

CONSTRUCTING LINEAGES AND INVENTING TRADITIONS THROUGH EXEMPLARY FIGURES IN EARLY CHINA¹

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One major obstacle to understanding the early history of China is the still-prevalent notion that discrete schools of thought contended in the Warring States and Han periods, and that these schools of thought were text-centered.² A second is the propensity to conflate quite separate accounts of the same events, institutions, concepts, and taxonomies, for the purpose of devising a neater record. Some historians of early China, recognizing these obstacles, have sensed that the word *jia* 家 does not mean only “schools” or “scholastic lineages” (as it is typically translated). Still more argue against the notion of a China that is homogeneous and unchanging. A majority, however, continue to treat the terms “Ru” and “Dao” as direct and unproblematic references to two scholastic “isms,” Confucianism and Daoism, and to ignore discrepancies among the rhetorical constructions in the early sources.³ This essay aims

¹ This essay derives from two papers on similar topics presented at the workshop “Intellectual Lineages in Pre-imperial China” organized by Paul Goldin at the University of Pennsylvania, September 27-28, 1997. The authors would also like to thank Martin Kern, Sir Geoffrey Lloyd, Nathan Sivin, Kidder Smith, and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier drafts.

² To find indisputably text-centered cultures in the ancient world, one may consult the collection *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, edited by Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), especially the introduction and the essays by Martin Goodman on “Texts, Scribes, and Power in Roman Judaea”; and Robin Lane Fox on “Literacy and Power in Early Christianity,” pp. 99-108, 126-48.

³ A number of works have prompted us to ponder our uses of Ru and Dao. See, e.g., Nathan Sivin, “On the Word ‘Taoism’ as a Source of Perplexity: With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China,” *History of Religions* 17 (1978), pp. 303-30; Jens Østergard Petersen, “Which Books Did the First Emperor of Ch’in Burn? On the Meaning of *pai chia* in Early Chinese

to disentangle several layers of historical writing composed during the Han and post-Han periods, reading the three standard histories for the Han as discrete rhetorical constructions. It argues that, if extant materials are any guide to that distant past, the impulse to assign early beliefs to academic “schools” predicated on text-based traditions corresponds more closely with the genealogizing tendencies of the Eastern Han and post-Han periods than with early Han realities. It begins necessarily with the *Shiji* 史記, since the ascription of text-centered “schools” to early Western Han is usually justified by reference to a few passages in that work, including Sima Tan’s 司馬談 (d. 110 BC) “Essentials of the six *jia*” (*liujia zhi yaozhi* 六家之要指).

The *Shiji*, possibly more than any other single work, has shaped our current understanding of the intellectual world of early China. After all, the *Shiji* provides a wealth of information, exceptional in its scope and depth, regarding the methods and motives of famous classical scholars, the major theoretical approaches to government policy, and the political postures, types of behavior, and associations of particular persons—even if the propensity to see the *Shiji* as a direct and unproblematic counterpart of Ban Gu’s 班固 (AD 32-92) monumental *Hanshu* 漢書 inspires as many misapprehensions as insights.⁴ In particular, the *Shiji*’s use of the term *jia* (literally, “family,” “household,” or “expert”) to denote a given approach to policy-making has exerted a profound influence. Because later writers used the same term to denote traditions defined by the ritual transmission from master to disciple of authoritative texts and their associated teachings, modern scholars have all too often assumed that the

Sources,” *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995), pp. 1-52; and Kidder Smith, “Sima Tan and the Invention of Daoism, ‘Legalism,’ et cetera,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62:1 (2003), pp. 129-156. Sivin’s article, in some ways, recalls arguments put forth earlier by Gu Jiegang 顧頌剛 on the relation of the Ru to the *fangshi* 方士. See Gu Jiegang, *Handai xueshu shilüe* 漢代學術史略 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996 rpt. of 1935 ed.). Regarding the “majority”: for this statement, we have reviewed the majority of textbooks written recently by Chinese historians. Readers should note also that in such textbooks Daoism is typically said to represent the single source for the three streams of philosophical Taoism (*dao jia* 道家), HuangLao 黃老, and religious Taoism (*dao jiao* 道教).

⁴ More and more scholars, following the lead of Loewe and Hulsewé, have been careful to note variations between the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* passages devoted to a given topic. See, e.g., Griet Vankeerberghen, *Huainanzi and Liu An’s Claim to Moral Authority* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), “Appendix”; and Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of *Wen* in Early China,” *T’oung Pao* 87 (2001), pp. 43-91.

Shiji used *jia* in the same sense—an error that has led to wider misperceptions.

In light of the extant pre-Han and early Western Han textual evidence about inherited traditions, the *Shiji*'s scattered references to *jia* appear to have many connotations other than the genealogical. All the pre-Han and early Western Han thinkers seem to have been, in essence, “eclectics” when viewed from the much stricter normative models of later times, though the *Shiji* admittedly provides very little evidence concerning the institutional history of experts who could not be classified as either “classicists” (Ru 儒) or HuangLao proponents. Far from expressing a strong interest in tracing scholastic lineages as the best means of gauging intellectual orthodoxy, the *Shiji*'s treatment of those classicists and HuangLao experts was most probably crafted to criticize the ruinous effect of state sponsorship on the enterprise of learning. (This finding does not discount the possibility that the finely wrought *Shiji* passages had other ramifications for state policy.)⁵ It was hardly coincidental, then, that the exemplary figures associated with classicism or with HuangLao in the *Shiji* were those who chose or were forced into private teaching and those who lived prior to the occurrence of what the *Shiji* sees as a co-option by the state of learned men on an unprecedented scale.

Long after the compilation of the *Shiji*, the connotations of the term *jia* shifted as the state's efforts to impose a measure of control over the master-disciple relationship conferred increasing importance on verifiable textual transmission. A partial shift was registered some two hundred years after the *Shiji* when Ban Gu came to compose his *Hanshu*. While the *Hanshu*'s rhetorical style and format were based loosely on the model of the *Shiji*, Ban Gu applied the term *jia* differently in his own taxonomies of the Ru and HuangLao experts. This was in part because he had a different attitude towards the state, and in part because a number of changes—

⁵ The authors wholeheartedly agree, for example, with Hans van Ess in identifying the policy toward the Xiongnu as a major factor in the formation of court factions. See his “The Meaning of Huang-Lao in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*,” *Études chinoises* 12 (Autumn, 1993), pp. 161-77. However, van Ess's own sources at key places contradict themselves, by his own reckoning. In positing a perfect identity between political stance on this one issue and membership in a faction, on the one hand, and a perfect match between accounts in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, on the other, van Ess tends to ignore the importance of such factors as personal predilection, family traditions, and the shifting historical context in shaping ideological stances and behaviors.

social, political, and technological—had converged in such a way as to impel the retrospective formation of scholastic lineages. (Notwithstanding, the scholastic lineages in Ban Gu’s time were still not as much defined by their devotion to a single corpus of received writings as lineages in the post-Han period would be.) Given the state’s increasing preoccupation with defining authoritative texts and their associated teachings, it was nearly inevitable that Ban himself, and many thereafter, would—consciously or unconsciously—strip the *Shiji* references to *jia* of their original context, and therefore of their original connotations, whenever it suited their purpose to trace an orthodox textual transmission back many generations, to Western Han or before.

Finally, a preoccupation with what would now be called “accuracy in textual transmission” seems to have come still later, many centuries after the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* were composed, with the post-Han biographies of Eastern Han figures recorded in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書. The *Hou Hanshu* biographies reflected, as the *Shiji* had done, upon the problems that arose from state sponsorship of character education, but their reflections were colored by the collapse of the first stable, unified empire of Han.

The *Jia* of the *Shiji* and the Myth of the Pre-Han “Schools”

Pre-Han works provide the crucial background for Sima Tan’s “Essentials of the six *jia*” inasmuch as a number of them, including the *Guanzi* 管子, *Mengzi* 孟子, *Xunzi* 荀子, *Han Feizi* 韓非子, and *Zhuangzi* 莊子, explicitly compare master-persuaders in a single passage.⁶ Notably, every single pre-Han text making such compari-

⁶ While we realize that the “authors” of the Warring States politico-philosophical texts are often fictitious or semi-fictitious personifications of the texts themselves, we use the term “persuaders” to remind readers that in the Han tradition all of these alleged authors, including Mencius and Xunzi, were portrayed as accomplished persuaders, and none of their teachings seemed particularly destined to “triumph” over the others, despite the twentieth-century talk of the “triumph of Confucianism.” A number of texts in the fourth and third centuries BC contrast individual persuaders or their ideas. The earliest of these references may be the brief grouping of Yang Zhu 楊朱 and Mozi 墨子 (c. 480-c. 390 BC) in the late-fourth century BC *Mengzi* (e.g., 3A9), where the two persuaders are criticized as absolutist, and their *dao* unfavorably compared with that of Kongzi 孔子, i.e. Confucius. The “Jiubai” 九敗 (Nine Losses) chapter of the *Guanzi*, which illustrates the problems with adopting each of nine different maxims for governing, has been dated by W. Allyn Rickett to the middle of the third century BC. See Rickett,

sons treats each persuader and his theories individually, not as a member of a scholastic lineage. Moreover, such pre-Han comparisons may group several masters, but these groupings do not appear to have been fixed: for instance, the *Zhuangzi* places Mozi and Song Bing 宋鉞 in different categories, while the *Xunzi* lumps them together.⁷ Furthermore, the pre-Han comparisons often group together persuaders in a fashion contrary to the *jia* typologies devised in later China.⁸ Finally, no extant pre-Han grouping associates its subjects primarily on the basis of their transmitted texts.

Most commonly, the pre-Han texts organize their comments about individual persuaders around what today might be called divisions in social policy. To the names of the individual persuaders they append brief notices about that persuader's political and philosophical orientations, as expressed by a motto or a form of special practice. The "Under Heaven" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, for example, distinguishes Guan Yin 關尹 and Lao Dan 老聃 from other masters by the signature phrases attributed to them, ascribing to Guan Yin the slogan "Never precede others, always follow them," and to Lao Dan, "While others always strive to lead, I alone strive

trans., *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 100. Roughly contemporary with that text is "Fei shier zi" 非十二子 (Condemning the twelve masters), traditionally numbered as chapter six of the *Xunzi*. There has been little doubt that this chapter is the work of Xunzi (c. 335-c. 238 BC). See *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies and the Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), p. 180. The "Xianxue" 顯學 (Exposing Learning) chapter of the *Han Feizi* (chap. 49) is usually attributed to the late third-century hand of Han Feizi (c. 280-c. 233 BC). The "Tianxia" 天下 (Under Heaven) chapter, usually numbered chapter 33 in the *Zhuangzi*, is dated by Angus Graham to about 200 BC in his *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 28.

⁷ Such groupings of master-persuaders do not appear to be fixed even in the classicizing Han documents. For example, both the *Shiji* and Yang Xiong 楊雄 (53 BC-AD 18) group Zhuangzi with Han Feizi in certain passages and with Laozi in others. See Han Jing 韓敬, *Fayan quanyi* 法言全譯 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1999), p. 104 (section 3.20).

⁸ This treatment continued into the Western Han period, as is clear from Mei Cheng's 枚乘 "Seven Stimuli" (Qifa 七發), which imagines Confucius and Laozi 老子 presiding together as ritual masters over a rhetorical contest at court, whose contestants include the persuaders Mozi, Yang Zhu, Wei Mou 魏牟, Bian Yuan 便蜎, and Zhan He 詹何. For an overview and translation of the "Seven Stimuli," see Gong Kechang, *Studies on the Han Fu*, transl. by David R. Knechtges et al. (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1997), pp. 114-31.

to be last.”⁹ Some works, for example the “Nine Losses” chapter of the *Guanzi*, do not even trouble to identify the authors of the various slogans they evaluate.¹⁰ The pre-Han texts reveal no apparent consensus on which masters’ social policies were deemed worthy of mention. Though “Under Heaven” mentions Guan Yin and Lao Dan, the *Xunzi*’s “Condemning the Twelve Masters” chapter does not, whereas both the *Xunzi* chapter and the *Zhuangzi* chapter mention such figures as Mozi, Song Bing, Tian Pian 田駢, Shen Dao 慎到, and Hui Shi 惠施.¹¹ Such disparities suggest that the mention of a given master was determined more by the author’s rhetorical purpose than by regard for lineage fidelity.

This is not to deny that texts were transmitted and regarded as important, or to assert that there were no formal master-disciple relations. Warring States references to the followers of Confucius and Mozi note forms of social organization among the disciples that could have facilitated the transmission of texts, written and oral, across generations. Early accounts do stress the degree to which groups loyal to the vision of Confucius and Mozi self-consciously upheld ritual or legal ideas that set them apart from the rest of society and state, claiming that these ideas had prevailed in the halcyon times of the sage-kings of antiquity.¹² (Mencius’s asser-

⁹ *Zhuangzi* 30, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, *Zhuji jicheng* 諸子集成 ed. (hereafter ZZJC) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1988), 10b.473.

¹⁰ The mottoes listed in this section of the *Guanzi* include “impartial caring” (*jian’ai* 兼愛), characteristic of Mozi, and “completing life” (*quansheng* 全生), associated with Yang Zhu. In neither case is an individual mentioned, which raises the question whether the motto or the authoritative name was more important to the argument. See Dai Wang 戴望, ed., *Guanzi jiaozheng* 管子校正, ZZJC, 1.12.

¹¹ Comparing *Zhuangzi* 33 (*Zhuangzi jishi* 10b.473) with *Xunzi* 6 (*Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, ZZJC), pp. 57-61.

¹² Confucius’s ritual system is discussed in Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). In particular, Confucius and his disciples set themselves apart from society by their particular rules governing ritual gifts of meat. Mozi and his disciples were set apart by their willingness to defy local law. For a sociological analysis of the Confucian master-disciple “meat economy,” see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucius,” in *The Rivers of Paradise*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Michael McClymond (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 233-308. The case of Mozi’s disciples executing a parricide in defiance of the Qin ruler may be found in the “Qusi” 去私 (Dispensing with Selfishness) chapter of the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, ZZJC, 1.10. The ritual gifts of meat and the execution of a parricide both relate, of course, to the troublesome issue of *bao* 報 (“requit”). See Yang Lien-sheng, “The concept of *Pao* as a Basis for Social Relations in China,” in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 291-397.

tion regarding the prevalence of the three-year mourning period in antiquity is a good example of such claims.) Moreover, the disciples of Confucius and Mozi were especially well prepared for vocations that entailed record-keeping, such as archivist, consultant on military defense, or estate steward (*zai* 宰). Given all these conditions, it is hardly surprising that the pre-Han paradigm for discipleship was provided by them. Thus the third-century BC *Lüshi chunqiu* illustrates questions of intellectual influence by harking back to the earliest disciples of Confucius and Mozi.¹³ But surely it is significant that in the early sources phrases like “Kongshi zhi menren” 孔氏之門人, literally “those who (learned) at the gate of the Kong,” referred only to the immediate circle of Confucius’s disciples alive in his time; that the term *zhu Ru* 諸儒 (“various Ru”) was used in contradistinction to Confucius’s “disciples” (*dizi* 弟子) in the first biography of Confucius (in the *Shiji*); and that the term “Ru *jia*” never appears in the entire text of the *Shiji* proper, which treats Confucius as an inspiration for ethical members of the Ru.¹⁴ Thus, there are no grounds to conflate paradigms of discipleship as conceptualized in late Warring States and early Han with the notion of multi-generational textual lineages that arose later in China. Until we have unambiguous proof that the acquisition or transmission of a particular text or set of texts was the main factor defining authority in the master-disciple relationship extending over generations, it is best to assume that the same corpus of texts, the Five Classics for example, could prove useful to many different persuaders promoting very different agendas.

Drawing on the use of the term *jia* in earlier texts, the *Shiji* did not use it to connote a continuous text-based transmission, but instead to refer to individuals and their methods. In particular, the *Shiji* drew on the term’s prior use in the *Xunzi*, but because it did

¹³ For what is perhaps the earliest example of an intellectual lineage stretching across more than two generations, see the “Dangran” 當染 (Proper Dyes) chapter of the *Lüshi chunqiu*, ZZJC, 2.20-1. The end of this chapter, devoted to the strong influence of teachers, contains three-generation accounts of those who “studied with” Kongzi and Mozi.

¹⁴ See *Analects* 13.5, on the disciples’ recitation of the *Odes*, and the follow-up in chapter two of the *Fayan* 法言. A check of the Academia Sinica electronic database (www.sinica.edu.tw) for the keywords later associated with textual schools has been helpful. The check for *zhu Ru* shows that the various experts in ritual were often at odds with one another on questions of ritual form (*Shiji* 58.2630; *Hanshu* 73.3113), though they could, upon occasion, act as interest groups at court.

not share that text's faith in the timelessness of classicist ritual methods, it applied the term differently. The *Xunzi* championed the transmission of the ritual practices of the past as a means of overcoming the fragmentation plaguing the body and the body politic. It claimed that the practices of Confucius were "sufficient" to restore the good rule that had prevailed under the former kings: "One expert attained the complete [or, by a pun, the Zhou] Way" (*yi jia de zhou dao* 一家得周道).¹⁵ It also used the term in the combination *baijia* 百家 "hundred experts." While the hundred experts could thrive when the "correct Way" was not in force, they would "have nowhere to hide" if that Way was adopted.¹⁶ The *Xunzi* therefore held out the possibility that the methods of one exemplary *jia* could eventually supplant the myriad lesser *jia*.

The *Shiji* takes up this use of *jia* as an "expert" but redeploys it in line with the more synthetic approach to knowledge typical of many Western Han texts, such as the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. The second chapter of that mid-second century BC text contrasts the unity of the Way in the early Zhou dynasty with its subsequent fragmentation, and it blames both the classicists and the followers of Mozi for participating in the fracturing of an original Way associated with the ideal ruler: "When the house of Zhou declined and the Way of the ruler fell into disuse, the Ru and Mo began to carve up the Way...." This same chapter of the *Huainanzi* describes this fragmentation in connection with the term "hundred experts":

The hundred *jia* have different theories, each issuing from something else. Now in terms of their way of governance, Mo 墨 [Di 翟], Yang [Zhu], Shen 申 [Buhai 不害], and Shang 商 [Yang 鞅] each have one rib of the carriage

¹⁵ See *Xunzi jijie*, ZZJC, 3.61. By doing this, Confucius's "virtue was equal to the Duke of Zhou, and his fame was a match for the Three Kings." This use of *yijia* indicates that Sima Tan's use of the term *jia* in this context was not innovative but adaptative (contra Kidder Smith). It seems to have been standard rhetorical practice to claim completeness for one's own favorite method, while denouncing the others as "partial" and "ineffective."

¹⁶ Chapter 22, "Zhengming" 正名, *Xunzi jijie*, ZZJC, 16.281. The term *baijia* 百家 is employed consistently in several different contexts in the *Xunzi* to refer to the "hundred experts." In chapter 8, "Zhong Ni" 仲尼, it refers to a set of people and not a set of transmissions. After outlining standards for engaging in discussion, first with the lords of the land, then with common people, the text then turns to discussions with the *baijia*: "If the persuasions of the *baijia* do not apply to the later kings, then one should not listen to them" (*Xunzi jijie*, ZZJC, 4.93). Cf. chapter 21, "Jiebi" 解蔽, and chapter 25, "Chengxiang" 成相 (*Xunzi jijie*, ZZJC, 15.258 and 25.306).

cover or spoke of the wheel. If you have them all, you possess the correct number, but if you are missing one, the whole is not rendered useless.¹⁷

From the perspective of the *Huainanzi*, each of the experts is useful, but all of them are needed if the Way of the ideal ruler is to be restored. For the ruler to miss an insight offered by one expert is to lessen his chances of achieving perfect governance. In implicit contrast to the *Xunzi* on *yi jia*, the *Huainanzi* sees the ideal unification called *yi jia* as the result of synthesizing approaches.¹⁸ The *Huainanzi*'s redeployment of *Xunzi*'s phrasing is consistent with the *Shiji*'s account of the six *jia*. And, as with both the *Xunzi* and the *Huainanzi*, the *Shiji*'s use of the term is limited to the methods of *individual* persuaders, rather than established "schools" or "lineages."

Within the *Shiji*, the occurrence of the term *jia*, in a sense other than that of "family," is limited almost entirely to Sima Tan's "Essentials of the six *jia*." The "Essentials" divide those who "strive on government's behalf" into six categories: *yinyang* 陰陽, *Ru*, *Mo*, *ming* 名, *fa* 法, and *daode* 道德.¹⁹ For Sima Tan, as for the Warring States thinkers cited above, a category was defined not by a common founder, canon, or genealogy, but by particular governing "methods" or "techniques" (*shu* 術).²⁰ Though many modern scholars presume

¹⁷ Wang Niansun 王念孫 (1744-1832) has argued that there is no need for four negatives in quick succession; he suggests that two of the characters *wu* 無 be omitted. See Liu Wendian 劉文典, ed., *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), 2.56.

¹⁸ A contrast may be drawn (as with the term *yijia* above) between arguments using the term *baijia* in the *Xunzi* and those in many Western Han sources. Han texts often stress not the superiority of a particular Way over the *baijia*, but the need to synthesize numerous approaches. Indeed, the Qin is seen as an example of the failure of a single approach, as is evident in a famous line from Jia Yi's 賈誼 "Guo Qin lun" 過秦論: "Thereupon [the Qin] abandoned the Way of the Former Kings and burned the doctrines of the *baijia*, in order to make the common people ignorant" (*Shiji* 48.1963, preserving language from Li Si's 李斯 memorial at *Shiji* 87.2546). For the Han synthetic point of view, cf. *Huainanzi* 13, "Fanlun" 汜論: "The hundred rivers flow from different springs, but all return to the ocean. The *baijia* have different specializations, but all work towards good government" (*Huainanzi*, ZZJC, 13.213). An analysis of root metaphors such as the "spoke of the wheel" and their influence in the late Warring States and Han may be found in Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Jia Yi's 'Techniques of the Dao' and the Han Confucian Appropriation of Technical Discourse," *Asia Major* 10.1-2 (1997), pp. 49-67.

¹⁹ *Shiji* 130.3288. A useful discussion of these approaches may be found in Kidder Smith, *op cit.*

²⁰ *Shiji* 130.3293. For a discussion of the scope and meaning of the term *shu*, see Csikszentmihalyi, "Jia Yi's 'Techniques of the Dao'", pp. 49-50.

that each of these six categories had a textual core, no such evidence can be found in Sima Tan's essay. A single ambiguous (and possibly interpolated) passage in the "Essentials" may refer to canonical texts *or* practices.²¹

The mistaken impression that the six categories reflect distinct sets of writings probably derives from the overlap between them and a set of ten bibliographic sub-categories in the *Hanshu* that expanded upon a typology devised by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79-8 BC) and Liu Xin 劉歆 (ca. 46 BC-AD 23).²² But Sima Tan's intention

²¹ *Shiji* 130.3290 notes that the *jing zhuan* 經傳 associated with the exemplary (*fa* 法) "Six Attainments" (*liuyi* 六藝) number in the thousands and tens of thousands; it comments that they are too numerous to be ever mastered, even over several generations. As the *Shiji* has noted elsewhere how few texts had been transmitted from the distant past, one is tempted to read *jing zhuan* not in its usual sense of "canonical texts and commentaries" or "commentaries on the canonical texts," but instead to read *jing* as "constant rules" and *zhuan* as "traditions." This section (pp. 3290-3292), which constitutes some sort of a reprise and an elaboration of the initial statements on the six (pp. 3288-3289)—as autocommentary or later insertion—would then criticize the myriad of ritual rules so beloved by the classicists. Certainly the passage continues with talk about the rites: "Generations have been unable to penetrate their learning, and men of recent years have been unable to master their rites. Therefore, it is said that the classicists are 'broad-ranging but with few essential points,' that they 'labor much but achieve only slight success.'" The description of the *Ru* then ends with more references to ritual and social practices (*shi* 事, "affairs, events, relations"), not to texts of any sort. Internal evidence, then, provides the strongest support for the idea that the phrase *jing zhuan* does not refer to "canonical texts and their commentaries." *Hanshu* 30 offers implicit support for this, since it does not even list the canonical texts and commentaries under the *Ru* category. It is equally possible, however, that a single character like *ci* 辭 (phrases) or *yan* 言 (explications) has dropped out of the *Shiji* text at this point. Remarks on the verbosity of one's rhetorical rival were standard practice. At a later date, in connection with Gongsun Long 公孫龍, Yang Xiong spoke of "many ten thousands" of weird phrases being "taken as model" (*fa*). See Han Jing, *Fayan qanyu*, p. 97 (section 2.8).

²² Based on a survey begun in 26 BC, the Liu bibliography consists of seven sections or summaries (*qilue* 七略), which resulted in the bibliography that forms the basis of *Hanshu* 30. One of these sections includes the classics and "elementary learning" (*xiaoxue* 小學). Another is devoted to the "various masters" (*zhuzi* 諸子) and is further subdivided into *Ru*, *dao*, *yinyang*, *fa*, *ming*, *Mo*, *zongheng* 縱橫, *za* 雜, *nong* 農, and *xiaoshuo* 小說 sub-sections. Other categories are poetry (*shifu* 詩賦), military writings (*bingshu* 兵書), techniques and calculations (*shushu* 術數), recipes and arts (*fangji* 方技), and a general or "collected" summary (*jilue* 輯略). But the *Hanshu* categories do not support the conventional construction of the term *jia*. The category *Ru*, for example, includes texts attributed to Yanzi 晏子 but none attributed to Confucius himself. The *Qilue* may have redeployed some of the *Shiji* categories as bibliographic divisions similar to "branches of knowledge." Note that the term "*Ru jia*" does not appear in the *Shiji* proper.

was hardly bibliographical. He conceived of *jia* as “experts” in a particular discipline, technique, or field, a sense completely consistent with the *Huainanzi* passage cited above. Discussing the various “techniques” as concrete and partial manifestations of a single and complete, ineffable Way, Sima Tan was both alluding to the Warring States critique of the fracturing of the Way and reinforcing the synthetic project of the Han by articulating a possible synthesis of these many disparate approaches. After describing the various techniques for governing comprised in each sort of expertise, the “Essentials” enjoins the wise ruler to use the *jia* in combination so as to effect his preferred policies—a counsel that had surely been the convention since long before. Rulers were to understand that these specializations all make a contribution to the Way, just as the proverbial spokes of a wheel (whose very roundness symbolizes completeness) converge on the hub.²³ The wise ruler was to compare and adapt the experts’ advice, discerning and applying the most efficacious to the situation at hand; in doing so, he would secure his authority. Sima Tan’s formulation of the six *jia* neither expressed nor implied anything about scholastic lineages. It merely exhorted the ruler to reconcile various types of expertise in governing.²⁴

The “Rulin” Chapter of the *Shiji*

Once the idea that the *Shiji* describes a set of six scholastic lineages has been laid to rest, the task remains to explain the rhe-

²³ An important feature of Sima Tan’s sixfold typology is that the sixth element (*dao**jia*) is in some sense a combination of the previous five. This addition of a “completion term,” as well as the relationship between *dao* and *shu*, are characteristic of writings from the second century BC. See “Jia Yi’s ‘Techniques of the Dao,’” p. 65.

²⁴ A related use of the term *jia* in *Hanshu* 62.2735 records a laconic remark attributed to Sima Qian: that he intended the *Shiji* to “complete, on his own, a single *jia*” (*zicheng yijia* 自成一家). This usage of *jia* may reflect a claim, on Sima Qian’s part, to create a new “expertise” of considerable value. Cf. *Shiji* 130.3320, where the *Shiji* speaks of creating *yijia zhi yan* 一家之言, an account of “one vantage” or “one expertise.” Petersen has noted that “there is no textual support for the standard interpretation of [*yijia*] as ‘one family’” (“Which Books Did the First Emperor of Ch’in Burn?,” p. 26). These uses are, by contrast, completely consistent with the perspective of the *Huainanzi* passage quoted above, which treats each *jia* as an individual or fragmentary perspective on the Dao. As these citations do not emphasize lines of literary transmission and succession, they do not constitute proof of a concern in Han and pre-Han times with the intact transmission of texts and teachings.

torical project of that work. A rich source for information on such a project is in the *Shiji* itself, whose “Rulin” 儒林 chapter (*juan* 121) introduces a “forest” or “phalanx” of Ru—those thought insufficiently important to merit a more extended biographical treatment elsewhere. Out of the six approaches to public policy and social practice listed by Sima Tan, only the exemplars of the Ru are allotted a chapter to themselves in the extant *Shiji*. The biographies of persuaders whose writings are now associated with the other five *jia* (e.g., the *Mozi*, *Laozi*, and *Han Feizi*) are not grouped in the *Shiji* according to later categorical distinctions.

In written texts that predate the *Shiji*, the term Ru connotes a potentially dangerous loyalty to family before state, as well as a set of consciously antiquated modes of social behavior. Texts like the *Mozi* or *Han Feizi* focus on specific Ru positions that they criticize as hypocritical (e.g., taking part in the hollow performance of ritual) or as patently false (e.g., the Ru belief in fatalism or in the primacy of the family). Seemingly unrelated criticisms—not necessarily warranted—cohere around the Ru’s supposed lack of political utility to state and society. Thus a similar tone prevails in *Mozi*’s repeated complaints about the Ru’s propensity to indulge in “ornamental,” antiquarian performances of the rites and music and in *Han Feizi*’s faulting the Ru for “destroying families” (*po jia* 破家) through lengthy rituals requiring huge financial outlays.²⁵ These pre-Han criticisms of the Ru were aimed at contemporary practices. They do not castigate Confucius as the main originator of such harmful practices. While the pre-Han men of learning accepted Confucius as “ancestor” in the roles of exemplary teacher, persuasive rhetorician (in speech or in writing), ritual master, and archivist, they did not—so far as we know from extant sources—single out for praise or condemnation the legendary Confucius in his role as chief author or editor of the Five Classics corpus. Learned men believed that many of the Classics and their associated traditions predated Confucius, and the unparalleled authority of those

²⁵ For *Mozi*’s criticisms, see especially chapter 39, *Mozi xiangu* 墨子閒詁, ZZJC, 9.180-181 and chapter 48, *Mozi xiangu* 12.275; for *Han Fei*, see chapter 50, *Han Feizi jiji* 韓非子集釋, ZZJC, 19.351-352. Sima Qian repeats some of *Han Fei*’s critique in his treatment of Confucius in *Shiji*, attributing it to Yan Ying 晏嬰, a minister in the state of Qi (*Shiji* 47.1911). David Schaberg has pointed out that the Ru are portrayed as inflexible in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳. See his *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), p. 309.

texts, written and oral, assured that they would be liable to widely varying interpretations.²⁶ It remained for the *Shiji* biography of Confucius to make the role of author and editor central to our understanding of the Sage's character. Presumably, the biography sought to provide a parallel both compelling and convenient between Confucius and Sima Qian himself, since Confucius had appeared in many pre-Han texts as a man of integrity famous—even when he was mocked—for his principled opposition to the ruler or to the tenor of the times.²⁷

Notwithstanding that biography, in mid-Western Han the category Ru (hereafter translated as “classicists”²⁸) referred to many who would not have identified themselves as committed ethical followers of Confucius: those claiming to be well-versed in older practices (such as intoning the *Odes* with an archaic pronunciation) and those who used their specialized knowledge in the service of

²⁶ The Ru are, at times, taken to task for their preoccupation with *wen*, which can refer to literary accomplishment. But Martin Kern has argued persuasively that through the Eastern Han, *wen* probably referred to patterned speech and behavior. See his “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon,” *op. cit.* The centrality of *wen* for Ru in the late Warring States is posited in chapter 49 of the *Han Feizi*, where the Ru are criticized for putting *wen* above *fa*, “impartial law” (*Han Feizi jijie*, ZZJC, 19.344); further evidence comes from Xunzi's criticism of Mozi, who was allegedly “so obsessed by utility that he did not understand *wen*” (chapter 42, *Xunzi jijie*, ZZJC, 15.261). Prior to the *Shiji*, no extant record associates Confucius with the task of authoring and editing all of the Five Classics. It was thought that Confucius used the *Odes* and *Documents* in his teaching (e.g., *Analects* 2.21 and *Mencius* 6A6). Confucius was also credited with compiling the *Spring and Autumn Annals* from archival material in Lu (e.g., *Mencius* 4B21). The attribution to Confucius of the composition of parts of the *Changes* and *Rites* is not attested before the Han. (We are aware of the Shanghai Museum strips, but many unresolved questions regarding their provenance remain.) Interestingly, Han visual and literary descriptions of Confucius often focus on him conversing with Laozi, i.e. the ritual master in attempts to synthesize disparate stances. (No pre-Han portrait have been found as yet). For the construction of the category Ru in the early modern period, see chaps. 3 and 4 of Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

²⁷ See *Shiji*, chap. 47, “Kongzi shijia.” Highly recommended is Thomas Wilson, “Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius,” *History of Religions* (2002), pp. 2-61. Confucius as a recipient of sacrifice appears far less often as the subject of Han visual or literary rhetoric than Confucius as either the model teacher of the rites or a teacher (but not necessarily author) of texts.

²⁸ For the translation of Ru as “classicist,” see Michael Nylan, “Han Confucianism,” in *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Confucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Kai-wing Chow, On-cho Ng, and John B. Henderson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 17-56.

the court. The classicists were often employed to impart literary flourishes to state documents and gravitas to court-sanctioned activities. And since their very livelihoods depended upon their claims to provide disciplined state service and antique learning, the Han classicists could be counted upon to uphold certain common assumptions about the relevance of past traditions to the resolution of contemporary moral and political dilemmas. These traditions were said to be encapsulated in classical or neoclassical rites and music, which supposedly had been transmitted—unlike most texts—from “antiquity,” a period often defined vaguely as “generations before.”²⁹ Of course, many written texts, especially the *Odes* and the *Documents*, were important to the classicists as repositories of the lore about ancient practices, specifically rites and music. But even the most committed ethical followers of Confucius, men like Mencius and Xunzi, pointed to errors in the textual transmission of the Classics and insisted upon testing their practical value as general guidelines to current policy-making. If they hoped to gain or retain a position at court, the classical learning espoused by the classicists had to prove useful to the ruler.

This understanding of the classicists as preoccupied with practical, sometimes even careerist concerns, rather than with a singular reverence for the intact transmission of old writings, dominates the *Shiji*'s discussion of them: they are seen there as “men offering techniques” (*shu shi* 術士).³⁰ The “Rulin” chapter opens with a lament for the loss of the Way of the Ruler associated with the early Western Zhou court. This lost method is defined in terms both positive and negative: by the utter perfection of its rule relying on rites and music, and by the contrast the Zhou made with the later debased rule of the *zhuhou* 諸侯 (lords of the land), men who based their claim to authority simply on their hereditary status, wealth, and power. The “Rulin” chapter in the *Shiji* then moves on to the figure of Confucius, whose despair over contemporary political events

²⁹ Many works, including Craig Clunas's *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early China* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) and Ronald Egan's forthcoming study of Ouyang Xiu, demonstrate that “antiquity” was a vague term that often referred to a time only a few generations back. See also Wang Yao's 王瑤 important essay on imitating the past, authorship, and “filling in what's missing,” in his *Zhonggu wenxue shi lun* 中古文學史論 (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1996), pp. 218–28. We in the early China field should not conclude, as we often do, that “antiquity” referred only to the distant past, the time of the sage-kings.

³⁰ *Shiji* 121.3116.

led him at the same time to attempt to revive the old rites and music traditions and to “use archival records to create the *Chunqiu* 春秋, to serve as pattern for the ruler.”³¹ Next, it turns to consider the fate of Confucius’s immediate circle of disciples, many of whom sought government jobs in states as far flung as Chu, becoming the *shi* 師 (“models” or “teachers”) for the rulers of their time. Despite some initial political successes attributed to the immediate disciples of Confucius, later rulers outside the states of Qi and Lu were said generally to ignore the methods “revived” by Confucius, until master-persuaders like Mencius and Xunzi managed to make Confucius’s attainments seem more “glossy and appealing” (*runse* 潤色). Thanks to such efforts, the classical techniques survived into mid-Western Han in more palatable forms, despite the harsh Qin proscriptions against “private learning” and the disinclination of the early Western Han rulers to support the classicists.³²

The next major development, according to the *Shiji*, was a dramatic turn in the fortunes of the classicists during the reign of Emperor Wu. The young emperor, anxious to free himself from the oversight of the Dowager Empress Dou 竇, allied himself with the group surrounding Zhao Wan 趙綰 and Wang Zang 王臧, who “made Ru learning famous.”³³ Factional considerations clearly

³¹ *Shiji* 121.3115. Note the implicit parallel set up between Confucius’s efforts and those of Sima Qian himself, a parallel underscored by the doubled use of the term *shiji* “archival records.” This understanding of the function of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* dates at least to the *Mengzi*. On this, see Stephen W. Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chap. 2; Waiyee Li, “The Idea of Authority in the *Shiji*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, 2 (Dec., 1994), 345-405; and Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han,” in *Essays on Confucius and the Analects*, ed. Bryan W. Van Norden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 134-162.

³² *Shiji* 121.3116. The use of the word *lie* 列—as opposed to *jia*—in the phrase “Mencius, Xunzi, and their ilk” seems significant. The phrase *runse* has negative connotations in *Hanshu* 88.3610, where it means “adding superfluous comments to already sufficient teachings.” From the point of view of Sima Qian, the only exception to this general pattern of neglect of Ru teachings was Shusun Tong 叔孫通, whose early work at the Han court was perceived to be a part of the larger project of recasting Zhou court institutions for the Han, accomplished despite Shusun’s character flaws (*Shiji* 99.2723, 121.3117).

³³ *Shiji* 121.3118. In 139 BC, Zhao Wan and Wang Zang committed suicide in prison, following an accusation made by the Dowager Empress. Later Ban Gu, presumably because of this, would associate the Imperial Academy with figures less tainted.

prompted the emperor's ousting of advisors allied with the Dowager, his invitation to several hundred classicists, and his apparent commitment to restoring benevolent rule via the rites and music.³⁴ In 124 BC, Emperor Wu established the Imperial Academy (*taixue* 太學), an educational institution supposedly modeled on the early Zhou, and placed it under the supervision of the Master of Rites (*taichang* 太常). To the members of the Imperial Academy was assigned the relatively mundane task of determining a bureaucratic candidate's level of familiarity with the Five Classics as a measure of his basic literacy and broader conceptual attainments.³⁵ The annual test at the Imperial Academy, in other words, functioned to measure a candidate's understanding of at least one of the polite arts (*yi* 藝). Officials were also to be on the lookout for students who could "clearly understand the divisions between Heaven and humankind, as well as the meaning of both ancient and modern [events]" and who exhibited "an elegance and refinement in forms of writing, a deep store of eloquent phrases, a sense of obligation [to superiors] and of noblesse oblige [to inferiors]."³⁶ The *Shiji*, through its careful citation of the relevant documents, indicates that the Academy officials were not charged with the weightier responsibility of assessing an individual candidate's commitment to the full range of ethical values promoted in the text of the Five Classics. Throughout, the preamble to the "Forest of Ru" chapter of the *Shiji* contrasts the Zhou rulers' stress on the civilizing rites and

³⁴ There is no particular celebration in the *Shiji* of the "restoration" of the Ru *boshi* 博士 in 134 BC, nor could there be, since the chapter shows that the Ru were continuously employed at the imperial and royal courts as *boshi*, though they were not always favored. Sima Qian also says little about the Qin's alleged attack on classical learning, other than that "lacunae and/or deficiencies" (*que* 缺) resulted from this. See *Shiji* 128.3116, 3126, comparing these passages with Zheng Qiao's 鄭樵 *Tongzhi* 通志, in *Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Commercial Press), vol. 374, 71/1a-2a (p. 480).

³⁵ Based on the absence of references to the position of *boshi* from 134 to 51 BC, Fukui Shigemasa 福井重雅 has argued against the idea that the study of the Five Classics was institutionalized under the reign of Emperor Wu. See Fukui, "Rikkyō, rikugei to gokyō: Kandai ni okeru gokyō no seiritsu" 六經六芸と五經: 漢代における五經の成立, *Chūgoku shigaku* 4 (1994): 139-64; and "Shin Kan jidai ni okeru hakase seido no tenkai: Gokyō hakase no setchi o meguru giji sairon" 秦漢時代における博士制度の展開: 五經博士の設置おめぐる疑義再論, *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 54 (1995): 1-31.

³⁶ *Shiji* 121.3119. While the term *taixue* was used prior to the *Shiji*, Chen Dongyuan 陳東原 has pointed out that its referent was a narrower teaching institution for the crown prince and other members of the aristocracy. See *Zhongguo jiaoyu shi* 中國教育史 (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1937), p. 7.

music with contemporary Han policies mandating a form of classical learning whose effect on governance tends to be marginal. Readers seeking related material in other chapters of the *Shiji* soon find that the main sponsors of the proposal to institute the Imperial Academy were partisans at court like Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (c. 200-121 BC), men solely interested in career advancement.

In corroboration of this important point, the *Shiji* presents in the “Rulin” chapter eight brief biographies of some of the most prominent early Western Han classical masters.³⁷ It is the sweep of these biographies that carries the main rhetorical force of the chapter: that Emperor Wu’s decree of 124 BC, in bringing a measure of fame and fortune to individual classicists and, by extension, to classical learning overall, had paradoxically undermined the genuinely older traditions of ethical behavior that the classicists claimed to uphold and preserve. According to chapter 121 of the *Shiji*, Emperor Wu was mainly interested in the classicists at his court for their ability to “adorn the rigor of the law [applied mainly to the aristocratic members of the Liu and the clans of the empresses and consorts (*waiqi* 外戚)] with their literary discourse.”³⁸ As a result, the Han court’s recent decision to favor the classicists over other contending factions had led them to be co-opted on the basis of the very wealth-and-power considerations from which their classical learning was supposed to insulate them.

The *Shiji* conveys this message through three related demonstrations. The first is that the ruling house in early Western Han, prior to 134 BC, had expressed remarkably little interest in the classicists’ projects. The second is that the early classicists, who suffered from a signal lack of government support, were men of integrity whose extraordinary accomplishments offered testimony to the power of character to inspire men to follow their methods. The third is that the more recent crop of classicists associated with Emperor Wu’s new educational policies, either as sponsors or as trainees, lacked the requisite erudition and character to determine what was

³⁷ Three masters are listed for the *Shi* 詩 (*Odes*), although no mention is made of an ancient-text (*guwen* 古文) *Odes* of Mao Heng 毛亨 or of Mao Chang 毛萇. One master is listed for the *Shu* 書 (*Documents*), along with several minor masters. One master is listed for the rites (who is known, significantly enough, not for his mastery of a *Li* 禮 [*Ritual*] text, but for his mastery of ritual practice). One master is listed for the *Yi* 易 (*Changes*), and two are listed for the *Chunqiu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*).

³⁸ See, e.g., *Hanshu* 88.3608.

right, let alone loyally remonstrate with their superiors to ensure proper governance.

The “Rulin” biographies leave us in no doubt about the *Shiji*’s contention that rulers up to the time of Emperor Wu had made little use of the genuine classicists. Two biographies in particular, those of Shen Pei 申培 and Master Yuan Gu 轅固, who were experts in the *Odes*, make this point. Shen Pei (c. 200-c. 139 BC), honored as Shen Gong 申公, had suffered mutilating punishment at the hands of his own royal pupil, the Prince of Chu. When he was recommended to Emperor Jing, he promptly offended the Son of Heaven, who was overly “fond of fine literary phrases,” by giving a blunt speech advising him that the key to good rule lay in substantive deeds, not fancy words. Shen Gong thereafter languished at court, never really enjoying imperial favor, until a time some years later when he barely escaped with his life after two of his students had been condemned to death. At that point he was grateful to be allowed to retire quietly to his home in Lu.³⁹ For his part, Master Yuan Gu, similarly forthright in his convictions, so enraged Emperor Jing’s mother, Empress Dou, who then held power, that she had him thrown unarmed into a pen with a wild boar.⁴⁰ (A third classicist master mentioned in the chapter, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, an expert in the *Chunqiu*, was likewise slated for execution, but he too was lucky enough to escape with his life, having been saved by a general amnesty.)⁴¹

That these prominent classicists so narrowly escaped death must surely be read as an implicit critique of the Han rulers’ failure to appreciate their extraordinary qualities, for the *Shiji* biographies are so constructed as to show that the fault did not lie with the classicists themselves. In fact, readers of the *Shiji* are led to believe that, at least in the case of Shen Pei and Master Yuan Gu, the source of their troubles at court lay in their allegiance to the values of the past over the exigencies of the state. This was certainly true of Master Fu 伏, whose devotion to past learning was so strong that he purportedly risked death when he disobeyed a Qin proscription of 213 BC against “private learning” by hiding a copy of the *Documents* in the walls of his home in Ji’nan.⁴² Had he been discovered

³⁹ *Shiji* 121.3120-2.

⁴⁰ *Shiji* 121.3122-4.

⁴¹ *Shiji* 121.3127-8.

⁴² See *Shiji* 12.3124. In this context, it must be remembered that the *Shiji*’s account of the early history of the *Documents* is riddled with contradictions. For

in this act of disobedience, the story says, the law would have mandated that Master Fu be drawn and quartered.⁴³ That the older classicists were fearless in the defense of their traditions is the point consistently advanced by the *Shiji*, a point all the more impressive when no comparable examples could be found among the crop of classicists elevated by Emperor Wu.

Indeed, chapter 121 shows that the younger generations of classicists indeed are no match for the early classicists, either in erudition or in personal courage. Master Fu's own grandson, despite adequate training in the "family business" of *Documents* interpretation, is said to have remained fairly ignorant of the relevant scholarly traditions.⁴⁴ Others in the new generation lacked the requisite administrative ability needed by those in high office, even when they did not exhibit a craven truckling to power. Ni Kuan 兒寬 (d. 103 BC), for instance, could never get his bureaucratic underlings to work their hardest, since he himself was reluctant to remonstrate properly with his superiors.⁴⁵ And Gongsun Hong and Dong Zhongshu, the two most famous experts in the *Chunqiu*, were prime examples respectively of an unscrupulous careerist and of a crackpot theorist whose concerns were ludicrously divorced from reality.⁴⁶ While Gongsun Hong dressed like a classicist (here the *Shiji* seems to echo the Warring States critiques of "vulgar" classicists), he not only failed to remonstrate with his ruler (the sin of omission) but also offered outright lies to him (the sin of commission).⁴⁷ The "Rulin" biographies might be read solely as accounts of personal

example, Master Fu as an official erudit was specifically exempted from the proscription order against "private learning," so he should have been able to keep his own copies of classical texts. See Paul Pelliot, "Le *Chou kung* en caractères anciens et le *Chang Chou che wen*," *Mémoires concernant l'Asie orientale* 2 (1916), pp. 123-77; and Michael Nylan, "The *chin wen/ku wen* (New text/Old text) Controversy in Han Times," *T'oung Pao* 80 (1994), pp. 83-145. For the purpose of the present essay we treat the *Shiji* narrative provisionally as a coherent work of the two Simas.

⁴³ *Shiji* 121.3124.

⁴⁴ *Shiji* 121.3125. This picture of declining quality is corroborated in *Hanshu* 88:3616, for example.

⁴⁵ *Shiji* 121.3125.

⁴⁶ *Shiji* 121.3128.

⁴⁷ *Shiji* 121.3128 and 112.2950; cf. *Hanshu* 88.3612. Anne Cheng, in a book review (*Early China* 23-24 [1998-99], pp. 353-66), reminds us of the contradictory portraits of Dong Zhongshu offered in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. An unexplored topic in our field is the variety of Ru self-critiques and stances. Chapter 41, "Ruxing" 儒行 (Conduct of the Classicists), of the *Liji* 禮記 may be seen in part as a classicist response to the criticisms leveled against the classicists in pre-Han and Han writings.

failures, but the sharp contrast that the *Shiji* draws between the actions of classicists of the older and newer generations is actually part of much broader historical claims about the decline in ethical standards brought on by recent institutional changes. That on the other hand the *Shiji*'s authors were not in any way opposed to change *per se* is demonstrated by their generally favorable treatment of Shusun Tong, the so-called "progenitor of the Ru" (*Ruzong* 儒宗), who handily adapted classical ritual to the needs of the Han founder.⁴⁸

Many studies have speculated on Sima Qian's possible motivations in taking up the brush to criticize Emperor Wu. The present essay, for its part, focuses on the *Shiji*'s consistent claim that the classicists' debacle under both Emperors Jing and Wu was linked to their failure as civil servants to establish the required connection between the old learning and contemporary conditions. By the time of Sima Tan and Sima Qian, many of the classicists held significant positions at court (up to the post of chancellor) and in the provinces (for example, as provincial governors).⁴⁹ And the second-, third-, and fourth-generation adherents of those high officials were filling the middle ranks of the imperial bureaucracy.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Shiji* 99.2726. See footnote 32.

⁴⁹ Among the chancellors (*chengxiang* 丞相) contemporary with Sima Qian, Zhao Wan (143-140 BC), Dou Ying 竇嬰 (140-139 BC), and Tian Fen 田蚡 (135-131 BC) all promoted the classicists' techniques in the face of Empress Dou's opposition (*Hanshu* 19b.768-84; 52.2379). Gongsun Hong, Wei Xian 韋賢, Wei Xuancheng 韋玄成, Kuang Heng 匡衡, and Zhai Fangjin 翟方進 were all prominent Ru who held the post of chancellor in the Western Han. See *Hanshu* 88.3609; 88.3613; 88.3618. Note that by an edict promulgated in 121 BC, Emperor Wu automatically elevated to aristocratic rank those classically trained chancellors who came from a non-aristocratic background. The first instance of such elevation came with the appointment of Xue Ze 薛澤, who was chancellor from 131-124 BC, in *Hanshu* 58.2620. That a string of chancellors did not fare so well may have made an impression on the authors of the *Shiji*. Li Cai 李蔡 (chancellor 121-118 BC) committed suicide after having been found guilty of appropriating sacred land from the funerary park of Emperor Jing (*Shiji* 109.2876; *Hanshu* 54.2449). Yan Qingdi 嚴青翟 (chancellor 118-115 BC), who was originally appointed by Empress Dou as a replacement for the classicists, ended up committing suicide over the misdeeds of a subordinate (*Hanshu* 6.182; 52.2379). Zhao Zhou 趙周 (chancellor 115-112 BC) was also dismissed (*Shiji* 103.2767). The *Shiji* specifically remarks that two of these chancellors owed their position to their aristocratic background, but lacked commensurate ability (*Shiji* 95.2685). Ban Gu expands this characterization to cover all three (*Hanshu* 42.2102).

⁵⁰ By contrast, the success of the second- and third-generation of Master Shen's disciples is detailed in *Shiji* 121.3122.

Gongsun Hong was a prime example of such men who aimed to administer affairs and had risen to the highest offices in the realm. Classicists in the recent generations, as the *Shiji* demonstrates, had prospered in their careers, satisfied their immediate desires, and fallen prey to wide-ranging greed and ambition.⁵¹ These latter-day classicists presented countless proposals on important matters of public policy to the throne, sometimes without regard to the proposals made by the two archivists, Sima Tan and Sima Qian.⁵² Perhaps no less important, when convened to discuss important ritual matters bearing upon imperial legitimacy itself they “could not clarify the matter of the *feng* and *shan*, and when shown the sacrificial vessels, they only complained that ‘These are not the same as in antiquity.’”⁵³ In the view of the *Shiji*, such new imperial bureaucrats, notwithstanding their long years of training designed to bridge the gap between the ideals of antiquity and the present, had in fact devoted their main energies to the acquisition and maintenance of prestige and power, rather than to the appropriate adaptation and preservation of the practices associated with the sage-kings. The *Shiji*’s implicit contrast pitted the older classicists, such as Shen Gong, who was content to retire from court and found a private academy in Lu, against the eager office-seekers in the new generation.⁵⁴

The changed relation between the classicists and the throne naturally altered the way the former dealt with the Five Classics. While the classicists of old supposedly endeavored to draw upon the classics as distillations of time-tested techniques for governing, the worst of the new generation simply memorized the texts and mined them for literary flourishes. When exemplary practice, rather than mas-

⁵¹ This tension between loyalty to the ruler and integrity in or out of office has historically been a central feature of the life of the Chinese official. See Conrad Schirokauer, “Chu Hsi’s Political Career: A Study in Ambiguity,” in *Confucian Personalities*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 162-88.

⁵² *Shiji* 28.1389.

⁵³ *Shiji* 28.1397. The best treatment of the “Feng and Shan” treatise is Mark Edward Lewis, “The *Feng* and *Shan* Sacrifices of Emperor Wu of Han,” in *State and Court Ritual in China*, ed. Joseph P. McDermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 50-80.

⁵⁴ *Shiji* 121.3120-3121; also below. Three early masters of the *Shi*, Master Shen (in Lu), Master Yuan Gu (in Qi), and Master Han 韓 (in Yan), are grouped in *Hanshu* 88.3593, perhaps reflecting the way in which Sima Qian extolled their transmission of core Confucian behavior and attributes.

tery of texts, had been the goal, the intact preservation of specific writings, however laudable, was clearly of secondary consequence, both in the formation of personal character and in the performance of loyal service to the state. Hence, the relative disinterest evinced in chapter 121 of the *Shiji* regarding textual traditions *per se*. With the possible exception of materials relating the history of the *Changes* text, which seem to have been interpolated from the *Hanshu*,⁵⁵ the *Shiji* focuses on the quality of the classicists' transmission effected through example and the careful explication of constant, yet adaptable, traditions, following the model of Confucius himself. In the *Shiji* the authority ascribed to certain ritual traditions is explicitly divorced from the absolute accuracy with which the associated textual traditions were handed down.⁵⁶

The *Shiji*'s Counterpoint to the Ru: HuangLao Learning

The *Shiji* appears to underscore its warning that state support can undermine traditional values and practices by implicitly com-

⁵⁵ The *Shiji* presents five separate narrative blocks in its chapter on classical learning, one for each of the Five Classics. The *Changes* narrative in the *Shiji* tries to trace a scholastic lineage going directly back to Confucius, thereby imbuing the *Changes* text with the authority of the Sage himself. The section on the *Changes* is uncharacteristic of the chapter as a whole, both in argument and in style, and is likely to represent a later interpolation—especially as it matches the later *Hanshu* entries in form and style. In comparing *Shiji* 121.3127 with *Hanshu* 88.3597, the primary difference between the two accounts is that the latter consistently attempts to fill in lacunae in the former. The *Shiji* narratives devoted to the remaining four Classics are consistent also, but to another end: they say that the classical master's character ought to constitute the chief proof of the legitimacy and authority of his teachings. Admittedly, a second alternative is also possible: in the *Changes* section, the *Shiji* may indicate an “unbroken” line of transmission for the text from Confucius himself in order to insure that the *Changes*, a text only recently incorporated into the Five “Confucian” Classics, stood on an equal footing with texts more securely fixed in that canon. However, this second possibility seems less and less likely as recent archaeological discoveries establish ever earlier dates for interest in the *Changes* on the part of those trained in the classical tradition.

⁵⁶ For example, the *Shiji* shows that the early Han *Ritual* traditions did not center around the transmission of texts. The early Han *Ritual* masters are said not only to have had faulty texts but also to have preferred to teach “demeanor” or “chanting” (*rong* 容 and *song* 誦, with each character a loan for the other). (By contrast, the later *Hou Hanshu* 79b.2577 mentions no *Ritual* masters who are not masters of ritual texts.) *Shiji* 121.3124 states that the *Odes* teachings transmitted by Han Ying did not match those of the other two established traditions of Qi and Lu. But, the passage continues, Han Ying's teachings were faithful *in spirit* to the other *Odes* teachings, so the three traditions were honored equally by all.

paring the classicists with a group of individuals associated with a tradition or set of traditions called HuangLao. What bound the HuangLao group together remains the subject of much speculation, catalyzed by the discovery in 1973 of a set of silk texts, originally identified as the lost *Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經), at Mawangdui near Changsha.⁵⁷ HuangLao studies in recent decades may be broadly divided into those that principally base their notion of HuangLao on mentions of Huangdi 黃帝 (usually translated as the “Yellow Emperor” or the “Yellow Thearch”) in the Mawangdui silk texts, and those that focus on the descriptions of distinctively HuangLao speech, techniques, and learning that first occur in the *Shiji*.⁵⁸ For the purpose of the present study, the content of “HuangLao thought” (if such a thing existed) may be less important than the construction of the group so labeled by the *Shiji* and the motives behind that construction. Since, so far as we know, the *Shiji* is the first text to employ the HuangLao category, its retrospective imposition on a handful of figures need not suggest their adherence to a body of internally coherent “HuangLao thought,” as HuangLao could have served as a rhetorical foil for the contemporary classicists. This does not deny that common philosophical positions or political interests may have united many of the individuals identified with HuangLao techniques or doctrines. Both Asano Yūichi 淺野裕一 and Hans van Ess have identified suggestive philosophical or political commonalities among HuangLao figures.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, no single commonality encompasses all the

⁵⁷ See Robin D.S. Yates’ exemplary cautions expressed in the *Five Lost Classics: Tao, Huang-Lao, and Yin-yang in Han China* (New York: Ballantine, 1997), p. 28.

⁵⁸ An example of the first approach is Chen Ligui’s 陳麗桂 *Zhanguo shiqi de HuangLao sixiang* 戰國時期的黃老思想 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1991). An example of the latter approach is Si Xiuwu’s 司修武 *HuangLao xueshuo yu Hanchu zhengzhi pingyi* 黃老學說與漢初政治評議 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1992). One problem with the former approach is that there is little indication that Huangdi and Laozi were associated with a set of ideas that were distinct from those associated with a number of other semi-divine beings at the time. For a comparison between the topic of Huangdi texts such as those found at Mawangdui, and those associated with Taiyi 太一 and Shen Nong 神農, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Han Cosmology and Mantic Practices,” in Livia Kohn, ed. *Daoism Handbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 61-65 and 57-8 respectively. The lack of philosophical distinctions between these types of text lends credence to Robin Yates’s observation that texts associated with HuangLao are generally based on the knowledge of natural categories and the manipulation of *yinyang* correlations. See Yates, *Five Lost Classics*, pp. 12-16.

⁵⁹ Asano’s study treats the textual record of the early Han, with a focus on Cao Shen and Chen Ping (pp. 434-470), tracing a naturalistic set of ideas about

cases recorded in the *Shiji*, and what we might see as a commonality may not have been what defined the group. Moreover, the cosmology characterized as specifically HuangLao by Asano seems to have been adopted by nearly all the thinkers of the time. It is notable that the practices associated with the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, insofar as they differed from those associated with the classicists, were cast in the *Shiji* as an alternative tradition which had successfully preserved values transmitted from the past. Thus, our attempts to define HuangLao examine the idea of HuangLao as conceived by the *Shiji*'s authors, rather than the ideas garnered from a set of texts outside the *Shiji*.⁶⁰

governance and the application of law centered on the concept of "Heaven's Way" (*tian dao* 天道) from the ancient figure of Fan Li 范蠡 through the Western Han period. It argues that, in counterpoint with the theory of technical law developed by the Qin, the early Han saw the formalization of a cosmological framework. Attempting to bridge the gap between the texts associated with the Yellow Emperor and Laozi and figures associated with HuangLao in the *Shiji*, Asano demonstrates that the governance strategies of some of the legal experts were eventually subsumed under this cosmological framework. See Asano Yūichi, *Kōrōdō no seiritsu to tenkai* 黃老道の成立と展開 (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1992). Because the political and self-cultivation methods in the works associated with the Yellow Emperor and Laozi are based on correlations with natural categories and other ideas central to the Western Han worldview, it is hard to see in Asano's characterization of HuangLao more than a generic description of the *Zeitgeist*. By contrast, van Ess in "The Meaning of Huang-Lao" concentrates primarily on the figures associated with HuangLao in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, and concludes that Sima Qian used the term HuangLao to denote a political faction defined principally by its opposition to foreign wars. Indeed, those HuangLao figures in the *Shiji* with discernable positions on policy did oppose some of the classicists on the latter issue, although there were other members of the opposition who were not affiliated with HuangLao. And while Dou Ying and Yuan Ang 爰盎 were members of this political faction, they do not seem to fit with the *Shiji*'s HuangLao group.

⁶⁰ While there are many works associated with the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, there are no texts described by the *Shiji* as explicitly "HuangLao." See Reinhard Emmerich, "Bemerkungen zu Huang und Lao in der Frühen Han-zeit," *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 53-140. Indeed, Sima Qian most often refers not to HuangLao texts, but to HuangLao "words," "mottoes" or "explications" (*yan* 言), or "techniques" (*shu* 術). While the "Lao" in HuangLao most likely pointed to Laozi, there is no reason to believe that the transmission of the *Laozi* was a central element of HuangLao. (The binome HuangLao may refer to the old advisors at court.) Instead, particular "words" from the *Laozi*, such as "knowing contentment" (*zhizhi* 知足) in chapter 44, were understood in the *Han Feizi*, *Huainanzi* and *Shiji* as references to commonsensical strategies for avoiding danger and not overextending oneself. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Emulating the Yellow Emperor: The Theory and Practice of HuangLao, 180-141 B.C.E." (Ph.D dissertation, Stanford University, 1994), pp. 138-9.

A crucial part of the *Shiji*'s description of HuangLao appears in an appraisal appended to its eightieth chapter, which is devoted to the third-century BC military strategist Yue Yi 樂毅 and his descendants.⁶¹ Following the biography of Yue Yi, the main text of chapter 80 briefly relates an event dating to the Han, an anecdote about the dynastic founder, Gaozu, as he passed through the area of Zhao shortly after unification. In this anecdote, the Emperor asks if any descendants of Yue Yi still live in Zhao. On receiving an answer in the affirmative, he enfeoffs a grandson of Yue Yi on the spot. The main text concludes with a mention of two other members of the Yue clan: Yue Xia Gong 樂瑕公 and Yue Chen Gong 樂臣公, noting that the latter “excelled at putting into practice the words of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, became famous in Qi, and was named ‘Worthy Teacher’ (*xianshi* 賢師).”⁶²

As is typical in the *Shiji*, the main text of the chapter is followed by a brief appraisal attributed to the “Grand Scribe” (*taishi gong* 太史公). The appraisal altogether relates six separate master-disciple filiations, in which no texts are mentioned:

Yue Chen Gong studied the Yellow Emperor and Laozi. His “ultimate model” (*benshi* 本師) was Heshang Zhangren 河上丈人 [literally the “person with a staff on the bank of the (Yellow) River”], but no one knows where he came from. Heshang Zhangren taught An Qi Sheng 安期生, who taught Mao Xi Gong 毛翁公, who taught Yue Xia Gong, who taught Yue Chen Gong, who taught Ge Gong 蓋公, who taught in Gaomi 高密 [Principality] and Jiaoxi 膠西 [Commandery] in the region of Qi, and served as teacher to Chancellor Cao Shen 曹參 (d. 190 BC).⁶³

⁶¹ *Shiji* 80.2427-2437. Yue Yi was behind the multi-state alliance of Yan, Zhao, Chu, and Wei against the powerful state of Qi, for which he was enfeoffed by King Zhao 昭 of Yan (r. 311-278 BC) at Changguo 昌國. While Yue was engaged in capturing the remaining Qi cities, Zhao's son Hui 惠 (r. 278-271 BC) recalled him and replaced him with Ji Jie 騎劫. Yue recognized that he had been slandered and was under suspicion, and so he fled to the state of Zhao. Under Ji Jie, Yan's fortunes reversed, and so Hui pleaded with Yue to return, eventually enfeoffing his son Jian 間 at Changguo. After the strategies of the Yue clan continued to be ignored in Yan, however, members of the clan moved back to Zhao. Because this tradition is placed at the end of the chapter and does not particularly fit with the narrative that comes before, it is possible that it was not the work of the Simas. However, in terms of particulars, the appraisal is consistent with many other *Shiji* references to HuangLao.

⁶² *Shiji* 80.2436. Because many members of the Yue line in Zhao are not noted elsewhere in the *Shiji*, it is often only possible to provide approximate dates for them.

⁶³ *Shiji* 80.2436. The appraisal either reflects or initiates traditions by which many of the figures listed in it are identified elsewhere with HuangLao, or plausibly

In the entire *Shiji*, only this single appraisal to the biography of Yue Chen Gong, either supplied by Sima Qian or inserted later by adherents of a tradition anxious to claim an ancient pedigree, groups so many HuangLao figures.⁶⁴ And this appraisal describes a HuangLao tradition similar in crucial ways to that of the classicists, but different in other important ways, as we shall see, since the HuangLao tradition is shown to derive directly from antiquity, to be even more clearly divorced from texts, and to discourage the pursuit of personal advancement.

Let us begin with some contrasts in terminology that may shed light on the *Shiji*'s rhetorical conception of second-century BC HuangLao in the state of Qi. First, the term *suo* 所 (literally "place" or "site") used in the *Shiji* and in later accounts of HuangLao institutions underscores the non-official nature of HuangLao instruction, offering an implicit contrast to the increasingly state-sponsored character of Five Classics instruction in Sima Qian's own time.⁶⁵ Second, the *Shiji* accords Yue Chen Gong the honorific title "Gong," thereby conveying a measure of its respect for the adherents of bygone standards of conduct (as it did with Shen Pei, who was also called Shen Gong). Still, the full title that the *Shiji* employs for Yue Chen Gong, which is Jugong 鉅公 ("Great Sir"), may indicate a greater measure of respect for the classicist model that derives from pre-Han, specifically Mohist, forms of social organization.⁶⁶ Third,

linked with the Yellow Emperor or Laozi. For example, Heshang Zhangren is the figure that later sources identify as the author of the *Laozi* Heshang Gong 河上公 commentary. See Alan K. L. Chan, *Two Visions of the Way* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 93-5. In the late second century, An Qi Sheng was identified by Gongsun Qing 公孫卿 as having communicating knowledge of Huangdi's sacrificial methods obtained directly from Huangdi himself. An Qi Sheng was supposed to have relayed Huangdi's message to Shen Gong 申功 (not to be confused with the other Shen Gong, teacher of the *Odes*) concerning the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices (*Shiji* 28.1393). Ge Gong "liked and was expert at HuangLao doctrine," and Chancellor Cao Shen was the *laissez-faire* leader whose "essentials of governing utilized HuangLao techniques." See *Shiji* 54.2028.

⁶⁴ For the transmission to Tian Shu 田叔 (fl. 199-156 BC), who "was fond of swords and studied the techniques of HuangLao at the site of Yue Ju Gong," see *Shiji* 104.2775; *Hanshu* 37.1981. The *Jijie* commentary to the *Shiji* (80.2436) notes that some editions of the *Shiji* also read Yue Ju Gong for Yue Chen Gong, and *Hanshu* 37.1981 has Ju Gong 鉅公 for the same individual. Ju Gong, as will be seen below, has been read by some commentators as a title.

⁶⁵ See Csikszentmihalyi, "Emulating the Yellow Emperor," pp. 42-52.

⁶⁶ Juzi (巨子 or 鉅子) is a Mohist term of veneration for their leader, a formal usage that appears in chap. 5 of the third-century *Lüshi chunqiu*, in ZZJC, 1.10. See

as the *Shiji* makes clear, it is Yue's behavior—his code of professional ethics as it governs his application of practical skills—that earns him the *Shiji*'s approbation, not his access to or reception of particular texts. Yue's instruction is oriented to practice: he appears to have taught the art of swordsmanship to Tian Shu and the methods of government to Ge Gong and Chancellor Cao. Cumulatively, these three points in the *Shiji* entries on HuangLao subtly indicate a preference for HuangLao as a group less prey to the temptations of wealth and power, representing a viable alternative to the new breed of classicists. The *Shiji*'s avowal of esteem for the HuangLao teaching organization, supposed to epitomize independent learning and venerable antiquity, certainly contrasts with its disparagement of the crass behavior of the officially sponsored classicists after Emperor Wu's edicts took effect. It hardly matters whether the *Shiji* account is fictive, semi-fictive, or accurate: HuangLao represented a “usable past.”⁶⁷

Of course, HuangLao was just such a past in several senses. The relatively flattering portrait of the private HuangLao learning may have reflected Sima Tan's own association with the HuangLao figure Huangshi 黃氏.⁶⁸ Moreover, the contrasts and comparisons of mid-Han classicism and HuangLao in the *Shiji* provided a suitably polarized background against which the Simas could explain court tensions during the reigns of Emperors Wen and Jing in the first part of the second century BC. No less important, the descriptions of the private training sites established by Shen Gong and Yue Chen Gong played a similar role in the rhetoric of the *Shiji*, for just as the early Lu training site established by Shen Gong after he had left office instilled the practices that were the strength of the classicist traditions, so the Qi academy of Yue Chen Gong served to inspire those who wished for a viable ethical alternative to the increased commodification and bureaucratization of classical learning taking place under Emperor Wu.⁶⁹ The *Shiji*'s authors evidently

Takigawa Kametarō 瀧川龜太朗, *Shiki kaichū kōchō* 史記會注考證 (Taipei: Hongshi, 1986), p. 104. If Takigawa is correct, Jugong may well set apart the members of the Yue transmission in the same way that the *Spring and Autumn* disciples were set apart by their different naming conventions.

⁶⁷ John Harold Plumb, *The Death of the Past* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), p. 41: “Authority once achieved must have a secure and usable past.”

⁶⁸ *Shiji* 121.3122-3; 130.3288.

⁶⁹ Nathan Sivin has shown that the term “academies” is anachronistic for the Warring States period. See “The Myth of the Naturalists,” in *Medicine, Philosophy*

considered distance from the court to be essential to the correct formation of character as the foundation for public service, for away from court there was little incentive to engage in certain bureaucratic practices—the rote memorization of texts, reliance on ornamental excess, and egregious sycophancy—that the *Shiji* deplored.

Most curious is Ban Gu's decision to omit mention of this HuangLao lineage in the *Hanshu*, despite its allegedly enormous influence on early Western Han political life. But the *Hanshu* does supply, as a potential counterweight to the *Shiji*'s flattering portrait of the HuangLao, an extended account of a highly successful private academy system for classicism that the *Shiji* narrations just as curiously ignore. The *Hanshu* tells us of Wen Weng 文翁, who founded what was to become the prototype of the local academy (*xueguan* 學官) in the city of Chengdu in Shu Commandery. An official during the last years of the reign of Emperor Jing (c.142 BC), Wen opened a school in the marketplace and gathered students from all over the province, exempting them from corvée duties and offering them local appointments and recommendations to the court. After several years, his academy's successes became so widely known that, as Ban Gu says, "[Everyone] contended to become a disciple at [Wen Weng's] local academy, and the rich went so far as to expend cash in their quest to do so." From this point onwards, Shu began to outstrip Qi and Lu in the number of learned "graduates" who went on to study or serve in the capital. Emperor Wu "promulgated an edict that all the commanderies and principalities establish local academies. This began with the example of Wen Weng, they say."⁷⁰

Motivating Emperor Wu's edict, presumably, was a desire to increase central-government influence in the distant provinces, as well as, intimately related, a perceived need to acculturate and recruit talented men from the periphery. Ban Gu's emphasis on the extraordinary influence of Wen Weng's academy is especially interesting in view of the *Shiji*'s failure to mention him at all. The *Shiji* is silent, in other words, about something that Ban celebrates as the inspiration for an important step on the road to the bureaucratiza-

and Religion in Ancient China (Aldershot and Brookfield: Variorum, 1995), part IV, pp. 1-33; esp. pp. 24-28.

⁷⁰ *Hanshu* 89.3626. Given that Wen's explicit aim was to acculturate the outlying area of Sichuan, it is interesting that his name translates, through a paronomastic gloss, as "Old Man Culture."

tion of learning. Might this silence reflect disapproval, not only of the official oversight of such local academies inherent in Emperor Wu's scheme, but also, and more generally, of the profit motive that pervaded the giving as well as the receiving of such training? The contrast between the *Shiji*'s portrayal of HuangLao training sites and the *Hanshu*'s description of Wen Weng's profitable academy is in fact representative of broader differences between the perspectives of the two works. The following section will review the relevant institutions as they developed in the Eastern Han and came to resemble more closely the formal institutions that modern historians tend to associate with later imperial scholastic lineages.

Eastern Han Notions of *Jia*

Fears about the co-optation of classical learning appear to have been well founded, because long before the Eastern Han text-based learning transmitted through officially identified scholastic lineages had already become big business, as can be seen in the "Rulin" chapter of Ban Gu's *Hanshu*. The rhetorical strategy behind Ban's chapter differs dramatically from that employed in the *Shiji*. Indeed, at key points, the *Hanshu* text seems to have been carefully crafted to undermine some of the *Shiji*'s chief contentions. Ban Gu lauded the Han emperors for their sponsorship of textual learning, for he believed that such sponsorship maximized the chances that the grand classical traditions would be preserved, as much through writings as through older practices. This much we learn from the opening remarks to the *Hanshu* "Rulin" chapter, which emphasize the links between tradition, writing, and empire by a subtle—usually overlooked—device: wherever the *Shiji* makes reference to the broad rubric of *wen* 文 ("cultural patterns" to be emulated), Ban substitutes explicit references to various canonical texts.

With the "restored" Eastern Han ruling house basing its legitimacy on its faithful sponsorship of textual traditions associated with the Five Classics, such as the apocrypha, the court came to feel the need, especially in troubled times, to reinforce the implied parallel between faithful service to the dynasty and faithful transmission of the canonical traditions. The propensity of the court and its loyal servant, Ban Gu, to relate classical traditions to text-based learning inevitably prompted questions about the integrity of the classics as they were passed from master to disciple. In response, Ban went to

considerable trouble to supply detailed accounts of multi-generational transmission for several interpretative traditions or “learnings” (*xue* 學), accounts that play no part whatsoever in the *Shiji* descriptions of the same masters. Thus, the *Hanshu* “Rulin” chapter and “Yiwen” treatise describe the line of filiation from Shen Gong, in early Western Han, in much greater detail than the *Shiji*.⁷¹ The “Rulin” chapter states:

Shen Gong taught both the *Odes* and the *Chunqiu*, and Xiaqiu Jiang Gong 瑕丘江公 was able to transmit these teachings in their entirety to many students. Xu Sheng 許生 from Lu and Xu Gong 徐公 from Mianzhong both preserved (*shou* 守) the learning (*xue*), teaching it and handing it down (*jiao shou* 教授) to others. Wei Xian mastered the *Odes* and studied with (*shi* 事) the elder [Xiaqiu] Jiang Gong and Xu Sheng. He also mastered the *Ritual* [or “rites”?], so he was eventually appointed Chancellor.⁷²

It is striking that, even by Ban Gu’s account, one of the most famous early Western Han scholars, Shen Pei or Shen Gong, who oversaw a successful school drawing great numbers of students,⁷³ had only two major disciples who “preserved the *xue*” (meaning that they directly passed on his entire tradition of learning). In the Eastern Han, presumably, greater rewards awaited promising students who faithfully adhered to an established learning (see below). Predictably, Ban Gu, in trying to impress readers with the magnitude of a particular classicist’s authority, measured it mainly by the number and level of official appointments held by the master and his disciples, rather than by the number or quality of written texts mastered and transmitted by the classicist. Hence the question: why did Ban, a relation of the imperial family by marriage, consider the faithful transmission of a particular interpretation to be a matter worthy of note? The reason becomes clear when he pro-

⁷¹ See below for the contrast between the terms *xue* and *jia*. Shi Chou 施讎 taught the *Yi* to two disciples, Zhang Yu 張禹 and Lu Bo 魯伯. Zhang’s disciple Peng Xuan 彭宣 turned out to be more influential than the first-generation disciple Lu Bo, and so, the text concludes, “Shi’s *jia* has the Zhang and Peng *xue*.” (*Hanshu* 88.3598).

⁷² *Hanshu* 88.3608. For this and other *Hanshu* lineages, see Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po Hu Tung: The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden: Brill, 1949), v. 1, pp. 82-9.

⁷³ According to *Hanshu* 88:3608, in Lu “Shen Gong had over a thousand students to whom he taught the *Shijing*. Although the conduct of the disciples at his local academy (*xueguan dizi* 學官弟子) was not flawless, over one hundred reached high office.” The *Shiji* claims that Shen Gong had “more than a hundred students” (*Shiji* 121.3121).

ceeds to discuss how a new franchise could be developed out of a previously established interpretive tradition:

Wei [Xian] transmitted it to his son [Wei] Xuancheng, who, as Commandant of the Capital of Huaiyang, took part in the discussions at the Stone Canal and later also became Chancellor. [Wei] Xuancheng and his older brother's son Shang 賞 taught the *Odes* to Emperor Ai. [Wei Shang] reached the level of Major General of the Cavalry, and he has his own biography. From this point on, the Lu *Odes* had a "Mister Wei's [separate] learning."⁷⁴

Wei Xian transmitted his interpretation of the *Odes* to his son, who participated in the Stone Canal Pavilion discussions on classical themes held in 51 BC. As Wei's interpretation met with imperial approval in these court debates, it was taught to the young Emperor Ai by his son and nephew, at which point the Lu school of the *Odes* classic was granted state recognition for a separate branch of learning credited to Wei.⁷⁵ Here, as elsewhere, Ban Gu's account is less concerned with texts *per se* than with conveying what he considered to be the proper relation between political life and scholarly recognition—a relation wherein imperial patronage for a state-sanctioned transmission of a particular branch learning won permanent fame for the master, and, through him, for the disciples. Surely training texts for Mr. Wei's learning were circulating, but the existence of such texts does not seem to have been Ban Gu's primary rhetorical concern.

A dilemma was built into Ban Gu's picture, however: the greater the emphasis on state-sponsored transmission, the greater the likelihood of falsified connections and forged texts, since learning that enjoyed imperial patronage was bound to be traded and bought as a valuable commodity. Ban Gu's account of Jing Fang 京房, one of the two scholars of the *Changes* classic by that name, shows an awareness of this very dilemma in action. Jing Fang received the *Changes*—Ban Gu's text does not specify whether he received a training in methods, or a text, or both—from one Jiao Yanshou 焦延壽 (also known as Jiao Gan 焦贛), who had received it earlier from Meng Xi 孟喜. Ban Gu's narrative continues:

On Meng Xi's death, Jing claimed that Jiao's version of the *Yi* represented the [true] Meng learning (*xue*), but Meng's other disciples Zhai Mu 翟牧 (Zixiong 子兄) and Bai Guang 白光 (Shaozi 少子) disputed his assertion.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Hanshu* 88.3608-9.

⁷⁵ These *xue* could be officially established, as were several of them regarding the *Documents* during the reign of Wang Mang 王莽 (*Hanshu* 88.3606).

⁷⁶ *Hanshu* 88.3601. Despite these condemnations, Jiao's transmission appears

Conflicts over who held the true transmission from a deceased master were staples of the classicist scene by Ban Gu's time. What should surprise modern scholars about the particular debate mentioned here is that Ban Gu apparently attached no opprobrium to the fact that Meng Xi's learning was itself based on a forgery.⁷⁷ As with the expansion of Fu Sheng's *Documents* by Zhang Ba 張霸, the so-called "102 chapters version" (*bailiangpian* 百兩篇),⁷⁸ a text written "in the style" of the ancients was accepted at court so long as its author(s) did not offend the throne on policy matters. The need to verify accuracy in the course of textual transmission was seldom mentioned, and the fact that some transmissions had no textual basis was considered acceptable by Ban Gu.⁷⁹

Still, during the centuries that separated Sima Qian's compilation of the *Shiji* and Ban Gu's *Hanshu*, multi-generational filiation had evidently become a more important determinant of scholastic authority—or perhaps simply one more talked about—as exemplified in the excerpt cited above. As we have seen, Emperor Wu had ordered the establishment of state educational institutions at sev-

to have been accepted. There is no information about official mechanisms to arbitrate disputes about intellectual property.

⁷⁷ Meng Xi, an expert in the *Yi*, was a student of Tian Wangsun 田王孫: "Because Meng Xi wanted to be famous he took some texts that interpreted disasters and events according to an *Yi*-based *yinyang* theory of omens, and falsely claimed that his teacher Tian had been lying on his deathbed with his head pillowed on a roll of Meng's inked slips, and that he had passed them on to Meng alone. This dazzled the other classicists. However, Liangqiu He 梁丘賀 saw through this, and said: 'Master Tian ended up in Shi Chou's hands, at which time Meng Xi had returned to Donghai—so how could such a thing have happened?'" (*Hanshu* 88.3599). Concealing teachings inside one's pillow is a traditional trope that attests to "the esoteric and precious character of a script which was to be kept always near or on one's person." See Anna Seidel, "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments—Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha," in Michel Strickmann, ed., *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein* (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1981-1983), pp. 291-371, here p. 301. Setting the issue of Meng's trustworthiness aside, these two episodes involving him may have signified to Ban Gu the importance of officially recognized transmissions, since individual claims were not dependable.

⁷⁸ *Hanshu* 88.3607.

⁷⁹ Ban Gu cites examples of oral transmission of the *Odes* (*Hanshu* 30.1715), and from Confucius (*ibid.*). These cases support, at least for the Eastern Han, G.E.R. Lloyd's contention that the important dividing line in early China was not between one *jia* and another, but between persons who were or were not recognized by the state for their erudition through appointment to public office. See his *Adversaries and Authorities: Investigations in Ancient Greek and Chinese Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 32.

eral levels of government, from the Imperial Academy in the capital down to the local academies (*xueguan* 學官) in the commanderies and principalities.⁸⁰ A particular master's learning could be included in the curriculum of these "public" schools only if the presiding officials had been able to verify that none of the teachers in the scholastic lineage in question had been indicted for crimes against the state, an offense that was very loosely defined in an age of fierce political partisanship. For example, because the scholar Kong Anguo 孔安國, a direct-line descendant of Confucius, had been implicated in a case of "witchcraft and poison" (*wugu* 巫蠱), his teachings were never transmitted in a public academy.⁸¹ In other words, the state's power to deny recognition threatened even the most famous of the classical masters with historical obscurity. Charting lines of filiation for each interpretive tradition allowed the state to monopolize the conferral of prestige and authority, at the same time that it granted the conferee public recognition and economic rewards. It is obvious, however, that the win-win situation promised in the theory did not always prevail in practice. Winning fame as well as fortune via the state bureaucracy depended upon the vagaries of imperial patronage—a fact brought out by Ban Gu's dismissive statement concerning the unofficial lineages of Gao Xiang 高相 from Pei: "From this point the *Changes* classic had a Mister Gao *xue*, but neither Gao nor Bi 費 [Zhi 直] have yet been established in a local academy."⁸² Acceptance into the public academy's curriculum, on the other hand, opened many bureaucratic doors for the proponents of an individual interpretive tradition. Hence the crucial distinction between a *jia* (an expert or expertise) and a *xue* (a specific learning eligible for state sponsorship) that underlies the two key chapters in Ban Gu's history devoted to textual practices, the "Rulin" and the "Treatise on Literature."

The link between mastery of one or more of the Five Classics and office-holding was hardly new. The very earliest accounts of

⁸⁰ The same term *xueguan* was also used for the official in charge of one of these academies.

⁸¹ *Hanshu* 88.3607. By the end of the Eastern Han, local academies could be established by an incoming official (see Chen Dongyuan, *Zhongguo jiaoyu shi*, pp. 59-60). While the accusation of witchcraft as such in this story may be suspect, there is no reason to doubt the reliability of its account of the consequences.

⁸² *Hanshu* 88.3602. Since they were not taught in the official schools, their interpretations were to be taught only in private academies: "There are also the *jia* of Bi [Zhi] and Gao [Xiang] among the common people" (*Hanshu* 30.1704).

diplomatic interchange between office-holders presupposed such mastery, and we have the names of several Qin Academicians who specialized in one or more of the Five Classics.⁸³ Yet by Ban Gu's time, with the number of competing interpretive traditions on the rise, pressure would have mounted for state recognition of a given master's reading of a particular text, since that recognition helped secure students of that text early preferment in the bureaucracy.⁸⁴ The desirability of government preferment, had it not been offset by the concomitant weakness of so many Eastern Han rulers, should have allowed the government to impose more exacting standards of ideological purity, political orthodoxy, and textual erudition—especially when so many more students were studying the classics.

Certainly, a record number of students were reportedly “taught” by famous classical masters in Eastern Han, at least if the figures in the *Hou Hanshu* can be trusted.⁸⁵ One celebrated Eastern Han teacher of the Five Classics, Cai Xuan 蔡玄, had 16,000 students registered. Another, Mou Chang 牟長, who transmitted the *Documents* traditions, had more than 10,000 registered students over the course of his teaching career. For his part Wei Ying 魏應, a specialist in the *Odes* traditions, had several thousand registered students.⁸⁶ Contrasting sharply with these numbers are the “more than a hundred” disciples (according to the *Shiji* account) trained by the much-admired Shen Gong in Western Han.⁸⁷ Two developments may have contributed to the dramatic expansion of local academies in Eastern Han and the heightening of state interest in regulating them: technological change, in the form of improved

⁸³ For a review of such accounts, see Mark Lewis's impressive chapter on the *Odes* in *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

⁸⁴ The public academies established at the local level probably echoed the choices of the Imperial Academy, as the *Hou Hanshu* implies: “The four *jia* of Shi [Chou], Meng [Xi], Liangqiu 梁丘 [He], and Mister Jing 京 [Fang] all had established erudits. The two *jia* of Bi [Zhi] and Gao [Xiang] did not establish any” (*Hou Hanshu* 79a.2549). The basis for appointment could be a classic (e.g., *Hanshu* 88.3614), a blood relation to a noted interpreter of a classic (e.g., *Hanshu* 88.3618), or simply a close friendship with a noted interpreter of a classic (e.g., *Hanshu* 88.3620).

⁸⁵ See *Hanshu* 88.3620 for masters with thousands of students; in *Hou Hanshu* 79 such numbers have become routine. These numbers are probably not very reliable, since the same teachers are credited with many more students in the *Hanshu* than in the *Shiji*. But the larger counts for disciples may include clients and retainers, as well.

⁸⁶ *Hou Hanshu* 79b.2588, 79a.2557, 79b.2571.

⁸⁷ Or, as we have seen, “more than a thousand” according to the *Hanshu*.

proto-paper and paper, and the growth of the bureaucracy.⁸⁸ In any case, it seems clear that in the increasingly competitive academic circles of Eastern Han, the proliferating and increasingly elaborated interpretations of earlier teachings as well as the swelling numbers of students supplied a rationale for the calls for greater control over the standards for learning.⁸⁹

An early example of uncontrolled elaboration of interpretations comes from the middle of the second century BC, with a master who reportedly expanded upon his teacher's relatively terse "explanations" until his own text reached over one hundred thousand characters.⁹⁰ However, Fan Ye's 范曄 (398-445) *Hou Hanshu* is among the earliest texts to present evidence of the Eastern Han court's attempts to use formal registration of the students as a legally binding instrument of state control over learning.⁹¹ Though the records

⁸⁸ Shimizu Shigeru 清水茂 has argued that the invention of paper resulted in a change in Later Han academic traditions, from masters specializing in particular classics to masters teaching all the classics; it also resulted in the more widespread dissemination of the works of individual teachers, a process that obviated the need for direct transmission of the texts. See "Kami no hatsumeji to Gokan no gakufū" 紙の発明と後漢の学風, *Tōyōgaku* 79 (1990), pp. 1-13; *Hou Hanshu* 49.1629. True paper was apparently invented in the second century AD, though a kind of expensive paper made from silk wastes was used at least a century earlier (sometimes called "rag-paper"). For the history of proto-paper, see Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962); and Pan Jixing 潘吉星, *Zhongguo zaozhi jishu shigao* 中國造紙技術史稿 (Beijing: Kexue, 1979). Cf. Pan's *Zaozhi yu yinshua* 造紙與印刷 in *Zhongguo kexue jishu shi* (Beijing: Kexue, 1998). Opinions vary over the definitions of "true paper" and "proto-paper," but it is unclear whether the Han development of paper used for wrapping was accompanied by the development of paper fine enough for writing. Yu Weichao compares paper from the Western Han found in Fufeng (Shanxi) in 1978, whose hempen material is so unevenly woven that it is "unfit for writing on" (it was probably used for wrapping), with paper from Eastern Han found in Hantanpo, Wuwei (Gansu) in 1974, whose close texture and evenly distributed fibers "paved the way for the [eventual] replacement of silk and bamboo bundles by paper." See National Museum of History, *A Journey into China's Antiquity* (Beijing: Morning Glory Press, 1997), v. 2, pp. 200-201 (plates 232 and 233).

⁸⁹ Pi Xirui notes that one of the major differences between Western and Eastern Han classicism is that in the Eastern Han one specialized in a particular school of interpretation of that classic (*Jingxue lishi*, *op. cit.*, p. 128).

⁹⁰ See the case of Qin Gong 秦恭, in *Hanshu* 88.3605. Qin's master, the "Lesser Xiahou" (Xiahou Jian 夏侯簡), lived in the mid-second century BC.

⁹¹ *Hou Hanshu* 79B.2581. Accounts of legal registration in Eastern Han can also be found in chapters 3 and 5 of *Fengsu tongyi*. There, government officials take responsibility for those they have recommended, while the latter face sanction if those who have recommended them are proscribed. See also Xu Tianlin 徐天麟, *DongHan huiyao* 東漢會要, chap. 25, pp. 269-273.

are vague, students are known to have registered under the name of a teacher, after which they were treated as that teacher's kin.⁹² If either a registered student or his master committed a crime, all those united in this type of fictive kinship were liable for punishment under the laws mandating collective responsibility. Presumably, the state's ultimate goal was to get individual masters and disciples to regulate themselves in the manner of families or indentured servants. It is in this light—the regulations governing households—that the *Hou Hanshu's* mention of the ubiquity of “*jia* laws/methods” (*jiafa* 家法) during the Eastern Han should be read.⁹³ And while the very term *jiafa* implies the state's desire to exert control over the individual experts in a particular field, that desire for control was not necessarily limited or equivalent to a desire to hold each *jia* accountable for maintaining written traditions accurately and without change. After all, the term *jiafa* originally referred to the “household regulations [of the Liu clan supporting the legitimacy of the ruling house].”⁹⁴ This usage continued over time, though some occurrences of the term in the *Hou Hanshu* do refer to newly invented canonical explications as a possible threat or affront to imperial supremacy.⁹⁵ *Jiafa* therefore seems to have referred to “the [legal] method for [using] an expertise,” whether or not that specialty received state sponsorship.⁹⁶

What has never been adequately explained is the relation between *jiafa*, *shifa* 師法, and *xue*. Most scholars have assumed that the first two compounds are loosely synonymous; that both reflect a preoccupation with accuracy in textual transmission; and that

⁹² It is unclear whether this fictive kin relationship lasted for the duration of the student's training or throughout his lifetime. Students were legally tied to their masters as long as they lived with or near them, and many students were proud to parade that allegiance for life. But some students studied with several masters, so we cannot be sure how long their legal and mourning obligations to their old teachers continued. It seems also that in the registration process disciples listed not only their teachers but also the scholastic traditions to which they pledged to adhere. See *Hou Hanshu* 79a.2553, n. 1.

⁹³ *Hou Hanshu* 79a.2545.

⁹⁴ See *Shiji* 58.2091. The *Shiji* and *Hanshu* use the term *jiafa* only to refer to the “regulations supporting the legitimacy of the Liu house,” but the *Hou Hanshu* applies it to the regulation of teaching.

⁹⁵ See *Hou Hanshu* 44.1500.

⁹⁶ If we trust Li Xian's 李賢 commentary to *Hou Hanshu* 6.281, *jiafa* may refer to the recognized “method of expertise” that pertains to each of the different classics. A comprehensive summary of Han private academies is Yu Shulin 余書麟, “LiangHan sixue yanjiu” 兩漢私學研究, *Shida xuebao* 11 (1966), pp. 109-47.

one compound was simply more in fashion at one time or in one rhetorical piece than another. It seems to us that it is time to query these long-held assumptions. One commentary to the *Hanshu* speaks of *shifa* as something that “explains the meaning.”⁹⁷ But numerous passages in the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu* demonstrate the relevance of such explications to what we would now call the mantic foundations of political legitimacy (the calendrical arts, the interpretation of portents, the determination of an accurate calendar, and so on). Naturally enough, the Han throne was most anxious that no one tamper with these explications, which were presumed to be based in the canons and their associated traditions.⁹⁸ Perhaps *shifa* in some cases connoted the “model method” for mantic interpretation, though an older meaning of the same compound as “the teacher’s model” has persisted until the present.⁹⁹ The above is a tentative hypothesis, for ambiguities exist in the extant record. What is abundantly clear from the *Hou Hanshu*, however, is that since interpretive traditions *had* to be elaborated by any disciple intent upon establishing his own separate *xue*, regulation of textual interpretations by the state could not but prove impossible to enforce in Eastern Han.

Most standard accounts presume the proliferation of scholastic lineages and the concomitant expansion of official controls throughout Eastern Han, but such conditions may not have prevailed until very late in that regime or even afterwards, given that the most unambiguous accounts of them occur first in the fifth-century text

⁹⁷ See Yan Shigu’s 顏師古 (541-645) commentary to *Hanshu* 49.2278. This meaning is consonant with many passages in addition to the one on which it comments.

⁹⁸ While several passages employing the term *shifa* are ambiguous, the vast majority are not. *Hanshu* 75.3170 refers to the determination of auspicious and inauspicious days; 75.3179 and 88.3159 refer to portent interpretation. *Hou Hanshu* 25.869 refers to the calendrical arts; 25.886, to a variety of mantic arts; 59.1898, to cosmological theories vital to the throne’s legitimacy; cf. *zhi* 2.3043. The sources most frequently mentioned in connection with *shifa* are the “Hong fan” 洪範 chapter of the *Documents* [sometimes cited just as “the *Documents*”] and the *Yijing*. See *Hanshu* 75.3179; 81.3347; 88.3599, 3616; 100B.4261 (note); *Hou Hanshu* 25.886 (citing Xie Cheng’s 謝承 history); 27.943; 59.1898 (citing Cai Yong 蔡邕; Cai Yong is also quoted in a note [ibid., n. 6] on the three cosmological theories of the universe).

⁹⁹ The term *shifa* is already complexly conceived in the *Xunzi*. There it explicitly refers both to the instructions of teachers and to methods in certain chapters (e.g., *Xunzi jijie*, ZZJC, 1.20, 4.91); in the composite “Xing’e” 性惡 chapter (*Xunzi jijie*, ZZJC, 17.289-90), it is used as a compound in the Han fashion.

of the *Hou Hanshu*. Much of the *Hou Hanshu* is devoted to demonstrating that, by the Eastern Han, the negative consequences of state control over moral learning were apparent to all. The compilers of the *Hou Hanshu* were the first to devise a separate chapter in a standard history to honor those of “independent conduct” (*duxing* 獨行) who eschewed career-seeking (at least for a while), and other chapters to honor experts in the mantic arts and in literature. The compilation seems to give undue attention to certain distant ancestors of Six Dynasties founders who had once opposed the late Eastern Han court, Chen Shi 陳寔, for example; also to like-minded men who had been forbidden to participate in government or who found participation dangerous. One biography in the *Hou Hanshu* recounts the story of Kong Song 孔嵩, a well-educated man who, due to straitened circumstances, changed his name and got a job as a patrol in a village in Xinye. As Kong was well-regarded in his prefecture, he was given an assignment as official greeter for a visiting provincial governor named Fan Shi 范式. Fan Shi, recognizing Kong as an old friend from his younger days at the Imperial Academy, lamented the cruel fate that had brought them to such different stations in life. When Fan offered to see that his friend was given an office, Kong Song declined the honor in a speech sporting two classical allusions:

[Tradition holds that] even in his old age, Hou Ying 侯嬴 stuck with his poor vocation. The watchman satisfied his ambitions as a gatekeeper. The Master ‘desired to live among the nine tribes,’ and ‘did not fear their vulgarity.’ If poverty is proper for a man of breeding, is there anything to scorn?¹⁰⁰

In refusing his friend’s offer of advancement, Kong cites the *Analects* and the *Shiji*, two texts that warn against seeing wealth and rank as the proper motivations for learning. Such citations naturally call to mind the *Shiji*’s arguments on the negative correlation between character development and state sponsorship.

Nonetheless, the final decades of the Eastern Han, as portrayed in the fifth-century *Hou Hanshu*, hardly represented a simple return to the conditions of the Warring States and early Western Han upon which the *Shiji* focused. In the earlier era, men who longed

¹⁰⁰ This passage appears in *Hou Hanshu* 81.2678. In the *Shiji*, Hou Ying (d. 257 BC) is the subject of a narrative similar to that of Kong Song (*Shiji* 77.2378-9). The “watchman” is a reference both to Hou Ying and to the gate watchman in *Analects* 14.38 who notes Confucius’s perseverance in the face of impossible odds (*Hou Hanshu* 56.1822, n. 5). Kong quotes *Analects* 9.14.

to effect and maintain the “Great Peace” in the wake of unification had sought ways to strengthen the capital bureaucracy through reform. Sima Tan and Sima Qian certainly viewed themselves as loyal critics of the Han throne. By the time of Kong Song and Fan Shi, the political situation was uncertain, and men of breeding and culture once again began to calculate the dangers and privations attending any form of public service. Hence, the changed tenor of the biographies in the *Hou Hanshu*, which reflect back on a situation where the benefits of empire were no longer always apparent to members of the very class of men needed to staff the bureaucracy.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn here are necessarily limited, because of the constraints of the Han sources themselves. For information about textual practice, historians in the main have been forced to rely on the scanty written evidence, since the recently excavated material from tombs offers relatively few clues about textual practice aboveground during the Han, aside from proving that so many alternative but equally authoritative versions of many texts circulated in pre-Han and Western Han times as to render moot any question of Ur-text accuracy.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, we have hardly begun to appreciate fully the evidence already provided by received texts such as the second-century BC *Huainanzi*, which explains the mechanism by which particular scholars, competing for authority, drew on a fictive lineage:

The average modern person holds the ancient in high esteem, but looks askance at the new. Those who work out methods must attribute them to Shennong and Huangdi, and only then will they be admitted into the debate... Today, if the writings of new sages were to be taken and labeled [works of] “Kongzi” or “Mozi,” then there would certainly be many disciples who would motion with their fingers and accept them.¹⁰²

The *Huainanzi*, compiled shortly before the *Shiji*, does not attribute any written texts to truly ancient authorities, though it presumes that some ancient methods of rulership might have been

¹⁰¹ Some of the archaeological material is reviewed in a forthcoming essay by Nylan, “Toward an Archaeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 BC-AD 220),” to be included in a volume edited by Martin Kern on text and ritual.

¹⁰² *Huainanzi* 19, *ZZJC*, pp. 242 and 244.

transmitted, more or less intact, from ancient times—just as the *Shiji* does. The *Huainanzi*'s sarcastic comment about false attribution, both of methods and of texts, underscores the arguments presented in this article in three important ways. First, it suggests that it was customary in early Western Han to attach the name of a distant progenitor—however impossible—to a method or a writing, without specifying the intermediate stages of transmission. That is just what we see in the *Shiji* “Rulin” chapters, which make no attempt to construct a continuous filiation, even where an ultimate filiation is named. Antiquity of origin added value, but apparently continuous, traceable filiation did not. Second, it suggests that ultimate progenitors were invoked frequently enough in Han disputations to render many attributions suspect, at least to those of sufficient erudition and less gullibility. Third, it suggests the relative weight conventionally accorded in mid-Western Han to “those who work out methods” (*weidaozhe* 爲道者) as opposed to texts (*shu* 書). Whereas the working out of methods was traced back to the sage-rulers of high antiquity, the writings commanded only the pedigree of the more recent sages, it seems.¹⁰³

Now, whether speaking of methods or of texts, the *Shiji* lamented the erosion of the tested ways of forming character and of governing state and society, which resulted in a situation where men of learning valued the acquisition of official status and salary over personal integrity. Suggesting that ethical priorities are best taught outside official circles and learned for reasons other than material gain, the *Shiji* projected these ideals back onto the academies of Shen Gong of Lu and Yue Chen Gong of Qi, figures who served as rhetorical foils for the debased scholars serving Emperors Jing and Wu. By contrast, in applauding the imperial decision to offer sponsorship to men of learning, Ban Gu's *Hanshu* made the creation of authoritative lines of transmission more central to its story. By the late Eastern Han, as described in the *Hou Hanshu*, the state did not merely offer sponsorship, it also conferred legality on precisely defined lines of transmission.

¹⁰³ This conceptual separation between methods and writings is the background for the *Shiji*'s critique of contemporary scholarship, as is the separation between “learning” (*xue*) and “writing” (*shu*) that is taken for granted in works as late as Zheng Qiao's (1104-62) *Tongzhi*. Zheng Qiao explains that “men preserve the [various forms of] learning, and learning preserves the writings” (*ren shou qi xue, xue shou qi shu* 人守其學, 學守其書). See *Tongzhi*, *op cit.*, 71.2a.

In keeping with Plumb's belief that "authority once achieved must have a secure and usable past," this essay has sought to distinguish between actual events and the usable past constructed with care by successive Chinese historiographers in state employ. The three standard histories analyzed here do not share the same presumptions and preoccupations, though their rhetorical conventions create the impression of continuity and sometimes render real changes in social conditions invisible. For this reason, work on the most basic level, viz. the changing connotations of conventional vocabulary, still needs to be done, with *jia* an important starting point. Judging from the standard histories themselves, the semantic range of *jia* naturally varied in response to the changing intellectual milieu of the Han. The very gradual shift in the meaning of the word from "individual experts [using a set of methods]" to "authorized transmitters of particular writings" reflected a shift in the social reality of scholarly activity. The evolution of the term *jia* was accompanied by other evolutions in basic vocabulary—just what we would expect, once we no longer regard Western and Eastern Han as a single historic unit, or the dynastic cycles portrayed in the standard histories as objective facts. The implication of the foregoing discussion for early history, prior to and including the Western Han, is clear: the ascription of philosophical "schools" is an anachronistic imposition of a set of Eastern Han and post-Han concerns onto earlier periods.

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