotic and the patriotic historical thinking grew accordingly. The intellectual resistance against Japan and the aspiration for the national salvation constituted the major contents of the historical writing in this time.

Interpreting the Chinese history and rethinking the fate of China from the perspective of historical materialism, Chinese Marxist historians gave quite a strong expression to the senses of the times and crisis. For example, in the “Author’s Preface” to *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu* 中国古代社会研究 (Studies in the ancient Chinese society), Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1982) explicitly stated that it was the expectation of China’s better future that drove *us* thoroughly reexamine the past. Besides, among historians who had the strong patriotic feeling many devoted themselves to the historico-geographical study, whereby they advocated patriotism and tell the people that how urgent the resistance against Japan was. Their aspirations and efforts were embodied in *Yugong* 禹贡 (The Tribute of Yu), which was founded by leading scholars such as Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚 (1893–1980) and Tan Qixiang 谭其骧 (1911–1992). In March, 1934, the historico-geographical journal was founded, perfectly embodying the scholarly effort to save the country from crises. According to *Yugong*’s *Prospectus*, stimulated by the unjust aggressions committed by the imperialistic countries, the Chinese students of the historico-geographical study inherited the invaluable patriotic tradition developed in the Opium War and tried their best to help scholars acquire the freedom from the abstract and impracticable study and do instead practicable studies such as the historico-geographical exploration of Chinese frontiers.

As soon as the *Journal* came out, it unambiguously took a strong patriotic stance. The founding editors of *Yugong* said in the conditions that the aggressive neighboring power (i.e. the imperial Japan) incessantly wreaked havoc on China and China was in the danger of being perished scholars resolutely and determinedly agreed to raise the banner of nationalism. Scholars further explained that why they chose “Yugong 禹贡,” which was the title of one of the chapters of the classical *Shangshu* 尚书 (*Book of History*), to be the title of the *Journal*. The reason lay in the fact that “Yugong” was the groundbreaking treatise exploring the historico-geographical changes of China, as well as in the aspiration to culturally resist imperialistic aggressions. “Whenever you hear the phrase—‘the territory of Yu the Great,’ you will immediately realize that the Chinese nation can by no means be insulted; nor can the country be divided” (“Fakanci 发刊词” [Opening chapter], *Yugong*). In total, there were eighty-two volumes of *Yugong* before July, 1937, when the highly acclaimed journal was forced to shut down due to the imminent war.

The *Yugong*-style patriotism was intensively embodied in the idea of protecting the Chinese land from being encroached by imperialistic powers. Renowned scholars devoted themselves to the explorations of the geography of ancient China with a view to accurately grasping the historical change of Chinese land and justifying the existing Chinese territory. Most importantly, they did hope that by doing so the Chinese would never forget that the land occupied by Japan actually belonged to China (“Jinianci 纪念辞” [The memorial speech], *Yugong*, issue 7, nos. 1–3, 1937). Such aspirational historians strongly held that the basic cognizance of the Chinese territory was indispensable to the cultivation of patriotic feeling. They even asserted that if the people did not fully grasp China’s frontiers and territories they could by no means be mobilized to love the country (“Benhui ci sannian zhong de gongzuo jihua 本会此三年中工作计划” (The three-year working plan), *Yugong*, issue 7, nos. 1–3, 1937). In other words, they resolved to use their scholarly explorations to arouse the people’s love for the country and strengthen their will to protect the homeland (“Benhui ci sannian zhong de gongzuo jihua”). In a word, such scholars did believe that after being exposed to the common history and fate of the country the Chinese would be consolidated to be the strongest nation in the world (“Jinianci”).

Employing historical documents and materials collected in the fieldwork, contributors of *Yugong* worked very hard on the proposals of safeguarding the northeastern and northwestern frontiers, as well as enthusiastically advocating the idea that only when the frontiers were stabilized would the inland be safe. Some even suggested that the traditional practice of *tuntian* (semi-military farming immigration into the border areas) be rehabilitated in the northwestern region. Distinguished Chinese scholars revealed that the historico-geographical studies done by scholars from imperialistic countries and Japan in particular were not purely academic at all. One piece of writing published in *Yugong* convincingly asserted that in the past century overseas—Japanese in particular—studies in Chinese history and society were actually in the service of the ambitious, expansionist political programs (“Yugong Xuehui muji jijin qishi 禹贡学会募集基金启事” [Call for donations!], *Yugong*, issue 4, no. 10, 1935). Such a type of scholarly work was, the *Yugong* scholar strongly held, actually a precursor of the future

military actions. One of them inspiringly said that in Japan there was the Korean study before the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), then Korea was annihilated; there was the Manchuria-Korean study, soon Liaoning was annexed; and there was the Manchurian study, the four northeastern provinces were consequently occupied. The author even pointed out that taking into consideration the fact that the East Asian study was developing very rapidly in the imperial Japan the entire East Asia would be devoured by the lunatic Japanese empire (“Riren dui dongbei yanjiu zhi xianzhuang 日人对东北研究之现状” [State of the Manchurian study in Japan], *Yugong*, issue 5, no. 6, 1936).

During the War of Resistance against Japan (1937–1945), the Yan’an-based Marxist historians and the history scholars in regions under the control of Kuomintang or the Nationalist Party were all strong advocates of patriotism and did their utmost to encourage the people to fight against the inhumane Japanese army. For example, Guo Moruo in Chongqing strengthened the patriotic feeling by penning historical plays; and Fan Wenlan 范文澜 (1893–1969) in Yan’an wrote *General History of China*, into which the patriotism was poured. Besides, the patriotic historians of both the Communist and Nationalist parties denounced the historical works advocating the surrender and downplaying the significance of the resistance against Japan. Overall, the patriotic historiography played quite a positive role in the work mobilizing the people to fight for the country.

It must be pointed out that the Communist Party of China (CPC) interpreted the characteristics of patriotism from the higher perspective of global revolution. CPC historians fused the patriotic historiography with the national struggle for liberation and the resistance against Japan and employed the *fused* history to criticize vulgar ideas such as the national nihilism and the predestined failure of China. Thanks to the Party’s effort, the national pride was consolidated and the confidence in a better new China strengthened among the Chinese people. Historically, *patriotism* was the flying flag around which the Chinese were revolving, in the War of Resistance against Japan.

## 2 The New History

The *new history* referred to a new genre of historical writing, which differed from the medieval history while interconnecting with the historiography in previous ages. Such a new history actually gave expression to the reality of modern society. Both the social development in the modern China and exposure to the Western scholarly thinking played a significant role in the birth and growth of the new history. Generally speaking, the Marxist-Leninist history was undoubtedly *a* new genre of history. In this book, it will be discussed separately. For this reason, the *new history* analyzed in this section focused on the historical writings that were significantly influenced by the bourgeois thinking.

The basic intellectual constituents of the *new history* were as follows. First, in accordance with a new philosophy of history the traditional historiography and the



historical course and phenomenon were (re-)interpreted, the past reconstructed from a broader perspective, and the conventional historical writings criticized. Second, varying types of general history, cultural history, themed history and specific history were produced in novel ways; meanwhile, modern journals were published in order to disseminate the results of scholarly explorations and lay the foundation of a modern discipline. Third, the studies in history were greatly promoted thanks to the fusion of the Western scholarship and the traditional Chinese historiography. Even the methods of natural science were employed to explore history. As a consequence, the conventional textual criticism, which was widely used in the Chinese historical works, was modernized by degrees. Such an epistemological/methodological growth was embodied in the following theories.

### 1. *The three times in Gongyang zhuan and the theory of socio-historical evolution*

It was the theory of socio-historical evolution that exerted the most drastic influence on the cognizance, interpretation and reconstruction of history in the history of modern Chinese historiography. The evolutionist history could be regarded as an extension and new growth of traditional Chinese evolutionary thinking. In the reigns of Jiaqing and Daoguang, the School of *Jinwen* (Confucian classics written in the *li*-style Chinese—or *new text*—in the Former and Later Han dynasties) prevailed again. Consequently, the teaching of *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊传 (The Master Gongyang's commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*), one of the favorite classics of the Confucian scholars of New Text School, was rehabilitated. Pi Xirui 皮锡瑞 (1850–1908) pinpointed such a scholarly change in the Qing dynasty, asserting that the rehabilitated teaching of New Text School was increasingly archaic, profound and, most importantly, closer to the true meaning of Great Way (Chapter 10, *Jingxue lishi* 经学历史 [History of studies in Confucian classics]). Such an intellectual rehabilitation significantly influenced the idea of history.

Around the First Opium War (1840–1842), thinkers and historians attempted to interpret the historical growth from the evolutionist perspective and then shed light on the necessity and inevitability of social change. Such a theory of historical evolution was actually intellectually based on the idea of *three times* in *Gongyang zhuan*. Digging into the ideas of Gong Zizhen 龚自珍 (1792–1841), Wei Yuan, Wang Tao, Huang Zunxian, Kang Youwei, Yan Fu 严复 (1854–1921) and Liang Qichao, we can clearly grasp the development of the theory. Gong Zizhen emphatically asserted that neither the established institutions nor the general situation nor specific things could keep unchanged from everlasting (“Shang Daxueshi shu 上大学士书” [Letter to the Grand Imperial Scholar]). Wei Yuan had the *tri-time* based on his idea that *qi* (breath or the most basic constituent of the universe) determined changes in history. In this sense, history was no other than the (re-)creation and operation of *qi*. In accordance with the changes of *qi*, Wei trichotomized the Chinese history. The first phase extended from the mythical period of the Three Emperors down to the Qin dynasty (221–207 BC); the second phase, from Han (202 BC–220 AD) down to Yuan (1206–1369); and the third phase immediately commenced after the collapse of Yuan, or the Mongol Empire.

In the three phases, the degree that how rulers were close to the Way of Sage differed from each other (“Zhipian san 治篇三” [The third part of treatise on governance], in *Mogu* 默觚 [The silent goblet]). Wei’s trichotomized *qi*-themed history was actually an intellectual fusion of the *Gongyang*-style *tri-time* and Principle-*qi*-themed history prevailing among Confucian gurus in the Northern and Southern Song dynasties. The goal of Wei’s combination of the two ideas was to justify the inevitability of historical change.

Wang Tao’s thinking was similar to that of Wei Yuan. He interpreted the human history from the perspective of general movement of universe. In his theory, a complete period of history had twelve thousand years and could be divided into two sections. The first section was two-thousand-year long; and the second, ten-thousand-year long. The second section was dichotomized into the first five-thousand years, in which various kingdoms competed with each other, and the second five-thousand years, when the mankind went extinct by degrees. After that, a new period would begin. Wang’s view of history did not differ so much from Shao Yong’s (1011–1077) idea. Shao was one of the most renowned Confucians in the Northern Song dynasty. He invented a complete history, wherein the myriad things were created and finally went extinct. Shao’s history was comprised of  *yuan* 元,  *hui* 会,  *yun* 运 and  *shi* 世. One  *shi* had thirty years; one  *yun*, twelve  *shi*; one  *hui*, thirty  *yun*; and the  *yuan*, twelve  *hui* or 129,600 years. Wang went further, having the Chinese history trichotomized. In the time prior to the great Three Dynasties—i.e. Xia, Shang and Zhou, the governance was perfect due to the fact that sovereigns and the people worked collaboratively. In the time of the Three Dynasties, sovereigns were increasingly indifferent to the weal and woe of the people and consequently the governance grew worse. The founding of the Qin Empire marked the beginning of the third time, when sovereigns placed themselves above the people and the good governance was thus entirely abandoned (“Zhongmin 重民” [Putting the people first]). Wang repeated the trichotomized history in a slightly modified way in other pieces of his writing. Despite differences existing in his varying writings, the implication was always the same, viz. that  *reform* was perfectly in line with the law of history. To put it another way, the key of the successful governance lay in the positive effort to change the established tradition in the light of the true situation. At that time thinkers such as Wang Tao and Zheng Guanying 郑观应 (1842–1922) all attempted to invoke the idea that history would definitely change and move on in defence of the inevitability of (the political) reform(s).

Some modern thinkers even had the aspiration for (the political) reform intellectually based on the *Gongyang*-style *Three Times*. Among them, Kang Youwei was the most renowned. In his representative works—*Liyun zhu* 礼运注 (The annotated “Origin and Growth of Proprieties”), *Chunqiu Dongshi xue* 春秋董氏学 (Dong Zhongshu’s teaching of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Kongzi gaizhi kao* 孔子改制考 (In-depth explorations of the reform advocated by Confucius), *Xinxue weijing kao* 新学伪经考 (Critique of the forged Confucian classics advocating the founding of the Xin [New] Regime), *Lunyu zhu* 论语注 (The annotated *Confucian Analects*), and so on—Kang discussed the idea of *Three Times* in details. Kang was a thinker who paid great attention to the Western thoughts. He had visited Hong

Kong and Shanghai. Impressed by the well-integrated (colonial) politics, Kang decided to purchase all existing Chinese translations of books about the West and read them one by one (Liang Qichao, *Kang Nanhai xiansheng zhuan* 康南海先生传 [The life of Kang Youwei]). Due to the intensive exposure to the Western thinking, Kang injected some (Western) novel elements into the traditional Gongyagn-style *Three Times*.

First, the three types of change—that is, the chaos, the growing stability and the grand established peace—were related to the absolute monarchy, the constitutional monarchy and the democratic republic, respectively. What Kang tried his best to defend was not the feudal despotism but the constitutional monarchy. In the light of this, it is safe to say that Kang's thinking was, to some extent, of an anti-feudal nature. Put plainly, Kang attempted to create the great peace for China in accordance with a certain Western capitalist mode of state. Second, Kang expounded and proved the inevitability of the World of Great Unity in the light of the theory of *Three Times*. Third, Kang strongly held that the law of historical evolution was universal and could be applied to all countries. He asserted that in spite of differences existing in the origin and speed of social evolution all countries without exception successively underwent the chaos, the stability and the great peace (*Lunyu zhu*). Overall, Kang's idea of history had already assumed some characteristics of the times. Such an epistemological growth was intensively embodied in his widely circulated *Datong shu* 大同书 (Treatise on the Great Unity). It should be pointed out that Kang ideologically slipped back after the failed Hundred Days Reform in 1898 and advocated instead that the (political) reform must be advanced gradually in due order (*Chunqiu bixue dayi weiyao kao* 春秋笔削大义微言考 (Exploring the deep meanings of highly sublimed words in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*)).

Apart from Kang Youwei, Huang Zunxian had also been exposed to the Western thinking and consequently integrated the idea of state competition into the traditional Chinese evolutionary theory. It was particularly worth mentioning that Yan Fu played quite a significant role in the dissemination of the Western evolutionist thinking in China. In 1895, Yan penned "Yuanfu 原富" (The origin of wealth), in which he ardently praised the sociology developed by Herbert Spencer. Next year, he finished rendering *Evolution and Ethics* authored by Thomas Henry Huxley into Chinese and had the Chinese edition entitled *Tiyan lun* 天演论 (Treatise on the evolution driven by Heaven), whereby the ideas of *natural selection and survival of the fittest* was preached nationwide. In 1897, Yan translated the first chapter of Spencer's *The Principles of Sociology* and had the Chinese translation published in the renowned *Guowen zhoubao* 国闻周报 (The National Weekly). Six years later, the full translation of *The Principles—Qunxue yiyao* 群学肄言 in Chinese—was published. In addition, Yan was also the translator of influential works such as Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (*Yuanfu* 原富 in Chinese), John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic* (*Mule mingxue* 穆勒名学), Edward Jenks's *A History of Politics* (*Shehui tongquan* 社会通论) and Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (*Fayi* 法意). Yan was the first Chinese who systematically introduced the Western evolutionism and scholarship into China and exerted significant and far-reaching influence on the view of history in the modern China. Unfortunately, in his twilight years Yan suffered from an ideological regress and believed instead the historicism.

## 2. The prevalence of the theory of evolution in the works devoted to the Chinese history

Xia Zengyou 夏曾佑 (1863–1924) penned the influential *Zhongguo lishi jiaokeshu* 中国历史教科书 (The Chinese history: A textbook), which was held as the first widely acclaimed new general history of China.<sup>1</sup> Combining the traditional Chinese evolutionary idea embodied in the writings of New Text School and Western evolutionist theory of causality, Xia formulated his idea of historical growth and had the Chinese history trichotomized (see table below).

General divisions	Subdivisions		Characteristics
The remote ancient China (Prehistory to the late Eastern Zhou)	Phase I	Prehistory to the early Zhou	History of doubts
	Phase II	The mid-Zhou to the Warring States	History of formation
The medieval China (Qin to Tang)	Phase I	Qin to the Three Kingdoms	History of prosperity
	Phase II	Jin to Sui	History of decline
	Phase III	Tang	History of rejuvenation
The recent ancient China (Song to Qing)	Phase I	The Five Dynasties to Ming	History of degeneration
	Phase II	Qing	History of transformation

In his textbook, Xia made a groundbreaking effort to shed light on the prehistory of China. He said in the time of Fuxi 伏羲 (a legendary king), the Chinese socio-economically depended on nomadism rather than on fishing and hunting. Where the marriage pattern was concerned, the archaic matriarchy was being replaced with individual families. It was in the time of Divine Farmer (another legendary king) that the nomadic life gradually disappeared and the agrarian society dawned. Such a historical course, Xia held, was universal. In other words, all countries and nations would undergo such an incremental growth in a certain time. Besides, Xia regarded changes taking place in the established institutions and culture as the ultimate driving force of historical growth. But on the other hand, the economic conditions in relation to the social development was paid almost no attention in Xia's writings. Sometimes, Xia analyzed cultural issues from the geographical and ethnic perspectives. Where the role *revolution* played in the Chinese history was concerned, Xia's attitude was very ambiguous, taking into consideration the fact that his evolutionist idea of history was actually shallow and

<sup>1</sup>Qi Sihe 齐思和, "Jinbainian lai Zhongguo shixue de fazhan 近百年来中国史学的发展" (The growth of Chinese historiography in the past century), *Yanjing shehui kexue* 燕京社会科学 (Journal of social sciences in Yenching University), no. 2 (October, 1949), pp. 2–37.

confusing. In 1933, the Commercial Press reprinted *Zhongguo lishi jiaokeshu* with a new title—*Zhongguo guodaishi* 中国古代史 (An historical sketch of the ancient China). Apart from Xia, other Chinese scholars also tried to (re-)write the country's history through the prism of evolutionism. At that time the evolutionist history of China had become a fad in the early modern Chinese historiography.

In 1901 and 1902, Liang Qichao penned *Zhongguoshi xulun* 中国史叙论 (Introduction to the Chinese history) and *Xin shixue* 新史学 (New History). The two works intensively gave expression to the new theory of history in the early modern China. In his writings, Liang substantially improved the Chinese evolutionist thinking. He explicitly stated that the evolutionist thinking was diametrically against the *old history* of China and the key of the creation of New History lay in the grasp of the theory of historical evolution. Liang's assertions could serve as the definition of New History. Integrating the theory of historical evolution and the universal law applying to historical growth, Liang interpreted the historical movement in a systematic way in his *Xin shixue*.

First, *history* was no other than the narrative of evolutionary phenomena. In order to justify his own idea, Liang criticized the traditional Chinese historicism discoursed by Mencius, boldly asserting that the reason that why China did not have the high-quality historical writings lay in the nation's ignorance of evolutionism. Second, *history* was the narrative of evolution of mankind. Liang furthered this point, declaring that *evolution* was no other than the universal law applying to both nature and the human society. He also inspiringly pointed out the old (Chinese) history focused on individual figures rather than on the community, as well as vulgarly trying to win favor from men in power. Third, the true *history* aspired to find the universal law or practice in the narration of the evolution of mankind. It was in such an aspirational effort that the philosophy of history was created. Liang asserted that without the philosophical aspiration there would be not any good historical writings.

Liang innovatively elaborated evolutionism from the perspective of philosophy of history. Before him, there was not any Chinese scholars who had made such an innovative attempt. The reason was twofold. First, historians in the past merely grasped one fragment of history while being ignorant of the *total* history of mankind. Second, Chinese historians knew only history while having few knowledge of other disciplines. Besides, Liang held that the ultimate goal of the work searching for the universal law and practice applicable to the entire history was to grasp the past and benefit the mankind. He explicitly stated that the historical study should not be done for the theory's or history's sake, but instead for the practical purposes. Liang even cried, "How significant the duty of history is!" He challengingly asserted that the lack of true historians, who were able to find the universal law and practice, contributed to the decline of China.

In *Zhongguoshi xulun*, Liang explained what the universal practice was. According to Liang's elaboration, the universal practice could be material, geographical and ethnic. As far as the history of mankind was concerned, Liang divided it into four phases—the prehistory, remote ages, medieval ages and modern ages. Moreover, the prehistory could be trichotomized into the periods of stone, bronze and

iron knives; and the stone-knife period be dichotomized into the old and new ones. Liang sincerely believed in the unchangeability of the sequence of such chronological divisions. In other words, it was universal. In his *Xin shixue* and treatises—“Lun junzheng minzheng xianshan zhili 论君政民政相嬗之理” (On the replacement of monarchy with democracy), “Yao Shun wei Zhongguo zhongyang junquan lanshang kao 尧舜为中国中央君权滥觞考” (The beginning of the centralized monarchy in the reigns of Yao and Shun), for instance—Liang also elaborated the universal law and practice. Although Liang’s alleged universal law and practice could not be the same as the objective, scientific laws of the development of human history, the productive thinker had already correctly sensed that there must be a *universal law* driving the historical movement. It was true that Liang’s inspiring elaboration of evolutionism marked an epistemological growth of the modern Chinese historiography. It was also true that in his old age Liang, just like other bourgeois historians in China, retrogressively embraced the historicism. One of his writings—*Yanjiu wenhuashi de jige zhognyao wenti* 研究文化史的几个重要问题 (Significant issues in the study of cultural history)—shed revealing light on this point.

Generally, the bourgeois historians in China failed to follow through with the evolutionism in their studies. It was, however, not an failure of the evolutionist thinking but an embodiment of the bourgeois historians’ fear resulted from the lack of confidence in the country’s better future. In practice, the idea of historical evolution still assumed predominance in the Chinese academia, regardless of the ideological regress afflicting so much a handful of leading scholars. Later, historians such as Lü Simian 吕思勉 (1884–1957) continued to interpret the Chinese history in the light of evolutionism and did quite an excellent job.

Zhang Taiyan criticized the *tri-time* and the *tri-orthodoxy* of New Text School. He advocated instead that the general history of China be written in accordance with the evolutionism. In his proposed *General History of China*, changes taking place in the established institutions, general situations, everyday life, proprieties, scholarship, writings and so on would all be analyzed. In June, 1902, in his open letter to Liang Qichao, Zhang asserted that a valuable history consisted of an encyclopedic collection of institutions whereby the principles regarding the socio-political rise and fall could be elaborated, and the biographies whereby the people would be encouraged and a better future be illuminated. It was a pity that Zhang finally could not realize his great program penning a grand general history of China. Even though, it was obvious that Zhang’s view of history was significantly influenced by the evolutionism. In fact, many pieces of his writing shed light on his extraordinary aspirations for a grand history and amazing understanding of historical changes.

It must be pointed out that the evolutionism that was directly incorporated into socio-historical studies was no more than the *social Darwinism*, which not only advocated the racism but also theoretically justified the Western colonialism. Nevertheless, we should always bear in mind that the goal of the modern Chinese historians’ efforts to provide a new, evolutionist history was to more convincingly show the necessity and urgency of the resistance against imperialistic invasions. Thus, their thinking embodied an invaluable intellectual element of national self-improvement. In view of this, we shall not confuse the Chinese thinking of an

evolutional history with the racist social Darwinism. At that time, apart from the evolutionism, varying Western thoughts such as the Neo-Kantianism, Neo-Hegelianism, Bergsonian personalism and voluntarism advocated by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche exerted influence on the Chinese historians. Due to the exposure to a kaleidoscopic array of Western thoughts, the Chinese idea of history grew increasingly eclectic.

### 3. The critique of *old history*

In the twentieth century the critique of *old history* was actually in fashion in the community of enlightened Chinese historians, among whom many advocate the history of the people rather than the history of sovereigns or top elites. Liang Qichao did an excellent job in this field. In his 1901 *Zhongguoshi xulun*, Liang asserted that *history* was the most significant learning, the mirror in the service of the people, and the origin of the patriotic feeling. Next year, in his *Xin shixue* he disparaged the feudal historiography, sharply pointing out that the *old history* committed six mistakes.

First, it focused exclusively on the imperial court rather than on the entire country. The so-called *Twenty-Four Histories* were, Liang disdainfully said, no more than the twenty-four family trees. Second, it paid attention to individuals rather than to the community. Liang contemptuously described the Chinese history, which was comprised of numerous annals and biographies, as an assemblage of epitaphs dedicated to individuals. Third, it immersed itself in the past while being indifferent to the present. Fourth, it was devoid of ideals, though it was renowned for abundant facts. Liang analogically said that the Chinese history was like a lifeless idol in the waxworks museum. He even denounced old historical works as something consuming rather than improving the human brain. Fifth, it could be merely able to narrate while being unable to provide in-depth analyses. Sixth, it obstinately adhered to the established rules and failed to innovatively recreate itself.

Due to the abovementioned six mistakes, there were extremely bad results in the *old history*, viz. that the traditional Chinese historical works were very hard to read and select and readers seldom were moved by reading them. Besides, Liang theoretically criticized the orthodox view, the historicism and the *sublimed narration* embodied in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the traditional Chinese historiography. In Liang's eyes a thorough revolution must be done in the historical writing in order both to help the scholarship grow soundly and to save the county from crises. He suggested all Chinese be immediately mobilized to innovatively work on *history*, even boldly asserting that if the revolution in history could not be successfully done the mission of national salvation would by no means be achieved.

Two decades later, Liang penned *Zhongguo lishi yanjiufa* 中国历史研究法 (Research methods applying to the Chinese history), in which the thinker furthered his critique of *old history*. In comparison with his writings in previous decades, the new monograph was much more moderate in the critique of the traditional Chinese historiography. Unlike the simplistic denial and disparagement that he had done in his early works, the concrete analysis and the dialectical criticism and sublation were employed by Liang to handle the case of Chinese historiography. To put it

another way, Liang's exploration of the traditional Chinese history had been deepened. Most importantly, the *revolution* that he had ardently advocated was replaced with *reform*. There were seven points as regards Liang's *reform* of the traditional Chinese historiography.

First, the *aristocratic character* of the old history should be abandoned. Liang contended that the old history was exclusively read by ruling oligarchs and top elites. One of the disastrous consequences of the exclusiveness was the distorted national character. It was, Liang bitterly rebuked, a serious crime committed by Chinese historians in the past two thousand years. Second, the exclusive focus on the *dead* in the old history should be replaced with the greater attention paid to the *living*. Third, the old history did not have the scientific subdivision, so that it need to be scientifically reconstructed. Fourth, inasmuch as the old history was subjectively penned, it should be rewritten in an objective manner. Liang desperately hoped that the *new history* would be loyal to the objective fact and the history per se was not the *method* but the *purpose*. He believed that only when there was a veritable, reliable history would the good history be created. Fifth, the new history would pay greater attention to human activities and changing situations of the human society. Sixth, unlike scholars devoting themselves to the old history, the new generation of historians attached much greater importance to the consistency existing between differing historical facts. Seventh, the themed history and general history should have the same aspirations. In other words, not only should the authors of the two types of history explore the historical root of all civilizations, but they also must always bear in mind that the historical scholarship in China desperately needed to be freed from the *history-hunger*.

Liang had already realized that the themed history and general history differed from each other while remaining interlinked. In view of this, it is safe to say that the thinker had already grasped the growth of history in the world and critically reexamined traditional Chinese historiography from the perspectives of the collection and categorization of primary sources, textual criticism of historical materials, compilation of (general) history and writing of themed history. His innovative efforts were embodied in his themed works such as *Qingdai xueshu gaikun* 清代学术概论 (Survey of the Qing scholarship) and *Zhongguo jin sanbainian xueshushi* 中国近三百年学术史 (The history of Chinese scholarship in the very recent three hundred years). In 1927, he finished a supplement to *Zhongguo lishi yanjiufa*. A comparative reading revealed that in the *Supplement* Liang Qichao, who had been an enlightened and inspiring thinker, definitely suffered an ideological regress. But on the other hand, his attitude towards the traditional Chinese historiography became more objective. Not only did Liang analytically criticize the traditional historiography but he also absorbed positive elements embedded in it. Such an increasingly objective reappraisal was embodied in Liang's views with respect to the primary sources, historiography and literature of history.

Gu Jiegang criticized the *old history* in his effort to critically (re-)examine the literature in close relation to the established ancient Chinese history. He had made a controversial assertion that the ancient Chinese history was nothing but a *multi-layered forgery*. Where such an iconoclastically bold assertion was concerned, there



were three main points. First, the span of the remote ancient China grew longer and longer as time went by. For example, in the Western and Eastern Zhou dynasties, the remotest legendary king was Yu; in the Warring States era, there were the Yellow Emperor and Divine Farmer who were earlier than Yu; in the Qin Empire, the Three Emperors preceded the Yellow Emperor and Divine Farmer; in the Former and Later Han dynasties, the most primordial Pangu, who created the heaven and earth, emerged. Second, later the times were, more feats were attributed to the key figures of myth. Put plainly, the legendary figures were increasingly aggrandized as time went on. Take Shun, a legendary king, as an example. In discourses by Confucius, Shun, a legendary king, was merely a sagacious sovereign advocating and practicing the principle of nonaction. In the later “Yaodian 尧典” (Canon of Yao), one of the chapters of *Shangshu*, Shun was portrayed as a sage who harmonized first his own family and then perfectly governed the country. In the teaching of Mencius, one of the greatest Confucian thinker living in the Warring States era, Shun was applauded due to the great filial piety he had done to his father. Third, although historians could by no means precisely know the truth of a certain event, they were able to correctly grasp what it was like in the incipient phase of a legend or a myth. For example, despite the fact that the true history of Xia, Shang and the Western Zhou dynasties was still open to discussion, the history of the three dynasties in a later age could be clearly reconstructed (Gu Jiegang, “Yu Qian Xuantong xiansheng lun gu shishu 与钱玄同先生论古史书” (Polemics regarding the ancient books with Mr. Qian Xuantong), in *Gushi bian* 古史辨 [Reappraisal of ancient Chinese history], part 2, vol. 1.).

Gu’s view of ancient Chinese history was very challenging at that time. It played a significant role in the mission destroying the blind cult of remote ages. According to Gu’s novel interpretations, the times of Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns, both of which were held by the ancient Chinese as the golden age when virtues and benevolence permeated the entire society, were no more than the myths that were fabricated in order to meet certain (political) needs. Therefore, Gu fervently advocated peeling off the false historical materials and reconstructing the true ancient history. Nevertheless, Gu overreached in his reckless denial of the entire ancient Chinese history. It must be admitted that although there were something fabricated in the ancient literature, there were undeniably something veritable and reliable. In reality, the archaeological discoveries have already slapped Gu in the face. But, admittedly, his challenging idea of history was against the outdated feudal historiography and could be regarded as one of the historiographical constituents of the intellectual liberation since the 1919 May Fourth Movement.

#### 4. Changes taking place in historiography and the publication of academic journals

In the early twentieth century, historians adopted the new historiography and began writing the new Chinese history. Zhang Taiyan in his *Zhongguo tongshi lüeli* 中国通史略例 (Basic principles regarding the general history of China) and Liang Qichao in his *Zhongguoshi xulun* and *Xin shixue* formulated significant rules applicable to creative works of the Chinese history. In the existing *Yinbingshi heji*

饮冰室合集, or the complete works of Liang Qichao, the proposal of “General History of China” could be found. Apart from Liang, Chen Fuchen 陈赭宸 (1859–1917) planned to write the general history that was based on the primary sources not only from China but also from the neighboring countries; and Ma Xulun 马叙伦 (1885–1970) also had a similar proposal. Some scholars did produce the new history of China. Apart from Xia Zengyou’s *Zhongguo lishi jiaokeshu*, Zeng Kunhua 曾赬化 (1882–1925) penned *Zhongguo lishi* 中国历史 (History of China). In his book, Zeng aspired to thoroughly investigate the people’s movements through all ages, shed light on the causality of movements, and finally rehabilitate the national soul. In the end of each chapter of the book, there was a general discussion about the overall social situation, whereby readers could better grasp the reason of changes in the country’s four-thousand-year history.<sup>2</sup>

Besides, Liang Qichao produced *Zhongguo siqiannian kaihuashi* 中国四千年开化史 (China: A four-thousand-year history of enlightenment) in 1906. In the 1920s, Wang Tongling 王桐龄 (1878–1953) wrote *Zhongguo shi* 中国史 (An historical sketch of China). One decade later, Lü Simian 吕思勉 finished *Zhongguo tongshi* 中国通史 (The general history of China); Deng Zhicheng 邓之诚 (1887–1960), *Zhonghua liangqiannian shi* 中华两千年史 (The two-thousand-year history of China); Miao Fenglin 缪凤林 (1899–1959), *Zhongguo tongshi gangyao* 中国通史纲要 (Outline of the general history of China); and Liu Shiwei 刘师培 (1884–1919), *Zhongguo lishi jiaokeshu* 中国历史教科书 (History of China: A textbook). In the 1940s, the number of works of New History increased considerably. Among them, there was a culture-themed monograph—*Zhongguo wenhuashi* 中国文化史 (History of the Chinese culture)—authored by Liu Yizheng 柳诒徵 (1880–1956). Digging into such new genres of historical writings, the present author finds that not only the idea of history but also the writing style based on separate chapters assumed predominance in the scholarship of history.

History textbooks and the general history produced in this time did characteristically differ from the historical works written in the feudal China. The traditional style of writing history had been replaced with the modern ones. Most importantly, such new works interpreted the past from totally different perspectives. As a consequence, the traditional purely-narrative history was turned into works exploring the causality of historical changes. Although Lenin had pointed out that the causality “only one-sidedly, fragmentarily and incompletely” gave expression to the “all-sidedness and all-embracing character of the interconnection of the world,” it actually included the “movement of matter” and the “movement of history” that

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed delineation of the works of New History, please see: Yu Danchu 俞旦初, “Ershi shiji chu Zhongguo de xin shixue sichao chutan xu 二十世纪初年中国的新史学思潮初探(续)” (A sequel to “A preliminary study in ideas of New History in the early twentieth century”), *Shixueshi yanjiu* 史学史研究 (Journal of historiography), no. 4 (1982), pp. 56–69.

were “grasped [and] mastered in its inner connection up to one or other degree of breadth or depth.”<sup>3</sup> Simply put, the Chinese authors of such new works had already begun exploring the inner causality of history.

The journals devoted to the historical studies played quite an important role in the dissemination of the New History. Around the 1920s, the comprehensive scholarly journals were published one after another. Even the influential newspaper or magazines such as *Minbao* 民报 (The People) and *Xinmin congbao* 新民丛报 (The New People) published historical writings. *Guoxue jikan* 国学季刊 (Journal of National Learning) of Peking University, *Lishiyuyansuo jikan* 历史语言研究所集刊 (Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology) of Academia Sinica and journals of institutes of higher education contributed greatly to the scholarship of history. The publication of academic journal was conducive not only to the dissemination of history but also to the founding of research schools. Usually, an academic journal was the front of a school, which consisted of a group of scholars who had similar academic points of view and research style. Such a group or school could gradually grow very influential in the academia. The change taking place in the mode of academic dissemination gave impetus to the growth of historical thinking. It was actually a significant embodiment of the modernization of history in China.

### 5. New research methods and modern textual criticism

The introduction and incorporation of Western scholarship and research methods were part and parcel of the New History. There were two ways of introducing the Western methodology regarding historical studies. First, Chinese scholars learnt the Western scholarship from Japanese works; and second, they studied directly in the Western writings. Chinese students studying abroad played quite a significant role in the work bridging the Chinese and Western scholarship. Having his work based on Tsuboi Kumami's 坪井九马三 monograph exploring research methods applicable to history, Wang Rongbao 汪荣宝 (1878–1933) recommended some Western research methods to Chinese historians. In addition, one of Ukita Kazutami's 浮田和民 works—*Shixue yuanlun* 史学原论 (Origin of history)—had many Chinese translations and significantly influenced Chinese students of history. It was Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962) who first advocated the fusion of (Western) research methods and the traditional Chinese historiography in his *Zhongguo zhexueshi dagang* 中国哲学史大纲 (Outline of the history of Chinese philosophy). Hu himself was controversial. Despite this, he ignited the heated debate on *method*. In his old age he even recalled his research work done to the Chinese history and thoughts was exclusively centered on “method.”<sup>4</sup> Later, He Bingsong 何炳松 (1890–1946) wrote *Lishi yanjiufa* 历史研究法 (Research methods for historical studies) and Liang

<sup>3</sup>Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Conspectus of Hegel's *Science of Logic*—Book II (Essence),” in *Philosophical Notebooks*, [https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/cons-logic/ch02.htm#LCW38\\_156](https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/cons-logic/ch02.htm#LCW38_156). Source: Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/>. Retrieved on July 31, 2016.

<sup>4</sup>Hu Shih, *Reminiscences of Shih Hu* (*Hu Shi koushu zizhuan* 胡适口述自传), trans. Tang Degang 唐德刚 (Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 1992), pp. 105–132.

Qichao penned *Zhongguo lishi yanjiufa* and its sequel. The three methodological monographs exerted great influence on the Chinese historians at that time.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the representative Chinese translations of Western works devoted to historical methods included *Introduction aux études historiques* (*Shixue yuanlun* 史学原论) by Charles Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos, *The New History and the Social Studies* (*Xinshixue yu shehuixue* 新史学与社会学) by Harry Elmer Barnes, *The Writing of History: An Introduction to Historical Method* (*Lishi fangfa gailun* 历史方法概论) by Fred Morrow Fling, and so on. Apart from methodological monographs, the books of historiography, theory of history and philosophy of history were brought to China. Overall, such imported methodologies seriously impinged on the traditional Chinese textual criticism and forced the latter to modernize itself. In fact, the Chinese historians' response to the impingement differed from each other. Some still denied the objective significance of causality; nor did they acknowledge the existence of law applying to the objective movement of history. Rather, they reduced historical methods to the simplistic collection, examination, reorganization and compilation of primary sources. In contrast, some fused the traditional Chinese textual criticism with modern Western research methods and then employed the fused method to do innovative and in-depth studies in the existing literature and archaeological materials such as oracle bone inscriptions. Finally, the *new* historians were rewarded handsomely for their open-mindedness and creativity. Such a scholarly growth also laid the foundation of the Chinese Marxist-Leninist history. The growth of historiography at that time was embodied in several historical methods developed by some distinguished Chinese historians.

(1) the method of induction. Liang Qichao asserted that the scientific method of historical study was no other than the *induction*. In his treatise on studies in the history of Chinese culture, Liang said that the key of *induction* lay in the effort to seek the common character among things by excluding differences. But, he pointed out that the method of induction could only be applicable to the work sorting out primary sources. In the light of the significance of the method of induction, Liang contended that despite the trivial character of textual criticism done by Qing scholars in the reigns of Qianlong and Jiaqing such a traditional scholarly effort should be laudable due to its spirit of scientific induction. He even explicitly stated that his own research method was no other than the method used in the Qian-Jia textual criticism and it was also the same as that of modern scientists (*Zhongguo lishi yanjiufa*). In his two methodological monographs, Liang did a significant work concluding the traditional Chinese textual criticism through the prism of modern induction.

It should be pointed out that Liang's methodology was intellectually interconnected with the Neo-Kantianism. Inspired by the idea of Heinrich Rickert, one of the leading figures of Neo-Kantian Southwestern School, Liang put the method of natural science and the historical method at opposites. He said the *universalized* method was applicable to studies in nature; the *individualized* method, meanwhile, could be applied to the studies in history and culture. In the light of such an absolute dichotomy, Liang asserted that the universe was divided into *nature* that was ruled by the law of causality and *culture* that was completely free (“Shenmeshi wenhua 什么是文化” (What is culture?)). It was obvious that by then Liang had abandoned

the idea of historical causality. History was instead merely the (re-)organization and criticism of primary sources, all of which could be handled by the method of induction (*Yanjiu wenhuashi de jige zhongyao wenti*).

(2) the *double proof* applying to the studies in the ancient Chinese history. In the first half of the twentieth century the Chinese archaeology made great progress, which was embodied in the discoveries of oracle bone inscriptions in Yinxu, the remaining manuscripts in Dunhuang and the bamboo slips ascribed to Han and Jin dynasties. Not only did such unearthed materials shed new light on the past but they also fundamentally changed the way of studying history. Wang Guowei's 王国维 (1877–1927) brilliant achievement—the *double proof* applying to the studies in the ancient Chinese history—was precisely based on such new historical materials. He correctly pointed out that the existing written literature could be attested by the archaeological discoveries and even some ancient writings, all of which were denounced *unorthodox and eclectic*, were proved to some extent valuable.<sup>5</sup> Chen Yinke 陈寅恪 (1890–1969) had explained Wang's novel approach applied to the ancient Chinese studies.

First, Wang had the archaeological materials and textual evidence corroborate each other. Employing such a mutually-corroborating method, Wang did an excellent job in his treatises—"Yin buci zhong suojian xiangong xianwang kao 殷卜辞中所见先公先王考" (The life of deceased kings of Shang dynasty in the light of oracle bone inscriptions), "Guifang Kunyi Xianyun kao 鬼方昆夷獯豷考" (Studies in the barbarian groups of Guifang, Kunyi and Xianyun), for instance—on the history of far remote dynasties. Second, Wang had existing ancient Chinese books and archaic records found in other countries corroborate each other. The method was used in Wang's exploration of the history of Liao, Jin and Yuan dynasties and frontiers. Concerned representative works included "Menggu kao 蒙古考" (Exploring the Mongols) and "Yuanchao mishi zhi Zhuyin yierjian kao 元朝秘史之主因亦儿坚考" (Exploring the "Zhuyin yierjian" [Jüyin people] in the *Secret History of the Mongols*). Third, Wang had imported ideas and established literature corroborate each other. Such a type of research practice could be found in his critiques of ancient Chinese literature such as poetry, fictions and dramas. In Wang's comments on *Honglou meng* 红楼梦 (A dream in red mansion) and treatises such as *Song Yuan xiqu kao* 宋元戏曲考 (Exploring the dramas produced in Song and Yuan dynasties) and *Tang Song daqu kao* 唐宋大曲考 (Exploring the grand melodies produced in Tang and Song dynasties), the method was brought into full play.<sup>6</sup> Chen Yinke even held that Wang's methods were so groundbreaking and enlightening that future scholars could not go beyond them.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Wang Guowei 王国维, *Gushi xinzheng* 古史新证 (New evidences corroborating the ancient Chinese history), in Collected lectures of Research Section of Tsinghua School, "Zonglun 总论" (Preface).

<sup>6</sup>Chen Yinke 陈寅恪, "Wang Jing'an xiansheng yishu xu 王静安先生遗书序" (Preface to *Posthumous Writings of Wang Jing'an* [i.e. Wang Guowei]), in *Jinming guan congkao erbian* 金明馆丛稿二编 [Two collections of writings of Jinming Pavilion] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2001), p. 247.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 247–248.

In his explorations of the ancient history, Wang consulted a great diversity of materials such as extant literature, inscriptions on ancient bronzes and steles, oracle bone inscriptions, unearthed bamboo slips and Dunhuang manuscripts and fully employed his epistemic reservoir comprised of philology, phonology, geography, linguistics and the knowledge of relicts and ancient institutions. In view of this, it is safe to say that Wang's method of *double proof* was actually a holistic comparative exploration of history. Such an innovative study was of a scientific nature. First, Wang fused the interpretation of words with investigations of historical events and institutions. He, for instance, did etymological studies in oracle bone inscriptions in his textual criticism of *Shiji* 史记 (The Grand Scribe's historical records), *Shiben* 世本 (Origin of the families of sovereigns and noted people in remote ages) and *Shanhai jing* 山海经 (Classics of mountains and seas). He also methodologically explained the fusion in his "Maogong ding kaoshi xu 毛公鼎考释序" (Preface to "Critical explanations of inscriptions on the giant three-legged bronze cauldron ascribed to the Duke of Mao") (Chapter 6, in *Guantang jilin* 观堂集林 [Collected works of Wang Guantang]). Second, Wang attached importance to on-the-spot investigation. He cherished very much what he witnessed and heard in person. In this regard, he ridiculed the close-door textual criticism performed by quite a few erudite Qing Confucians. For example, in his "Zhejiang kao" (Exploring Zhejiang, or the River Zhe) Wang pointed out that the record left by Sima Qian should not be easily denied on the grounds that it was based on a solid fieldwork. Third, Wang emphatically said that strained interpretations and farfetched analogies should never be made in the scholarly work. He had pointed out that in the effort to interpret inscriptions on ancient bronze vessels scholars usually worked out a plan that was too ambitious to be practicable. In order to do the mission impossible, they were even ready to make explanations that were unlikely to be true (Chapter 6, in *Guantang jilin*).

The Wang-style criticism of ancient history laid stress on the interconnection between and the development of things. It was through the universal interconnection and development that Wang grasped the changes of things and then critically (re-) examined the history. Such a methodological innovation was embodied in his *Han Wei boshi kao* 汉魏博士考 (Exploring the history of Boshi or Imperial Erudite Scholars in Han and Wei dynasties). The monograph was actually a history of changes of Han scholarship. In which, Wang treated the system of imperial scholar as a changing process and analyzed it thoroughly. It was true that Wang inherited the methods of textual criticism in the reigns of Qianlong and Jiaqing; it was also true that he carried forward such a traditional scholarly practice. It was particularly worth mentioning that Wang innovatively employed the traditional method of exploration, whereby the phonological interconnection, diffusion and change could be attached great importance, to (re-)examine historical phenomena. Thanks to such an innovative effort Wang did groundbreaking studies in the ancient Chinese history. His work epitomized the growth of the traditional textual criticism in the modern China.

The aspiration for and practice of *double proof* gave expression to Wang's enlightenment and open-mindedness. In his eyes historical materials included not only the written literature but also oracle bone inscriptions, inscriptions on bronze vessels and *new* materials such as inscriptions on seal, cowrie and earthenware. Wang

firmly believed that such unconventional materials could all be used to corroborate the history. He also pointed out that apart from the orthodox history and classics the *heterodox* writings of differing intellectual schools embodied valuable historical materials. Besides, Wang suggested that the well-established Confucian classics such as *Book of Poetry* and *Shangshu*, together with highly acclaimed history such as *Shiji*, be reexamined in the light of the principle of *double proof*. The traditional idea that materials must be ultimately attested by the established classics should be reversed. To put it another way, such orthodox—and even unchallengeable—classics must be attested by other materials. Where the popular skepticism projected unto the ancient Chinese history was concerned, Wang contended that the *doubt* must be based on solid evidences. Of course, Wang was not a conservative scholar, who refused to change the established tradition. But meanwhile, he strongly objected to the ungrounded skepticism based on the skin-deep investigations of primary sources.

Wang's great achievements in ancient Chinese studies were greatly conducive to the birth and growth of the Marxist-Leninist history in China. Guo Moruo had inspiringly pointed out that the accomplishments of Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉 (1866–1940) and Wang Guowei actually constitute the basis, on which his studies in the ancient Chinese society could be soundly initiated (“Author’s Preface,” *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu*). Last but not least, originally, Wang planned to make a methodological breakthrough with the help of philosophy. Finally, he gave it up. The reason of his abandonment of the original plan might lay in his exposure to the Schopenhauerian philosophy. In the case of Wang, the philosophical thinking of Schopenhauer proved to be double-edged. On the one hand, his ardent belief in the Schopenhauerian philosophy helped him study history in a more scientific manner; but on the other hand, such a powerful thinking seriously restricted Wang's deep-going explorations of history.

(3) the methods of corroborating history by the literary works and deducing the origin. Chen Yinke was a towering historian, who was very good at using such innovative methods. In his works, Chen employed existing poems and proses to corroborate historical records and vice versa. His success was embodied in his *Yuan Bai shi jianzheng gao* 元白诗笺证稿 (Annotated corroborations applying to poems by Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi) and *Qinfu yin jiaojian* 秦妇吟校笺 (Furthered emendation and corroboration of *Chant of a Madame from Qin*). Employing Du Fu's 杜甫 (712–770 AD) poems, Chen shed new light on the history of Tang Empire. He went further, comparatively reexamining the records in the *Old* and *New History of Tang* and pointing out that the two basic accounts could be able to complement each other.<sup>8</sup>

It was said that Chen had a very good command of multiple languages. He had used Chinese, Mongolian, Sanskrit and Western languages to solve some scholarly conundrums in the historical studies. One of Chen's representative works was *Menggu yuanliu zuozhe shixi kao* 蒙古源流作者世系考 (The genealogy of the author of *Menggu yuanliu* [The origin of Mongols]). Besides, Chen was extremely

<sup>8</sup>Chen Yinke, “Yi Du shi zheng Tangshi suowei zazhonghu zhiyi 以杜诗证唐史所谓杂种胡之义” (Employing Du Fu's poems to clarify what the *hybrid barbarian* denoted in the [Old and New] History of Tang), *ibid.*, p. 59.

good at finding the *true* history buried beneath the Buddhist writings, among which there were even some *pseudographs*. Such an excellent skill could be found in his *Liang yi Dacheng qixin lun wei Zhiyi xu zhong zhi zhen shiliao* 梁译大乘起信论伪智恺序中之真史料 (Genuine historical materials in the false Zhiyi's "Preface" to *Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*).

Apart from his mutual corroboration between history and literature, another research method—the *deduction in the light of key factor(s)*—was devised by Chen. Such a Chen-style method was brought to full play in his well-known succinct monograph entitled *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan luegao* 隋唐制度渊源略稿 (Prospectus of the origin of institutions prevailing in Sui and Tang dynasties). In the "Introduction," he explicitly stated that in order to do a compensatory study in the origin, growth and diffusion of varying Sui-Tang institutions, scholars must analyze the *key factor(s)* by thoroughly (re-)examining the existant literature and archaeological materials. He concluded that the *key factor(s)* could be trichotomized into the institutions of the Northern Wei and Qi dynasties, the ones of the Southern Liang and Chen dynasties, and those of the Western Wei and the Northern Zhou dynasties. Among the three pairs of *key factor*, the institutions of the Western Wei and the Northern Zhou were far less prominent than those of the Northern Wei and Qi and the Southern Liang and Chen dynasties. But in fact, many historians mistakenly held that Sui and Tang empires inherited institutions of the Western Wei and the Northern Zhou dynasties. In his *corrective* study, Chen divided the sources of Sui-Tang institutions into several parts (see table below).

Sources of the institutions of Sui and Tang dynasties	
Institutions of the Northern Wei and Qi dynasties	It originated from the institutions of the Han, Wei and the first half of the Eastern Jin and Southern dynasties. The <i>Southern Dynasties</i> here referred to the Southern Song and the Southern Qi. It should be pointed out that the orthodox culture of the Central Plains was well preserved in the Prefecture of Liang 凉 (present-day Gansu) after the Yongjia Rebellion that broke out in 311 A.D. The preserved culture was also known as the Culture of Hexi 河西 (the West of the Yellow River), which played a constituting role in the creation of Sui-Tang institutions.
Institutions of the Southern Liang and Chen dynasties	Wang Su 王肃 (464–501 AD) fled to the Northern Wei dynasty in 493 A.D. After that the orthodox culture that was preserved in the South was later inherited by Sui and finally handed down to Tang.
Institutions of the Western Wei and the Northern Zhou dynasties	The culture in the two dynasties fundamentally differed from those of Shandong (the East of the Mount Hua) and Jiangzuo (the lower reaches of the Yangtze River). It was preserved in the region of Guanlong 关陇 (the reaches of the River Wei 渭). It was actually a <i>hybrid</i> culture meeting the need of the six powerful cliques of warlords, who were of Xianbei 鲜卑 (a barbarian group) origin and exerted very insignificant influence on the Sui-Tang institutions.



In spite of Chen's failure in interconnecting the culture and socio-economy in his investigation of the origin of institutions, he did achieve something that could not be imagined by those who practiced the traditional textual criticism in previous ages. Not only did Chen admirably display the modernized textual criticism but he even showed that there were rich dialectical elements in his historical studies.

(4) Hu Shi's historical pragmatism. In his "Zhixue de fangfa yu cailiao 治学的方法与材料" (Methods and materials for scholarly work), Hu Shi said the scientific method was no other than the respect for fact and evidence. Where the application of the *scientific method* was concerned, Hu laid stress on the *bold assumption plus careful verification*. He tried his best to fuse the pragmatism advocated by John Dewey with the traditional Chinese textual criticism. In one of the chapters—which discussed the way of pragmatic thinking—of his *Reminiscences*, Hu recalled that the thinking of John Dewey not only helped him understand the basic constituents of scientific method but also enlightened him to rethink the traditional Chinese textual criticism. He held that the traditional textual criticism could be translated into the *evidential investigation*. Hu told the interviewer that in his time there were very few scholars who had realized that the modern scientific method and the traditional Chinese textual criticism could be interconnected, so that he declared himself to be the very first person to integrate the two fundamentally different methodologies. Besides, Hu acknowledged that it was Dewey who instructed him to grasp the *common program* existing in scientific methods/laws of all shades. He contended that the Western and Chinese scholarly methods were actually not different from each other. The reason that why there was the commonness between the Western and Chinese scholarship lay in the fact that both were based on the common sense of humankind.

Admittedly, the Western and Chinese scientific methods could be interconnected; the respect for fact and evidence was the prerequisite for any scientific study; and the *assumption* was indispensable to science. The question was not that whether there should be the *assumption* but how the *assumption* was made. Was it made on the basis of a purely subjective idea? Or was it made in accordance with the *fact* and the trend of the development of things? Hu Shi had assumed that *it would be unconscionable for China not to collapse*. Then, he ransacked the Chinese history and reality for negative cases that could be used to support his hypothesis. It was a mission that could be easily done. But, was it *scientific*?

(5) Gu Jiegang's *forged evolution of history*. The most successful practice of the Gu-style research method was the aforementioned scholarly effort to prove that the ancient Chinese history was nothing but a *multilayered forgery*. Hu Shi regarded Gu's innovative reexamination of Chinese history not only as a great contribution to the scholarship of history but also as a perfect experiment of his *bold assumption plus careful verification*. Gu himself also said that his methodology had been inspired by the thinking of Hu Shi. The two scholars' methodologies were, however, very different. For Gu, the alleged *forged evolution of history* was merely a *tool*, whereby the incorrect understanding of the ancient Chinese history could be rectified.

Moreover, Gu's allegation that the ancient history was forged gradually by later generations should not be readily regarded as an embodiment of Hu Shi's *bold assumption plus careful verification* on the grounds that it was actually inspired by the folklore and dramas. In his inquiry into the popular stories and dramas, Gu found that the contents and plots were constantly enriched as time went on. Obviously, both stories and dramas were recreated uninterruptedly. Inspired by this, Gu contended that materials in relation to the history of remote ages must be *forged* with a view to meeting a certain need. The true purpose of Gu's bold assertion was to restore the original look of ancient history as far as possible and break people's blind faith in the archaic written literature. He emphatically talked about this point in his "Preface" to the debut volume of *Gushi bian*. In view of this, it is safe to say that there was indeed an aspiration for truth in Gu's methodology.

It must be pointed out that the methodological assertion that history was nothing but a *forgery by later generations* did, to some extent, contradict the ideological nucleus of Gu's School. The former illuminated that the skill of forging history would be perfected generation after generation. Nevertheless, it was not evolution but degeneration. In contrast, the latter had such a grand evolutionist aspiration to debunk the myth, in which some remote dynasties were imagined as the Gold Age. The discrepancy gave expression to the contradiction existing between the philosophy of history and the methodology of history. It was also an embodiment of the negative influence that the Hu-style thinking exerted on Gu.

(6) Chen Yuan's 陈垣 (1880–1971) textual criticism. Chen played a leading role in the modern Chinese philological study. Bai Shouyi 白寿彝 (1909–2000) had incisively pointed out that the characteristic of Chen's research method and academic writing lay in *the grasp of the general through the individual*.<sup>9</sup> To put it another way, Chen was able to lead readers and researchers to see the complete picture of history through a thorough investigation of a concrete case. Chen had formulated some general rules with respect to the historical study. For example, in the work emending *Yuan dianzhang* 元典章 (Institutions and regulations of Yuan dynasty), he proposed four *laws*. First, the emendator should comparatively read the original edition and other editions of a certain book and then wrote down differences. Second, the emendator should carefully and thoroughly read differing parts of the same book and in doing so they could find discrepancies and mistakes. Third, the emendator should use other literature to corroborate the book. Fourth, the emendator should employ guiding principles apart from the written literature to corroborate the book. Due to the four *laws* the traditional work of emendation was upgraded to a special learning.

Besides, Chen was a great master of the work categorizing materials and shedding light on the true feelings buried deep beneath the words. His *Tongjian Hu zhu biaowei* 通鉴胡注表微 (Revealing the hidden meanings of Hu Sanxing's 胡三省 *Annotated Zizhi tongjian* [Comprehensive records in aid of governance]) was a

<sup>9</sup>Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, *Lishi jiaoyu he shixue yichan* 历史教育和史学遗产 [The education of history and historiographical heritages] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1983), p. 170.

brilliant work in this field. Investigating so thoroughly and deeply Hu Sansheng's annotations, Chen found that there were a strong but contained patriotic feeling in Hu's words. Chen's work brought the traditional emendation and textual criticism to a new level. In other words, due to Chen's contribution, not only were the historical facts and literature corroborated but the thought, feeling and opinion of author(s) of history were discovered. In *Yuan Yelikewen jiao kao* 元也里可温教考 (Investigation of the teaching of Yelikewen [a Christian order] in the Yuan dynasty), one of Chen's masterpieces, he did a panoramic study in the ancient Chinese Christianity by collecting homogenous materials from numerous sources. Overall, Chen really carried forward the traditional textual criticism in his efforts to fuse the emendation of ancient literature with the modern scientific methods, conclude general rules applying to the philological study, and create the trinity of investigation, discussion and narration of history.

(7) the linguistico-philological method applied to the textual criticism. Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950) was noted for his advocacy and practice of such a combined method. Fu contended that *language was thinking* and the modern science of history was no other than the science of historical materials. He even asserted, "Being equipped with tools of every hue by the *science*, [modern historians] devote themselves to sorting out all materials that can be seamed together."<sup>10</sup> Thus, he resolved to fuse the historical study with the linguistics. Luo Jialun 罗家伦 (1897–1969), a renowned historian, had recalled that Fu's aspiration for the integrated linguistico-historical study should be ascribed to multiple types of influence exerted by natural sciences such as the modern physics, theory of relativity and quantum theory, the German comparative linguistics and friends such as Chen Yinke and Yu Dawei 俞大维 (1893–1993) in Humboldt University of Berlin. After being exposed to a great variety of theories and methods, Fu suddenly found that he had quite a solid command of the Chinese history and language. For this reason, he decided to do a groundbreaking integrated linguistico-historical study (Fu Lecheng 傅乐成, *Fu Mengzhen xiansheng nianpu* 傅孟真先生年谱 [A chronicle of the life of Fu Mengzhen (i.e. Fu Sinian)]).

Fu ardently advocated that there must be research materials that could be directly investigated; that research materials must be augmented; and that research methods must be diversified. He explicitly stated that history should be reorganized by methods of natural science. In his eyes, the modern history was the gathering place, wherein there were the scientific methods of all forms. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out *history* in the Fu-style discourses actually denoted *historical materials*. One of Fu's slogans was exactly that "History lies in materials." Apart from Fu, Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 (1887–1936) and Liang Qichao suggested that the statistical methods be applied to the work (re-)organizing primary sources and deducing historical events.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Fu Sinian 傅斯年, "Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo gongzuo zhi zhiqu 历史语言研究所工作之旨趣" (The purport of work of Institute of History and Philology), *Lishiyuyansuo jikan* 历史语言研究所集刊 (Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology), Issue 1, no.1 (October, 1928).

<sup>11</sup>Liang, for instance, had penned a treatise entitled "Lishi tongjixue 历史统计学" (The historical statistics).

### 3 The Historical Materialism and the Chinese Idea of History

#### 1. Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1889–1927)

The historical materialism played a great role in the work reconstructing the traditional Chinese idea of history. Marxism was introduced into China at the turn of the twentieth century. It was after Russia's October Revolution in 1917 that the Marxism and Leninism were systematically explored in China. Li Dazhao did an excellent job in the dissemination of the Marxist-Leninist thinking (see table below).

#### Li Dazhao's works devoted to the dissemination of Marxism and Leninism

Title of papers	Publication date	Purpose
法俄革命之比较观 (A comparative reading of revolutions in France and Russia)	1918	Bringing Marxism and Leninism before the eyes of Chinese people
庶民的胜利 (The victory of the people)		
Bolshevism (布尔什维主义的胜利) (The victory of Bolshevism)		
我的马克思主义观 (My personal view of Marxism)	1919	Intensively introducing the historical materialism to the Chinese
唯物史观在现代史上的价值 (The significance of historical materialism to the modern history)	1920	
唯物史观在现代社会学上的价值 (The significance of historical materialism to the modern sociology)		

In view of the abovementioned works, we can say that it was Li Dazhao who laid the foundation of the Chinese Marxist history. There were four points regarding the founding role he played in the birth and early growth of the Chinese Marxist history. First, Li spent much time and energy disseminating the historical materialism. Second, he advocated the teaching of and research into the history of ideas of history. Thanks to his advocacy, the *history of ideas of history* later developed into an independent discipline. Li also pointed out that inasmuch as the historical materialism was the highest form in the history of modern European thoughts, it finally brought *history* to the shrine of science. Third, Li analyzed the nature and characteristics of history and criticized the non-Marxist view of history. Fourth, Li attempted to explore the Chinese history and society from the perspective of historical materialism.

Li shed light on key points of the historical materialism. He epistemically put the historical materialism in the entire system of Marxist theories. In “Wode Makesi zhuyi guan 我的马克思主义观” (My personal view of Marxism), he pointed out that Marxism had three major constituents, that is, the Marxist views of history, economy and socialist movement. The three points of views were strung together by

a gold thread—that is, the theory of class struggle. Thus, the past was no other than the history of class struggles. Having his explanations based on the basic Marxist works such as *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Communist Manifesto* and *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Li elaborated the intellectual cores of historical materialism and displayed the uniqueness of Marxist view of history. He concluded two points regarding the characteristic of historical materialism. First, the relations of production as a whole constituted the social economy. It was the base of a society. The Changes taking place in the non-material realms—the politics, laws, ethics, philosophy, and so on—were all determined by the change of economic infrastructure. Second, the productive force and social organization were closely related to each other. Whenever the productive force changed, the social organization would undergo a change accordingly. The social organization, meanwhile, was able to act on the productive force. In other words, the social organization could be either an impetus or an impediment to the growth of productive force. When the contradiction existing between the productive force, which aspired to grow forever, and the social organization, which could seriously restrict the production, could by no means be coordinated, there must be a social revolution.

The teaching of and research into the history of ideas of history were indispensable to the dissemination of Marxism. In 1920, Li Dazhao published *Shixue shixiang jiangyi* 史学思想讲义 (Lecture notes to the ideas of history) in Beijing. Li investigated the historical thinking of numerous European philosophers. On the one hand, he acknowledged that the early modern thinkers played a positive role in the epistemic growth of mankind on the grounds that their thoughts outshone the medieval theologies and destroyed the blind faith in the forged ancient Golden Age. Most importantly, he inspiringly asserted that the idea of history had its own history and changed in accordance with the change of history. The idea of history was vivid, changeable and progressive.<sup>12</sup> The historical materialism was precisely the most shining fruit of the growth of modern European ideas of history. In this regard, Li cheered, “Due to Marx’s creation of historical materialism the history was finally leveled with the natural science. It was really an epoch-making contribution to the scholarship of history.”<sup>13</sup>

The *history of ideas of history* was very significant to the reconstruction of history, the understanding of the growth of history and the grasp of the general intellectual trend. Li’s pioneering work laid the foundation of the discipline of *history of ideas of history*. Usually, he paid particular attention to the growth of European ideas of history. But he also reexamined Chinese ideas of history and sharply criticized the medieval Chinese theological, historicistic and retrogressive ideas of history. Generally, Li placed emphasis on the close relation existing between the growth of history and the progress of historical thinking.

<sup>12</sup>Li Dazhao 李大钊, “Shiguan 史观” (The view of history), in *Li Dazhao wenji* 李大钊文集 [Collected writings of Li Dazhao] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999), vol. 3, p. 229.

<sup>13</sup>Li Dazhao, “Makesi de lishi zhexue yu Likaier de lishi zhexue 马克思的历史哲学与理恺尔的历史哲学” (The philosophy of history: Karl Marx and Heinrich Rickert), *ibid.*, p. 305.

In his *Shixue yaolun* 史学要论 (The essence of history), which could be regarded as the first monograph devoted to the Marxist theory of history in China, Li illuminated the nature and constituents of history from the Marxist perspective. He pointed out that the objective (analytical) history was different from the history that merely recorded the past. History embodied not only facts and political events in the past but also the entire human life of past, present and future. History was the social change. History consisted of the human life and culture existing in the constant social changes. The history that merely recorded the past was not the history of human life but a purely narrative history.

He went further, saying that the present-day history was the science of history and it could also be called the *theoretical* history. Originally, the main purpose of history was to collect historical facts and then reorganize and narrate them. Unlike the traditional history, the new history moved on and theoretically (re-examined) facts. Apart from the traditional narrative of the past, general theories of history were created. It was the course wherein the science of history was founded. Such an experimental aspiration and practice heralded the coming of new scholarship of history. The *history as science* must be based on a scientific theory, that is, the historical materialism. Li thus said, "If we want to clearly grasp the concepts of history and society, we would better thoroughly grasp Marx's view of history. As we know, in discoursing his view of history, Marx interconnected history and society. [In accordance with Marx's idea,] there is the history, if we vertically observe the world; and there is the society, if we horizontally examine the world" (*Shixue yaolun*).

In the treatise entitled "Yanjiu lishi de renwu 研究历史的任务" (The mission researching into history), Li illuminated the significance of historical materialism to historical studies. He explicitly stated that it was Karl Marx who for the first time shed light on the true significance of history. Such a historic epistemological growth was embodied in the Great Teacher's materialist conception of history. Li thus asserted that Chinese historians reexamine China's thousands-of-year old books from the new—i.e. Marxist—perspective and by doing so they would definitely find something new and the truth of history. Li dreamed a well-established systematic science of history and delineated his *dream history* in *Shixue yaolun*.

Li was actually a practitioner of historical materialism. He had penned "Yuanren shehui yu wenzi shuqi shang zhi weiwu de fanying 原人社会于文字书契上之唯物物的反映" (Materialist reflections of the primitive society in the written literature), in which the Marxist guru in the early modern China applied the historical materialism to the ancient Chinese study. Besides, Li was a trailblazer for the work delineating the Paleolithic, Neolithic, bronze, totemic, matrilineal and patrilineal societies in the far remote ages of China by means of an integrated analysis of historical records and legends. Li was also the author of "Zhongguo gudai jingji sixiang zhi tedian 中国古代经济思想之特点" (Characteristics of the ancient Chinese economic thinking), whereby he demonstrated the fundamental difference existing between the West and China. The paper left us novel ideas and methods in

aid of the furthered explorations of differing genres of the Sino-Western ideological growth. Last but not least, inspired by the Marxist theory of social revolution, Li concluded that the past was “basically a history of class struggles.”<sup>14</sup>

Apart from the ancient Chinese history, the history of modern China was under the scholarly searchlight of Li Dazhao. Li wrote treatises such as “从印度航路发见以至辛丑条约的帝国主义侵入东方大事年表” (A chronicle of imperialistic invasions from the Discovery of Sea Route to India down to the 1901 Boxer Protocol), “Da Ying diguozhuyi qinlüe Zhongguo shi 大英帝国主义侵略中国史” (History of British invasions of China) and “Sun Zhongshan xainsheng zai Zhongguo minzu gemingshi shang zhi weizhi 孙中山先生在中国民族革命史上之位置 (The role Sun Yat-sen played in the history of the national revolution of China), all of which were the earliest works exploring the modern China from the Marxist perspective. He specially pointed out that Marxism should be the guiding principle for studies in the history of modern China and the Marxist methods be adopted in related studies. Li did believe that with the help of Marxism Chinese scholars would be able to clearly analyze the on-going national revolution of China. To be specific, scholars should immerse themselves in Marx’s treatises on the Chinese revolution, whereby they could find the enlightening and useful formulas and methods.<sup>15</sup>

Besides Li Dazhao, early Chinese communists such as Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879–1942), Cai Hesen 蔡和森 (1895–1931), Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899–1935) and Li Da 李达 (1890–1966) all made substantive contributions to the introduction and dissemination of the historical materialism. Where the modern Chinese historical study was concerned, early Marxists such as Li Dazhao had not found the effective way of Sinicizing the Marxist history. Despite this, none of them abandoned the national history in their scholarly practice of historical materialism. For this reason, the creation of Marxist history with Chinese characteristics was could by no means be a castle in the air.

## 2. Guo Moruo

Guo consciously applied the historical materialism to the scholarly exploration of the ancient Chinese history and produced the highly influential *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu* (Studies in the ancient Chinese society) in 1930. Guo had said that he finished the book under the guidance of Marxist view of history and by nature, the book was a *sequel* to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*

<sup>14</sup>Li Dazhao, “Huang Pang liuxue ji xu 《黄虎流血记》序” (Preface to *The Death of Huang Ai 黄爰 and Pang Renquan 庞人铨*), *ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 197. (Huang and Pang were two leaders of worker’s movement in Hunan. In 1922, both were executed by a regional warlord in Changsha—Translator’s note.)

<sup>15</sup>Li Dazhao, “Makesi de Zhongguo minzu geminguan lun 马克思的中国民族革命观论” (Karl Marx’s discussions of the Chinese national revolution), *ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 97.

penned by Frederick Engels. Guo's goal of writing the book was to critically and rigorously reexamine the Chinese society, culture and thoughts and answer the question that whether the Chinese conditions and tradition did differ from those of other parts of the world ("Author's Preface," *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu*). In short, he wanted to prove that the historical materialism was universally applicable.

Guo emphatically said that the development of Chinese history followed the common law applying to the entire human society. Meanwhile, he pointed out that the Chinese history had its own characteristics. For example, in his discussions of the feudalism in China, he inspiringly revealed that the Chinese feudal society was much longer in comparison with other countries and even continued to exist in the "very recent one hundred years" ("Part Four of Introduction," *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu*). Guo's groundbreaking work gave expression to the puzzling and the most fundamental question regarding the path of historical growth of China. The question could be dichotomized into whether the Chinese history grew in accordance with the universal law of social development and whether the Chinese history had its own characteristics and obey the universal law at the same time.

Although the book focused on the ancient Chinese history, it was actually a reflection of Guo's understanding of the general course of Chinese history. In the book, Guo explored almost every aspect of the ancient Chinese social life. His analyses indicated that he had a Marxist perception of the relationship existing between the economic infrastructure, superstructure and ideology. Additionally, Guo objectively—albeit critically—conclude the traditional Chinese literature. He, for instance, dialectically pointed out that the archaic *Book of Changes* consisted of both intellectual dregs and (dialectical) essence (Chapter 1, *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu*). In fact, Guo in this book formulated a general rule regarding the correct handling of the ancient Chinese culture and thoughts and set an example of critical conclusion and sublation of the traditional Chinese culture. Where the concrete scholarly exploration was concerned, Guo demonstrated how to employ the ancient books and Confucian classics in particular to analyze the ancient Chinese society. For example, he said the general pattern of ancient social life and spiritual production could be reconstructed if sentences and paragraphs revealing the real life in far remote ages in the *Book of Changes* could be picked out and appropriately categorized.

### 3. Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893–1976)

In the Chinese Communist Revolution, Mao Zedong, the founder of the New China, creatively developed Marxism and rethought the future of the Chinese nation. What he did was a tremendous contribution to the work Sinicizing Marxism. As far as the relationship between the idea of history and the Marxist theory was concerned, Chairman Mao emphasized that there must be a correct attitude towards the Marxism-Leninism. Chairman Mao said,

We should regard it [i.e. Marxism-Leninism] not as a dogma, but as a guide to action. ... Hence to apply Marxism concretely in China so that its every manifestation has an



indubitably Chinese character, i.e., to apply Marxism in the light of China's specific characteristics, becomes a problem which it is urgent for the whole Party to understand and solve.<sup>16</sup>

Chairman Mao asserted that it was only the Marxist-Leninist historical materialism that could be the scientific guiding principle of historical studies. In his well-known *On Practice*, he explained this point, asserting, "Before Marx, materialism examined the problem of knowledge apart from the social nature of man and apart from his historical development, and was therefore incapable of understanding the dependence of knowledge on social practice, that is, the dependence of knowledge on production and the class struggle."<sup>17</sup> One of Mao's philosophical masterpieces—*On Contradiction*—echoed this explanation. Concerned words read, "It was not until Marx and Engels, the great protagonists of the proletarian movement, had synthesized the positive achievements in the history of human knowledge and, in particular, critically absorbed the rational elements of Hegelian dialectics and created the great theory of dialectical and historical materialism that an unprecedented revolution occurred in the history of human knowledge."<sup>18</sup> Highly inspiring elaborations of concepts such as the unity of opposites and principal/non-principal contradictions in *On Contradictions* could be the guiding ideologies for studies in history.

Chairman Mao pointed out that not only did the Chinese history and society follow the universal law reigning over the development of human society but it also possessed unique characteristics. He had said like other nations, the Chinese nation successively underwent the primitive, slave and feudal societies; and meanwhile it suffered quiet a long economic, political and cultural stagnancy in the feudal stage, which "lasted about 3,000 years."<sup>19</sup> Noteworthy points were twofold in Mao's assertion. First, it involved the significant question regarding the historical stages of China. Second, it indicated that Mao, an outstanding revolutionary leader, paid great attention to the characteristics of Chinese nation.

Creatively employing the theory of politico-economic imbalance, Chairman Mao incisively pointed out that the nature of modern Chinese society was semi-feudal and semi-colonial. In these conditions, if China wanted to have a successful revolution, it must follow the path of New-Democratic Revolution. To be specific, the Communist Party must found the revolutionary base in the countryside, from which the Party had the cities surrounded by degrees and finally

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<sup>16</sup>Mao Zedong, *The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_10.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_10.htm). Source: Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/>. Retrieved on August 3, 2016.

<sup>17</sup>Mao Zedong, *On Practice*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_16.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_16.htm). Ibid. Retrieved on August 3, 2016.

<sup>18</sup>Mao Zedong, *On Contradiction*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_17.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm). Ibid. Retrieved on August 3, 2016.

<sup>19</sup>Mao Zedong, *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_23.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_23.htm). Ibid. Retrieved on August 3, 2016.

seized the power by the armed force. Digging into such a revolutionary discourses, we find that Mao innovatively applied the historical materialism to his inquiry into the nature of the Chinese society and showed clearly what lay ahead for the country.

When it comes to the historical study, Chairman Mao analyzed it from a much loftier perspective. He hoped that, being equipped with Marxist theories and methods, a historian “will not chop up history. It is not enough for him to know ancient Greece, he must know China; he must know the revolutionary history not only of foreign countries but also of China, not only the China of today but also the China of yesterday and of the day before yesterday.”<sup>20</sup> He even imagined an ideal type of historian, or “theorist” in his own words. “What kind of theorists do we want? We want theorists who can, in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint and method, correctly interpret the practical problems arising in the course of history and revolution and give scientific explanations and theoretical elucidations of China’s economic, political, military, cultural, and other problems.”<sup>21</sup>

Chairman Mao very clearly showed his attitude towards the traditional Chinese culture, including the legacies of traditional Chinese historiography. His elaboration was filled with the patriotic feeling and national pride. He said,

A splendid old culture was created during the long period of Chinese feudal society. To study the development of this old culture, to reject its feudal dross and assimilate its democratic essence is a necessary condition for developing our new national culture and increasing our national self-confidence, but we should never swallow anything and everything uncritically. It is imperative to separate the fine old culture of the people which had a more or less democratic and revolutionary character from all the decadence of the old feudal ruling class. China’s present new politics and new economy have developed out of her old politics and old economy, and her present new culture, too, has developed out of her old culture; therefore, we must respect our own history and must not lop it off. However, respect for history means giving it its proper place as a science, respecting its dialectical development, and not eulogizing the past at the expense of the present or praising every drop of feudal poison. As far as the masses and the young students are concerned, the essential thing is to guide them to look forward and not backward.<sup>22</sup>

Chairman Mao’s creative application of the materialist conception of history in the work solving China’s historical and real problems marked that the Chinese were increasingly good at elaborating and practicing the historical materialism. Admittedly, Chairman Mao made mistakes in his twilight years. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that it was not the historical materialism but Chairman Mao himself that went wrong. What Chairman Mao did in the late 1960s did ran against the basic law of the historical materialism. In spite of the mistakes he made in his old age, Chairman Mao had actually shed revealing light on the correct path of

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<sup>20</sup>Mao Zedong, *Reform Our Study*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3\\_02.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_02.htm). Ibid. Retrieved on August 3, 2016.

<sup>21</sup>Mao Zedong, *Rectify the Party’s Style of Work*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3\\_06.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_06.htm). Ibid. Retrieved on August 3, 2016.

<sup>22</sup>Mao Zedong, *On New Democracy*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_26.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm). Ibid. Retrieved on August 3, 2016.

growth of the historical study in his indelible *On Practice*. He said, “Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and develop the truth. Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world.”<sup>23</sup> Although the great leader’s goal was to create a revolutionary methodology, his in-depth elaborations were not inapplicable to the *history* as science.

#### 4. The historical materialism in the War of Resistance against Japan

Marxist historians in revolutionary bases and some progressive scholars of history in regions under the Kuomintang’s control penned numerous historical works from the perspective of historical materialism. Among them, Guo Moruo, Fan Wenlan, Lü Zhenyu, Jian Bozan 翦伯赞 (1898–1968) and Hou Wailu 侯外庐 (1903–1987) were towering figures. They made great contributions to the scholarship of history in their efforts to explore the Chinese history, society, culture and thoughts. Due to their work the historical materialism witnessed a rapid development and grew more influential. The growth and influence of historical materialism were embodied in four aspects.

First, the historical materialism was the guiding ideology in studies in the general, intellectual, social, ethnic and cultural history of China. Second, monographs devoted to the dissemination of historical materialism emerged one after another. They helped scholars better understand the historical materialism from the perspectives of the philosophy of history and the historical methodology. Thanks to such introductory books, the historical materialism even interested some non-Marxist scholars. Third, fusing their research work with the War of Resistance against Japan, historians produced patriotic works. Fourth, many research works fulfilled the mission integrating the historical materialism and the actuality of Chinese history, as well as giving expression to the trend of Sinicization of Marxism.

Fan Wenlan, for instance, did a great job in the mission combining Marxism and Chinese characteristics on the basis of his good command of the traditional Chinese culture.<sup>24</sup> Lü Zhenyu also displayed the aspiration for a Sinicized Marxist history that was based on the critique and inheritance of the Chinese culture in his treatise entitled “Chuangzao minzu xinwenhua yu wenhua yicheng wenti 创造民族新文化与文化遗产的继承问题” (The creation of a new national culture and the inheritance of cultural legacies). Apart from Fan and Lü, Hou Wailu attempted to “Sinicize the Marxist theories of history.”<sup>25</sup> To be specific, Hou hoped that the Chinese would be able to interpret the Chinese history through their own discourses and employ new research methods to find the valuable cultural tradition. Where his

<sup>23</sup>Mao Zedong, *On Practice*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_16.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_16.htm). Ibid. Retrieved on August 3, 2016.

<sup>24</sup>“Preface by Liu Danian 刘大年,” in Fan Wenlan 范文澜, *Fan Wenlan lishi lunwen xuanji 范文澜历史论文选集* [Collected research papers by Fan Wenlan] (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1979).

<sup>25</sup>Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, *Bai Shouyi shixue lunji 白寿彝史学论集* [Collected Bai Shouyi’s research papers of history] (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1994), vol. 1, p. 415.

own specialty—the Chinese intellectual history—was concerned, Hou contended that it be based on the exploration of social history. Methodologically, Hou suggested that, with the help of a comparative study aspiring to differ the social paths of the West and China, scholars examine the characteristics of Chinese history and then analyze the basic characters of ancient Chinese thoughts.

### 5. The historical materialism in the 1940s

In the 1920s, Li Dazhao started to disseminate the Marxist historical materialism and inquire into the Chinese history and society from the perspective of historical materialism. In the 1930s, Guo Moruo applied the historical materialism to his studies in the ancient Chinese society and penned *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu*, which marked the birth of Chinese Marxist history. In the 1940s, the development of Chinese Marxist history was furthered. Due to the historical materialism, the scholarship of history in China entered a new stage. As with the historical materialism itself, it is an ever-growing, dialectical process. It helps humans grow epistemically and deepens their thinking. In no way will it block the epistemic growth of humans. Simply put, the historical materialism will always move on. Engels had elucidated this point, saying, “In every epoch, and therefore also in ours, theoretical thought is a historical product, which at different times assumes very different forms and, therewith, very different contents. The science of thought is therefore, like every other, a historical science, the science of the historical development of human thought.”<sup>26</sup> The Great Teacher implied that forms and contents of all types of human knowledge and theoretical thinking would grow as time went on. The historical materialism was not an exception.

The historical materialism had a practical character. When the social practice was furthered, the historical materialism would be examined, enriched and promoted accordingly. The historical materialism required that humans summarize the new situation and experience and revise conclusions that were not in conformity with the reality. Such a rectifying effort was exactly an embodiment of the historical materialism. As long as it adhered to the principle of *putting practice first*, the historical materialism would always enjoy the freedom from being sagged. To put it another way, it would not be turned into a dogma. Lenin illuminated this point, asserting, “There can be no dogmatism where the supreme and sole criterion of a doctrine is its conformity to the actual process of social and economic development.”<sup>27</sup>

For historians in the early People’s Republic, how to absorb the valuable ancient and modern Chinese thinking and the excellent foreign culture and thoughts and then carry forward the historical materialism was a very significant and difficult

<sup>26</sup>Frederick Engels, *On Dialectics*. <http://marxists.catbull.com/archive/marx/works/1878/05/dialectics.htm>. Source: Marxists Internet Archive, <http://marxists.catbull.com/>. Retrieved on August 4, 2016.

<sup>27</sup>Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1894/friends/08.htm#v01zz99h-271-GUESS>. Source: Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/>. Retrieved on August 4, 2016.

mission. Epistemologically, the historical materialism was not the abandonment of the past but the dialectical negation—or, sublation—of old ideas of history. It “has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture.”<sup>28</sup> If the valuable thoughts and culture of China and the world were rejected, neither the historical materialism nor the idea of history could have any furthered development.

In order to carry forward the historical materialism, historians should positively apply varying materialist concepts of history to their studies in the Chinese history, path, future and characteristics and do their best to display the significance of such a fundamental Marxist idea. Undoubtedly, it would be a very challenging work. Scholars must not be careless. In a certain period, the practice of simplification and formulism had prevailed in the community of Chinese historians. It is better for us to summarize the lesson. Nowadays, rethinking the history of historical materialism, which has lived in China for more than half a century, students of history in China are attempting to lay a solid foundation of the globalized national history.

#### 4 Ideas of History in New China

After the founding of People’s Republic of China, the Chinese society changed drastically. Accordingly, the historical study in China transformed fundamentally. Such a historic transformation gave expression not only to the traditional Chinese national history but also to the modern changes taking place in the traditional historiography. The *national character* and *zeitgeist* of the Chinese historical thinking grew more and more conspicuous. In order to better understand the course of the development of ideas of history in the New China, the present author divides it into several phases (see table below).

Phase(s)	Year(s)	Description(s)
I	1949–1966	The science of history witnessed a very rapid growth despite the fact that historical studies were indeed disturbed by the erroneous “Left” thinking.
II	1966–1976	The historical studies were seriously damaged in the “Cultural Revolution” (1966–1976).
III	1978–1990	There was the self-examination in the scholarship of history. Besides, the dissenting (Western) thoughts impinged on the established scholarly tradition.
IV	1990–present	The Chinese history recreates itself in a globalized era.

<sup>28</sup>Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *On Proletarian Culture*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/oct/08.htm>. Ibid. Retrieved on August 4, 2016.

Like the *history as a discipline*, the ideas of history underwent tremendous changes in the five decades of People's Republic.

### 1) Ideas of history in the first seventeen years (1949–1966) of New China

Comparatively examining the history in the seventeen years and that in the previous five decades, the present author finds that there was a fundamental change, viz. that the historical materialism as the guiding ideology was well established in the Chinese academia. It was a historic change in the long history of Chinese historical studies. The overwhelming majority of Chinese historians consciously accepted the historical materialism and applied it to their studies. On the face of it, the ideological predominance of historical materialism had ended all types of disputes in the wake of the founding of New China. Actually, it was not. There were still heated debates in certain fields in certain periods. Although Marxism successfully played a leading role in intellectual and academic realms, the views of history still differed from each other among scholars. As for the *diversity in unity*, there were several points worthy of furthered discussions.

First, there was a remarkable phenomenon, wherein the changes and growth of history in differing phases were greatly different, even though concerned studies were almost all conducted under the guidance of historical materialism. Second, nearly all historians claimed that they researched into history from the Marxist perspective; but on the other hand, their views of history greatly diversified. Third, scholars answered basic questions—how to use Marxism as the guiding ideology; how to practice Marxism as guiding ideology, and so on—in very different manners and consequently their research results differed so greatly. Fourth, both historians and their research work were easily influenced by the politics. It was an element that should not be neglected in the effort to interpret the *diversity in unity*.

The achievements that the Chinese historians made in the seventeen years had been intensively discussed in several books and articles.<sup>29</sup> In spite of differing understanding and results, students of history in the New China all endeavored to fuse historical studies with Marxist theories of history, rethink the path and characteristics of Chinese history, and better the guiding role Marxism played in their research work. Therein lay the most distinctive characteristics of history in the New China. Since the early 1950s, China published complete works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin and selected writings of Chairman Mao, all of which laid the theoretical foundation of the Chinese Marxist history. Deeply studying Marxism and applying it to their research work, Chinese historians in the New China brought the Chinese history—including the Chinese ideas of history—to a new stage. They inspiringly inquired into several key questions in close relation to the entire Chinese history.

<sup>29</sup>See: Zhou Chaomin 周朝民 et al., eds., *Zhongguo shixue sishinian* 中国史学四十年 [Historical studies in China in the past forty years] (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1989); Xiao Li 萧黎 ed., *Zhongguo lishixue sishinian* 中国历史学四十年 [Review of historical studies in China in the past forty years] (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1989), and so on.

### (1) The course and characteristics of the Chinese history

In the 1950s and the 1960s, among historians there were heated debates, from which Five Flowers (i.e. the most popular research topics in history)—the periodization of the ancient Chinese history, the feudal land ownership, the peasant wars in the feudal China, the sprout of Chinese capitalism and the formation of Han 汉 nationality—grew. Besides, the theoretical question of *Asiatic mode of production*, which was relevant to the Five Flowers, and the periodization of modern Chinese history were also intensively discussed. Such scholarly explorations involved the most fundamental questions such as the entire course, concrete phases and detailed characteristics of the Chinese history and the most distinctive features of the Chinese nation.

1) The periodization of ancient China. It should be pointed out that the debate on the periodization of ancient China actually did not begin in the New China. It was an extension of the long discussion of the course of Chinese history among historians since the early twentieth century. As soon as the introduction of Marxism into China, scholars' understanding of Chinese history greatly diversified. Li Dazhao, Qu Qiubai, Cai Hesen and Li Da displayed their opinions about the course of the ancient and modern China. In the 1930s, the heated debate on the *nature of Chinese social history* put the issue of periodization forward and even interested some foreign scholars. The periodization of Chinese history was not only academic but also realistic. It involved the correct understanding of the nature of modern China and what lay ahead for China. During the War of Resistance against Japan, both Yan'an-based and Chongqing-based scholars demonstrated their distinct interpretations of the development of Chinese history.

Such a long and complex argument continued to exist in the early People's Republic. The scholarly exploration of the periodization of Chinese history in the New China was, however, different from that in previous decades. At that time scholars in the mainland proposed their ideas in the light of the Marxist theory of history. Bearing in mind that history of all peoples underwent a common course, historians of New China rethought the stages and characteristics of Chinese history. For example, where the beginning time of Chinese feudal society was concerned, scholars argued that it might be in the Western Zhou, the Spring and Autumn era, the Warring States era, the Former Han, the Later Han, the Wei-Jin period, and so on. Despite the differences existing among historians, such conclusions were all drawn under the guidance of the Marxist theory of history and based on the analyses of the tool of production, relation of production, productivity and ideology and their interrelations. Simply put, they all applied the historical materialism to their studies, regardless of the discrepancies in their understanding of Marxist theory, application of primary sources and perspectives of research. Overall, historians at that time enthusiastically studied Marxism and tried their utmost to fuse Marxist theories with the actuality of Chinese history in their efforts to solve the conundrums of ancient China.

2) The periodization of modern China. It focused on how to divide the history spanning from the First Opium War (1840–1842) down to the May Fourth Movement (1919). Some held that the periodization of the modern Chinese history

be based on the class struggle. Therefore, in the light of three large-scale struggles —The Taiping Rebellion, The Boxer Rebellion and The 1911 Revolution, they divided the modern Chinese history into seven stages (see table below).

Phase(s)	Year(s)	Landmark events
I	1840–1850	The first opium war broke out in 1840 and ended in 1842.
II	1851–1864	The Taiping Rebellion broke out in 1851.
III	1864–1895	The Taiping Rebellion ended in 1864.
IV	1895–1900	The Boxer Rebellion broke out in 1900.
V	1901–1905	The Boxer Rebellion ended in 1901.
VI	1905–1912	The 1911 Revolution broke out in 1911.
VII	1912–1919	The Republic of China was founded in 1912.

Some contended that the modern Chinese history be quatrochotomized in accordance with the changes of principle social contradictions. Some had the history quintachotomized on the basis of inquiries into the trinity of class struggle, social economy and mode of production in the modern China. Besides, a few scholars attempted to trichotomize the course of modern China. Elucidating their periodization of the modern Chinese history, historians tried to shed light on the general law of the growth of modern China. Due to the great difference in the periodization, scholars had very different ideas about significant issues in relation to the modern China.

3) The feudal land ownership. The land ownership was relevant to the most basic characteristic of the Chinese history. Historians proposed many points of view as regard this point (see table below).

Type	Note(s)
Ownership of land by the state	It ran through entire history of feudal China.
Private ownership of land	It was always the predominant system in the feudal China.
Varying ownership	It meant that the ownership in the early and later stages of feudal China differed from each other.
Mixed ownership	In addition to the ownership by the state, there were the ownership by big lords and ownership by small peasants.
System of ownership/ system of possession	Some historians made distinction between the system of ownership and the system of possession.

Related issues such as the land rent and the legal right were discussed accordingly. Some even attempted to illuminate the growth and the characteristics of Chinese thoughts in the light of the interpretations of the feudal land ownership. In retrospect, such differing opinions as a whole were the embodiment of the Chinese



historians' aspiration for the in-depth analysis of the Chinese history rather than a merely skin-deep description of the history.

4) The formation of Han nationality. The work devoted to this topic was actually an effort to study the characteristics of Chinese history from the ethnological perspective. At that time historians usually adopted Joseph Stalin's definition of nation. Stalin asserted, "[A] nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of the common possession of four principal characteristics, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up."<sup>30</sup> In fact, historians interpreted the Stalin-style concept in their own ways. As a result, differing understanding of the Chinese nation was created. Accordingly, the elaborations of the origin of nationalities, the relationship among ethnic groups and the role ethnic groups played in the Chinese history greatly diversified. Such insightful discussions were not only theoretically but also realistically conducive to understanding and consolidating China, a unitary multinational country.

Historians in the early days of the People's Republic deepened their understanding of the course of Chinese history thanks to arguments regarding the periodization of the ancient and modern Chinese history. Despite differences, diverse points of view were all based on the scholars' perception of the historical materialism. It should be pointed out that none of the points of view was anti-Marxist. Therefore, it was ridiculous to put differing ideas at opposites. The heated debate was a great impetus to the study of the historical materialism. Unfortunately, the ultra-Leftist thinking finally interfered in the academic debate and consequently the exploration of the characteristics of Chinese history was forced to stop.

## (2) The dynamics of the Chinese history

In the 1950s and 1960s, some regarded the class struggle as the driving force of history; some held that it was the social contradiction that gave impetus to the development of history; and some suggested that the growth of social development in China was determined by the material production. The inquiries into the dynamics of the Chinese history involved two key points. One was the role the peasant war played; and the other was the significance of brilliant historical figures to the Chinese history.

1) The peasant war. Concerned discussions focused on the nature, role, characteristic and periodization of peasant war. The overwhelming majority of historians agreed that the peasant war was very significant to the Chinese history. Nevertheless, the consensus about the way, whereby the peasant war contributed to the history, had not been reached at all. Many scholars held that the feudal sovereigns would *make a concession* after a large-scale peasant war. Usually, the

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<sup>30</sup>Joseph Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism*, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1929/03/18.htm>. Source: Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/>. Retrieved on August 4, 2016.

concession, which was comprised of positive policies such as the reduction in tax and corvee and the promotion of agriculture, was conducive to the social progress. Some, meanwhile, did not think that ruling oligarchs would make any concession and the ultimate goal of peasant war was to overthrow the old dynasty. If the old dynasty was, they argued, thrown away, the feudal relation of production would be seriously weakened. As a consequence, the society was pushed forward. Such differing ideas were all well-grounded and should be treated fairly. Unfortunately, some points of view were unfairly criticized.

2) Brilliant historic figures. Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220 AD), who was an outstanding politician, military strategist and de facto founder of the Kingdom of Wei, had been intensively discussed by Chinese historians in the 1950s. Apart from Cao, the history of Wu Zetian 武则天 (624–705 AD), who was the only female emperor in the ancient China and laid the solid foundation of the most prosperous decades of Tang Empire, was scrutinized by scholars. Besides the professional historians, even men of letters, philosophers, cadres and young students were all participants of the work reappraising Cao and Wu. One decade later, the reappraisal of brilliant historical figures such as Cao Cao and Wu Zetian was upgraded to the debate on the criteria reigning over the evaluation of entire history. At first, the debate focused on the role brilliant historical figures played in the history; then, it was led to significant methodological issues such as the class analysis and the historicism.

### (3) The Asiatic mode of production

The debate on the *Asiatic mode of production* could be traced back to the 1930s, when scholars from differing political groups partook in it. In the 1950s, Marxist historians in the mainland continued to explore the conundrum. The terminology was coined by Karl Marx in his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). As regards the same piece of classical Marxist literature, Chinese historians had very different understanding. Some said what Marx denoted was the primitive society; some contended that it referred to the (premature) slavery endemic to the East; and some held that it was actually a variant of the classical slavery. Historians' interpretations of Marx's assertion greatly differed from each other. Nevertheless, their goal was the same; that it to say, they aspired to shed light on the characteristic of the Chinese history. Scholars went further in probing into what on earth brought about the thousands-of-year history of feudalism in China. Some tried to find the answer in superstructures such as political system; some, in the economic relation; and some, in the Central Plains' conflicts with barbarian groups.

Apart from abovementioned theoretical issues, historians in the early People's Republic discussed practical matters such as writing history. Where the relation of *history* and *theory* was concerned, some suggested that the writing of history be led by theory while some emphasizing that theory must be based on history. As with the relation of *present* and *past*, some held that the historical writing focus on the modern and contemporary history while some contending that the ancient Chinese history be the core of the historical study. Besides, historians discussed the importance of non-Chinese history in the historical study of New China.

In practice, studies in the modern history and the party history were substantially improved. In the Great Leap era, the number of works devoted to the history of factories, People's Communes and families increased greatly. Where the studies in the history of foreign countries were concerned, as early as the Yan'an era Chairman Mao had criticized the excessive attention paid to the Western history among concerned Chinese historians. In the New China, the situation was significantly changed. Greater importance was attached to the history of the international communist movement, the history of struggle for liberation in the Southeast Asia and the history of Asian and African countries.

Besides, historians rethought the relationships between the old generation of experts and the young scholars and between professionals and nonprofessionals (such as workers, farmers and soldiers who participated in the compilation of history books). The textbook, history courses and education of history were all under their searchlight. In the 1950s, the institutes of higher education were entirely reshuffled in accordance with the mode of Soviet Union. As a result, the vast majority of courses of history became the Soviet Union-style.

In the 1950s and 1960s, differing understanding of the characteristics of Chinese history was embodied in the newly-produced historical works. In line with their own periodizations of the ancient Chinese history, Fan Wenlan finished *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian* 中国通史简编 (A concise general history of China); Guo Moruo, *Zhongguo shigao* 中国史稿 (An historical sketch of China); Jian Bozan, *Zhongguoshi gangyao* 中国史纲要 (The outline of Chinese history); Lü Zhenyu, *Jianming Zhongguo tongshi* 简明中国通史 (A short history of China); and Hou Wailu, *Zhongguo gudai shixiang tongshi* 中国古代思想通史 (General history of the ancient Chinese thoughts). In addition, works devoted to the modern Chinese history, the Chinese revolutionary history, the party history and various themed history were published. It was true that such early Marxist history did have some shortcomings. It was also true that they were pioneering in many fields. Compared with works produced in previous decades and even centuries ago, the historical writings in the New China were fundamentally different. Authors of such new writings endeavored to interpret the course of Chinese history in accordance with the law of development of an *objective* history. They drew an in-depth and inspiring conclusion that not only did the history of Chinese nation follow the general law of entire human history but it also had distinctive characteristics at the same time. Due to their contributions, the ultimate reason of historical growth no longer lay in the intentions of supernatural beings; nor was the culture in the history treated as something fantastic. Such new works put the greatness of Chinese nation in the limelight, giving clear expression to the national spirit of China.

The work (re-)organizing existing historical literature witnessed a rapid growth in the first seventeen years. *Zizhi tongjian*, Twenty-Four Histories and primary sources with respect to the history of Ming and Qing dynasties were systematically emended and published. The sixty-four-volume *Zhongguo jindai shiliao congkan* 中国近代史料丛刊 (Collected primary sources of modern Chinese history) and special volumes devoted to the primary sources of the economic history of modern China came out one after another. Besides, the collection and publication of historical materials in regard to the New Democratic Revolution were very splendid.

The New China did quite a remarkable archaeological work. Historians and archaeologists fused inquiries into the archaeological discoveries with the periodization of the ancient Chinese history. Such a fused historico-archaeological study was one of the most distinctive characteristics of the historical study in the New China. Some archaeological discoveries deserved to be mentioned (see table below).

Discoveries	Significance
Two incisors of Yuanmou man	The Chinese history could be traced back to 1.7 million years ago.
Dawenkou (neolithic) culture	It greatly enriched historians' understanding of Chinese primitive culture.
Erlitou 二里头 culture	It was a great impetus to the studies in the early history of Shang dynasty.
Houma 侯马 relics	It was a great impetus to the studies in the late Spring and Autumn era.
Yinxu 殷墟 relics	Yinxu was the site, wherein the capital city of late Shang was seated. As early as 1950, China conducted a large-scale excavation of Yinxu. As a result, a huge number of oracle bones were discovered. Slightly later, the work sorting out and interpreting inscriptions on the bones made a great progress. In 1956, the well-known <i>Yinxu buci zongshu</i> 殷墟卜辞综述 (Comprehensive studies in oracle bone inscriptions discovered at Yinxu) authored by Chen Mengjia 陈梦家 (1911–1966) was published.

Nevertheless, we should admit that there were indeed some problems in the first seventeen years. As time went on, such problems became increasingly serious. Inasmuch as the erroneous *Leftist* thinking interfered in historical studies, the theoretical innovation could by no means be done and the Sinicization of Marxist theory was forced to stop. In the political movements, the debates on academic issues and the struggles for political lines were too tangled up to unravel. Consequently, quite a few differing academic points of view were denounced *revisionist* or *anti-Marxist*. The political line—*Class struggle is the Key Link*—gradually became the guiding ideology. Many fields that were originally open to the academic inquiry were turned into forbidden zones. Such a pervasive ideologization impinged on the ancient Chinese studies so greatly that the ancient Chinese history became almost a history of peasant wars. The valuable ancient Chinese historiography was totally denied. In order to break the old elitist history of emperors and ministers, even the reign titles of ancient emperors were abolished. Such radical changes made the work compiling history extremely difficult. In these conditions, innovations on history were out of the question.

Formulism was another serious problem disturbing so much the scholarship of history. Something ridiculous emerged in an endless stream. Some senior historians, for instance, were academically excluded and such an arbitrary exclusion was known as *plucking the white flag*; and the history-majored freshmen were allowed to penned textbook with a view to *destroying superstitions*. Under such circumstances, the training of professional historians could by no means be done at all.

The diversity of research schools had long been gone. In the late 1950s, there was a heated debate on the resignation of Hai Rui 海瑞 (1514–1587), a renowned incorruptible official in the Ming dynasty. Several years later, there were severe criticisms against the *Resignation of Hai Rui*, a historical play authored by a noted historian known as Wu Han 吴晗 (1909–1969). Consequently, an academic argument mutated into a political struggle. It took place in 1965, merely one year before the *Cultural Revolution*. In the following decade, the Chinese academia—including historians—had to stand mute.

Where the international academic exchange in the first seventeen years was concerned, Chinese historians were exclusively exposed to the scholarship of Soviet Union due to the special global situation at that time. It was undeniable that the ideas and methods of Russian historians greatly inspired their counterparts in China. Nevertheless, the negative influence of the scholarship of Soviet Union was quite evident. Meanwhile, the Chinese historians were almost completely ignorant of the Western scholarship of history in the 1950s and the 1960s.

## 2) Ideas of history in the post-*Cultural Revolution* era

The *Cultural Revolution* ended in 1976. Immediately after the anachronistic revolution, historians began to rectify the misled scholarship. In 1978, an internal journal run by the Central Party School published an epoch-making article entitled “Practice is the Sole Criterion of Truth.” Deng Xiaoping affirmed the core idea of the article in the All-Army Conference on Political Work, stating,

Many comrades in our Party are persistent in their study of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and in their efforts to integrate the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the practice of our revolution. This is very good and should certainly be encouraged. There are other comrades, however, who talk about Mao Zedong Thought every day, but who often forget, abandon or even oppose Comrade Mao’s fundamental Marxist viewpoint and his method of seeking truth from facts, of always proceeding from reality and of integrating theory with practice. Some people even go further: they maintain that those who persist in seeking truth from facts, proceeding from reality and integrating theory with practice are guilty of a heinous crime. ...Guidelines for our work must be set in conformity with actual conditions. This is a most fundamental approach and method of work, which every Communist must cleave to.<sup>31</sup>

In December, 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee was convened in Beijing. The political line—*Class struggle is the Key Link*—was officially discarded by the Party. As a consequence, China underwent an intellectual emancipation. What did lie ahead for the historical studies in China would definitely be a sound and rapid growth. In following two decades, the Chinese scholarship of history made a great progress. Historians continued to write the general history in a tolerant political situation. The number of works devoted to a certain dynasty increased greatly. Numerous ethnographic, ethnic and local history

<sup>31</sup>Deng Xiaoping, *Speech at the All-Army Conference on Political Work*, <https://dengxiaopingworks.wordpress.com/2013/02/25/speech-at-the-all-army-conference-on-political-work/>. Retrieved on August 5, 2016.

books were produced. The themed, social and cultural history interested more and more scholars. Chinese scholars started to explore the Western works, among which some were published in China. Both the Chinese and foreign (Western) theories of history and the history of historiography were deeply discussed and concerned works sent to the press. Besides, the ancient Chinese books were emended and published and a great variety of collected works and biographies (re-)printed. Academic journals devoted to history grew very rapidly. Even journals devoted exclusively to the theories of history and the history of historiography had come out. Such exciting achievements in history were all worthy of furthered delineation and analyses.

Since the Reform and Opening-up (1978), the Chinese historical study entered a brand-new stage. Significant changes took place in fields such as the historiography and the idea of history. Chinese historians had new aspirations. First, they proposed new questions and deepened their understanding of history. Historians rethought the course, law and characteristics of the Chinese history. Again, they worked on conundrums such as whether there were the slavery and sprout of Chinese capitalism, why the feudal society lasted so long in China, and what the role the highly power-centralized politics and the imperial power played in the Chinese history. Some intensively-discussed topics—the dynamics of Chinese history, the criteria whereby the historical figures could be evaluated, the peasant war, and so on—were reappraised. In some cases, new interpretations were applied to the established questions; and in other cases, there were new questions that were discussed in new ways. Historians in the New Period broke through many theoretical forbidden zones while adhering to the historical materialism. Therein lay one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Chinese scholarship of history in the New Period.

Overall, the research fields grew much more extensive and even studies in the social and culture became very popular. It was particularly worth mentioning that the Chinese historians drew new theoretical conclusions that were based on the inquiries into the Chinese history and in conformity with the materialist concept of history. Some, for instance, corroborated Deng Xiaoping's famous assertion that "science and technology are primary productive force;" some such as Bai Shouyi shed light on the coexistence of multiple modes of production in his twelve-volume *General History of China*; some provided analyses of the nature of productive force; some proposed new ideas illuminating the role state played in history; and some displayed their in-depth explorations of the relations of differing nationalities.

Second, the Chinese historians tried their best to improve the studies in the foreign ideas of history and historiography. In the times prior to the 1980s, Chinese historians had very little knowledge of the Western ideas of history and historiography. The number of concerned books was very small. In 1956, Sanlian Shudian (The Joint Publishing) published Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, which was translated by Wang Zaoshi 王造时 (1903–1971). Six years later, a Soviet symposium entitled *The Declining Bourgeois Philosophy of History* was sent to the same press. Next year, the Commercial Press printed and distributed James H. Robinson's *The New History*, which was rendered into Chinese by Qi Sihe 齐思和 (1907–1980). Besides, in the serials of *Chinese Translation of World Classics* there

were a few books devoted to the Western ideas of history, through which the Chinese scholars could catch a glimpse of the Western scholarship. Since the Reform and Open-up, the Chinese historians opened their eyes to the whole world. In two decades, more than thirty Western books of historical theories and methodologies were introduced into China.<sup>32</sup> Apart from translations, monographs and symposia devoted to the Western historiography, European history and philosophy of history came out one after another. Thanks to such inspiring translations and original writings, the horizons of Chinese scholars were greatly broadened and new ideas and thoughts brought to China. Consequently, Chinese historians (re-) examined the fundamental issues such as the nature of the oriental society, the historical epistemology and the subject/object of history from new theoretical perspectives.

Third, the Chinese historians concluded the development of history and the national history in particular in the past century. In the New Period, scholars reappraised the value of the heritages of ancient Chinese historical writings and then summed up the course and characteristics of Chinese historiography. The popularity of the history of Chinese historiography was unprecedented. Critically examining the ideas of history, the styles of writings history, the education of history and the historical literature, scholars concluded the traditional Chinese history. In doing so, they shed light on the characteristics of the Chinese national historiography. Such a deep-going research was carried out against the backdrops of a great development of Chinese society and the growth of Chinese philosophy and social sciences. Thus, the ultimate goal of the research work was to approve the status of the Chinese national history in the globe, inherit the valuable elements of the traditional Chinese history, strengthen the national confidence, create the new history with Chinese characteristics, and have history play a significant role in the work building the socialist spiritual civilization. The emergence and development of the Chinese Marxist history was part and parcel of the growth of historical study in the past century. It was worthy of a furthered study. Quite a few books devoted to the history of Chinese Marxist history and Chinese Marxist historians had been published.

Fourth, the Chinese historians re-studied and re-explored the historical materialism. Most importantly, they realized that the historical materialism should not be equated with the theory of history. On the basis of such a refined understanding of Marxism, scholars produced a number of conspectuses of history. In recent years,

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<sup>32</sup>For detailed discussions, see: Yu Pei 于沛, “‘Jiefang shixiang, shishi qiushi’ he waiguo shixue lilun yanjiu 解放思想, 实事求是和外国史学理论研究” (The idea of “emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts” and studies in foreign theories of history), *Shixue lilun yanjiu 史学理论研究* (Historiography quarterly), no. 4 (1998), pp. 5–14; Zhang Guangzhi 张广智, “Jin ershinian lai Zhongguo de xifang shixueshi yanjiu 近二十年来中国的西方史学史研究(1978–1998)” (Chinese studies in the history of Western historiography in recent two decades), *Shixueshi yanjiu 史学史研究* (Journal of history of historiography), no. 4 (1998), pp. 19–26; Liu Zehua 刘泽华 ed., *Jin jiushinian shixue lilun yaoji tiyao 近九十年史学理论要籍提要* [Essence of key monographs devoted to theories of history in the past nine decades] (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1991).

the Chinese historians began to discuss the relation between the historical materialism and other foreign ideas of history and the global influence of historical materialism. Moreover, they did groundbreaking studies in the endeavor to systematically conclude the influence of historical materialism on the modern Chinese historiography.

In more than twenty years since the Reform and Opening-up, there were many hot spots in historical studies. For example, in the early 1980s the traditional textual criticism performed by renowned Qing scholars in the reigns of Qianlong and Jiaqing interested historians again; in the mid-1980s the Old and New *Tri-Theory* were the buzzwords among historians; and in the 1990s the cultural, neo-Confucian and national-learning fever swept the academia. In the face of the drastically-changing Chinese scholarship of history, an objective analysis is desperately needed. Neither the sweeping acknowledgment nor the total denial is acceptable. The present-author has several ideas as regards this point.

First, it is ridiculous to put Marxist and non-Marxist historians at opposites.

In each period of the past century, there were towering figures in the community of Chinese historians. Among them, some were Marxist historians; and, some were not. Despite the fundamental difference existing between their theoretical orientations, their achievements in historical studies constituted the precious cultural heritages shared by all later Chinese historians. Sometimes historians of both schools ideologically argued against each other. But meanwhile, they academically influenced and acted on each other. In present-day China, there is a ridiculous phenomenon, wherein some scholars fervently hype up the achievements of a few non-Marxist historians while intentionally playing down the significance of Marxist historians. Even the farce re-ranking the alleged masters in the modern China was staged in the production of certain series of books. It was absurdly unfair and incorrect. The truth was very different from such an alleged antagonism. Hu Shi, for instance, respected Li Dazhao very much and revered Li as one of the friends that could not be forgotten (Vol. 3 of *Hu Shi wencun* 胡适文存 (Remainig works of Hu Shi)); Li Dazhao had given a hand to Fu Sinian; and Hou Wailu thought very highly of Liang Qichao's brilliant works. Where the Marxist theory was concerned, Gu Jiegang in the 1920s stated explicitly that he himself was not opposed to the historical materialism ("Author's Preface," in vol. 4 of *Gushi bian*).

What on earth was the mainstream history in the modern China? It was a controversial topic. But, it must be pointed out that the materialist concepts of history did exert great influence on the modern Chinese historiography. Applying the alleged antagonism to the historians from both Marxist and non-Marxist schools was really unreasonable. In the same vein, it was totally unnecessary to put Marxist historians who had differing styles and characteristics at opposites. For present-day scholars, the goal of the work analyzing the cultural thoughts of every hue was not to praise or censure the past scholarship and historians but to find good points and apply them to the effort to develop the new history.

Second, it is ridiculous to put the adherence to historical materialism and the innovation on history at opposites.



Where the scholarship of history in the New China was concerned, some biasedly held that the reason that why there were mistakes in historical studies lay in the excessive emphasis placed on Marxism; that the greater importance attached to Marxism brought about the dullness of writing and the paucity of contents in historical works; and that the guiding ideology—i.e. the historical materialism—was an impediment to the innovation on history. In fact, the Marxist outlook on development is the theoretical base of all innovations on history. According Marxism, the objective world has nothing but the myriad matters moving on perpetually and the universal law whereby the matters can move on and change. The human knowledge is the reflection of the objective world; so that it perpetually changes and moves on. In comparison with the traditional Chinese history and the so-called historical revolution advocated by the modern New History in China, the Marxist idea is much more thorough and scientific.

As mentioned above, the character of the historical materialism is practical. The historical materialism is examined in the social practice and keeps growing in pace with the development of social practice. *Putting practice first* is the most fundamental requirement of the historical materialism. So long as the requirement is constantly fulfilled, the historical materialism will always be vigorous. Lenin had strongly criticized the prejudice that Marxists dogmatically believed in the unchangeability of historical formula, denouncing it the most vulgar accusation against Marxism and totally a lie. He incisively pointed out that Marxists never held Marxism as something independent of a certain socioeconomic pattern.<sup>33</sup> In view of this, the present author believes that the adherence to the historical materialism is the guarantee of innovations on history.

Whether a research work was carried out under the guidance of the historical materialism should be measured by the criterion of practice. Indiscriminately imitating Marxist words, mechanically applying Marxist assertions, and taking Marxist theory of history as a universal formula, all of which ran against the basic requirement of the historical materialism. Engels had said, “I must tell you [Paul Ernst] from the very first that the materialist method is converted into its direct opposite if instead of being used as a guiding thread in historical research it is made to serve as a ready-cut pattern on which to tailor historical facts.”<sup>34</sup> In view of this, we shall say that the accusations that the Marxist teaching of general law was no more than a linear causality and the historical materialism as guiding ideology brought about the simplification and sketchiness of history were totally on shaky ground. The old generation of Marxist historians strongly objected to the simplification of history.

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<sup>33</sup>Liening (V.I. Lenin), *Liening quanji* 列宁全集 [Complete works of Lenin] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), vol. 1, p. 162.

<sup>34</sup>Frederick Engels, *Engels to Paul Ernst*. [http://marxists.catbull.com/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90\\_06\\_05.htm](http://marxists.catbull.com/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_06_05.htm). Source: Marxists Internet Archive, <http://marxists.catbull.com/>. Retrieved on August 6, 2016.

Fan Wenlan, for instance, was strongly opposed to the mechanical historical writing, penning, “[In the mechanical genre of historical writing] history is described as something entirely devoid of humans or human activities and was reduced to an automatic development of multiple economic processes; and moreover, the historical materialism is turned into *an* economic materialism and the vivid human history into a simplistic unity of several formulas.”<sup>35</sup> Hou Wailu echoed Fan, recalling, “As early as the 1940s, I emphasized that we Chinese discourse our own history and thoughts by means of our own discourses and explore our own good cultural tradition with the help of new methods.”<sup>36</sup>

Another reason why we shall do historical studies under the guidance of the historical materialism lies in the fact that it is the material concepts of history that fundamentally elucidate the necessity and importance of critically inheriting legacies of the traditional Chinese and foreign history. Marxism is a dialectical outlook on development. Therefore, the Marxist history requires the sublation or dialectical negation of old things rather than the absolute separation of past and present. For Marxist historians, everything valuable in the past two thousand years are worthy of absorption or reconstruction. Marxism enjoys the full freedom from exclusivity and thus paves way for the innovations on history.

Third, the methodology and the idea of history cannot be isolated from each other.

The present author does not think a certain method can bring about a drastic change in history. In the history of the modern Chinese historical study, there were two periods characterized by the fever of historical methodology. One was the 1920s and the other was the 1980s. In the 1920s, in the wake of introduction of Western methods of historical study into China, Chinese scholars spent much time and energy discussing the methodology. It was an embodiment of the modernization of history in China and gave impetus to the growth of historical study. In fact, in the ancient Chinese historians’ aspirational efforts to thoroughly understand nature and humans, there were methods; in the practice of textual criticism, there were methods; and in the endeavor to modernize the traditional history, there were methods, too. Consulting both indigenous and foreign historiographies, the Chinese historians developed a great variety of research methods. But, it should be pointed out that a certain method must associate itself with a certain idea of history. Furthermore, the denial of the objective law reigning over the development of human history and simplistically reducing research methods to methods of reorganizing primary sources could not bring any fundamental changes to the historical study.

In the Western scholarship of history, there were differing genres of philosophy of history, various inquiries into the subject and object of historical study and diverse explorations of the historical knowledge and nature of history. No matter what the history would be—pragmatic or speculative, it must have a certain *method*.

<sup>35</sup>Fan Wenlan, *Fan Wenlan lishi lunwen xuanji*, p. 56.

<sup>36</sup>Hou Wailu 侯外庐, *Hou Wailu shixue lunwen xuanji* 侯外庐史学论文选集 [Selected historical papers of Hou Wailu] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1987), vol. 1, p. 18.

For this reason, the studies in historical methodologies prevailed very much in the New History. Even so, an array of scholarly practice such as the textual criticism, the syncretism of historical materialism and the production of research books were all subject to the idea of history. In the Chinese studies in the historical methodology, quite a few scholars were inclined to treat the methodology as something completely independent; that is to say, they overoptimistically believed that they could explore methodology and neglect the idea of history at the same time and then handle the issue of innovation on history. It was, however, a mission impossible, just as an old Chinese saying goes, "Catching fish in a tree." In the mid-1980s, the fever of historical methodology consumed so much time and energy of Chinese scholars. Even so, it achieved almost nothing. The Chinese historians should always bear in mind that the innovation on history was a systematic project and the idea of history and the historical method constituted a dialectical unity. In the past, the lack of methodological exploration was an impediment to the growth of historical study. At present, the promotion of a syncretic method involving differing disciplines must be related to a certain idea of history. The exploration of historical methodology without history was simply a fantasied edifice. In many cases, even though scholars shared the same idea of history and methodology, their understanding of history unavoidably differed greatly.

Forth, the relation between the collective and independent writing shall be correctly handled in the production of historical works.

Since the Yan'an era, the Party had very successful experience in the work collectively compiling history. In many cases, many experts worked collaboratively and spent even decades penning excellent works that could be handed down generation after generation. At present, information is exploding. It is extremely difficult for a single scholar to finish huge research projects. In view of this, it is safe to say that the collective writing is demanded by the times. But, it must be pointed out that the eager for quick successes and instant benefits disturbs the collective writing in recent years. Driven by the desire for profit, some scholars produced huge volumes of book, which had golden coat only. Such a kind of history was sheer waste of time and funding. Worst of all, it ruined the scholarship of history. At any time the diligence and rigorousness are indispensable to history. Even the collective writing is based on individual historians' solid and in-depth research work.

Fifth, the relation existing between history and politics shall be normalized.

Tolerance is indispensable to scholarship. It was ridiculous to treat academic debates as struggles between political groups and denounce one side *anti-Marxist*. Such a politicized dichotomy was extremely hazardous to the academic work. For example, the alleged binary opposition between Confucianism and Legalism in the scholarship of history during the *Cultural Revolution* was not academic at all. It was true that there was a close relation between politics and history. Nevertheless, the conscientious historians were strongly against the attempts to label, analogize and insinuate history. Of course, the present author does not hold that history can be independent of the social reality and the politics. The assertion of the *minimization of ideology* was basically a self-deception. History is an ideology, reflecting the social existence and reacting to it at the same time. This is how history always is.

### 3) Ideas of history in Taiwan

The development of historical studies in Taiwan could be trichotomized into three phases—1949–the mid-1960s, the mid-1960–1987, and the late 1980s–1999. Changes taking place in these phases were very different from those in the mainland. Despite this, both shared the same origin of national culture and changes in the mainland’s scholarship of history did exerted influence on its counterpart in Taiwan. Since the late 1970s, the cross-strait academic exchange grew very rapidly and gave a great impetus to the development of the national history.

In the first phase, the National Taiwan University superintended by Fu Sinian, scholars from the mainland and young students in Taiwan played a great role in the development of the historical studies in the island. In the 1950s, the historical ideas developed by the School of Primary Sources, which was the heir to the mainland scholarship before 1949, assumed the predominance.<sup>37</sup> In the early 1960s, a number of Taiwan students were enrolled in PhD programs of leading American universities. They all studied the course devoted to historiography. As required by the course, they must read basic writings in regard to the idea of relatively objective history. Such an intensive exposure to the Western scholarship greatly changed their understanding of history. Generally, such American-educated young Chinese historians believed (1) that it could by no means be possible to find the absolutely objective historical facts; (2) that the handling of primary sources was merely a part of historical study; and (3) that the interpretation of history was inevitable. Such *new* ideas later significantly influenced the historical studies in Taiwan. When returned to Taiwan, such students founded *Si yu yan* 思与言 (Thoughts and languages) and resumed *Shihuou yuekan* 食货月刊 (Socioeconomic studies monthly), whereby they enthusiastically promoted their ideas.<sup>38</sup>

The Taiwan academia reacted to the *Cultural Revolution* entirely sweeping the mainland. Therein lay exactly the Movement Resuscitating the Chinese Culture, to which the historical study was indispensable. Some Taiwan historians held that inasmuch as the Taiwan-based scholars could not act as a counterweight to their counterparts in the mainland in terms of the fieldworks and socioeconomic studies, they could focus instead on studies in the Chinese intellectual history and in doing so they could make historical studies in Taiwan more distinctive.<sup>39</sup> It was actually a response to the traditional Chinese history.

In the third phase, there was an active cross-strait cultural exchange, wherein the historians from Taiwan and the mainland tried their best to inherit and carry forward the national history. The conferences of every hue were held one after another. Both

<sup>37</sup>Gu Weiying 古伟瀛 and Gao Mingshi 高明士, “Zonglun 总论” (A general introduction), in *Zhanhou Taiwan de lishixue yanjiu* 战后台湾的历史学研究 [Historical studies in the post-war Taiwan] (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2004), vol. 1, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>See: Li Enhuan 李恩涵, “Fu Sinian dui Taiwan shixue jiaoyan de yingxiang 傅斯年对台湾史学教研的影响” (Fu Sinian’s influence on the historical teaching and research in Taiwan), *Zhunji wenxue* 传记文学 (Biographical literature), issue 508, vol. 85, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

the Taiwanese and mainland scholars exchanged their ideas in these conferences with a view to promoting the historical study. For example, in 1998, professors from Beijing Normal University, Fudan University and Hangzhou University participated in a conference devoted to the historiography in Taiwan's National Chung Hsing University. Meanwhile, Taiwan scholars took an active part in the conferences held in the mainland. Besides, the cross-strait exchange of publication was effectively initiated. At the end of twentieth century, for instance, in total in Taiwan there were fourteen university-level history departments, among which thirteen published history journals that were open to mainland historians.<sup>40</sup> Thanks to the efforts made by the scholars and institutes of Taiwan and the mainland, the cross-strait academic exchange grows soundly and rapidly.

In December, 2014, a workshop devoted to the development of historical studies in Taiwan was held in the National Chung Cheng University. The participants reexamined the Western influence on the Chinese historical study; illuminated the relevance of the traditional Chinese history to historical studies in Taiwan; discussed the education of history; elaborated the traditional historians' aspirations for the betterment of the politics by means of history; and analyzed the influence exerted by the postmodernism and Western historiography. They pointed out that the history-majored students be encouraged to read the traditional historical writings and the studies in the historical criticism and the ideas of history be furthered. Finally, they concluded that in the face of drastic changes taking place in the global scholarship of history, there should be a cross-strait effort to systematically conclude and explore the traditional Chinese historiography.

The points as regards to the cross-strait exchange of historical study are worthy of furthered discussions. First, there shall be a general consciousness of history. Undoubtedly, the study in Taiwanese history is growing more and more prominent. It has already been a mighty trend.<sup>41</sup> The key questions in regard to such a genre of historical study lie in the viewpoint and research method(s). The present author holds that a general consciousness of history is indispensable to the study. The *general consciousness of history* refers to the interconnection of history. To be specific, any type of research work done to the history of a certain dynasty (period), subject and region must fully take into consideration the interconnection of past and present. In the case of Taiwan, the historical and historiographical interconnections with the mainland are the objective existence, which has been well-established in the long history. For this reason, the historical studies in Taiwan is a part of the Chinese historical studies. The consciousness of *de-Sinicization* is completely wrong and disapproved by many scholars in Taiwan. The efforts to separate the

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Shi Zhiwen 施志汶, "Taiwanshi yanjiu de fansi: Yi jin shinianlai gexiao lishi yanjiusuo shuoshi lunwen wei zhongxin '台湾史研究'的反思—以近十年来各校历史研究所硕士论文为中心" (Rethinking the *study in the Taiwanese history* in the light of master theses of history institutes at Taiwan-based universities in the recent decade), *Taiwan Shifan Daxue lishi xuebao* 台湾师范大学历史学报 (Bulletin of historical research, National Taiwan Normal University), no. 22 (1994), pp. 413–446.

history of Taiwan from the history of her motherland and diffuse the consciousness of *Taiwan Independence* into the education of history are very hazardous and academically against the law stipulating that past and present must be thoroughly understood.

Second, historians of both sides shall rethink the *zeitgeist* and the national character of history. Digging into changes in the historical studies in the past century, we realize that we shall pay attention not only to changes of the times but also to the tradition of national history. Both the complete Westernization and an obstinate adherence to the tradition lead history to the impasse. The criterion, whereby the historical study in a certain period can be evaluated and the changes taking place in this field be analyzed, does matter. If the criterion is always based on the Western scholarship, historians in Taiwan and the mainland can hardly grasp the most fundamental way reigning over the contemporary Chinese history.

Take Fu Sinian for example. By the time when he passed away, the Institute of History and Philology, which was led by Fu for decades, had published thirty monographs, twenty-five themed single issues, twenty-two volumes of collected research papers, seven series of collection of historical materials and two copies of collected archaeological reports. Many noted Chinese historians had been Fu's students or in/directly influenced by the guru.<sup>42</sup> It was true that Fu was an ardent advocator of the Rankean history; it was also true that his history was well based on the traditional Chinese national history. Due to his influence, many young scholars, who had studied in the United States, employed the new Western scholarship to struggle against the old Western scholarship and promote the (Westernized) methods of social sciences at the same time. Inspired by them, the present author suggests the mainland Chinese historians, on the basis of the contemporary historical studies, globally absorb the advanced scholarly thinking and the essence of national history of other countries and then creatively (re-)formulate an indigenous set of criteria.

Third, historians of Taiwan and the mainland shall rethink what lies ahead for history in the new century. In 1901, Liang Qichao penned an "Introduction to the History of China;" next year, he published the groundbreaking *New History*. The two works marked the beginning of a long course, wherein the Chinese history strenuously pursued the modernity. Later, Li Dadao suggested that the modern history be created in China. Hou Wailu put ideas into practice and founded the Society of New History. In the twentieth century, the *history as discipline* in China was created after its counterpart in the West in the wake of the breakdown of the traditional Chinese learning. Such a drastic change greatly influenced the Chinese culture, education and scholarship. Following the Western path, history in China

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<sup>42</sup>Li Quan 李泉, "Fu Sinian yu Zhongguo jindai shizheng shixue 傅斯年与中国近代实证史学" (Fu Ssu-nien [Fu Sinian] and the Modern Critical Historiography of China), *Taida lishi xuebao* 台大历史学报 (*Historical Inquiry*, National Taiwan University), no. 20 (November, 1996), pp. 35–56.

was professionalized.<sup>43</sup> As mentioned above, historians of both sides share the common aspiration for the resuscitation of the national history of China. In the twenty-first century, the ever-growing cross-strait academic exchange will effectively promote the joint work developing the new history. It is a noble cause for the Chinese nation, indeed.

#### 4) Ideas of history at the turn of the twenty-first century

The Chinese historians shall pay attention to the influence exerted by the new types of historical thinking on the Chinese scholarship in the beginning of the new millennium. In recent decades, three new trends—i.e. the social, cultural and global history—have grown much more prominent in the academic world.<sup>44</sup> Besides, the environmental, oral, ecological and women history interested many scholars. Where the theory of history in the West was concerned, the postmodernism was undoubtedly the most attractive and had been intensively discussed. In 2004, a Chinese journal—*Shixue lilun yanjiu* 史学理论研究 (*Historiography Quarterly*)—published a series of articles devoted to the postmodernism and its influence on historiography. The author(s) of “Editor’s Note” asserted that no matter how the postmodernism would be appraised in future, it did exert a great influence on present-day historical studies. The postmodern thinking deepened people’s understanding of history and triggered diverse thoughts and associations. Unlike the theories of history and the philosophy of history in previous ages, the postmodernism did not prepare a general concept and mode of history. Nevertheless, it objectively created new space for the growth of history. Chinese historians shall be scientifically and rigorously open to the postmodernism. In other words, scholars can borrow something valuable and useful while being aware of something negative buried beneath the postmodern thinking.

One of the hot topics in the present-day community of Chinese historians is the innovation on history. For example, in May, 2002, the China Association for Historical Studies and Yunnan University held a conference, wherein scholars from all over China discussed the future of history in the twenty-first century. One of the key questions in relation to the theory of history and the innovation on history is the advancement of the spirit of Chinese nation. Patriotism is the core of the national spirit of China. We have already lived in the era of globalization. The globalization has created a new, historic reality; so that it enriches our understanding of the historical theories in conformity with the historical materialism. But on the other hand, the globalization inevitably brings the cultural diversity and pluralistic

<sup>43</sup>For the professionalization of history, see: Georg G. Iggers, “The Early Phase: The Emergence of History as a Professional Discipline,” in Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997.), pp. 23–30.

<sup>44</sup>Yuergen Keka (Jürgen Kocka), “Ershi shiji xiabanye guoji lishi kexue de xinchaoliu 20世纪下半叶国际历史科学的新潮流” (New trends of history in the globe in the late 20th century), trans. Jing Dexiang 景德祥, *Shixue lilun yanjiu*, no. 1 (2002), pp. 5–10.



thoughts to China. In the face of growing diversity and pluralism, the materialist concepts of history still have the vitality. Exactly for this reason, the present author is always in high spirits at the prospect of the history in line with Marxism.

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## Chapter 10

# Globalization and The Chinese Ideas of History

Generally, the *globalization* is mainly embodied in a globalized economy. Nevertheless, there are multifarious embodiments such as the globalized information, the globalized culture and the globalized ecology. In fact, the globalization can be felt whenever and wherever. In the new century, the globalization indisputably sweeps entire globe. The present world history lies predominantly in the globalization. Against such a macro socio-historical background characterized by the globalization, everything taking place in present-day world can be *globally* (re-) examined. Without any doubt, the globalization had shaken the entire world. Not only the economy but also the culture—including history—is challenged, as well as being given new opportunities. The present author holds that inasmuch as the globalization strengthens a global interconnection and represents the new trend of history, it is not insignificant to the historians' effort to rethink history and historiography. To put it another way, present-day historians shall pay greater attention to such a new trend and explore the influence that it exerts on history and society in the new millennium. In doing so, the historical thinking will be enriched.

Where the historical thinking in the twentieth century was concerned, one of the key questions was the cognizance of the historical movement. It was in the differing understandings of such a fundamental *movement* that a great variety of ideas of history lay. Even the *new history*, a product of the transformation of traditional history, and the *new* “new history,”<sup>1</sup> which was brought about by the mutation of the *new history* in the second half of twentieth century, focused primarily on the process of historical movement, though both intensively explored the historical epistemology and methodology and roles history could play. It was also in the twentieth century that the traditional Chinese history was gradually modernized in the drastic changes. The new, changing elements of Chinese history were all related

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<sup>1</sup>See Luo Fengli 罗凤礼, *Lishi yu xinling* 历史与心灵 [History and spirit] (Beijing: The Central Compilation and Translation Press, 1998), Chapter 2.

to the Chinese historians' reformulated understanding of the process of historical movement. The reason that why the Chinese Marxist historians theoretically contended with each other in the development of Chinese Marxist history unexceptionally lay in the differing types of cognizance of the historical process.

The absorption of the traditional Chinese ideas of history is indispensable to the innovation on Chinese history in the new era. The traditional Chinese ideas—*using history for reference*, the dialectic *tongbian* (a thorough understanding of changes), *putting the people first, being in the service of the work ordering the country*, for instance—are all worthy of furthered explorations. It was quite a good tradition being concerned with the fate of nation and country among the ancient Chinese historians. Present-day Chinese historians shall inherit and carry forward the tradition. The traditional Chinese historiography is also a great legacy. For example, sublating the archaic biography-centered Chinese historical writing, historians can create a new, syncretic writing style, whereby the historical activities can be examined from a much broader perspective. Moreover, the modern textual criticism regarding the historical literature concurrently differ from and interconnect with the traditional Chinese textual criticism, on the grounds that it does absorb methods of textual criticism prevailing in the Qianlong (r. 1736–1796) and Jianqing (r. 1796–1820) reigns while innovatively transforming itself. In the context of globalization, between the traditional national history and the new Chinese history there is a sublation-inspired absorption. In practice, only the traditional elements that are adaptable to the new time can be incorporated into the new history.

In the face of the increasingly powerful globalization, the Chinese historians shall pay greater attention to the ancient Chinese ideas of history, dig more deeply into the national spirit of Chinese history, absorb more positively the essence of world cultures, and ultimately uphold and advance the national character of Chinese culture (including history). It is, indeed, an urgent task for present-day Chinese historians. As mentioned in the opening “Introduction,” at present, the Chinese historians must take into consideration the zeitgeist and national character of history in their efforts to reconstruct the Chinese history in the era of globalization. The Chinese and world history mutually act on each other. In this regard, China and the world are historically inseparable. Such a basic inseparability requires that the course of Chinese history, the predominant trend of Chinese history and the reconstruction of Chinese history be discussed from the perspectives of the entire globe and mankind. The Chinese historians shall always bear in mind that whenever there is a great innovation on the historical theory there will be a giant growth of the subject of history. In fact, the *history* of history has already demonstrated.

## 1 Globalization and What Lies Ahead for History

Globalization is *the* reality. It illuminates the orientation of social changes and the common course of entire mankind. In spite of differing from each other in many aspects among countries and nations in the globe, the varying national and ethnic

entities actually share a common trend in the overall development. Such a shared trend is not imagined nor fabricated. But instead truly and objectively exists. Indeed, there were the interconnections between countries and regions in the ancient world. Nevertheless, such ancient transnational or transregional interconnections were very limited due to multiple reasons such as the geographical complexity and thus fundamentally differed from the modern globalization. Some scholars hold that the ancient Chinese or foreign ideas of *holistic history* were the theoretical embodiments of globalization. Such a holistic historical thinking was, however, very different from the modern idea of *an* objective historical process. In this sense, the assertion that the ancient historians had already the idea of globalization is actually ungrounded. It was only in the phase of capitalism that the world grew much more economically and culturally closer and consequently there was the *globalization*. In the second half of the twentieth century, the *globalization* was greatly accelerated. The *globalization* itself is *a* process and enriches our ideas of historical process. Even so, the theory of globalization can by no means be the replacement of the theory of historical process.

The *globalization* indicates that there is definitely the *necessity* in the history of mankind; that is to say, the law reigning over the historical growth of human society is actually discernible and fathomable. In the twentieth century there was a fierce theoretical debate on the existence or nonexistence of the objective law dictating the course of history. In the case of Marxism, a systematic and complete theory approving the law of objective human history was created thanks to the historical materialism. On the contrary, some Western historians—the neo-Kantians such as Wilhelm Windelband, the neo-Hegelians such as Benedetto Croce, for instance—unanimously denied the existence of such an objective law, but instead proposed different theories and employed differing methodologies. Besides, some held that history was not the *producer* but *a* consumer of the general law and the true master of history was *God*<sup>2</sup>; some asserted that the science of history devoted itself to the particularity rather than to the general law as physics did; and some strongly contended that history was unable to predict the future, offer correct guidance, and judge right and wrong.<sup>3</sup> Overall, quite a few Western scholars neither recognized the objectivity of law of history—but instead regarded the law as something subjective and an embodiment of God's intention—nor gave the existence and significance of the historical law the nod. In some cases, scholars even inappropriately equated the Marxist theory of law reigning over the objective history with the positivist and Spenglerian theories. Specifically, they invented instead the *patterns of civilizations* and the *world systems*. Such *patterns* or *systems* were, however, fundamentally different from the Marxist discourses on the law of objective history.

<sup>2</sup>William H. Dray, *Lishi zhexue 历史哲学 (Philosophy of History)*, trans. Wang Wei 王伟 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1988), pp. 10, 202.

<sup>3</sup>Tian Rukang 田汝康 and Jin Chongyuan 金重远 (eds.), *Xiandai xifang shixue liupai wenxuan 现代西方史学流派文选 [Selected writings of differing schools of the Western historiography]* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1982), pp. 98, 185.

In fact, the debates between Marxist and non-Marxist theories as regards the historic law never ceased.

In one of his works, Geoffrey Barraclough, a British historian, pointed out that around 1955 a significant change took place in the scholarship of history in entire world. The change was mainly embodied in the rapid transformation and self-examination (of the past scholarship). Barraclough made a furthered explanation, saying that the contemporary historical research was focusing on the general law rather on the individuality or particularity and meanwhile both history and the social science were trying to choose *human* as the ultimate objective of research. The second attempt was, the historian held, a great impetus to the spatiotemporal extension of historians' vision.<sup>4</sup> Barraclough shed light on the fact that the idea of history was indeed changing. Such an intellectual change was brought about by the globalization, which was actually an inevitable *momentum* of the historical movement. What was embedded in the *momentum* was not the causation in general but a law-like relation embodying the general trend of history.

In the twentieth century not only was the Marxist idea of the law reigning over the objective history an academic issue but it also directly exerted influence on the changes of the world. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, when Marxism was introduced into China, the historical materialism significantly influenced the Chinese revolution. At that time some pointed out that the historical materialism was the *philosophical base* of the new born Communist Party of China (CPC) and it could by no means be unconfirmable or readily shakable as idealism was.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese Marxists placed emphasis on the dissemination of the law of objective historical development, whereby the Chinese people could be enlightened to correctly perceive how history would grow. Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1889–1927), one of the leading figures of the Chinese communist movement in its incipient stage, confirmed this point, recalling that “in very recent years the professors of history in higher education institutions were almost all influenced by the historical materialism and had a growing enthusiasm about the (re-)creation of the Chinese society.”<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, the historical materialism did play quite a significant role in the drastic social change taking place in the twentieth-century China.

The early Chinese Marxists tried their utmost to correctly explain the historical law in accordance with the historical materialism. For example, in the 1920s, Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899–1935), an early Chinese communist theorists, explicitly pointed out that despite the frequent occurrence of “something occasional,” the “common law” was always predominant and the mission of science was to discover

<sup>4</sup>Geoffrey Barraclough, *Dangdai shixue zhuyao qushi* 当代史学主要趋势 (*Main trends in history*), trans. Yang Yu 杨豫 (Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1987), p. 148.

<sup>5</sup>Zedong 泽东, “Minzhong de dalianhe 民众的大联合” (The great union of the masses), *Xiangjiang pinglun* 湘江评论 (*The Xiang River Review*), no. 2 (1919).

<sup>6</sup>Li Dazhao 李大钊, *Li Daozhao shixue lunji* 李大钊史学论集 [Li Dazhao's essays devoted to history and historiography] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1984), p. 149.

such a pervasive and predominant “common law.”<sup>7</sup> Qu also inspiringly revealed that the naked denial of the existence of the “common law” applying to the social phenomena and the partial recognizance of the teleological law applying to the social phenomena were all strategies employed by the modern scholars in their anti-socialist undertakings.<sup>8</sup> Thanks to the work done by early Chinese Marxists, who shed revealing light on the law of development of the human history, what would lie ahead for the Chinese history was clearly illuminated.

It must be pointed out that the theory of globalization can by no means replace the theory of history as *process*. But on the other hand, the discourses on globalization does enrich the *process* theory. Where the *enrichment* is concerned, the present author proposes several points. First, against the backdrop of globalization, not only are the difference and contradiction existing between countries with different political systems illuminated but also the complementarity between socio-economic-politically differing countries is highlighted. It is such an interconnection that promotes the healthy growth of globalization and propels the historical growth. Second, multiple elements contribute to the *trend* (i.e. globalization) in the historical movement. To put it another way, apart from the economy, science and information in particular are all being globalized. Due to the influence of globalization, present-day people perceive more clearly and deeply the role science and technology can play in the development of history. The protection of world ecology is part and parcel of the globalization. It embodies the complex interaction between humans, differing countries and *nature*. The effort to explore such a human-state-nature trilateral relation adds new elements into the traditional Chinese historians’ aspiration to thoroughly understand all changes and deeply inquire into the relation of Heaven and humans. Third, in the face of a growing globalization more and more countries and peoples realize that how important the role the *culture* plays in the historical development is the growth of national culture and the absorption of essence of foreign cultures are inseparable. It must be admitted that the *globalization* is indeed what the national culture expects in its aspiration for a furthered growth.

## 2 Differences Existing Between Globalization and the Historical Growth

If there were not any differences existing between countries and nations, there would not be the *trend of globalization* at all. It is no other than the *imbalance*, which changes incessantly, that determines the issue of *trend of globalization*. The

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<sup>7</sup>Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, “Ziyou shijie yu biran shijie 自由世界与必然世界” (The realms of freedom and necessity), in *Qu Qiubai xuanji* 瞿秋白选集 [Selected works of Qu Qiubai] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985), pp. 113–114.

<sup>8</sup>Qu Qiubai, “Xiandai wenming de wenti yu shehui zhuyi 现代文明的问题与社会主义” (Problems of the modern civilization and socialism), *ibid.*, p. 106.

actual trend of globalization has indicated that the process of being globalized is mainly embodied in the reciprocal transformation of balance and imbalance, both of which demonstrate that the historical process is exactly a dynamic curve. Generally, the balance in a certain time is not absolute but relative and whenever the established balance comes to an end the new imbalance will emerge and grow. In other words, under no circumstances can the globalization put an end to the difference existing between nations. For this reason, historians should perceive the changes in history from a global perspective and pay greater attention to the characteristics of the history of nations; and moreover, they should explore the multiple influence that the globalization exerts on the historical growth of all nations.

In accordance with the historical materialism, which lays stress on the imbalance of politico-social development, historians will find that each nation has its own particularity in the common course of globalization. To put it another way, the historical processes of differing countries are different from each other. Such a universal fact determines that each country or nation must act strictly according to the historical law, be open to diversity, and unshakably adhere to the grand principles such as the independent sovereignty, the territorial integrity, the mutual respect (between countries) and the co-prosperity. Unfortunately, the hegemonistic countries—the United States, for instance—exerts itself to the utmost to establish an America-led unipolar world, wherein the America-style *individualism*, *freedom* and *civilization* can be successfully imposed on other countries. Such an American deliria actually goes against the tide of history.

The politico-economic imbalance in the context of globalization is a significant law. The cultural perception of such an important law does matter. In very recent years, one of the key topics sweeping the academic conferences and media of every description in China is the status of Chinese culture in the course of globalization. Jin Chongji 金冲及, a leading historian, sheds light on this point, asserting,

We might say that more globalized the world is, greater attention shall be paid to the mutual equality and mutual respect between differing peoples in the globe and greater importance be attached to the cultural diversity. In no way does the world have only *one* face and *one* culture. In the same vein, under no circumstances can a certain culture or value be imposed on all other countries or peoples. Such a forced obedience is definitely uncondusive to the growth of human civilization. In fact, that all countries or peoples are forced to blindly follow a certain culture or value is practically out of the question.<sup>9</sup>

The globalization has indicated that *history* and the development of countries and peoples are not isolated but interconnected. The rise and fall of a certain country is actually in very close relation to the changes taking place in both other countries and entire world. For example, the prosperity that predominant Capitalist countries enjoyed was undoubtedly based on the agony that had been inflicted upon the colonies all over the world. It should be pointed out that if a country achieved

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<sup>9</sup>Jin Chongji 金冲及, "Jingji quanqiuhua qushi xia de Zhonghua wenhua 经济全球化趋势下的中华文化" (The Chinese culture in the context of growing economic globalization), *Renmin rirbao* 人民日报 (*The People's Daily*), January 4, 2001, p. 9.

the development at the cost of the interests of other countries or nations, there would definitely be the day of retribution. In present-day world, the world economy has already possessed a historic true *world market*, wherein the science and technology and the financial recession and resuscitation are globally interlinked. One of the old Chinese sayings—"If one prospers, the other thrives too; if one cannot grow vibrantly, the other will not be prosperous either"—inspiringly illuminates this point. Nevertheless, a few advanced countries acted selfishly, immorally grabbing the lion's share generated by the globalization. To make matters worse, such avaricious countries always try by every possible means to shift losses on to other countries and nations whenever there is an economic crisis. The globalization will finally teach them that only when the equality, mutual benefit and co-development between countries are really respected and put into effect will the long term interest of a country be fulfilled.

Broadening the vision of historical study is one of the basic requirements for the Chinese historians in the age of globalization. In the case of studies in the Chinese history, *China*, an object of history, shall be (re-)examined in the *total* process of world history. The Chinese history is part and parcel of the world history and keeps advancing in the globalization. Unavoidably and undoubtedly, in present-day world China and other countries mutually influence on each other. Even historically the situation in the early modern China did not differ greatly. The First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), for instance, significantly changed the historical course of both China and Japan and foreshadowed the later huge change in the world history. Such a type of historical event, which exerted multiple and extensive influence on certain countries and even entire globe can only be thoroughly examined from a global perspective.

Besides, China has a very good tradition writing the contemporary history. Nevertheless, how to write the history is a challenge for the Chinese historians on the grounds that under the globalized circumstances the Chinese and world history much more closely act on each other. It is generally held that not only the contemporary history but also the history with respect to the Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) be conceived in the context of globalization. In this regard, the significant events, figures, thoughts, institutions and even the entire social life in the twentieth century should be reexamined from the perspectives of *a new, globalized age and a holistic world*.

There were numerous epoch-making and drastic social changes in the twentieth century. The first socialist country, which was the fruit of the 1917 Russian October Revolution, was created in the history of mankind; the New China was founded in 1949 after the successful Communist Revolution; the Communist China innovated on the socialist path in the mission building the socialism with Chinese characteristics in the 1980s; the powerful Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s and the Cold War ended accordingly; the post-cold War world was thrown into the instability brought about by the expansionist strategy of *a hegemonic American Empire*, and so on. One of the urgent tasks of the scholars inquiring into the history of Sino-foreign relation is to analyze such significant historical changes from a global perspective. For example, not only do scholars devoting themselves to



studies in the history of Sino-Soviet Union, Sino-American and Sino-Japanese relations discuss changes in the bilateral relations but they also shall illuminate how such bilateral relations globally influence the world history.

In China, there has already been the groundbreaking projects researching into the world history. It is actually one of the Chinese historians' efforts to respond to the challenge posed by the globalization to the science of history. The Chinese scholars incisively grasp this point. As early as the first winter of the new millennium, the nationally esteemed *Guangming ribao* 光明日报 (*The Guangming (Enlightenment) Daily*) invited eminent historians devoting themselves to the foreign history to discuss how to innovatively write the *new* world history against the backdrop of an increasingly prevalent consciousness of globalization. Most importantly, Chinese historians put their ideas into practice. For example, not only did they translate "globalized" foreign works—Philip Lee Ralph's two-volume *World Civilizations*, Will Durant's gigantic eleven-volume *The Story of Civilization*, Geoffrey Barraclough's *The Times Atlas of World History*, William McNeill's *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*, Leften Stavros Stavrianos's *A Global History: From Prehistory to the twenty first Century*, and so on—into Chinese, but they also produced creative works such as the globalization-inspired *Shijie wenming shi* 世界文明史 (The history of world civilizations) and *Shijie lishi* 世界历史 (The history of the world). Apart from the translations and creative works, the theories with respect to the writing of *global history* are also being elaborated in the Chinese academia.

Due to the growing consciousness of globalization the studies in the regional history, cultural history, social history, maritime history, history of civilization(s), history of immigrants and history of development have made a significant progress. In their efforts to broaden the research perspective, the Chinese historians do pay greater attention to the absorption of the essence of foreign historical studies. In this regard, they have indeed made great achievements since the commencement of Reform and Opening-up. Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out the translation and introduction of Western history are not enough for the creative transformation of the Chinese history in such a drastically changing age of globalization.

### 3 Globalization and New Research Perspectives

First, the globalization requires that history be examined by a systematic method, which places emphasis on the mutual relation and the interaction between countries and peoples. In the case of Chinese history, driven by the consciousness of globalization, historians explored the rise and fall of the Middle Kingdom in the dynamic process of world history. According to the ancient Chinese historiography, the fate of a certain dynasty should be related to the rise and fall of neighboring peoples. In a similar albeit intrinsically different manner, the *globalized* history analyzes the growth and decline of a country through the prism of the fate of neighboring countries. The two World Wars and post-World War II history convincingly approves this point.

Admittedly, without such an integrated and systematized research method, the process and characteristics of the (global) history can almost impossibly be illuminated.

Second, the cross-discipline method, which plays quite a significant role in the modern historiography, should be attached greater importance in the growing globalization. In the course of globalization, the economy, politics, culture and science mutually influence and act on each other and finally are turned into an integrated entity. For example, inquiring into the relation existing between human activities and natural environment, historians conclude the lessons in relation to the human efforts to manage nature. Usually, such a type of historical study focuses on how natural disasters such as flood, drought and earthquake influence the human society and in doing so it fuses theories and methods of multiple disciplines such as history, historical geography, demography, biology and astronomy into one. If the study is conventionally confined to the humanistic and political dimensions, it will be turned into a mission impossible.

Third, the comparative study is indispensable to the *globalized* history. It is in the comparative study that the characteristics of Chinese national history, the historic mission of Chinese historians and the situation wherein the Chinese historians are living are clearly perceived. Therein lies exactly the importance of a comparative study. In order to more vividly explain this point, here the present author does a very brief comparative study between the American *frontier studies* and its counterpart in the Republican China in the 1930s.

It was in the 1930s that Japan increasingly encroach the Chinese territory. The Japanese invasion stimulated the second tide of Chinese *frontier studies*, which was preceded by the trend of studies in the Chinese frontiers and geography in the wake of the First Opium War (1840–1842). The fundamental spirit of the second tide of *frontier studies* in China lay in two *noes*, viz., that neither would the Chinese nation be bullied nor would the Chinese territory be split. Patriotism was explicitly the motive for the creation of the Chinese *frontier studies* at that time. For example, in the “Three-Year Working Plan,” *Yugong* 禹贡 (The Tribute of Yu), the leading academic journal devoted to *frontier studies* in the Republican China, the editorial board inspiringly pointed out that patriotic compatriots could not be mobilized if they were ignorant of the territory of the country; and moreover, they clearly stated that their goals were to awake the patriotic feeling by a combined effort made by the comrades devoting themselves to the Chinese historico-geographical study and consolidate the people’s will to protect the motherland by helping them be cognizant of the changes taking place in the Chinese territory.<sup>10</sup> Overall, the Chinese *frontier studies* in the 1930s were used to mobilize the entire nation to struggle against the Japanese imperialism and bring to light the ulterior motive of Japan’s *frontier studies* with respect to China.

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<sup>10</sup>The Editorial Board, “Benhui ci sanian zhong gongzuo jihua 本会此三年中工作计划” (The three-year working plan), *Yugong* 禹贡 (The Tribute of Yu), issue 7, nos. 1, 2, 3 (1937).

In comparison with the Chinese *frontier studies*, the American scholars' exploration of the *history of frontier* also played quite a different role in the United States. In their eyes the *frontier* was not a fixed *border* but an incessant outward movement. The word *movement* implied that the American territory was ever expanding, the American way of life and individualism ever extending, and the American civilization ever diffusing. Such an expansionist *frontier study* was intensively embodied in one of Frederick Jackson Turner's treatises, in which the historian stated that the number of states in American had grown from the founding thirteen to the fifty including Pacific islands and asserted that such a growth would never stop. In this regard, Turner said,

For nearly three centuries the dominant fact in American life has been expansion. ...That these energies of expansion will no longer operate would be a rash prediction; and the demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue.<sup>11</sup>

Unsurprisingly, his *frontier study* was appreciated very much by the ruling oligarchs of the United States and the expansionist pulse in Turner's reconstruction of America's *history of frontiers* was turned into part and parcel of America's foreign policy.

Fifth, the innovation on the science of history is the ultimate goal of the academic endeavors in the historical circles in the age of globalization. Where the innovation work is concerned, the present author places emphasis on the role the traditional Chinese history can play in the aspiration for the transformation of modern history. The globalization has exerted significant influence on the epistemic innovation. Therein actually lies a huge change of the way of thinking. Nowadays, the infrastructures—science, humanities including history, for instance—in aid of the global innovation have come into view. The work innovatively recreating culture requires that a certain country or people absorb the essence of cultures of other countries and peoples. China has quite a long and good tradition writing history. The traditional Chinese history played a significant role in the work consolidating the Chinese nation. In the new age of globalization, it will globally affect the human history as it did to the Chinese history. Simply put, the traditional Chinese history is one of the important constituents of human civilization and thus worthy of a furthered exploration and absorption.

Sixth, the progress in the natural science not only physically influences the material life but it also epistemically affects the creation or reconstruction of knowledge. The eminent ancient Chinese scholars, for instance, paid great attention to the knowledge of nature, just as the *Book of Changes* had said,

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<sup>11</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West," *The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, Politics*, vol. LXXVIII (September, 1896), no. CCCCLXVII, pp. 289–297.

Anciently, [sages] [looked] up, he contemplated the brilliant forms exhibited in the sky, and [looked] down he surveyed the patterns shown on the earth. He contemplated the ornamental appearances of birds and beasts and the (different) suitabilities of the soil. Near at hand, in his own person, he found things for consideration, and the same at a distance, in things in general.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, as a whole the *Book of Changes* can be regarded as a complete set of theories, all of which were formulated by the ancient Chinese after a long and meticulous observation of heaven, earth and a myriad of things.

In the case of Sima Qian 司马迁 (145–86 BC), who was one of the greatest historians in the ancient China and aspired to thoroughly explore the relation of Heaven and humans, he—as well as Sima Tan 司马谈, his father—not only had a good command of the *Book of Changes* but also played a leading role in the work making calendars for the Former Han dynasty. Thanks to such a comprehensive and solid background of (natural) knowledge, the father (Sima Tan) and the son (Sima Qian) achieved quite an outstanding cultural attainment and most importantly both were equipped with the highly extraordinary mind of *tongbian* 通变 (a thorough understanding of all changes in entire history). It was such a distinguished cultural attainment and mind that laid the epistemic foundation of the unparalleled *Shiji* 史记, or *The Grand Scribe's Historical Records*. One of the keys of Sima's success lay in his nature-inspired wisdom, without which the creative and monumental masterpieces of history could by no means be produced in the ancient China. The work done by Qian Daxin 钱大昕 (1728–1804), who was one of the towering scholars of history in the mid-Qing dynasty and made great achievements in the explorations of astronomy and geography, corroborated the significance of nature-inspired knowledge to the scholarship of history. In fact, the exposure to natural knowledge was a great tradition in the Chinese historiography. Unfortunately, it has been lost for quite a long time among the modern Chinese historians.

The history of world culture has indicated that the growth of humanities and natural science are inseparable. The emergence of Darwinism, for instance, was an epoch-making event in the history of science; and moreover, it exerted quite a significant influence on the theories of social history. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese thinkers such as Huang Zunxian 黄遵宪 (1848–1905), Yan Fu 严复 (1854–1921) and Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929) fervently promoted the (social) theory of evolution and applied it to the studies in Chinese history. As a consequence, a series of new general history of China were produced. In this sense, the Darwinism was actually the theoretical base of the modernization of the traditional Chinese historiography.

As far as the birth of Marxism was concerned, it was in much closer relation to the growth of natural science. As we know, the two towering founders of the Marxist School—Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895)—showed the great enthusiasm for the development of natural science. Intellectually,

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<sup>12</sup>Zhouyi 周易, or *Book of Changes*, trans. James Legge, <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-cixia/ens>.

it was the energy conservation law, theory of evolution and cell theory that gave birth to the historical materialism, one of the primary constituents of the Marxist thinking. In particular, it should be pointed out that the growth of science and technology constantly approved the correctness of the materialistic dialectics and enriched our understanding of history from a higher perspective. Friedrich Engels shed light on this point, saying,

With each epoch-making discovery even in the sphere of natural science, it [i.e. materialism] has to change its form; and after history was also subjected to materialistic treatment, a new avenue of development has opened here, too.<sup>13</sup>

In accordance with what the great teacher has taught us, we historians shall endeavor to acquire new wisdom generated by the advanced science and high technology in the age of globalization. In doing so, we update the established ways of historical thinking and take the science of history to the next level.

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<sup>13</sup>Frederick Engels, “Materialism,” in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1886/ludwig-feuerbach/ch02.htm>. Source: Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org>. Retrieved on May 18, 2016.

## Appendix

Major dynasties in the Chinese history

General name	Specific name(s)	From	To	
Xia 夏		2100 BC	1600 BC	
Shang 商		1600 BC	1100 BC	
Western Zhou 西周		1100 BC	771 BC	
Eastern Zhou 东周		770 BC	256 BC	
	Spring and Autumn 春秋	770 BC	476 BC	
	Warring States 战国	475 BC	221 BC	
Qin 秦		221 BC	206 BC	
Former Han 西汉		206 BC	24 AD	
Later Han 东汉 and Three Kingdoms 三国		25 AD	220 AD	
	Wei 魏	220	265	
	Shu 蜀	221	263	
	Wu 吴	222	280	
Western Jin 西晋		265	316	
Eastern Jin 东晋		317	420	
Southern and Northern 南北 朝	Southern	Song 宋	420	479
		Qi 齐	479	502
		Liang 梁	502	557
		Chen 陈	557	589
	Northern	Northern Wei 北魏	386	534
		Eastern Wei 东魏	534	550
		Northern Qi 北齐	550	577
		Western Wei 西魏	535	556
		Northern Zhou 北周	557	581
Sui 隋		581	618	
Tang 唐		618	907	
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdom 五代十国		907	960	
Northern Song 北宋		960	1127	

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General name	Specific name(s)	From	To
Southern Song 南宋		1127	1279
Liao 辽		916	1125
Jin 金		1115	1234
Western Xia (Tangut Empire) 西夏		1038	1227
Yuan 元		1271	1368
Ming 明		1368	1644
Qing 清		1644	1911

*Ershisi shi* 二十四史 (The twenty-four history)

Title and the most popular modern edition	Author(s)
<i>Shiji</i> 史记 [The Grand Scribe's historical records] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959)	Sima Qian 司马迁 and Sima Tan 司马谈 (Father)
<i>Hanshu</i> 汉书 [Book of the Former Han dynasty]	Ban Gu 班固, Ban Zhao 班昭 (Sister) and Ma Xu 马续 (Zhao's disciple)
<i>Hou Han shu</i> 后汉书 [Book of the Later Han dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965)	Fan Ye 范曄
<i>Sanguo zhi</i> 三国志 [Records of the Three Kingdoms] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964)	Chen Shou 陈寿
<i>Jinshu</i> 晋书 [Book of the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974)	Fang Xuanling 房玄龄 et al.
<i>Songshu</i> 宋书 [Book of Song [of the Southern Dynasties]] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974)	Shen Yue 沈约
<i>Nan Qi shu</i> 南齐书 [Book of the Southern Qi dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972)	Xiao Zixian 萧子显
<i>Liangshu</i> 梁书 [Book of Liang [of the Southern Dynasties]] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973)	Yao Silian 姚思廉 and Yao Cha 姚察 (Father)
<i>Chenshu</i> 陈书 [Book of Chen [of the Southern Dynasties]] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972)	Yao Silian 姚思廉 and Yao Cha 姚察 (Father)
<i>Weishu</i> 魏书 [Book of Wei [of the Northern Dynasties]] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974)	Wei Shou 魏收
<i>Bei Qi shu</i> 北齐书 [Book of the Northern Qi] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972)	Li Baiyao 李百药 and Li Delin 李德林 (Father)
<i>Zhoushu</i> 周书 [Book of the Northern Zhou dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971)	Linghu Defen 令狐德芬 et al.
<i>Suishu</i> 隋书 [Book of the Sui dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973)	Wei Zheng 魏征 et al.
<i>Nanshi</i> 南史 [The Southern History [devoted to the Southern Dynasties]] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975)	Li Yanshou 李延寿 and Li Dashi 李大师 (Father)
<i>Beishi</i> 北史 [The Northern History [devoted to the Northern Dynasties]] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974)	Li Yanshou 李延寿 and Li Dashi 李大师 (Father)

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Title and the most popular modern edition	Author(s)
<i>Jiu Tang shu</i> 旧唐书 [The old book of the Tang dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975)	Liu Xu 刘昫 et al.
<i>Xin Tang shu</i> 新唐书 [The new book of the Tang dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975)	Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 et al.
<i>Jiu Wudai shi</i> 旧五代史 [The old history of the Five Dynasties] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976)	Xu Juzheng 薛居正 et al.
<i>Xin Wudai shi</i> 新五代史 [The new history of the Five Dynasties] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974)	Ouyang Xiu
<i>Songshi</i> 宋史 [History of the Northern and Southern Song dynasties] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977)	Tuotuo 脱脱 et al.
<i>Liaoshi</i> 辽史 [History of the Liao dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974)	Tuotuo 脱脱 et al.
<i>Jinshi</i> 金史 [History of the Jin dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975)	Tuotuo 脱脱 et al.
<i>Yuanshi</i> 元史 [History of the Yuan dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973)	Song Lian 宋濂 et al.
<i>Mingshi</i> 明史 [History of the Ming dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974)	Zhang Tingyu 张廷玉 et al.



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