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The Oxford Handbook *of* CLASSICAL CHINESE LITERATURE (1000 BCE–900 CE)

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WIEBKE DENECKE, WAI-YEE LI,
and
XIAOFEI TIAN

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For our children
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Timeline of Chinese Dynasties

- Shang (Yin) Dynasty 商 (ca. 1300–1046 BCE)
- Zhou Dynasty 周 (ca. 1046–256 BCE)
  - Western Zhou 西周 (ca. 1046–771 BCE)
  - Eastern Zhou 東周 (770–256 BCE)
    - Spring and Autumn Period 春秋 (770–481 BCE)
    - Warring States Period 戰國 (481–221 BCE)
- Qin Dynasty 秦 (221–207 BCE)
- Han Dynasty 漢 (206 BCE–220 CE)
  - Former/Western Han 前漢 / 西漢 (206 BCE–8 CE)
  - Xin Dynasty 新 (9–23)
  - Later/Eastern Han 後漢 / 東漢 (25–220 CE)
- Wei 魏 Dynasty (220–265) / Three Kingdoms 三國
- Jin 晉 Dynasty (265–420)
  - Western Jin 西晉 (265–316)
  - Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420)
- Northern and Southern Dynasties 南北朝 (420–589)
- Sui Dynasty 隋 (581–618)
- Tang Dynasty 唐 (618–907)
- Five Dynasties 五代 (907–960)
- Song Dynasty 宋 (960–1279)
  - Northern Song 北宋 (960–1127)
  - Southern Song 南宋 (1127–1279)
- Yuan Dynasty (Mongols) 元 (1271–1368)
- Ming Dynasty 明 (1368–1644)
- Qing Dynasty (Manchus) 清 (1644–1911)

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

KEY CONCEPTS OF "LITERATURE"

STEPHEN OWEN

To give an account of the Chinese conception of literature is, at its root, a comparative question, positing a universal category, "literature," which has a peculiarly Chinese inflection. The enterprise founders on the historicity of the relatively recent concept of "literature" and its earlier counterpart, "poetry" (in its primary sense), in the European tradition, with an unmanageable diversity of inclusions and exclusions. However strong particular opinions may be, we still do not agree on what is and what is not literature, and a rough collective agreement on a word is necessary to stabilize comparison. It would, moreover, be perverse to take the contemporary academic construction of the field (as fluid as it still is) and attempt to refer that back to pre-900 CE Chinese conceptions of some rough analogue of our own blurred category. It is fine to construct contemporary anthologies of premodern Chinese works, to do studies, and to make reference works like the present one, all working with our contemporary scope of literature, but it is not valid to use that as a reference point for the Chinese understanding of "literature" in, say, 500 CE.

Such an act of comparison is, moreover, essentially unequal, taking a category of one tradition and looking for it in another. This act presumes that not only will we find a commensurate analogue, but that the counterpart of "literature" will involve questions of commensurate gravity. This is not the case. What we find instead are two histories that diverged. One began with Aristotle and a very broad notion of "poetry," clearly distinguished from verse, sustaining over two millennia of critical reflection, eventually becoming "literature" (with the term "poetry" eventually redefined as a lyric genre within that larger field of "literature"). The other began with *shi* 詩, the rough analogue of "poetry," but tied to a certain kind of verse (that is, not all verse is *shi*, but all *shi* is in verse). As we will see, a discursive field developed, including but not limited to *shi*; this field is the rough analogue to "literature." For a brief period, that field was subject to critical reflection, but such critical reflection had entirely disappeared before the end of the period covered by this volume. The genre *shi*, however, did sustain over two millennia of critical reflection, as did, to a far lesser degree, other genres within the "literary" field.

The "literary" and the "idea of the literary" are different things. The task here is not to identify the former. Most contemporary readers recognize that *Zhuangzi*'s 莊子 wondrous fusion of thought and imaginative writing is, in some profound sense, literary. It could not have been done in the plain discursive prose of his age. Our range of reference is before 900 CE, and *Zhuangzi*, however much admired and used in literary writing, was not itself generally considered *wen* 文, the term we turn to when we look for something analogous to literature. We might endure that exclusion, but then we have to face the fact that every petition to the throne, however banal and poorly written, *was* considered *wen* (as the worst nineteenth-century verse in English is technically "literature," even if it is execrable poetry).

Wen, our rough analogue for "literature" in China, is best considered as a discursive field, a system of genres, recognized as distinct from other kinds of writing. We will consider what makes works within this system collectively distinct from other discursive fields; then we will consider attempts to theorize that distinction and the abandonment of that enterprise in favor of genre-based theory.

To speak about a conception of "literature" as a general field, a system of genres distinct from other kinds of writing, is not tenable before the early third century CE. Poetry (*shi*), one of the primary constituent genres of the literary field, had been highly theorized since late antiquity (see Chapter 23) with reference to the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*). And there was a more fluid sense of other particular genres through lineages of famous texts.

Shi was a more restrictive category. On the surface, it was immediately clear whether a text was or was not *shi*. The definition of *shi* in the "Great Preface" ("Daxu" 大序) to the *Shijing* is: "The Poem articulates what the mind is intent upon" (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志). Although there were many poems in which it is hard to see that definition, and although that definition was varied in significant ways, it was not possible to negate the old definition and seriously claim "The poem (*shi*) does *not* articulate what the mind is intent upon." *Wen*, the emergent analogue of "literature" in the third century, was a different kind of category; it had a wide range of usage outside texts in language and gained depth by resonance with those other frames of reference. Moreover, it was not always clear whether a given text should or should not be considered *wen*. The easiest recourse for identifying *wen* was a system of genres, but many genres lay on the ambiguous margins of *wen*, with some instantiations of those genres clearly judged to be *wen*, while other instantiations were probably not *wen*; e.g., some letters were *wen*, and some were not.

To understand *wen*, it is best to consider its historical transformation into a discursive field. I will not here go back to the earliest usages of the term, but rather consider such early usages as they were used in later periods, when they were anachronistically drawn into attempts to explain *wen*.

Between earliest antiquity and the early third century, there was abundant material that we now would consider literature from a variety of perspectives, but there was no sense of literature is a distinct field of discourse. In the first decades of the second half of the first century CE, in Wang Chong's 王充 (27–100 CE) chapter on "An Explanation of Writing" ("Shu jie" 書解) in *Lun heng* 論衡 (*Balanced Discourses*), there was a developed sense of *wen* as something like "patterned grace" in writing, the counterpart of a writer's inner qualities and drawing on an earlier discourse of *wen*, but this clearly did not yet constitute a distinct field (Wang Chong 1990, 1149–1150). Wang Chong, however, gives us one essential characteristic of *wen* as it would develop in the next century: there is some essential correspondence between the inner character of the person and that person's writing. Such a correspondence between the interior of the speaker and its linguistic manifestation in text has a basic similarity to the theory of *shi* in the "Great Preface" to the *Shijing*. But there is also an essential difference. The state of mind of the speaker of one of the poems in the *Shijing* was circumstantial and externally determined, a response to the situation of the times. Wang Chong's *wen* revealed a quality of the inner person that was not circumstantially determined. This quality, however, was not yet differentiated into types, and it was not presumed to be present in the writing of everyone.

Before considering the discourse of *wen* as it came to constitute a field, we should outline the field negatively, defining it by the other discursive fields that were "not literature." The nature of "poetry," *shi*, was a theoretical question; the nature of *wen* as a larger field of discourse that included poetry was initially a bibliographical question. In the bibliographical system as it was evolving during the Six Dynasties (see Chapter 11), literature was not "Classics" (*jing* 經), not "Masters Literature" or the "literature of knowledge" (*zi* 子) and not "History" (*shi* 史). This fourth discursive field is not named for any of the standard words and phrases usually used in Chinese literary thought; it is called "collections" (*ji* 集), the shorter writings of individuals in a variable, but restricted, range of genres—a genre system (see Chapter 15).

The collection of *wen* is *ji* 集, the shorter works of one individual or many individuals. This bibliographical container gives us a basic insight into the idea of literature that is often missing in the grander discourse of *wen*. Some of the works in a collection could have been included as a chapter in a treatise of Masters Literature (see Chapter 14), or they could have been a biography or historical discussion appropriate for a history, or they could have been a discussion of a Classic, but their shortness involves closure and focus, and they are read not as knowledge per se but in terms of their historically contingent author. Works in a *ji* are understood as historically local acts of composition, in contrast to writings in other fields, which are projects over extended time. Those projects obviously involved particular acts of composition, but they were parts of a whole. To take the example of Masters Literature, a master was allowed to compose only one book (and even if such a book is divided into "inner" and "outer" chapters, such a division is understood as some difference in content rather simply an ongoing production of chapters). Chinese scholars like to assign dates to literary works, dates that are the putative date of composition; as a project of indeterminate duration, the Masters treatise has only a date of completion, if that is known. The "master" himself might live on after his treatise was done; although the author of works in a *ji* might compile provisional versions of his collection, the collection was "complete" only with the author's death, so that it was essentially a posthumous construction. The Chinese literary text might convey the wisdom of the sages, might contain knowledge, and might be historically true and a contribution to historical knowledge, but there was a surplus; defining the putative parameters of that surplus may be the best way to talk about something like "literature." The centrality of the historically contingent author, the organizational principle of a collection, *ji*, is an essential part of that surplus.

A chapter or discussion of writing and rhetoric had been a common part of the treatises in Masters Literature. In his *Dian lun* 典論 (*Normative Discourses*), Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) included a chapter entitled "Discourse on Literature" ("Lun wen" 論文). In its current form, the "Discourse on Literature" is about the literary field, specifically about the "Seven Masters of the Jian'an Reign" (*Jian'an qizi* 建安七子), each having a distinct temperament and each having strength in a specific genre. The field of letters, as Cao Pi describes it, is constituted by an orderly set of complementary differences, each singular strength simultaneously implying a limitation. Occasionally, Cao Pi makes reference to *wen* simply as "good writing," in the sense in which Wang Chong had used it, and he closes with a praise of the "discourses" (*lun* 論), of Xu Gan 徐幹 (171–218). While the single *lun* was to become part of the literary genre system, Cao Pi here refers to a long treatise by Xu Gan, a work of Masters Literature, which, in contrast to the partial excellences of the literary field, promises a complete summation of knowledge—as does Cao Pi's own treatise, *Dian lun*. A literary field has not been fully established here, but it is emergent.

Works of Masters Literature preferred terms of general authority and balanced impartiality: Wang Chong's *Lun heng*, Xu Gan's *Zhong lun* 中論 (*Discourses on the Mean*), Cao Pi's *Dian lun*. By contrast, Cao Pi describes the writers of *wen* as being very good at some things and not at others, individual strengths mapped onto the particular strength of genres. Instead of the serene whole of the treatise in Masters Literature, the "Seven Masters" are literally in a horse race, each trying to outdo the other.

The survival of the "Discourse on Literature" presents an interesting complication. While *Dian lun* survives only in fragments, the "Discourse on Literature" was preserved in Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501–531) *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*), from the early sixth century, under the genre "discourse" (*lun*). Because other extant fragments seem to belong to the "Discourse on Literature" chapter and because the discourse is much shorter than most chapters in treatises in Masters Literature, it is probable that Xiao Tong selected and perhaps restructured the chapter in its current form. The early sixth century did have a very strong sense of *wen* as a discursive field, and we cannot tell how much the current form of "Discourse on Literature" as preserved in *Wen xuan* represents Cao Pi's original chapter and how much it represents the motivated excerpting of Xiao Tong. We should note, however, that the metamorphosis of the chapter into a literary "discourse" (*lun*) is particularly effective because of Cao Pi's personal and elegiac engagement with the "Seven Masters"; rather than conveying impersonal authority, Cao Pi's voice of personal engagement mediates his claims and becomes itself part of those claims.

If the sense of *wen* as a distinct discursive field was still not fully developed in the third century, there was considerable interest in and discussion of the genres of writing that came to constitute it. Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) described *wen* through one of its genres, the "rhapsody" (*fu* 賦). "The Rhapsody on *wen*" ("Wen fu" 文賦, also "Rhapsody on Literature"), is an exceptionally rich text, essentially on compositional practice, beginning with a meditation on the universe, then the process of organizing speculative experience, followed by a spontaneous process of writing. As in Cao Pi's "Discourse on Literature," a set of genres, each with distinct characteristics, is enumerated. One might well argue that Lu Ji's compositional procedures are better suited to poetry or even poetic exposition than to a petition to the throne or to a stele inscription. But in the present context, the issue is how Lu Ji's account defines a field of literature. The obvious answer is that Lu Ji's compositional procedures involve short texts: they are inapplicable to long-term projects, such as Masters treatises or Histories; they involve thought but not "research" in sources; unlike the Classics, they are not a summation of knowledge but an occasion of composition.

Lu Ji speaks of the compositional process in terms undifferentiated by individual disposition or genre and allows for all the variations he can imagine, but the particular demands of a given genre mediate between general meditation and production. Internal division and difference remain central to the literary field.

The third century also saw the beginning of compiling literary collections, usually posthumous, and the earliest anthologies. The most influential early anthology was that of Zhi Yu 摯虞 (d. ca. 312), working around the turn of the fourth century. The anthology itself is lost, but there are numerous quotations from the headings of its generic divisions. The title is *Wenzhang liubie ji* 文章流別集 (*Collection of Literature Arranged by Genre*), echoing Cao Pi's notions of complementary generic divisions that together create a whole. Zhi Yu's use of the popular water metaphor, however, adds a temporal dimension, of a watery totality that divides into different branches like the delta of a river. In the surviving fragments of the genre introductions, we see Zhi Yu trying to trace each genre back to antiquity, and, where possible, to the Classics. This is the first clear iteration of a shared early Middle Period idea of literature as a linear derivation from the Classics, leaving open the question of whether the writer should return to the Classics or should embrace change as necessary and good.

The field of early medieval literary genres bore little resemblance to Aristotle's "poetry" or to Sanskrit *kāvya*. Pride of place went to rhapsody (*fu*, a long rhymed description or account) and to classical poetry (*shi*), but they included letters, petitions to the throne, inscriptions of various kinds, laments, and funerary genres—in short, the different kinds of largely public writing that a member of the educated elite might be called upon to produce. Narrative frames for poetic expositions might contain patently fictional interlocutors ("Master No-Such") or famous speakers from the past; fictive narrative, however, was generally not included within the scope of literary genres, with the notable exception of parable. Narratives that we would call "historical romance" were classified in one of the special subsets of history such as *biezhuan* 別傳 (separate biography, like those of Qin Jia 秦嘉 or Cai Yan 蔡琰 [ca. 170–ca. 215]), suggesting their dubious historical reliability; if those narratives contained poems or letters, the poems or letters might be included in the category of *wen*, under the name of the character to whom they were ascribed in the narrative. Anecdotes and supernatural tales eventually came to be included among the bibliographical subsets of Masters Texts, under rubrics that suggest their lack of credibility and seriousness, or appeal to a certain set of beliefs.

There was extensive interest in and discussion of literary texts through the fourth and fifth centuries, usually with a focus on particular genres and largely on poetry. The great attempt to discuss *wen* as a general field came again only around the turn of the sixth century. A lay scholar studying in a Buddhist monastery, Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s), undertook the unprecedented step of writing a treatise on *wen*. From one point of view, this was itself an evolution of Masters Literature, in that it involved the composition of one big book with many chapters. Earlier Masters treatises had sought to cover all fields of knowledge, inflected by the particular interests of the "master"; Liu Xie's work, however, took what would have been one chapter of a Masters treatise and turned it into a book. From another point of view, this book was essentially a *śāstra*, a systematic treatise on a single field of knowledge, a basic genre in South Asian literature appearing at a time when Sanskrit texts were coming into China in large numbers.

Liu Xie's book was entitled *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, roughly translated as *Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*. It was in fifty chapters, divided between chapters on genres and chapters on theoretical issues, with a final postface in which Liu Xie gave an account of how he came to write the book. Liu Xie claimed to have had a dream of Confucius as a child, and despairing of making an original contribution to commentary on the Classics, he turned instead to writing on literature as an outgrowth of the Classics.

The first chapter, "Its Origin in the Way" ("Yuan Dao" 原道), is a fully developed exposition of *wen*, drawing on conventional associations and adding new ones to link the field of "literature" with the larger sense of *wen* as "external patterning" and thereby ground literature in nature. *Wen* was a very old term, which had acquired a wide range of usage, and writings about literature such as Liu Xie's treatise often anachronistically drew on those associations. In its larger sphere of usage, *wen* was "pattern," the external manifestation of inner quality on the surface; for example, in a sumptuary regime the patterns on clothing corresponded to status and role that would otherwise be invisible. *Wen* referred to civil virtues and graces, in distinction from *wu*, the military aspect of society. *Wen* was also the ultimate signifying dimension of pattern—in other words, "writing." And within writing itself, *wen* gradually became "embellishment," in opposition to "substance" (*zhi* 質). In the *wen*/*zhi* opposition, the ideal was the "perfect balance" (*binbin* 彬彬) between the two. Wang Chong's treatment of *wen* in the "Explanation of Writing" chapter is a good example of the evolution of the term: *wen* is a quality in writing that shows the human quality of the writer, but it is clearly not rhetorical embellishment, which Wang Chong strongly opposed.

By Liu Xie's time, normal style in the genres that made up the literary field was highly "embellished," a quality of which Liu Xie sometimes disapproved and sometimes approved. On the negative side, this was seen as *wen* and *zhi* failing to achieve "perfect balance," with an excess of *wen*. In "Its Origin in the Way," Liu Xie's task was to naturalize the gorgeous. He began by drawing on two established compounds using *wen: tianwen* 天文, the "pattern of the heavens" (i.e., the patterns and motions of heavenly bodies), and *diwen* 地文, "the pattern of earth" (topography). As these showed splendid outward appearances according to the essential nature of Heaven and Earth respectively, so human beings, whose essential nature is mind—and following from that, language—had their external manifestation in patterned language, *wen*. His repeated declarations that this was "natural" remind us of the doubt that he was trying to dispel: that literary language might be thought to be rhetorical and artificial.

Such grand claims for *wen* were capacious, but their very capaciousness encouraged Liu Xie to cross the boundaries by which the discursive field was commonly understood by his contemporaries. His chapter on the Classics (3), "Zong jing" 宗經, was to be expected, laying the groundwork for the derivation of later genres, but the following chapter on the Apocrypha to the Confucian Classics (4), "Zheng wei" 正緯, was obviously included for symmetry and was far from any imaginable sense of *wen* among Liu Xie's contemporaries. The standard genres of the usual field of *wen* were included, but so were those other discursive fields that had negatively delimited *wen*: Historical Writing (16), "Shi zhuan" 史傳; and Masters Writing (17), "Zhuzi" 諸子. The chapter on "Discourse and Persuasion" (18), "Lunshui" 論說, even included commentary on the Confucian Classics. This left Liu Xie with the problem of what writing was "not *wen*." Contemporary understanding did have a term for this: *bi* 筆, roughly translated as "plain writing." In "General Technique" (44), "Zong shu" 總術, Liu Xie eventually addressed this issue, first rejecting the most naive distinction, which made *wen* rhymed and *bi* unrhymed, then rejecting a barely comprehensible thesis by Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (384–456), surviving only in Liu Xie's refutation. In the end, Liu Xie himself could not propose a credible distinction to demarcate the sphere of *wen* by identifying what was "not *wen*."

Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon was a great experiment, grasping for something that had identity beyond merely a system of genres. The concept of *wen* was drawn so broadly that, while there was bad *wen*, there was no kind of writing that was explicitly excluded. In *Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon* we can, however, see the outlines of the boundaries of *wen* by the tacit exclusions, most notably the rich world of anecdote, such as *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*), and of fantastic tales, texts that occupy a large place in the modern, Western-influenced concept of "literature."

A few decades after *Wenxin diaolong*, we have Xiao Tong's *Wen xuan*, the inheritor of Zhi Yu's *Wenzhang liubie ji*. For several centuries, this was the most influential anthology representing *wen* in a broad sense. It was a work grounded in the court, either prepared or overseen by Xiao Tong, the Crown Prince, who was intensely aware of his institutional role as a supporter of culture. This kind of anthology, covering the full range of the "literary" field as it was understood in the early sixth century, was often a unifying imperial act, continued in the seventh century with the court-sponsored *Wenguan* *cilin* 文館詞林 (*Forest of Compositions of the Literary Academy*) and, after the founding of the Song Dynasty in the late tenth century, the imperially sponsored *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (*The Flower of the Garden of Letters*), whose contents began in the sixth century, where the *Wen xuan* left off. This was followed by Lü Zuqian's 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) *Song wen jian* 宋文鑑 (*Mirror of Song Literature*), an imperially commissioned anthology of Northern Song writings. Such anthologies were designed to represent an era and retained the broad sense of *wen*. We even have a private anthology on the model of the *Wen xuan*, the Tang *Guwen yuan* 古文苑 (*Garden of Ancient Literature*), including early material not included in Xiao Tong's anthology.

The real inertia in the maintenance of a general sphere of "literature" was in the "collected works" of an individual, the *ji*, including poetic expositions, poetry, and shorter prose writings. Dynastic histories often made a place for "biographies of men of letters" (toward the end of the biographical section), but there was no critical attempt to define what they meant. The important political figure who was also a famous writer would be given a more prominent place in the biographies and not included in "biographies of men of letters." The famous writer who was the son of a prominent political figure would usually be given a short biographical notice after his father. To be included in "biographies of men of letters" effectively meant that they were famous only for their writing. The earliest extant example of this category appears in the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*) by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), with a brief "summary verse" (*zan* 贊) attached at the end. Some of the "biographies of men of letters" (often referred to as "garden of *wen*," *wenyuan* 文苑) in later histories have introductory sections praising the importance of literature, but none reflect on the category of *wen*, and they are implicitly content to understand it as the kind of writings included in a "collection."

If there was a field of *wen* in the sixth century that could possibly sustain reflection, that field virtually dissolved over the course of the Tang, surviving only in the inertia of the bibliographical system, certain forms of anthology, and the historical category of "biographies of men of letters," made up of short biographies of those writers whose prominence did not merit a full biography earlier in the "biographies" section of the standard histories.

In popular criticism, we see the forces at work in the eighth-century materials the Japanese monk Kūkai 空海 (774–835) collected in *Bunkyō hifuron* 文鏡秘府論 (Ch. *Wenjing mifu lun, The Secret Treasury of the Mirror of Letters*). It very title gestures to the category *wen*, but in actuality the texts it includes are overwhelmingly about *shi*. Even the section entitled "On Meaning in *Wen*" ("Lun wen yi" 論文意), though it begins grandly, quickly turns to poetry, *shi*, which dominates the essay (though there are scattered references to rhapsodies and to prose pieces). The essay speaks of "making *wen*" (*zuo wen* 作文) (*Wenjing mifu lun* 1365), but immediately reveals that it means *shi*. In the following sections, "On Genre" ("Lun ti" 論體) and "On Position" ("Lun wei" 論位), the same "making *wen*" refers primarily to prose. Since *Bunkyō hifuron* is a compilation of various sources, the only conclusion we can draw is that during the Tang the discourse on poetry was becoming distinct, and a discourse on prose was conducted in generalities that might include poetry, but were more appropriate for prose forms.

In short, the possibility of general critical reflection on *wen* as including all kinds of writing in a "collection" was gradually supplanted by critical reflection on particular genres, or on the grouping of "prose" genres. The theoretical leisure of Liu Xie composing his treatise in a Buddhist temple gave way to the pragmatic, pedagogic needs of young men who needed to master different discursive forms for their careers. This was not always the case in the Tang, but it was pervasive. *Bunkyō hifuron* begins some essays with grand statements, but it also tells its reader to keep a writing brush and a lamp handy at night in case he wakes up with inspiration. From the early ninth century we have a "Manual of Rhapsodies" ("Fu pu" 賦譜), which is not at all interested in what a rhapsody "is," only in how to compose one according to the rules. Popular criticism merged seamlessly into sets of model compositions for different genres, such as Bai Juyi's 白居易 (772–846) model sets of "judgments" (*panwen* 判文) and model answers to examination questions.

By the early ninth century, with the resurgent interest in "old-style prose" (*guwen* 古文), the term *wen* was losing its broader sense of "literature" and acquiring its more restrictive meaning of "prose," the complementary opposite of *shi*. Already in the early decades of the ninth century, we begin to have a new notion of the "poet," *shiren* 詩人, as someone who writes only poetry and is obsessed with poetry. Even if one can argue that *wen* still retained something of its broad sense around the turn of the ninth century, we have no doubt about *wen*'s more restrictive meaning as "prose" by the mid-ninth century. Playing on the figure of the obsessed poet, Liu Tui 劉蛻 (821–after 874) writes of his obsession with prose: "Eating and drinking I never forget prose (*wen*); in the darkness I never forget prose. In sorrow and in rage, in illness and merriment, in a crowd and traveling on a mission, I never once fail to have prose on my mind" (*Quan Tang wen* 789.8266).

By the end of the period covered by this volume, we have entered the stage of late imperial literature. Although anthologies modeled on *Wen xuan* were still as inclusive as the standard form of the "collection," virtually all critical discourse was divided generically: there was a tradition of critical discourse on *shi*, another on old-style prose, and another on parallel prose (*siliu* 四六), which might include discourse on rhapsodies, *fu* (though there was a distinct tradition of critical writing on *fu*). Some of the newer genres, such as song lyric (*ci* 詞) and vernacular lyric (*qu* 曲), each acquired its own distinct critical tradition. Change came from new genres appearing outside the margins of the old genres. A good example can be seen in stories, which were increasing in sophistication and popularity from the late eighth through the ninth century. While such stories were usually kept out of authorial "collections," there are enough cases where the promise of a serious moral lesson led to an ambiguity in classification that we can see the boundary between the "literary" and the previously "nonliterary" collapsing. The new song lyric form (*ci*) was at first excluded from literary collections, but by the twelfth century began to be included—at or near the end of a collection.

Our discussion here is somewhat artificially constrained by the year 900. As Liu Xie had discovered, the margins of the "literary" opened to other discursive fields against which the literary field had taken shape. By the thirteenth century, critical discussions of "old-style" (*guwen*) prose could not help drawing from the Classics, the Histories, and Masters Literature. Using selections from these other fields later became standard in old-style prose anthologies. The boundaries of "literature" in the old sense remained relatively clear until the early twentieth century, but texts that were interesting in what we consider (and late imperial critics considered) to be a "literary" way were growing outside the old genre system, and many texts within the old genre system were no longer read—immortalized in print, but ignored. A new, broader sense of "literature" gradually emerged; the importance of this broader field of texts, including drama and fiction, was recognized, but there was no attempt to define a field as such.

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CHAPTER 2

PERIODIZATION AND MAJOR INFLECTION POINTS

STEPHEN OWEN

THE periodization of literature has more historical interest than theoretical interest. Periodization is a function of a virtual literary historical narrative, organizing selective evidence to produce a coherent narrative of change of one particular sort. The most significant variable is the way in which literature is granted greater or lesser autonomy within an integral narrative of culture and politics. As this process works out in history, we can observe, first, the larger discourse of change that underwrites the earliest accounts of periodization, and, second, the internalization and inertia of certain modes of periodization in subsequent accounts.

We might first consider the act of periodization that abruptly terminates the present volume at the year 900. This is a felicitous date of convenience because it roughly gestures to both traditional Chinese periodization and to more recent macronarratives of Chinese cultural history. Our date is very close to the nominal end of the Tang Dynasty in 907, corresponding to the last gasp of a major dynasty. The rich body of recent scholarly literature on the "Tang-Song transition" makes 900 an acceptable intermediate date of convenience for a narrative of fundamental change, beginning with intellectual changes inaugurated in the early ninth century, the gradual dissolution of an old aristocratic culture, and emergence of a new world of Northern Song literary culture in the first quarter of the eleventh century. Finally, our date satisfies the more recent mode of narrative that seeks the ground of discursive culture in material culture: the earliest known print edition of a collection of poetry, that of Guan Xiu 貫休 (832–912), was done at the end of the second or the beginning of the third decade of the tenth century. Thus our date brings us to the edge of print culture. The periodization of very large spans is, of course, a blunt tool. Despite a long span of war, devastation, and social upheaval on either side of 900, it was a period of great stability, and it would be difficult to find any major change in literature for the eighty years preceding 900 and a hundred years following that date. In regard to print culture, the first known printing of a literary collection is more symbolic than substantive. We know that poetry was being printed and sold in broadside over eighty years earlier, and that that large-scale, commercial printing of literary works did not begin until the second half of the eleventh century and was not fully established until the first half of the twelfth century. All this is to remind us that the date that demarcates a period is a function of the narrative, rather than the narrative being a function of the date.

We are, however, left with an unmanageable span of almost two millennia of textual production in this volume, and it would be useful to further divide that by some other date of convenience with something of the resonance of 900, though with the same essential fuzziness. Allow me to choose 200 CE as such a date, anchoring the first appearance of paper in roughly the first century CE and its subsequent spread to become the dominant medium of writing. While we know that bamboo slips and wooden tablets continued to be used long after this date, paper seems to have become increasingly widespread in elite venues in the century before and after 200. This seems the best way to account for the dramatic increase in literary production in the roughly two centuries of the Eastern Han as compared to the two centuries of the Western Han. This is not to suggest that Eastern Han works were necessarily composed on paper, but rather that they were recent enough to survive into an age when circulation on paper became increasingly common. The consequences of paper—as compared to bamboo strips and wooden tablets—were immense. It made possible new script-forms that could be written far more quickly; it made distribution of larger texts no longer dependent on wagonloads; and it made possible a personal library on a physical scale smaller than a warehouse. The famous anecdote that Zuo Si's 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305) "Rhapsody on the Three Metropolises" ("Sandu fu" 三都賦) was so popular that it made the cost of paper rise in Luoyang may come from a somewhat later source, but the anecdote remains interesting in taking for granted not only that those interested would copy it on paper—and could afford to—but also that the supply was limited.

The felicity of this date of convenience is in its correspondence with the rise of classical poetry and a variety of new genres, with the appearance of the literary "collection" and the discursive field of *wen* 文 (see Chapter 1). The plague of 217, which took the lives of so many famous writers of the time, was seen as the end of an era—a "period"—laying the groundwork for the first attempts to periodize literature in the centuries to follow.

We will first look at the problems of periodizing texts of antiquity before the imperial period and the early imperial period. Then we will consider the received terms of cultural change and their assumptions, which provided the basis of the first attempts at literary periodization. We will then address the formation and transformation of periodization between 200 and 900, focusing on the literary historical work of the fifth and sixth centuries as well as the periodization of the Tang. Finally, we will raise some of the problems for periodization posed by distortions in the textual record.

ANTIQUITY

In the roughly seven or eight centuries of received texts from before the imperial period, we can see large changes between the putatively earliest texts and the latest texts. While we can identify major changes that occurred, we cannot date them except very roughly. If we look at shorter spans of a few centuries, we are on safer grounds if we identify "differences" rather than "changes." These differences might possibly be historical change, but we cannot discount regional differences, differences of scribal convention, and other factors. Obvious linguistic differences between the earlier chapters and the last chapters of the *Analects* are taken to be evidence of historical difference, but those differences might simply represent two communities that differed in terms of the way in which Confucius's words were reported. The sequence of arrangement of sections in a work is too often taken as actual historical sequence of composition. Many ancient texts in the received tradition are layered, sometimes with sections that are probably Han (or, more problematically, a Han version of earlier material), and many seem to have been put together into "books" by the needs of Han bibliography. We commonly see similar material rewritten in new contexts, and the differences may represent distinct local writing traditions or different contexts as much as historical change.

The gross historical divisions in this era are the Western Zhou (ca. 1046 –771 BCE), the Eastern Zhou (770–256 BCE), the Spring and Autumn Period (770–481 BCE), and the Warring States Period (481–221 BCE). These are rough dates to produce a continuous year-line. Perhaps one of the most significant changes, occurring in the Warring States, was the change from the ubiquitous citation of speech ("Master X said . . .") to the essay, with a presumed author who does not appear as the speaker. Even in this case, however, we are mapping difference as historical change; and while it is almost certainly the case that cited speech preceded uncited discourse, this does not mean that, within a particular family of discourse, cited speech might not have been the mode of composition long after essays using uncited discourse appeared. In short, despite the large body of texts, unknown variables make it impossible to provide enough dates to do anything like periodization. We have an increasingly large corpus of archeologically recovered texts, but these come almost entirely from one region and one limited period in ancient history. These do not allow us to make large generalizations about practices elsewhere and in other periods.

We are on somewhat more secure grounds when we enter the first phase of the imperial period, the Qin (221–207 BCE) and the Western Han, but the record is so thin and many texts are so problematic that it is better to think of works and authors rather than the thicker record that makes literary history possible. We can be certain of the prominence of Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE), and recognize his influence on Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), but the attempt to do a "literary history" of the Western Han poetic exposition in any greater detail finds "periods" characterized by one or two authors and one or two works. The relatively secure works are surrounded by other works of dubious authenticity. Dating is often based on assumptions which, if examined in detail, are themselves in question. We can begin to see lineages and knowledge of earlier texts, but we do not have enough secure material to talk about periods—apart from the very large presence of empire.

The "Terms" of Cultural Change

The prefaces of the Mao version of the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) and their subcommentaries did not in themselves constitute literary history, but they did provide some of the most basic assumptions through which to think about literary change, along with some terms by which to represent those assumptions. The Mao interpretation mapped the poems in the *Shijing* at different points in the first four centuries of the Zhou dynasty, which saw the gradual decline of Zhou power. This process was understood as increasing moral decline, in which those lower in the social hierarchy bore the consequences of the failings of those above them. The poems were interpreted as voices from those historical moments. This mode of interpretation forever linked the story of literature to a morally inflected political context, with particular attention to the motif of decline. While later literary historical interpretation modified this model in interesting ways, the most basic assumptions have lasted to the present.

The basic form of decline theory is the transition from *zheng* 正, the "norm" and the "proper," to *bian* 變, the term of change. This binary opposition had its origins in the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*), where *bian* as "change" was an inevitable and essentially neutral term. In the context of the Mao interpretation of the *Shijing*, however, *zheng* (a term interchangeable with another *zheng* 政, "[good] governance") was represented by voices speaking from the condition of good government, a voice celebrating good government, or a voice from good government itself to exert influence on the people. From *zheng* the poems in the *Shijing* pass into *bian*, in this sense best understood as "deviation"; these poems either directly criticize some consequence of misrule or indirectly criticize misrule by holding up the model of the past. When mapped on history, *zheng*, embodied in the putatively earliest poems, passes into degrees of ever greater *bian*, "deviation." Speaking from different moments and locales, the poems bear witness to a rudimentary narrative of a dynasty gaining the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命) and then losing it by degrees.

This rudimentary narrative lay at the heart of the theory of a "dynastic cycle." The narrative would be modified to account for the contingencies of real history, both political and literary. In the case of political history, the Zhou model of King Xuan 周宣王 (r. 827–782 BCE) was appropriated to account for a phase of "restoration" that interrupted decline and postponed the inevitable end. The task of the literary historian was to identify texts and qualities in texts that instantiated the given assumptions. To some degree, this kind of literary historical narrative, tied to the dynastic cycle, lasted throughout the imperial period. Within a given dynasty, certain reigns were often chosen to represent the subdivisions of the process.

The historically determined process of movement from *zheng* to *bian* became from early on linked to another process, anchored by the binary opposition of *zhi* 質, the "plain" and "substantive," and *wen* 文, the "ornamented" and "literary," which at its extreme becomes "merely literary" (see Chapter 1). This binary opposition had a range of reference that extended well beyond the literary sphere, but the literary sphere was where this putatively cultural change became most visible. Although the ideal was the "perfect balance," *binbin* 彬彬, of *zhi* and *wen*, there was a strong inclination to understand the relation between the two terms as a process, by which cultural forms passed from simplicity to ornament. Although this was often attached to the dynastic process, it could also be used for larger and smaller historical intervals.

The binary opposition of "plain"/"ornamented" has remained one of the deepest assumptions in the Chinese reception of literature. Given two poems of roughly the same kind, at least one of which is undatable, the poem with parallelism, references, and high-register diction will seem somehow later than the poem in a plainer register. The "plain"/"ornamented" binary was, however, also used as a class marker; if a simple poem is given as anonymous in some sources and attributed to an elite poet in other sources, plebeian anonymity will be preferred.

In the long duration of Chinese cultural and literary history, there was the implicit need to "reset the clock," to return to origins and cultural forms that seemed to embody the "proper" or the "plain." Articulation of this value became increasingly common through the course of the middle period. The declaration that literature had returned to some version of the "proper" could be understood as a compliment to the current ruler, and in some venues of writing literary history, it was obligatory. In his chapter on "Temporal Sequence" ("Shi xu" 時序, Liu 45), Liu Xie (see Chapter 1) improbably attributed the restoration of literary perfection to the [Southern] Qi (479–502), the brief dynasty during which he was writing the chapter. It is hard to justify this judgment in the extant record.

The more interesting problem was reconciling actual judgment with the ideological disposition to a narrative of decline from ancient simplicity to hollow rhetorical flourish. Writing in the early sixth century, Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (ca. 468–518) deplored the excessive ornamentation of his contemporaries, and in his top grade of poets he gave pride of place to the anonymous "old poems" (*gushi* 古詩). He characterized the poetry of Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) as possessing "ancient directness" (*guzhi* 古直), a quality that would seem to deserve some respect. But Cao Cao is placed in the lowest of his three grades of poets. Too much "ancient directness" was, perhaps, unpalatable. Somewhat earlier, Liu Xie had offered an ingenious intervention in the decline narrative by the metaphor of dyeing: literature is like plain cloth which can be beautiful if you dye it only once; if you continue to dye it, it becomes muddy and ugly. Hence literature should stay close to its origins in the Classics and continuously return to those origins—but always take one step beyond origins. If the theory of decline in the Mao interpretation of the *Shijing* began with the "proper" and best and then went downhill, around the turn of the sixth century we see forces that implicitly seek a new period of raw beginnings that lead to a subsequent period of perfect balance and perfection, followed by decline.

The application of these cultural processes to literary history was essentially deductive rather than inductive: the process itself was the given assumption, and the literary historian discovered its presence in actual texts, passing the appropriate judgment. A shared understanding of historical process could, however, easily produce completely opposite judgments, depending on how it was applied; for example, in his chapter "The Elucidation of Poetry" ("Ming shi" 明詩) Liu Xie treated the poets of the Western Jin as rhetorically excessive, thus marking a decline from the perfection of the early third century; a decade or two later, Zhong Rong treated the same period as a height of poetry, returning to and perfecting the poetry of the early third century. Periodization was by dynasty or reign, with the shared assumption of process used to articulate the significance of period change.

Here we should note that premodern China had no system of continuous dating; history could be articulated only through dynasty names and reign names. Continuous literary history could be represented only through reference to a continuous line of political rule, and thus a historical narrative was immanent in all literary historical accounts. Nevertheless, there were moments and points of view that enabled a mode of periodization that did not correspond to dynastic change and a *zheng/bian* agenda. We see this first in a surviving passage from Tan Daoluan's 檀道鸞 *Xu Jin Yangqiu* 續晉陽秋 (*Sequel to* [*Sun Sheng's*] *Annals of the Jin*) from the first half of the fifth century. Giving an account of the poetry of the third and fourth centuries, Tan Daoluan describes a series of changing interests that cannot be easily mapped onto political change, culminating in a major change (apparently for the better) in the penultimate reign of the Eastern Jin (Owen 2006, 41 f.). Formalist accounts of genres also could often not be easily mapped onto accepted political narratives. From the eighth century on, critics of poetry recognized that "regulated verse" (*lüshi* 律詩) reached formal perfection in the hands of Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (ca. 656–712) and Shen Quanqi 沈佺期 (ca. 656–ca. 715), working during some of the politically darkest and most corrupt days of the dynasty. Although literary history could never be entirely detached from political history, there were forces at work that complicated the decline narrative and forced a degree of autonomy on the account of literary history.

Eventually, the model of the dynastic cycle developed new ways to reconcile fundamental assumptions with the clear evidence of historical contingency. It was becoming increasingly obvious that literary change did not always match up perfectly with dynastic change, when the writings should have represented the voices of a world well governed. Eventually the *zheng/bian* model was supplemented by the theory of "lingering influence" (*yufeng* 餘風). The literary court of Emperor Taizong of Tang 唐太宗 (r. 626–649) did not seem much different from the literary establishments of the short dynasties that preceded his reign, even though Taizong was much admired as an exemplary founding ruler who set the dynasty on a firm footing. How could the literary record fail to bear witness to the "good government of the Zhenguan Reign," acknowledged throughout the Tang and afterward? The *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New History of the*

Tang) explains this as follows: "When the Tang arose, belles lettres continued the lingering influence of Xu [Ling] and Yu [Xin, both sixth-century court poets]; the whole world admired and emulated them. [Chen] Zi'ang 陳子昂 (ca. 661–702) first changed to the dignified and proper style" (Ouyang Xiu 1975, 4078). Chen Zi'ang's work takes us seven decades into the Tang, almost a quarter of the dynasty. In the same way, the late Tang style "lingered" more than a century after the fall of the dynasty, through the Five Dynasties and about six decades into the Song. In short, the dynastic model for literary history was a deep assumption, but it permitted a degree of modification when theory did not match historical reality. The theory of "lingering influence" contributed to a new term in periodization, by which the cultural height of a dynasty was deferred by the introduction of a new phase, "early."

The Fifth and Sixth Centuries

We earlier discussed the ideological disposition to describe literary change in terms of a process moving from the plain to the ornamented. This was initially conceived as a general process not yet mapped onto the specifics of literary history. Around the turn of the fourth century, we see this assumption in its simplest terms in Zhi Yu's 摯虞 (d. ca. 312) comment on "inscription" (*ming* 銘): "Ancient inscriptions were the ultimate in terseness; modern inscriptions are the ultimate in prolixity" (Deng Guoguang 1990, 187). Zhi Yu's subsequent examples leap quickly from high antiquity to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192), who is "canonical and proper" (*dianzheng* 典正). However, the final example he offers, which seems structurally to embody the undesirable prolixity of the present, is Li You 李尤 (44–126), an Eastern Han writer working two generations *earlier* than Cai Yong. In short, a literary historical narrative is proposed and apparently demonstrated by a series of cases, but the final, anchoring case is out of sequence.

The fifth and sixth centuries saw numerous attempts to instantiate such earlier assumptions regarding literary change in the specifics of literary history, leading to quite detailed periodization, attached to dynasties, phases of dynasties, or specific reigns. When we look at these accounts together, however, we find remarkably little agreement on the specifics in characterizing a given period. We find little agreement on the values assigned to different phases in the process: in some instances plainness is best; in some instances balance between plainness and ornament is best; and in a few rare cases we find that novelty is best. There is, however, almost universal agreement on the process. The process is sometimes a macrohistorical event beginning in remote antiquity and concluding in the vapidly ornamented present. In other accounts, the process restarts itself many times. No one gave relatively detailed accounts of literary historical change more often than Liu Xie, and the inconsistency of particulars in those accounts is striking, even though the processes are the same.

Five-syllable line poetry was a "new" form, presumed to first appear in the Western Han. There was general agreement that it reached a height of "plain vigor" in the Jian'an

Reign (196–220 CE) and that it had undergone many changes. While fifth- and sixth-century authors disagreed on which changes were for the better and which were for the worse, the case was closed with the fall of the South. In the histories of the Southern Dynasties, composed in the first half century of the Tang, there was universal agreement that the Southern literature of the sixth century represented the extreme of a frivolity and decadence that was the embodiment of moral bankruptcy and the cause of the South's destruction.

This seemed to define a clear "period." There was, however, one small problem. The late Southern Dynasties style remained the predominant influence during the Sui and, as mentioned above, during the first part of the Tang. Emperor Wen of Sui 隋文帝 (541–604) commanded a return to simplicity in literary style, but his successor Emperor Yang of Sui 隋煬帝 (569–618) was fascinated by Southern literature and culture. Just as the late Southern Dynasties style was seen as both symptom and cause of the fall of the South, Emperor Yang of Sui's beguilement by Southern literary culture was blamed for his own fall and the fall of his dynasty. While one might suggest that Emperor Yang's disastrous obsession with conquering Korea was the more significant cause of dynastic destabilization, the interest in some of his languid poems as the symptoms of illness in the body politic suggests the imagined stake in literary production.

THE TANG

If the historians had reached a consensus that the late Southern Dynasties (and Emperor Yang of Sui's reign) were poetically "decadent," the Tang's increasing political success suggested that that they were not too far off the mark in moral governance, even under the "lingering influence." Taizong and his court produced thematically acceptable verse, even if it remained in the Southern (or late Northern) court style. For example, Taizong could write a beautifully parallel couplet on the patterns made by his horse snorting in the water: the Northern warrior has somehow appropriated the delicate finesse of the Southern poet. Throughout the seventh century, we have declarations of literary change that return literary style to the "proper"—even if it is often hard to detect such radical transformation in literary production. The eighth and ninth centuries retrospectively singled out the work of Chen Zi'ang (661–702) as embodying a significant breach with the recent literary past and a successful "restoration of antiquity" (*fu gu* 復古), in effect the "beginning" of Tang poetry. While in some of his work Chen Zi'ang did indeed adopt a stylized moral tone and vaguely imitated the style of Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263), the vast preponderance of literary production represented a gradual evolution of the old Southern court style rather than a radical reaction against it. In short, within the Tang itself the single most common moment defining a "period" was what "should have happened" rather than what was happening.

In the Tang imagination, Chen Zi'ang marked a "period," but on the whole Tang intellectuals seem to have been less interested in telling literary historical stories than their

Southern Dynasties predecessors. The Tang was intensely aware of prominent earlier writers, both Tang and pre-Tang. The An Lushan Rebellion (755–763) loomed large as marking the end of an era, but Tang writers did not refer to it as the end of a specific literary historical period; Tang intellectuals associated certain reigns with a particular style. The Yuanhe reign 元和 (806–820) was considered a "period" in the ninth century. However, the full periodization of Tang poetry awaited retrospective consideration by their successors.

The Zhou model of dynastic process in the Mao interpretation of the *Shijing* was perfection at the beginning, followed by a gradual falling away, *bian*. The implicit model of "early," "high," and "late" eventually, in the thirteenth century, became explicit in the periodization of the Tang, with the "early Tang" linked to "lingering influence," and the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) defining the "High Tang." The century and a half after the An Lushan Rebellion and Xuanzong's abdication became "late." This version of the "late Tang" involved immense changes in literature and was useless as a period term. Enumerating "normative [period] styles" (*ti* 體), in *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話 (*Canglang's Remarks on Poetry*, before 1244), Yan Yu 嚴羽 broke up that too-long period by returning to the older practice of defining a period style roughly by a reign title; the long "late Tang" was divided into the "Dali style" (for the Dali reign 大曆, 766–779), the "Yuanhe style" for the Yuanhe reign, and the "late Tang style" for everything thereafter. This intrusion of periods particular to the Tang (the Dali and Yuanhe reigns) undermined a set of terms that were tied to the general "dynastic cycle" and could be applied to any dynasty. This was remedied by the creation of a "mid-Tang," growing as a period concept through the fourteenth century and given final form in Gao Bing's 高棅 (1350–1423) *Tangshi pinhui* 唐詩品彙 (*Graded Compendium of Tang* Poetry, 1393). Although this four-phase division of dynastic literary history is most strongly associated with the Tang, the terms were irregularly applied to later dynasties as well, taking the dynastic cycle for granted as the premise of literary history.

Periodization and Its Complications

Often we might like to free ourselves of the legacy of premodern periodization, especially in those cases when periodization is driven by ideological assumptions about what "should have happened." We need, however, to consider the ways in which earlier literary history becomes an inevitable part of our current attempts to reassess literary history. Perhaps the most obvious issue is the way in which literary production was itself driven by assumptions about "what should happen." We may properly contextualize Chen Zi'ang's version of "returning to antiquity" as only a small part of the very different literary work of his age—and indeed only a small part of his own work. Nevertheless, that part of his work exerted a disproportionate influence on his successors.

A more serious issue is the way in which subsequent premodern literary history has distorted the record, favoring the reproduction of manuscripts that instantiate one particular later view of what was important. Changes in taste could lead to radical losses that distort the record, and in some cases later eras might well have preferred what was lost to what was preserved. Early bibliographies remind us how much more was lost than was preserved, and we cannot always trust the old consolation that only the "best" was preserved.

In some cases, we have an explicit record of changes in taste that allow us to correct the distortions of transmission. Comments from the fifth and sixth centuries are explicit about the popularity of "arcane discourse" (*xuanyan* 玄言), in the poetry of the first half of the fourth century. The reaction against that fashion later in the fourth century was so sharp that only a few examples have been preserved. Those few examples, not represented in the standard anthologies, would probably have been overlooked were it not for repeated reference to the literature of "arcane discourse" in fifth- and early-sixth-century remarks on the history of poetry.

Without such roughly contemporary comments, however, misjudgment is easy. Looking over the extant record, it would be easy and obvious to talk about the "rise of poetry in the five-syllable line" from the beginning of the third century CE on; and there is little doubt that the Caos—first ruling, then reigning—were great supporters of five-syllable-line poetry. We must, however, take into account the fact that only two collections of literary works have been preserved roughly intact from before the end of the fourth century (setting aside the poetry collection of Ruan Ji, which may have been taken out of a fuller collection that survived through the Song dynasty). Both of these collections, those of Xi Kang 嵇康 (ca. 223–ca. 262) and Lu Yun 陸雲 (262–303), have as many or more poems in the four-syllable line as we have in the five-syllable line. The recovery of fascicles from the mid-seventh-century *Wenguan cilin* 文館詞林 (*Forest of Compositions of the Literary Academy*) reminds of how many poems in the four-syllable line have been lost. Here we see how the literary values of the fifth and sixth centuries, when the five-syllable line came to be preferred, influenced the preservation of earlier poetry. We can still talk about the "rise of poetry in the five-syllable line," but the process was contested, and the history of poetry requires more nuance.

As we suggested at the beginning of this essay, periodization is a function of a virtual literary historical narrative, anchored by decisions about which authors and works are important. Were we to depend only on the poetry anthologies done in the Tang itself, our history of Tang poetry would look very different from current versions. Were we to be restricted to the extensive manuscript record preserved at Dunhuang, Tang poetry would look different still.

Here we need to consider the degree to which what we think of as the periodization of "literature" is actually periodization of certain genres. If we are talking about the "mid-Tang," defined roughly as the last decade of the eighth century to about 827, we might find resonance between a resurgent "old-style" prose (*guwen* 古文) and some aspects of poetry, thus giving the illusion of a coherent shift in literary interests. In "rhapsodies" (*fu* 賦), however, this same period was the heyday of "regulated rhapsodies" (*lüfu* 律賦), which represent values almost diametrically opposed to those of "old style" prose and poetry.

There is a strong desire in Chinese literary history to tell "one story," to decide (often anachronistically) which authors or genres are most important and to make that the main plot. As the extant record grew through the Tang, the reader of the primary texts becomes aware of many different stories unfolding simultaneously. The desired clarity of periodization dissolves. Received periodization is deeply engrained in the current understanding of Chinese literature, and it structures our attention to certain authors, works, and genres rather than others. It is an essentially conservative force that foregrounds one story while blurring others. It would perhaps be in our collective interest to give it up in favor of mere chronology, allowing us to tell different ongoing stories rather than a single story.

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SECTION TWO

BASICS OF LITERACY

I. Technology and Media

Editor's Introduction (Xiaofei Tian)

In classical Chinese literary studies, it has finally, and fortunately, become an increasingly quaint notion that literature can exist, or ever existed, as a transcendent entity or disembodied content separated from its physical media. Such a materialist turn in recent years is also a historicist turn, as the issues of technology and media in literary production are closely tied to the changing conditions of a society in its specific historical context. The opening section of the Handbook aims to introduce the reader to the mechanisms of Chinese literature that have played a crucial role in the development of that literature.

The consideration of Chinese literature necessarily begins with that of the Chinese writing system, which is distinguished by two things: it is one of a small handful of writing systems with an independent origin in the ancient world; yet, unlike the other independently invented writing systems like the Sumerian or the Mayan, the Chinese script enjoys an unbroken duration for over three millennia and is known as the oldest continuously used writing system. Some of its specific features have produced a deep impact not only on Chinese but also on other East Asian traditions that have adopted Chinese characters. Its monosyllabic nature—that is, each character represents a single syllable and usually a word—contributes to a number of distinctive formal features of Chinese poetry and prose, such as parallelism. Despite popular misperception, Chinese characters are not pictographs or ideographs, but logographs that represent the sounds and words of a living language. This nevertheless should not obscure the fact that the written language of the premodern period—*wenyan wen* (Literary Chinese or Classical Chinese)—constitutes a language largely separate from the spoken language of any given period and of any particular region. Perhaps the most salient point about the Chinese writing system is that its stability over the centuries has ensured the remarkable continuity of Chinese literary and cultural tradition, but also masks its enormous changes over the course of history, including its elastic absorption of a large amount of foreign vocabulary during the early medieval period (that is, between the first and seventh century CE), when Buddhist texts were being imported from India to China and translated from Sanskrit into Chinese on a large scale.

The next chapter in this section explores the various media through which literature—both in the broad sense of the word and in the narrower sense of belletristic writings—was created and transmitted prior to the spread of printing. Bones and shells, bamboo and wood, as well as bronze and stone, all constituted early writing media. These writing materials are durable, but also cumbersome. Silk was much lighter, yet costly. The technology of paper therefore marked a major turning point in the wide dissemination of texts, especially when paper became increasingly easy and cheap to produce. In the early third century, Emperor Wen of the Wei 魏文帝, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), had sent one silk copy of his book *Normative Discourses* and his belletristic writings to the Wu ruler Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252) and one paper copy to Sun Quan's chief minister, Zhang Zhao 張昭 (156–236). After his death, Cao Pi's son and successor, Emperor Ming 明帝 (r. 226–239), ordered *Normative Discourses* inscribed on stone and displayed outside the Imperial University. These different types of writing media—stone, silk, and paper—each indicated a different level of functionality and import for Cao Pi's works.

Cao Pi was also the man who made the famous statement: "In literature, *qi* is the principal factor." A historical understanding of the concept of *qi* 氣—breath—situates it in an age when literature maintained close ties to oral composition and performance. Besides oral recital, musical performance of *shi* poetry was also a common phenomenon, as in the well-known story of several Tang dynasty (618–907) poets secretly betting on whose quatrain would be sung by the most beautiful of the singing girls at a banquet. The golden age of Chinese poetry was thus never a static world of written texts, but a dynamically mobile world of multimedia performances.

Mobility characterizes manuscript culture, the topic of the third chapter in this section. Manuscript culture is an expedient umbrella term referring to the age of manuscript books in contradistinction from the age of print culture. Simply put, before printing became widespread, hand-copying was the single most important means of textual transmission. Unlike a printed book, which has many identical copies of the same print run, each and every hand-copied manuscript is a unique entity. While a hand-copied text may have an author, in most cases we no longer have the master copy approved by the author but are left only with multiple copies of a hypothetical source text. This is particularly true when the primary medium of textual transmission was the easily destructible paper rather than parchment. Just as Western historians of the book have become cognizant of the importance of manuscripts despite the continuous focus on print, literary scholars and historians in Chinese studies have also begun to pay attention to the complex dynamics of manuscript culture.

Here, however, two salient points must be raised. First, manuscript and print are not mutually exclusive, and the boundary between manuscript and print culture is porous and fluid. Some scholars believe that printing was used in China for religious purposes from as early as the sixth or seventh century, although printing did not become widespread until after the tenth century, the cutoff point for our volume. But even long after that, print never superseded manuscript, which persisted well into the twentieth century. The use of paper also overlapped with that of other writing materials, not to mention with oral transmission and memorization. It is easy to exaggerate either the "revolutionary" nature of printing or the power of paper manuscripts; instead, concomitance and interaction of these different forms are more enabling concepts in understanding the matrix of manuscript culture. Second, the age of manuscript culture itself has different stages: the bronze and bamboo of the early period imposed certain limits on textual production and dissemination that could be circumvented by paper, and necessarily entail different conceptualization. Texts reproduced on paper greatly facilitated the increase of a robust book trade, which in turn made it possible for private individuals to form their own libraries.

One of the first mentions of a large private library—the one that belonged to the scholar Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192)—appeared toward the end of the Eastern Han (25–220), which was about the same time as the spread of paper. Earlier, the Ban family, the most illustrious scholarly and literary family of the first century CE, also enjoyed a large private book collection, but that was only because Emperor Cheng of the Han 漢成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE) bestowed on Ban You 班斿 (fl. 30 BCE) a generous gift of duplicate copies of books in the imperial library. Ban You's home thereupon became a gathering place for many scholars who were eager to see his books. The historian Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), the son of Ban You's nephew, relates an illustrative anecdote retold later by the third-century writer Xi Kang 嵇康 (or Ji Kang, ca. 223–ca. 262): the writer and scholar Huan Tan 桓譚 (23 BCE–56 CE) once asked to borrow a copy of *Zhuangzi* from Ban You's son Si 嗣, but Si refused his request, claiming that Huan Tan was too much under the adverse influence of Confucianism to benefit from Zhuangzi's teachings. *Zhuangzi* was a commonly available title in Xi Kang's time, but clearly had not been such two centuries before. The scholar Cui Yuan 崔瑗 (78–143) once sent his friend the present of ten thousand cash and a paper book in ten scrolls, *Xuzi*, with an apology: "Being too poor to afford silk, I could only use paper [to copy this book out]." *Xuzi* was a philosophical work like *Zhuangzi*. Books on paper, here sent around as a material gift, certainly proved much easier to circulate than those on bamboo or wood.

Paper technology also plays an important role in the rise of literature's "sister arts" calligraphy and painting. The last chapter in this section explores the relationship of calligraphy and painting to literature, especially to poetry, which remained the most privileged genre in premodern times. The "three arts of the brush"—poetry, calligraphy, and painting—share a discursive affinity, as the development of the theories and aesthetic ideals of calligraphy and painting are closely related to literary thought and poetics. Their association is also manifested on the physical level, as the subgenre of "poetry on painting" was first developed in early medieval times, and such poems were often inscribed, as a calligraphic display, on the painting surface. Although many such poems from the period covered by this volume are detached and disembodied from the paintings they depict, the words are nevertheless meant to conjure visual images as well as represent the "spirit" animating the visual images. Sometimes, in the hands of a great poet like Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), writing a poem on a faded visual image—for instance, cranes (known in the Chinese tradition as immortal birds) painted on a crumbling wall behind an office building—became an occasion to reflect on the relationship between immortal art and its all-too-fragile physical medium.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHINESE WRITING SYSTEM

IMRE GALAMBOS

THE Chinese script is among the main writing systems of the ancient world, and with its over three millennia of documented history is the only one that has been in continuous use essentially in the same form until today. The earliest surviving examples of Chinese writing go back to the late Shang 商 (ca. 1300–1046) period, around 1300 BCE, which is considerably later than some of the inscriptions written in Egyptian and Mesopotamian scripts. This had led to the hypothesis that the Chinese script may have been imported from West Asia (e.g., Mair 1992), but to this day there is no credible proof supporting this theory. Instead, the available evidence suggests that the Shang script was an indigenous invention dating not much earlier than our earliest extant examples.

Starting with Jesuit contacts with China, from about the early seventeenth century there was a growing interest among Western scholars with regard to how the Chinese script compared with other writing systems of the world and what its nature was. Initially, Chinese characters were understood in the West as being able to communicate ideas directly without the need to be vocalized, that is, without the medium of language and speech. These arguments usually emphasized how people in various parts of China, and even in neighboring countries, who spoke different dialects or languages and thus were unable to understand each other verbally, could resort to writing as an efficient means of communication (e.g., Bacon 2008: 122–123; Nieuhof 1669: 157–161). Peter Stephen Du Ponceau (1760–1844) was the first to criticize this understanding, arguing that Chinese characters in fact represented words of spoken language and not ideas independently of language (Du Ponceau 1838: xxxi–xxxii). With the development of the academic discipline of linguistics came the belief that languages in general shared similar characteristics and that true writing was a graphic representation of language, which by definition was inseparable from pronunciation. In the second half of the 1930s, a heated debate developed in Western Sinology precisely on the issue of whether Chinese writing was ideographic or logographic, that is, whether the characters represented ideas or words (Creel 1936; Boodberg 1937; Creel 1939; Boodberg 1940; Lurie 2006). The debate subsequently subsided, but the issue is still of interest, even if most scholars today would agree that Chinese characters record Chinese language, whatever variety or dialect it may be, and that scripts in general cannot communicate ideas directly. Having said that, there is sometimes perhaps too much emphasis on the phonetic aspect of the script and its indebtedness to spoken language, disregarding the rich substratum of extraphonetic possibilities that can be, and indeed often have been, utilized in literary or political writings.

Before the archaeological discoveries of the modern age, the history of the script was seen in light of traditional accounts written during the Eastern Han 漢 dynasty (25–220). We know no earlier descriptions of the origins of writing, even though by this time the script had been in use for about a millennium and a half. The Eastern Han description of the origin of writing was so influential that it remained in use for the following 1,900 years and to some extent is still used today. Archaeological discoveries, especially those in the first half of the twentieth century, were invariably interpreted against this model, leading to a number of difficulties. In most cases, it is easier to abandon much of the traditional terminology, because the old terms do not seem to be identifiable with what is in front of us and, at the same time, they carry a wealth of additional connotations attached to them during the last two thousand years.

Native Accounts of the Early History of Chinese Writing

The earliest native accounts of the history of the Chinese writing system date to the Eastern Han period, around the late first century CE. These appear in the "Postface" of the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Explanation of Simple Graphs and Analysis of Composite Characters*, hereafter *Shuowen*), completed by Xu Shen 許愼 (d. ca. 149) around AD 100 (Boltz 1993: 429), and the roughly contemporaneous "Yiwenzhi" 藝文志 ("Monograph on Arts and Writings") of the *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*) (Hulsewé 1993: 129–130), even if the latter had probably been adopted from earlier sources. Although these two accounts display a number of important differences, in many respects they are quite similar, and it is likely that they ultimately go back to the same source. The version in the *Shuowen* is more elaborate and contains details not available in the *Han shu*, perhaps as the result of the *Shuowen*'s more pronounced interest in the script, as opposed to the literary focus of the "Yiwenzhi."

According to the *Shuowen* account (see also Chapter 6), the first signs were the work of the mythical ruler Pao Xi 庖犧 (also known as Fu Xi 伏羲) who composed the eight trigrams (*bagua* 八卦) of the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*) by observing the signs (*xiang* 象) of heaven and the patterns (*fa* 法) on the ground. This latter was also identified as the "prints of birds and beasts" (*niaoshou zhi wen* 鳥獸之文). In addition to this description, the *Shuowen* provides another story, according to which in the time of Shennong 神農, the Divine Husbandman, people were using knots on threads, but with time this proved to be insufficient to record their affairs. As a solution, Cang Jie 倉頡, historian of the Yellow Emperor 黃帝, created writing, once again by observing the prints of birds and beasts on the ground. Whether the story of Pao Xi and that of Cang Jie are two alternate myths or in fact represent consecutive stages of the same narrative, they signify that at the earliest stage writing was said to have arisen from imitating various patterns in the natural world, especially the footprints of animals.

The *Shuowen*, however, also provides technical details about Cang Jie's invention of writing, claiming that he first created the simple-component characters called *wen* 文 ("patterns") and then, by combining the forms and sounds (*xing sheng* 形聲) of these, the multicomponent characters called *zi* 字 ("name, character"). The word *zi* is explained as referring to the multiplication (*ziru* 孳乳) of characters, implicitly connecting it with *zi* 子 ("child, offspring"). Yet the dichotomy between *wen* and *zi* is clearly based on the two syllables of the word *wenzi* 文字 ("writing, script"), which by Han times, but not much earlier, was a commonly used binom. Xu Shen separates the binom into its constituents and rationalizes them as two distinct items, a point of view also reflected in the title of the *Shuowen*: (i) "explicating simple characters" (*shuowen* 說文) and (ii) "dissecting complex characters" (*jiezi* 解字). This explication of the meaning of the words *wen* and *zi*, however, is unattested in other early sources and may not reflect a historically accurate etymology.

Even if the terms *wen* and *zi* did not signify a distinction between complex and simple characters, Chinese writing in general indeed consists of single-component or multicomponent graphs, which by definition represent two sequential stages. As to the principles according to which characters were composed, the *Shuowen* identifies the following six principles, calling these *liushu* 六書, or the "six scripts" (English translation of terms adopted from Boltz 1994, 144–145).

(1) *zhishi* 指事 ("indicating the matter"): expressing concepts inferentially or symbolically, rather than through pictorial representation;
(2) *xiangxing* 象形 ("representing the form"): depicting objects graphically as pictographs;
(3) *xingsheng* 形聲 ("formulating the sound"): combining a phonetic and semantic component;
(4) *huiyi* 會意 ("conjoining the sense"): putting together two characters and use their semantic values to approximate the meaning of a new word;

(5) *zhuanzhu* 轉注 (“revolved and redirected [graphs]”): rotating existing characters to represent cognate words (this explanation is only a conjecture, because the *zhuanzhu* category is hard to interpret, mainly because very few characters are explicitly identified as belonging to this category);

(6) *jiajie* 假借 (“loaned and borrowed [graphs]”): borrowing existing characters for their phonetic value to represent new words.

The *Shuowen* account continues with more specific details about the subsequent history of the script, describing how a certain historian called Zhòu 籀 from the court of King Xuan of the Zhou 周宣王 (r. 827/825–782 BCE) compiled a work called *Dazhuan* 大篆 (“Great Seal Script”), in which he modified the so-called “ancient script” (*guwen* 古文), allegedly used by Confucius (551–479 BCE?) and Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 (fl. fifth century BCE). With the decline of Zhou rule, regional powers grew in strength, eventually forming the seven large states of the Warring States, which were no longer controlled by a central authority and thus had their own languages and scripts. According to the *Shuowen*, this situation changed when the First Emperor of the Qin 秦始皇帝 (r. 246–210 BCE) brought the regional states under his control and created a unified empire. His chancellor Li Si 李斯 (ca. 280–208 BCE) proposed to unify the script and discard everything that did not agree with the Qin script. As a means of promulgating the new standard, leading officials created three different textbooks, each of which relied on *dazhuan* characters of historian Zhòu, at times heavily abbreviating and altering those. The new script was, says the *Shuowen*, the *xiaozhuan* 小篆 (“small seal script”) script. The Qin empire also saw the appearance of *lishu* 隸書 (“clerical script”), which primarily grew out of the need for a simple and easy way of writing in the newly founded bureaucracy. Following this, a variety of different calligraphic styles came into being, with additional styles emerging later on.

This traditional account of the origin and early history of the Chinese script over time became extremely influential and lay at the basis of all subsequent discussions concerning the history and nature of Chinese characters. Considering it in the light of the intellectual milieu of the Eastern Han period, when it was written, it is apparent that Xu Shen did not compile the *Shuowen* purely for linguistic or philological purposes but saw the script as the prerequisite for successful government (Boltz 1994: 150–151). In the “Postface,” he stressed that “writing is the foundation of the classics and the arts, the beginning of royal government; it is the means by which people of the past reach posterity, by which people of the future know the past” (Galambos 2006: 143). It is this belief in historical continuity that is reflected in his overview of the history of writing. Part of this perspective on history was seeing the Han as reimplementing the central power of the Zhou that had allegedly preceded the chaos of the Warring States period (481–221 BCE) (Galambos 2006: 143–144). Accordingly, Xu Shen’s account portrays the Qin unification of writing as a restoration of an original order that existed before the world sank into disorder, which inevitably signified a general moral decline. He sees orthography, and the script in general, as symptomatic of the moral and political situation.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE AND THE EARLY STAGES OF THE SCRIPT

The twentieth century yielded an unprecedented amount of manuscripts and inscriptions, and these allow us to reinterpret the origin and early development of Chinese writing. This is not to say, however, that similar discoveries were completely absent in earlier times. We have records of old manuscripts coming to light from at least Han times. One of the earliest recorded cases was the discovery of *guwen* documents in the old residence of Confucius, which allegedly yielded copies of documents dating back to the Xia and Shang dynasties, as well as copies of the *Lunyu* 論語 (the *Analects*) and *Xiaojing* 孝經 (*Classic of Filial Piety*) written in the so-called tadpole script (*kedou wenzi* 科斗文字) (Kong Anguo 孔安國 [d. ca. 100 BCE], "Preface to the *Classic of Documents*" *Shangshu xu* 尚書序). These documents were transcribed into the modern script and promptly integrated into scholarly discourse. To name another famous incident, in 279 several texts, including the *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 (*Bamboo Annals*), were found in the tomb of King Xiang 襄 of Wei 魏 (r. 318–296 BCE) in Ji 汲 County, modern He'nan province (Shaughnessy 1993). Later on, during the Song dynasty (960–1279), a general interest in collecting antiquities was yet another important trend that brought ancient inscriptions into the focus of scholarly attention, resulting in a number of important works on epigraphy and paleography.

In general, these premodern textual discoveries were evaluated according to the traditional understanding of the nature and history of writing, ultimately going back to the Eastern Han accounts. Indeed, the trend of interpreting discoveries within the framework of the traditional model of the Chinese script continued to the modern age, and can be met with even today. One of the major sources of problems is that it is difficult to match archaeological material with what is being described in early sources. We cannot unambiguously identify what terms such as *dazhuan, zhòuwen* ("the script of [the historian] Zhòu"), and *guwen* refer to with regard to the inscriptions and manuscripts that come out of the ground today. English translations such as "great seal script" are of course also flawed, as they rely on the idea that the *zhuan* 篆 script was used on seals, a notion that goes back to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western encounters with China. Similarly, it is hard to classify the peculiar type of script used on the relatively large number of bamboo-slip documents from the ancient state of Chu 楚, and it is evident that we cannot ascribe it to any of the categories mentioned in the *Shuowen*, apart from calling it a regional script. Yet these bamboo slips are clearly not exceptional, because a considerable number of them have been unearthed in recent decades, and some contain important parallels with transmitted texts well known from traditional scholarship.

Therefore, current research tends to avoid using the traditional Chinese terms, choosing instead descriptive terms according to the media, time frame, provenance, use, and other characteristics that can be associated with the material. The archaeological material has also forced us to re-evaluate the history of Chinese writing and make significant modifications to the traditional model. Among the most important materials in this respect are oracle-bone inscriptions produced by the Shang and Zhou peoples around the thirteenth to eleventh centuries BCE. These were divination records carved onto turtle shells and bovine scapulae by royal diviners, and today they represent the earliest examples of Chinese writing (Keightley 1978). They are not mentioned in traditional sources and thus seem to have been completely forgotten by the time Han intellectuals turned their attention to the history of their script. Likewise, there is no record of the variety of pottery marks found at Banpo 半坡, Jiangzhai 姜寨, and other Neolithic sites, which may possibly represent a form of proto-writing, although their connection with each other, and especially with the late Shang script, is still unsubstantiated.

Even though the archaeological material provides important clues to the origin of Chinese writing, it does not fully resolve the problem. Opinions vary on how far the oracle-bone inscriptions are removed from the initial stage of the script, ranging from decades to centuries. But the inscriptions nevertheless provide firsthand evidence about a stage in the history of the script earlier than that known to the Han dynasty scholars who formulated the traditional models. Accordingly, our understanding of how Chinese characters were born somewhat differs from traditional accounts. Instead of the *liushu* model, starting from the Republican period of the twentieth century Chinese palaeographers advanced the *sanshu* 三書 ("three scripts") theory, which itself went through several stages of modifications (Tang 1935; Chen 1956; Qiu 2000). Generally speaking, this theory considers that the overall majority of characters were formed according to three principles, and these principles may also represent three evolutionary stages. According to Chen Mengjia's 陳夢家 (1911–1966) model, advanced on the basis of Tang Lan's 唐蘭 (1901–1979) original idea, the three types of characters were (i) pictographs, (ii) phonetic loans, and (iii) semanto-phonetic compounds (Chen 1956: 75–83). Qiu Xigui 裘锡圭 suggested replacing the category of pictographs with that of "semantographs" (Qiu 2000: 106).

According to William G. Boltz, the three stages of the development of Chinese characters were (i) the zodiographic (i.e., graphs originally drawn to depict objects were chosen to represent words of the language), (ii) the multivalent (i.e., pre-existing characters were used for writing new words, either adopting the phonetic or semantic values of the original character), and (iii) the determinative (i.e., additional—either semantic or phonetic—components were added to characters to differentiate them). Boltz also asserts that the same principles were at work at the birth of other major writing systems of the world (Boltz 2000). This naturally leads to the conclusion that the Chinese writing might have also evolved into a syllabary or an alphabet, and indeed, Warring States manuscripts demonstrate a tendency towards desemanticization. This trend, however, was arrested by the Qin-Han standardization of writing and the scholars' attitude towards the script and the tradition it embodied (Boltz 1994: 168–177). In a sense, this evolutionary potential was accomplished by later phonetic systems that stem from Chinese characters, such as the Japanese *kana*, the *nüshu* 女書 ("female script") from Hu'nan province, and the *zhuyin fuhao* 注音符號 (“phonetic symbols”) introduced during the Republican period and still used in Taiwan.

Orthography

Recent archaeological discoveries also provide material for reconstructing subsequent developments in the history of the Chinese script. One of the most interesting aspects is the transition from the Warring States period to the dynastic era, especially the Qin and Han periods. A striking contrast with the traditional accounts of this transition is that there is little immediate proof of the unification of the script during the time of the First Emperor of the Qin. For example, the edict plates officially issued by the Qin government display a surprising degree of orthographic inconsistency, and the same variability is also evidenced in Qin and Han steles (Galambos 2006: 35–39). This indicates that the reforms may not have been as sweeping as described in Han sources, which in any case tended to overstate the strictness of Qin administrative and punitive measures. Moreover, the transition from Warring States scripts to the clerical script seems to have taken much longer than a few years, and there is evidence that the clerical script was used long before the unification of China. Similarly, the regional characteristics of scripts did not disappear with the reign of the First Emperor but are evidenced even in some Han dynasty tombs.

Nevertheless, even if it took significantly longer than Han sources claimed, the transition to the clerical script was a major episode in the history of writing. The process, called *libian* 隸變 or *liding* 隸定 (“clericization”), essentially involved a component-level transcription of pre-Qin characters to clerical ones (Zhao 2009). In the majority of cases, the transcription was straightforward and the new characters consisted of the same components as the old ones. Yet there are also many cases when the structure of new characters did not reproduce the orthography of old ones. One of the reasons behind the discontinuity of orthographic structure was the variability of the script, a phenomenon amply demonstrated by the archaeological record (Galambos 2006). Scribes and other literate people in early China—and all the way through modern times—often wrote characters, especially complex ones, with variable structure, attesting to the relatively flexible attitude towards orthographic uniformity at the time. Technically speaking, these variants were not seen as “mistakes” but merely alternate, and perfectly acceptable, ways of writing the same character.

There is some anecdotal evidence that writing characters incorrectly may have influenced records left for posterity. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Mr. Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals*) includes an amusing story that involved Zi Xia 子夏, one of the main disciples of Confucius, who was known for his literary skills and his supposed role in transmitting and editing the classics, including the compilation of the Mao commentary to the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*). The story describes Zi Xia's encounter with a textual problem while on the road:

> When Zi Xia was going to Jin 晉, he passed through Wei 衛, where someone read a historical record, saying, "The Jin army and three pigs crossed the Yellow River" 晉師三豕涉河. Zi Xia remarked, "That is wrong! It should say *jihai* 己亥 [not "three pigs" 三豕]. The character 己 is close to 三 ('three'); and the character 豕 ('pig') resembles 亥." Arriving in Jin, he enquired about it, and the text indeed said: "The Jin army crossed the Yellow River on the *jihai* day" 晉師己亥涉河. (*Lü* 2002: 1527)

The story contrasts everyday attitudes towards writing with the high intellectual standard of scholars exemplified by Zi Xia, who was able to make sense of a phrase in an archival record when it was no longer comprehensible to others. His ability to decipher corrupted pieces of text betrays an overall sensitivity to textual and palaeographic issues. Despite his own literary sophistication, he was no doubt used to reading characters written with inconsistent orthography, which would have been quite common during his time. The story does not condemn the writing habits that led to the corruption of the text but rather praises the skills of Zi Xia, who not only reconstructed the original phrase but also identified and explained the cause of the problem.

Han sources also contain occasional references to the significance of correct and consistent writing, usually in the context of criticizing mistakes. For example, the *Shiji* 史記 records how the official Shi Jian 石建 submitted a proposal but accidentally wrote the character *ma* 馬 ("horse") with one stroke missing, and was terrified of the consequences of his negligence (*Shiji* 103.2766). The correct way of writing characters is also an issue raised by the famous Han bibliographer and editor Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) in his "Appendix" ("Fulu" 附錄) to the newly compiled *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), where he complained that the books he had to work from had a multitude of mistakes and often omitted half of the characters, writing, for instance, the character *xiao* 肖 in place of *zhao* 趙, or the character *li* 立 in place of *qi* 齊. Even though Liu Xiang calls these mistakes, these were by no means unusual forms of those characters, as is amply evidenced by newly discovered manuscripts and inscriptions. Liu Xiang's attitude towards these nonstandard characters demonstrates that despite their common use at the time, at least toward the end of the first century BCE intellectuals and officials were concerned with orthographic consistency and the standardization of the script. Because the transmission of early Chinese texts to later periods involved multiple stages of editing by such standardization-minded scholars, our corpus of transmitted literature from the pre-Han period is based to a significant degree on their efforts. In contrast, manuscript sources that have not gone through such normalization typically reveal a more flexible, or even haphazard, attitude towards orthography.

Nonstandard forms were not limited to manuscripts but were also commonly carved on medieval stone inscriptions. Judging from the available material, ordinary scholars and scribes not only had little interest in trying to avoid using such characters but at times purposefully chose such forms for the sake of diversity, perhaps as a way of making the calligraphy and the text more interesting. With the shift to paper manuscripts, character variants remained in common use, despite the complaints voiced by elite scholars. For example, in the sixth century Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–ca. 591) complained about the proliferation of nonstandard characters not only in the popular sphere but also in the classics and the commentaries (Galambos 2011: 400). Indeed, the Dunhuang manuscripts, the bulk of which come from the ninth and tenth centuries, display an amazing variety of nonstandard variants. While we may question how representative the manuscripts from the northwestern garrison town of Dunhuang are for the whole of China, we see a very similar picture of orthographic flexibility in stele inscriptions that survive from Central China. Since medieval times, variants on paper manuscripts have been commonly referred to as *suzi* 俗字 ("popular or vulgar characters"), in contrast with the *zhengzi* 正字 ("correct characters") that represented the official standard. Judging from manuscript evidence, texts produced in an official capacity were written in a relatively standard orthography. Most impressive in this respect are Tang Dynasty (618–907) official documents and Buddhist sutras commissioned by the Tang court—these were normally written in a meticulous hand with no variants whatsoever. As we move toward less official types of manuscripts, the number of *suzi* greatly increases. Especially manuscripts containing works of vernacular literature and students' writing exercises are irregular, in terms of both handwriting style and orthography. In general, the less skilled the handwriting is in a manuscript, the more *suzi* we are likely to find in it. In addition, such manuscripts may also replace characters with others that have the same or similar pronunciation (phonetic borrowing), betraying the lack of concern not only for the structure of particular characters but also for which character stands for which word.

When dealing with variant forms, we should keep in mind that orthographic standards changed from one time period to the next, and one generation's variant may have been another's standard form. For example, the character *gao* 高 ("tall") was at times written as 髙, and today the latter is usually referred to as a variant. Yet this form, called in Japan *hashigodaka* はしご高 (i.e., the character 髙 with a middle section written as a ladder), was the official standard at certain periods during the Tang (Ishizuka et al. 2012: 86–87). Unfortunately, as we do not have records of what the standard was at any given point in history, this information can only be accumulated piece by piece on the basis of officially sanctioned manuscripts and inscriptions (Ishizuka 2012). Some medieval dictionaries (e.g., *Ganlu zishu* 干禄字書, *Longkan shoujian* 龍龕手鑑) attempt to distinguish standard characters from nonstandard ones, but they are generally unspecific with regard to the chronological aspect of their usage. The situation is further complicated by the fact that what these dictionaries claim to be the standard does not always accord with actual practice and may instead represent a prescriptive ideal to which they subscribed. For instance, the eighth-century dictionary *Ganlu zishu* follows the *Shuowen* in recognizing 朙 as the standard form of the character *ming* 明 ("bright"), even though this form is almost never used in Tang manuscripts and therefore cannot have been the standard (Galambos 2011: 399).

Despite the seemingly haphazard nature of *suzi* characters, they were anything but random. Regardless of their popularity, the variants we see in medieval manuscripts were surprisingly stable, and many of them remained in use for over a millennium. In fact, a significant portion of the *suzi* seen in the Dunhuang manuscripts survived in the handwritten tradition up to the twentieth century, and many of them served as the basis for the simplified characters used in Mainland China today. The continuous use of the same *suzi* for many centuries testifies to the continuity of manuscript culture in medieval and early modern China, regardless of the recurring periods of political disunity and chaos. The surviving manuscripts from Dunhuang contain relatively few variants that do not commonly occur in other manuscripts, and most such cases are outright mistakes made by inexperienced copyists or people with a relatively low level of literacy.

Literacy

We possess little information about the extent of literacy in early and medieval China. The wide range of excavated texts points to literate communities, but in most cases it is hard to estimate which groups and how large a segment of the overall population were producing and using these texts. As the Japanese example tells us, the presence of early inscriptions did not necessarily entail literacy even on a small scale, because writing could be, and at times certainly was, employed nonverbally for reasons of prestige and power (Lurie 2011: 15–66). In China, where writing is indigenous and has a more direct connection with the language than in early Japan, similar considerations would nevertheless have been at play. The oracle-bone inscriptions were produced by literate diviner groups, but it is difficult to judge whether the Shang kings or anyone else besides the diviners, and presumably the spirits, were expected to be able to read them. It is hypothesized that during the Western Zhou period, the transcription and archival of the sometimes quite lengthy court audiences would have been a sizable challenge to literate personnel at the court, and thus the practice would have contributed to the increase of literacy and its spread beyond the confines of the court (Falkenhausen 2011, Li 2011).

The literary and philosophical texts of the Warring States texts habitually talk about learning and its application for taking an office. Although it is possible that this culture of learning and ritual education involved a significant oral component, there is no doubt that written texts were also a vital part of it. The literate population probably consisted of the elite layers of society, those who ruled and those who helped them to rule. Education was a means of control and was largely in the hands of clan members, and lineage narratives constituted the basis of written knowledge (Cook 2011: 302). The development of various schools of learning and the eventual transmission of their masters' teachings in writing corroborate the prevalence of literacy, even if for a relatively small portion of the total population. This is further corroborated by excavated Warring States manuscripts, many of which were clearly produced within the framework of a highly advanced manuscript culture, which could not have existed without an active base of people involved in various forms of literary production and use.

It is possible, however, that we underestimate the extent of literacy and that it was not limited to the elite, but some commoners also possessed basic literacy skills. The *Mozi* 墨子, for example, discusses certain regulations which had to be posted in public places for commoners, who were expected to understand them (Yates 2011: 341–342). Military personnel would have been required to write reports to, and read orders received from, their superiors, and there are surviving specimens of letters sent by ordinary Qin soldiers back home (Yates 2011: 362–363). It is possible that the soldiers who sent these letters did not write them themselves but had to rely on someone else's help in their unit to write them on their behalf. Even so, this case still suggests that writing was relatively widespread among the nonelite sections of society and that even those who were not, or not fully, literate could make use of writing. There is also indication that some women in the early dynastic period would have been literate, especially those who ran businesses or were heads of households, as they would have been motivated, and in some cases required, to interact with the administrative and legal systems of the state (Yates 2011: 364–367).

The vast quantity of surviving manuscripts from Dunhuang confirms the prevalence of literacy in medieval China. Most of this material is Buddhist in content, demonstrating that this was a highly literate religious tradition that explicitly encouraged the dissemination of written scriptures for the sake of accruing karmic merits. There were undoubtedly different levels of education among members of the *saṃgha*, ranging from eminent monks who composed elaborate commentaries and sermons in elegant language to those who could only follow on paper the texts they already knew. But the monastic community on the whole was no doubt highly literate, and written scriptures played a major role in the lives of monks and lay believers. Communities of other faiths—Daoists, Christians, and Manicheans—were just as reliant on written texts and developed their own textual traditions. The Dunhuang manuscripts reveal that even lay education was closely connected with Buddhism, as numerous colophons testify that lay students were learning literacy skills in local monasteries and making copies of secular and religious texts alike (Zürcher 1989). In fact, a considerable number of manuscripts, including works of popular literature, may have been produced as part of such educational activity (Mair 1981).

Naturally, this does not mean that the majority of the population was literate. Many documents (contracts, land deeds, association circulars, etc.) found in Turfan and Dunhuang illustrate that people often could not even sign their own name and instead used various marks and mutilated characters. Unfortunately, there is little information on what segment of the population was illiterate, and the question is further complicated by the peripheral location and multilingual character of these regions where not being able to write Chinese characters did not automatically entail illiteracy. Finally, it is worth remembering that, as in most cultures, literacy was never a binary concept; there would have been many levels to it, depending on social background, vocation, and exposure to writing. As it is the case even today, the literacy needs of a farmer would have been quite different from those of the educated elite, and the two would have represented vastly different levels of textual sophistication, which would have inevitably shown in the quality of the manuscripts they produced.

Chinese Characters beyond the Border

The Chinese script, along with the massive corpus of religious and secular literature written in it over the centuries, formed the backbone of Chinese civilization, creating a textual tradition stretching from the Bronze Age until today. Yet the dynasties that ruled over the territory of today's China were ethnically and culturally diverse, and calling them "Chinese" is only a convenient simplification. From the medieval period, the same script was also used by peoples who lived beyond the boundaries of the Chinese states and spoke different languages. The spread of the Chinese script was closely connected with the spread of Chinese-type Buddhism, and in many cases Buddhist texts functioned as the primary vehicle for the spread of the script. Among the most important countries that adopted the Chinese script were Japan, Korea, and Vietnam (Kornicki 2008). Of these, only Japan continues to use the Chinese script, intermixing it with two kinds of *kana* syllabaries, which ultimately also derive from Chinese characters.

Texts written in Chinese characters on the Japanese archipelago can be documented starting from the fifth century, while widespread literacy appears from the seventh and eighth centuries (Lurie 2011: 1). With the widespread use of the script, different ways of reading developed. One of them was phonetic reading, which entailed reading a character using its Chinese pronunciation, or more correctly, a Japanese approximation of its Chinese pronunciation. At the same time, characters would also have a native Japanese reading that depended on what word they represented. In Korea, analogous methods of reading Chinese characters developed, and by at least the seventh century the Chinese script and texts written in literary Chinese were in common use in the states of Koguryŏ 高句麗, Paekche 百濟, and Silla 新羅. In Vietnam, a Chinese-style civil service examinations system was introduced in 1075, in which the Confucian classics comprised the bulk of the curriculum. All formal writings were done in literary Chinese (*Hán văn* 漢文), whereas for the vernacular literary tradition a native writing system called *chữ nôm* 字喃 ("southern writing") was in use from around the fifteenth century (for a more detailed discussion of the Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese use of the Chinese script, see Chapter 33).

Because Japan, Korea, and Vietnam still exist as distinct countries, they are most commonly mentioned in the context of the spread of the Chinese script. Nevertheless, there were other regions where the script was also used, either in its original or modified form. The Uighurs of Gaochang 高昌 (around present-day Turfan 吐魯番, Xinjiang), for example, in addition to the variety of phonetic scripts employed to write their language (e.g., Runic, Sogdian, Brahmi, Uighur), also used Chinese characters in Buddhist commentaries and sutras. Excavated texts demonstrate that they often intermixed Chinese characters in texts written with the Uighur script, much as it was and is still done in Japan, where the phonetic *kana* are mixed with Chinese characters. In doing so, the

Uighurs vocalized the Chinese characters, depending on the context, either in Uighur or according to a received Chinese pronunciation (Takata 1985, Shōgaito 2004). Again, this received Chinese pronunciation did not reflect how Chinese was spoken in Gaochang at the time of writing the text but was based on the Dunhuang dialect of the ninth and tenth centuries, adapted to the phonetic structure of spoken Uighur. The Uighurs seem to have limited the use of Chinese characters to Chinese Buddhist texts.

The Chinese script also served as the basis for the so-called Siniform scripts in northern China (Kychanov and Kara 1996). Among these, the large Khitan script (*Qidan dazi* 契丹大字) was introduced in 920 by Emperor Taizu 太祖 (r. 907–926) of the Liao 遼 dynasty (Kane 2009). In contrast with the predominantly phonetic Khitan small script (*Qidan xiaozi* 契丹小字), the large script was logographic and consisted of characters modeled after the Chinese example, at times modifying existing Chinese characters and even directly adopting some of those. The Jurchen 女真 large script of the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234), invented around 1120, was in turn based on the large Khitan script, further modifying that. Shortly after founding the Xixia 西夏 state, the first Tangut emperor Li Yuanhao 李元昊 (r. 1032–1048) introduced a native Tangut script which was also inspired by the Chinese script, although much more loosely than in the case of the Khitan or Jurchen scripts. None of the approximately 6,000 Tangut characters was borrowed from the Chinese script, yet the strokes were unmistakably those of Chinese characters. Not only that, but the structural principles of character formation were also those of the Chinese script.

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CHAPTER 4

LITERARY MEDIA

Writing and Orality

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A literary work can exist today in a dizzying array of formats, from ink marks on paper to ones and zeros electronically encoded, from words spoken once to a small audience at a poetry reading to lyrics heard by millions over the radio. While we might associate this wide array of textual reproduction with the modern digital age, the textual environment of Classical Chinese literature was itself strikingly diverse. People sang poems at parties and intoned them at funerals; they wrote letters on scented paper and cast hymns on bronze; they carefully copied works into personal collections stored securely in monastic vaults and scrawled them drunkenly onto the walls of taverns. While much critical work on Classical Chinese literature has historically oriented itself toward abstract, almost platonic ideas of a "work" that exists independent of any particular material manifestation, archeological finds of the last century have given scholars opportunities to pay much closer attention to the material media of literature from these earlier periods and to earnestly take up the Shakespeare scholar David Scott Kastan's claim that "literature exists, in any useful sense, only and always in its materializations, and that these are the conditions of its meaning rather than merely the containers of it" (Kastan 2001: 4).

The different media of literary production and reproduction influenced Classical literature's formats, structures, and transmission. Certain media enforced strict limits, while others allowed considerable freedom. Some could preserve a text for millennia but hamper its circulation; others lent themselves to rapid but temporally bound transmission, resulting in a brief period of popularity that we know about through secondhand accounts, while the work itself no longer exists in any form. I use "media" here in a broad sense that encompasses not only visible objects such as bamboo slips and brushes, but also voice, sound, and memory. Literature was produced, preserved, and transmitted in these forms as well. As much as writing was arguably a more widespread and advanced activity in pre-print China than it was anywhere else in the world, it was always closely tied to the oral, both in its literary structures and practices.

Early Writing Media

The earliest extant written documents from China are the inscribed scapulae of cattle and plastrons of tortoises that record the divinatory acts of the Shang 商 (ca. 1300–1046 BCE) royal court. These "oracle bones" do not appear to have been used for writing that would fall into even our broad category of literature, and were rarely used after the fall of the Shang. They do not appear in the historical record until their rediscovery in the modern period. At the same time, excavated oracle bones hint at a much larger world of literary production than that for which we have extant evidence. Traces of cinnabar and some form of black ink on the bones, together with a vermillion inscription on an excavated Shang jade, indicate the use of a brush as a writing instrument going back much further than the time of the earliest extant excavated examples (Bagley 1999: 182; Tsien 2004: 22). An early form of the character *ce* 冊, meaning here a document consisting of bound bamboo or wood strips, appears in these documents as well, indicating that such a writing medium was already in use, though the earliest surviving examples are from many centuries later.

The great preponderance of extant objects containing writing from the succeeding Western Zhou period (ca. 1045–771 BCE) are excavated bronze vessels and weapons. It is in the inscriptions on these objects that we find what one scholar has called "the fountainhead of Chinese literature" (Kern 2010: 12). Bronze vessels served a range of purposes during this period (and up through the Warring States period [481–221 BCE]), from the private and domestic to the public and ceremonial, making it problematic to characterize them with any single description. Some inscriptions seem strictly bureaucratic, while in others we find the same sort of literary language used in sections of the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*, hereafter the *Poems*) and other received literary works dating from the early Zhou. The substantial number of surviving inscribed bronzes (which, though numbering in the thousands, are clearly but a fraction of those that must originally have been produced) and their evident importance in elite society at the time give strong indications of a robust culture of writing.

The durability of the material from which they were made has led to inscribed bronzes being our main set of textual sources from the pre-imperial period, but this should not imply that bronze was the primary medium for general textual production in that period. Though we do not have surviving examples until hundreds of years later, it is clear that strips of bamboo (and, on occasion, similarly shaped slips of wood) were used contemporaneously with inscribed bronze casting and likely much earlier as well. Bamboo has been cultivated in China for thousands of years and had a northern range that overlapped with the central Zhou cultural sphere. It grows quickly and requires only limited preparation (cutting, drying, and the removal of the green surface layer) to ready it to serve as medium for writing with a brush and ink (Tsien 2004: 113–114). The traditional manner of writing Chinese in vertical lines likely originated with writing on bamboo strips and was carried over to other media. After the strips were written on, they would be bound with strings of hemp, silk, or leather and rolled up into scrolls, also a format that would be largely continued when paper became the dominant medium centuries later.

Bronzes and bamboo are representative of a distinction between two broad types of writing media that will remain valid even up through the spread of printing: those used for ordinary writing (including both composing and copying) by individuals and those used primarily for public display. Cast bronzes and the engraved stone of later periods were clearly of the latter category. It is unlikely that any author ever composed a literary work by impressing onto a bronze casting mold or chiseling into stone. These were instead media used to record works that had already been composed and written down on more malleable (and, alas, perishable) media such as bamboo, wood, or silk (and later paper). Inscriptions on bronze vessels, in most cases, were meant specifically to disseminate, or at least to display, texts to an audience. They are manifestations of literature in a completed state, in which the text has been purposely fixed in a particular form by a collaborative effort extending well beyond the author. Writing on lighter materials, such as bamboo, silk, and paper, was more individual. While these media could be used for display and certainly disseminated literary works to a broader audience in many contexts, they were also used widely by individuals to record texts for their own personal uses, whether their own writings or those of others.

Any single object might fit securely into one of these two categories, but in the Western Zhou period in particular the categories were closely intertwined. Bronze vessels were but the final product of a process that involved producing and reproducing text in a range of media. The character *ce*, noted above as representing the word for bound bamboo strips, is an interesting example of the intersection of different textual forms. For inscriptions on bronze vessels conferring official appointments, the text of the appointment proclamation was first written down on bamboo, then recited aloud at the appointment ceremony, and finally cast into bronze on a bell or vessel. While the bound bamboo strips would not have had the full display value (or the longevity) of the cast bronze, they played crucial ritual roles. Descriptions of appointment ceremonies tell of how the bamboo document of "royal command" would be bestowed upon the appointee, who would then attach it to his garment as part of the ceremony (Li 2011: 274). This document would serve as the basis for the bronze inscription, but would itself (along with other copies on bamboo) likely be stored in the royal archive and in that of the family of the appointee (Shaughnessy 1999: 299).

WRITING AND THE ORAL CONTEXT

As we move from the Western Zhou into the Spring and Autumn (770–481 BCE), Warring States, and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) periods, though inscribed bronze objects continue to be cast, the more extensive spread of writing on bamboo and, to a lesser extent, silk came to play a much larger role in the spread of writing in a range of contexts. But before further discussion of these and other light writing materials, it is important to give a sense of the oral (and aural) contexts in which written texts were produced and circulated. As we can see from the above brief description of an appointment ceremony, written documents functioned as different modes of display that, in some cases, depended on the oral reproduction of the texts they contained to have their full impact. In the case of commemorative verses cast onto bronze vessels, it is likely that the number of people who would have heard these verses orally performed is far greater than that of those who would have read the actual written text with their own eyes. The aesthetic structures of these verses, with their close similarities to the *Poems*, indicate an intention for oral performance as well (Kern 2000: 94–95).

Kern further argues that while the character *ce* does indicate a noun meaning "bamboo document," it can also function verbally to indicate the recitation of the text on that document and is indeed functioning in this way in descriptions of appointment ceremonies found on Zhou bronzes, where he thus translates the term as "announcing" or "reciting" (Kern 2007: 152–154). Other scholars disagree with some aspects of Kern's interpretation, though none dispute that a key part of the ceremony was the recitation of the text that would be cast in bronze and given to the recipient of the appointment (Shaughnessy 1999: 298; Li 2011: 274–277).

Later, memorial stone stelae in the Han, even though intended to be *read* by a wide audience and publicly displayed as written texts, circulated orally as well. As K. E. Brashier has convincingly argued, these texts were meant not only to be read but to be committed to memory and transmitted by recitation. The stelae frequently exhort the reader to orally perform the texts inscribed on their surfaces, using terms such as "intone" (*yong* 詠) and "chant" (*song* 誦). They also display a set of structural and aesthetic devises such as cliché, exaggeration, loci, and verse used by a range of literary traditions throughout history as mnemonic aides (Brashier 2005: 254–260).

Returning to the Zhou and considering the *Poems*, we again find a context in which the dominant medium is oral. There is evidence indicating that the *Poems* circulated primarily through memorization and oral recitation, with texts written out on bamboo playing only secondary roles prior to the Han. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, the particular variant patterns in excavated bamboo manuscripts of the *Poems*, which are predominantly of a graphic, rather than phonetic, nature, indicate a relatively stable oral text that was represented by a wider array of written forms. In one interpretation, this substantial graphic instability suggests that the written text may have been fully understandable only in the context of individual instruction and oral transmission between teacher and student (Kern 2010: 27–28; for an opposing view, see Shaughnessy 2006: 260). In certain contexts, the written documents may have functioned as prompts or mnemonic aides; they were subsidiary to the oral versions that students would memorize and quote at rhetorically appropriate moments. Although the limited surviving sources can make it difficult to determine exactly how a document would have been used, some recent scholarship has looked at punctuation and other formal aspects of texts found in excavated documents to make informed speculations that while some were created primarily to transmit the written texts they contained, other were meant to refresh the memory for texts already learned or to aid oral recitation (Richter 2011).

This dependency on a larger oral context for the production of meaning was not limited to poetic texts; it was true of what are often categorized as the "philosophical" texts of the Warring States period as well. Some scholars have argued that the rhetorical structures of excavated documents imply a missing oral context. Dirk Meyer sees certain texts as being "context-dependent" in that they only functioned meaningfully within the context of oral explanation, often in a group setting. He argues that these context-dependent texts, perhaps surprisingly given their inherent ambiguity and corresponding need for further explanation, actually proved *more* likely to survive into later times. Their ambiguity allowed them to function in a range of different explanatory contexts and take on different meanings in different interpretive communities (Meyer 2012: 1, 227–228, 232). The ephemerality and changeability of the oral contexts thus proved a key component of longevity of written texts dependent on them. While this oral context is now lost to us, we can envision it involving both oral circulation of the larger sets of ideas that gave concrete meaning to the written texts and oral composition, as new explanations and rhetorical contexts were created over time to accompany the written texts.

Meyer sees a clear connection between changes in philosophical debate and the media used to record and convey texts. In his view, the increased use of bamboo as a writing material in the late Warring States was key to the emergence of syncretic abstract philosophical thought, as more and more thinkers had access to written versions of texts and would record their own ideas in writing as well (Meyer 2012: 240–241). The change he identifies is a gradual one, and it is really in the Han, by which time the use of bamboo was extensive and even the more expensive medium of silk appears to have been in common use for writing (one writer mentions carrying a four-foot strip to take notes during his travels), that we can observe some of the trends Meyer identifies having a substantial impact on the literary tradition (Tsien 2004: 130). The compilation, reorganization, and, in many cases, rewriting of the pre-imperial tradition by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and his collaborators at the Han imperial library (see also Chapters 3 and 11) represent a radical moment of syncretization, a concentrated version of the lengthy and diffuse process Meyer sees taking place in the philosophical realm that here reaches into all areas of literary production. A mass of written materials, many of which depended on an oral context to produce meaning, were now stripped of that context and put into new forms and orders in which they could exists as full autonomous written texts. This transformation, in which the material context of more widely used lightweight writing materials and the administrative and educational needs of the Han bureaucratic state intersected, resulted in a fully new version of pre-imperial literature based on identifiable authors, self-contained "books" divided into chapters, and distinct schools of thought associated with those books. The transition was not always smooth, and these newly compiled works often suffered from the lack of the oral context in which their constituent parts had first come into being. As Kern has pointed out, excavated texts from the late Warring States are often more coherent and meaningfully structured in mnemonic terms than versions we know from the received tradition (Kern 2010: 62). Prior to relatively recent work on excavated materials, the Han-created tradition was the only tradition known to us, and the old oral context, so crucial to the creation of meaning in pre-imperial times, was replaced by commentaries trying to make sense of the gaps and deficiencies that its absence created.

It is important to be clear that there is substantial scholarly disagreement about the relative roles of writing and orality in the pre-imperial period. Edward Shaughnessy and others correctly note that the "concrete" evidence consists entirely of *written* texts. While this is necessarily true, the evidence that other scholars use in support of a more orally focused paradigm has proven persuasive in many contexts as well. There is, however, little disagreement that texts existed throughout this period in a range of both written and oral forms. The relative importance of these forms and the precise roles they played will continue to be points of dispute as more archeological discoveries emerge.

PAPER AND OTHER SURFACES

Perhaps no other invention has played as crucial a role in preservation and dissemination of knowledge in human history than paper (for detailed accounts, see Hunter 1978; Carter and Goodrich 1955; Tsien 1985; Pan 1998). The impact on literary culture in China was tremendous as well, though we must not forget that this impact developed over the course of many centuries and is most accurately seen as the continuation of trends that had begun with the increasingly widespread use of bamboo and silk as writing media. Paper consists of macerated plant fibers that have been suspended in water and then thinly spread on a fine screen, either by lifting the screen through the water or by pouring the solution onto the screen. It was most likely first discovered in the form of felted layers of fibers left on mats that had been used in the process of washing rags. Once dried, the crossed fibers of the felted layer give it structural cohesion and allow it to be peeled off from the base mat. Remarkably, this basic form and the essentials of its manufacture have changed little over the millennia, and, in spite of frequent claims that it will be replaced by other technologies, the production and consumption of paper continues to increase year by year.

As with most materials and practices of great cultural importance, the "invention" of paper was traditionally attributed to a single individual, in this case the second-century CE eunuch Cai Lun 蔡倫 (ca. 50–121 CE), who was credited with making the discovery in 105 CE. Cai Lun is a known historical figure, and he was almost surely responsible for certain improvements in the production of paper, in particular an expansion in the types of raw materials that could be used, but archeological finds have shown that paper had been in use for hundreds of years by Cai Lun's time. Tomb excavations have pushed the use of paper back well into the second century BCE, with early examples including wrappings for medicines on which the names of the medicines are written and even a piece of paper with a map drawn on it with black ink (Tsien 2004: 146–147). These specimens likely show the limits of writing on paper at this earliest stage of its development.

By the second century CE, however, it was being produced in a form refined enough for writing using the long-extant fur-tipped writing brush and either lampblack or black ink (primarily made from pine soot); by the third century, its use as a writing material in China was widespread.

The advantages of paper over previous writing media are clear. It was easier to produce and prepare than silk, and far cheaper. By the third century, a wide range of materials were being used in paper production, including hemp (and related bast plants), the bark of mulberry trees, and many different grasses and reeds. The most prized paper continued to be made from hemp. Early versions were likely made from macerated soaked rags and fishing nets, with production becoming more specialized later on. Hempen and rattan paper were the primary sort used for official governmental documents in the Tang dynasty (618–907) and were also favored for calligraphy and related uses. The supply of rattan gradually ran out, and both it and hemp (which had many other important uses as well, especially in textiles) were largely replaced by bamboo by the end of the eighth century (Tsien 2004: 163).

Though most paper could likely be written on in its raw form, it was improved by the use of sizing (such as starch) to keep ink from running and by treatment with various insecticidal powders and dyes to keep the bookworms at bay. These would often give the paper a yellow hue, and many of the paper scrolls discovered in the caves at Dunhuang are of this sort (and have, of course, survived for well over a thousand years). Beyond preservative uses, different dyes added to paper's aesthetic appeal as well, with certain colors associated with specific regions and uses. The famed calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361 or 321–379) was said to have used violet-colored paper. By the Tang period, at least ten different colors were used for personal stationary, with the best known likely being the hibiscus-dyed red note paper created by the courtesan Xue Tao 薛濤 (760s–830s), who used it to correspond with some of the most famous poets of the age (Tsien 1985: 92–93). Abundant and cheap though it was, paper remained a scarce enough resource that even finer sorts used for writing could be repurposed for less exalted uses. The scholar Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–ca. 591) thus specifically points out in his *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 (*Family Instructions for the Yan Clan*) that "if paper has the language of the Five Classics or the names of great worthies, we do not dare use it for unsanitary purposes" (Yan 1980: 66).

It is important to keep in mind that, just as the creation of writing did not bring an end to oral culture, paper did not quickly replace other writing materials, even after its production methods had reached a high degree of sophistication and the paper was of high quality. Bamboo continued to be used as a writing material, especially in outlying areas, up to the fourth century. Silk, likewise, was in relatively widespread use though the sixth century (Tsien 2004: 98). Though bamboo and other forms of wood were cumbersome to transport and more difficult to write on, they had properties that recommended them over paper in certain contexts. One was ease of production. In comparison to a material like the parchment used in medieval and Renaissance Europe, which was both expensive and difficult to produce (requiring the long and unpleasant process of tanning animal skins), paper production was simple and cheap. Bamboo, however, required even less processing and grew abundantly (and quickly) in many regions. Wood and bamboo could also be reused in ways that paper could not. In a manner similar to the reuse of wax tablets and parchment in Europe, writing on wood and bamboo could be shaved off, resulting in a fresh surface. This method could be used to correct an error or to reuse a set of strips for an entirely new text. The fact that wood shavings with characters written on them were discovered at Dunhuang (likely the result of reusing wood for practicing writing) shows that these materials were used well after the spread of paper in certain areas (Tsien 2004: 114–115).

Even in the Tang period, long after paper had become the dominant writing medium for all forms of literature, poetry in particular continued to appear on a wide range of surfaces, from the walls of monasteries to the thighs of courtesans. Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) famously claimed of his friend Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) that his works "are written on the walls of every palace, monastery, and post station" (Yuan 1982: 555). Inscribing poems on public surfaces was such a common practice in the Tang that it must have been difficult to walk through a city like Chang'an without encountering it at every turn. Monasteries, temples, taverns, and post-stations were particularly popular locales for such inscription, no doubt in part because frequent visits by travelers could potentially result in widespread circulation of a poet's works. Some such places would install "poetry boards" (*shiban* 詩板) for poets to write on, perhaps so that walls would not need to be repeatedly whitewashed. There are similarities here, especially in terms of circulation, to the inscription of literary works on stone stelae. But while, as noted above, it seems unlikely that people ever directly composed in the medium of stone, they do seem to have composed poems by brushing them directly onto these various surfaces. There are thousands of poems surviving from the Tang whose titles indicate that they were written on public surfaces, and this number surely represents a fraction of the total that were composed in such circumstances through the period (Nugent 2010: 199–210).

The multitude of surfaces that met poets' brushes in this period notwithstanding, the widespread use of cheap paper of decent quality was a crucial development that had a massive influence on literary culture through the period. It is difficult to get an accurate account of the extent of paper production, but the totals for administrative use can give us a broad sense. The Department of Public Revenue alone is recorded to have used some five hundred thousand sheets of paper annually in recording the budget in the ninth century. The Academy of Scholarly Worthies (*Jixian yuan* 集賢院) is said to have used sixteen million sheets to copy its contents of approximately five hundred thousand scrolls (Yang 2000: 11). While similar figures do not exist for private use, it was clearly ubiquitous among the literate classes. We see by this period a confluence of material conditions and social developments in which the direction of influence is difficult to determine. The wide availability and affordability of quality paper unquestionably increased the ease of acquiring the materials necessary for literary training. While the literate elite still made up a very small sliver of the overall population, it was larger in both gross and fractional terms than at any time in Chinese history. The higher number of literate men allowed for the further development of the bureaucratic system, entry into which was increasingly influenced by success on the civil service exam, or at least training in the types of writing required for that exam (see Chapter 7 for more detailed discussion of the exam system). These factors in turn resulted in a much greater demand for paper and thus incentives to streamline and increase its production.

Over the course of this period during which paper became the dominant writing medium, from the end of the Han through the Tang, we also see important changes in the conceptualization of literary production that are likely tied to these changes in the technology of writing. Perhaps the most striking is the increasingly close association between literary composition and writing. This may seem obvious, but as we have seen above, the written text was not necessarily seen as the *primary* conduit of literary works until the late Warring States or Han. Even then we often see literary composition conceived in oral terms. The "Daxu" 大序 ("Great Preface [to the *Poems*]"), now believed to have been put together in its final form in the first century CE by Wei Hong 衛宏 (fl. ca. 25 CE), famously states that "The affections are stirred within and take on form in words. If words alone are inadequate, we speak them out in sighs. If sighing is inadequate, we sing them" 情動於中而形於言, 言之不足故嗟歎之, 嗟歎之不足故詠歌之 (tr. Owen 1992: 41). The focus here is very much on sound, whether of spoken words (*yan* 言) or sighs and songs. Though this statement has become canonical, it may well have been more of an ideological reaction against the increasing use of written text rather than a simple description of how poetry was composed. In either case, there is a clear focus on the oral that would soon change in accounts of literary production.

By the late third century CE, we begin to see literary composition conceptualized not in terms of voice but of writing. In his famous "Wen fu" 文賦 ("Rhapsody on Literature"), Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) describes someone composing a literary work as follows: "With strong feelings he puts aside the book and takes his writing brush/to make it manifest in literature" 慨投篇而援筆, 聊宣之乎斯文 (Lu 2002: 20; tr. Owen 1992: 94). It is not that sound has no role to play, as Lu Ji also writes "A stream of words flows through lips and teeth" 言泉流於唇齒, but there are constant references to the work of the brush as well. Interestingly, Lu Ji's rhapsody refers to the writing brush and silk (*hao su* 毫素), rather than paper, but it is likely the latter that was changing larger concepts of literary production. Liu Xie's 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*) also makes constant reference to the brush, rather than the voice, as the producer of literature.

This transformation is even more marked by the Tang, and the references we find in this period refer almost uniformly to paper. Two short passages from an essay attributed to the Tang poet Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 690–ca. 756) entitled "Discussion of Literary Ideas" (*Lun wenyi* 論文意) found in the eighth-century anthology of Six Dynasties and Tang writings on poetry and poetics preserved in Japan as the *Bunkyō hifuron* (*Wenjing mifu lun* 文鏡秘府論, *The Secret Treasury of the Mirror of Letters*) show that by that point writing, not voice, was firmly established as the final stage in literary composition:

> Now when one's writing is roused, first it moves the *qi* [breath, or vital energy]. The *qi* is born in the heart and the heart puts it forth in words. It is heard by the ear, seen by the eye, and recorded on paper (Kūkai 1983: 139).

> A poem is based on that which the mind is on intently. In the mind it is being intent; coming out in words it is a poem. The affections are stirred within and manifested in words, and only after this does one write them on paper. (Kūkai 1983: 129)

The debt here to the "Great Preface" is obvious, as is the continued association of poetry and the spoken (or sung) word, but something has changed as well. Writing might be the last stage that takes place only after the poem has already become an aesthetic whole, but it is a necessary one to transform the work into a material object.

Later in the dynasty, we find the stage of vocalization passed over altogether, as the compositional process goes directly from inspiration to realization as written text. In the influential description of his own compositional process found in his "Da Li Yi shu" 答李翊書 ("Letter in Reply to Li Yi"), the Mid-Tang writer Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) says of the emotions he is driven to express, "When they are grasped in the heart and pour from the hand, it comes like a flood" 當其取於心而注於手也, 汩汩然來也 (Han 1987: 170). The hand, like the brush it presumably holds, is no longer a mere recorder of the sounds that constitute the literary work, it is the primary conduit.

Han Yu's compositional process has a sense of spontaneity that we can trace back to the "Great Preface" model, yet one of the most distinctive changes in the conceptualization of literary composition in this period, and one closely tied to the increased focus on writing specifically, is the notion that composition is a lengthy and difficult process of decisions and revisions. Stephen Owen has described this notion of "working on a poem" as a move towards "the idea of poetry as an art rather than a transparent adjunct to experience" (Owen 1996: 108). The Late Tang writer Li Shangyin's 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858) "Li He xiaozhuan" 李賀小傳 ("Short Biography of Li He") includes the following description of the short-lived but highly influential Mid-Tang poet Li He's 李賀 (790?–816?) compositional technique:

> He would always go off riding a donkey followed by a young Xi slave. On his back he carried an old tattered brocade bag. If he happened to get something, he would write it down at once and throw it in the bag. When he went back in the evening, his mother had a serving girl take the bag and empty out its contents, and when she saw how much he had written, his mother burst out with, "This boy won't stop until he has spit out his heart." Then she lit the lamps and gave him his dinner. Li He next had the serving girl get what he had written; then grinding ink and piling up paper, he would complete them, at which point he would throw them into another bag. (Li 1998: 13; tr. Owen 1996: 113)

The final poem here is the end result of a process of production. It is very much a material object produced from other material objects. Throughout this passage there is an emphasis on the physicality and materiality of the different stages of the compositional process. Li He "gets," or "obtains" (*de* 得), the parts of what he will eventually assemble into a poem. He records these and "throws" (*tou* 投) them into a bag. The poet is exhausted and needs food and illumination to continue to the next stage of his work.

Again we see specific mention of the materials: ink is ground and paper piled up. When the poems are completed, they are again thrown into a bag. There is nothing here about sound, and though the moments of inspiration might be spontaneous, the process of turning them into literature requires the explicit expenditure of physical effort and material supplies.

This transformation of conceptions of the process of literary production is surely tied to the changes in material media on which that literature was produced. We can see, in this description of Li He's process (which, of course, may well have been an invention of Li Shangyin or merely the stuff of legend), a microcosm of the larger transition that Meyer attributes to the spread of bamboo as a lightweight writing material. Li He takes the scattered words and phrases that come into his mind and combines them in a new form; he gives them a new context within the structure of a poem, with the aesthetic requirements that form imposes. Whether Li He actually did compose in this way is beside the point. That Li Shangyin would imagine him doing so, and that this story would hold so much sway in the tradition, tells us that changes in material media had altered forever the way literature would be conceived.

The Continuing Roles of Orality and Memory

Though the invention and spread of paper in China led to the production of written texts on a scale greater than the world had ever known, orality and memorization continued to play important roles, even in the lives of the highly literate elite. Vocalization, for example, was often still a part of the composition process, albeit in more limited contexts. The *Wei shu* 魏書 (*History of the Wei*) portrays Emperor Xiaowen of the [Northern] Wei 魏孝文帝 (r. 471–499) regularly composing in an oral mode: "He was fond of literary writing. He would compose poems, rhapsodies, epitaphs, and hymns following his mood. There were great literary works that he would dictate orally on horseback, without a single character to be changed when they were complete" (*Wei shu* 7.187). Being on horseback or in other circumstances that would make writing difficult (ranging from being on a boat in churning waters to suffering imprisonment at the hands of the Tang rebel leader An Lushan 安祿山 [ca. 703–757]) is a common part of descriptions of oral composition in the Six Dynasties and Tang periods. Explicit mentions of oral composition appear to diminish in the later part of the Tang, but this mode of composition was still noted in titles, playing off the model of the "Great Preface," as a way to indicate an immediate emotional response to a specific circumstance. In the preface to his poem "Xu Ru ting mashang kouhao" 徐孺亭馬上口號 ("Orally Composed on Horseback at the Xu Ru Pavilion"), Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759–818) describes his frequent visits to a ruined pavilion containing moss-covered stelae with works of poets from earlier in the dynasty. Moved by the vicissitudes of time and the threads connecting the present and the past, he writes, “Thereupon, while on my horse I orally composed a single quatrain to lodge my melancholy” 因於馬上口號絕句詩一首以寄愀愴 (*QTS* 326.3657). More directly stirred by the present, Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) claims to have responded with twelve short poems entitled “Chengwen Hebei zhu Jiedu ruchao huanxi kouhao jueju shi’ershou” 承聞河北諸節度入朝歡喜口號絕句十二首 (“Upon Receiving the News That All of the Hebei Military Commissioners Had Entered the Court, I Was Joyful and Orally Composed Twelve Quatrains,” Du 1980: 1624–1629). In titles and descriptions such as these, we catch only the smallest glimpse of what was likely a very common practice. As poetry increasingly became an art requiring prolonged effort and revision through the course of this period, the notion that poetic composition was fundamentally connected to orality remains valid.

Just as works of literature continued to be composed orally, so were they passed on to others that way. Chapter 5 in this volume addresses the topic of oral circulation of literature in more detail, but it is worth saying a few words here on the important role memory played in the preservation and circulation of literature in these periods. Prior to the widespread use of paper, it is clear that literature was “inscribed” in the mind more often than it was written on a material surface. A key example is, again, the *Poems*, with variant patterns in excavated texts that indicate these texts were written down from memorized words rather than from physically present written characters. Similarly, the received tradition from this period, both poetic and philosophical, shows a close connection to these works’ original oral context. The extensive use of stock phrases, parallelism, repetition, and similar structural conventions indicates that these texts grew out of a world in which the works that survived were often those that could be committed to memory (Meyer 2012: 251).

While China appears never to have produced the kinds of systematic treatises on mnemonic methods that we find from Greco-Roman times through medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque Europe, it is clear that a strong memory was a praiseworthy personal trait even after memorization and orality were no longer the dominant mode of textual transmission. In biographies of Han and later figures, we frequently find such phrases as “after reading something once he was usually able to recite it from memory” (*Hou Han shu* 62.2058). Another passage says of its subject that “Whatever his eyes saw, he could instantly recite. Whatever his ears happened to hear, his heart would not forget” (*Hou Han shu* 80.2653). Even in this age of more readily available writing materials, cost remained a factor. The biography of Wang Chong 王充 (27–ca. 100), author of the *Lun heng* 論衡 (*Balanced Discourses*), notes: “His family was poor and lacked books. He would often visit the markets and shops of Luoyang and read the books they sold. After seeing them once he was instantly able to recite them from memory” (*Hou Han shu* 49.1629). It is worth noting that in all of these cases the presence of a written text is stated or implied. This was not the predominantly oral world of the pre-imperial period; memorization still played an important role, but it appears to have been increasingly based on what the eyes saw rather than what the ears heard.

This pattern continued into the post-Han periods. Xing Shao 邢邵 (ca. 496–561) of the Northern Qi 齊 (550–577) is described as casually setting texts to memory as a break from seemingly more recreational activities: "tired from drinking and playing around, he looked broadly through the classics and histories. He read through them quickly, remembering them after a single glance and not forgetting a thing" (*Bei Qi shu* 36.475). The Early Tang writer Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638) was reputed to have had a particularly capacious and accurate memory, with the ability to write down full texts silently and without error (*Jiu Tang shu* 72.2566). Later in the dynasty, Han Yu recounts a story originally told by Yu Song 于嵩 about his acquaintance, the famous, though ultimately defeated, general Zhang Xun 張巡 (709–757):

> He once saw Song reading the *Han shu* [*History of the Former Han*] and asked him, "Why do you keep reading this?"
>
> Song replied, "I've not yet mastered it."
>
> Xun said, "My way with books is that I read something no more than three times and I never forget it for my whole life."
>
> He then recited the book that Song was reading and did not get a single character wrong in the entire scroll. Song was surprised and thought that Xun just happened to be familiar with this scroll. He then randomly pulled out other rolls to test him and it was like this for all of them. Song took still more books from his shelves and tested Xun with questions. Zhang Xun smoothly recited each without hesitation. Song accompanied Zhang Xun for a long time and never saw him reading much. (Han 1987: 77)

The figures in these stories are, of course, extraordinary, and should not be taken to indicate the mental powers of the average literate man in the period. But there is every reason to believe that for poetry in particular, works were regularly committed to memory and circulated by passing through this medium at various stages. It is no doubt not mere coincidence that one of the most popular form of literature, "regulated verse" (*lüshi* 律詩), had a number of characteristics that made it particularly easy to memorize quickly. Parallelism, tonal alternations, rhyme, and brevity all had independent aesthetic appeal, but the fact that they were great aids to memorization surely assisted in the rapid circulation and survival of so many works in this form.

Terms such as "text" and "literature" inevitably privilege the written word, and there is no doubt that words written on physical surfaces played crucial, even defining, roles in the lives of the cultural elite in all the periods covered in this volume. These were people who understood their past and present through writing and hoped to extend their own legacy to future generations the same way, whether their words were inscribed on bronze, paper, or the walls of a tavern. Yet the diversity of media in this literary world remains striking. The words of the past came to life anew through constant recitation that put them in the ears and minds of new listeners. The poetry of a good friend was as likely to be heard as to be read in many cases. Classical Chinese literature exists for us today because it was written down, but we must remember that writing, important though it was, was only one of the forms in which it existed for those who created and first experienced it.

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CHAPTER 5

MANUSCRIPT CULTURE

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The term "manuscript culture" refers broadly to aspects of producing and circulating texts by hand-copying. Though it was scholars of medieval and Renaissance Europe who first undertook sophisticated analysis of the specific characteristics that distinguish manuscript culture from print culture, many of their insights and approaches are applicable to any context in which texts are reproduced by nonmechanized means. Whether the subject is a ninth-century Irish monk copying the Bible or a court academician in the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) a thousand years earlier, they both produced texts more slowly and with a far greater degree of variation in each copy, by intention or error, than would be the norm in later print-based contexts.

I organize my discussion here thematically, with the main topics being production, circulation, and change. Within each of these topics, in addition to thematic subtopics I will also deal with the issue of diachronic difference, covering a span of nearly two thousand years and writing surfaces ranging from bronze and bamboo to silk and paper. Works such as the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*, hereafter the *Poems*), the main text of which might have taken no more than one hundred pages of Tang paper, would have required over a thousand two-foot-long bamboo strips, resulting in a mass of material far more difficult to move from place to place. Such differences mean that while our main topics apply to the entire time span in question, the issues involved play out quite differently depending on the specific period.

PRODUCTION

Our focus in this section is on producing texts (or, more precisely, documents), as opposed to producing literary works. That is, it is not abstract notions of literary composition but rather the creation of material objects—written texts—with which we are concerned. Printing, after all, did little to change the mechanics involved in authorial composition prior to the invention of the typewriter. Long after printing became the dominant mode of textual reproduction, indeed well into the twentieth century, writers worldwide continued to compose literary works using a pointed object (albeit with a softer point in the case of a Chinese writing brush) they held in their hand. The important issue here is that prior to the spread of printing, each *additional copy* of their work was produced in this same manner.

The key features of textual reproduction in a manuscript culture are those of time and effort. Every single reproduction of a text required someone to write out every stroke of every character anew. A balance always needed to be struck between care—and thus in many cases legibility and accuracy—and speed. For professional scribes, evidence indicates that payment was made on the basis not of time spent but of objects produced. Different types of texts would also call for very differing degrees of care; many Buddhist texts discovered in Dunhuang and surrounding areas display a far more skilled and meticulous hand than do copies of popular contemporary poetic and narrative works from the same trove of manuscripts.

There was nothing "automatic" about the procedures of textual reproduction in the manuscript culture of pre-print China. Each individual copying of a text required an intentional decision to invest the time and effort, or money, involved. For the texts we are considering as literary (as opposed to, for example, administrative documents produced by the state) from this long period in China, textual reproduction was a task undertaken by both professional scribes and ordinary literate individuals. Beginning in the fifth century CE, we find numerous accounts of men who copied texts to earn money. Some did this as a sideline or as part of the process of their education, while others made it their primary occupation, working as household scribes for wealthy families (Tian 2007: 79–80). While we lack detailed accounts from the Tang of scribes who made their living copying literary works specifically, we do know that bookstores in the capital city Chang'an did a brisk business in the period and that there was a commercial market for poetry, especially by well-known poets in the later part of the dynasty (Nugent 2010: 214–220).

More frequent are descriptions of literary works being copied by authors themselves, or by their friends, families, and "fans" (*haoshizhe* 好事者). In these cases, which likely accounted for the largest part of the circulation of literary works, a text was almost always originally copied for a personal (i.e., noncommercial) reason. Authors most often copied their own literary works in order to give them to their friends or superiors. In the Tang, we see a full range of writers from Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) to the monk-poet Jiaoran 皎然 (ca. 720–ca. 798) depicted copying out selections of their poems to give to acquaintances and to those whom they would like to have as such. The famous friends Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) and their circle wrote about this with great frequency, but there is every indication that it was common among all elite men. An institutionalized form of this practice was known as "circulating scrolls" (*xingjuan* 行卷 or *wenjuan* 溫卷, lit. "warming scrolls"), whereby exam candidates and others seeking patronage or favor from influential men in the capital would circulate small sets of writings to these figures (see Chapter 7 for further discussion of the exam system). Indeed, the recycling and reselling of these scrolls (which were often discarded, unread, by their intended recipients) was part of the commercial book trade and resulted in a number of amusing anecdotes concerning candidates who bought such scrolls only to submit them under their own name to their original authors (Nugent 2010: 216–219, 223–224; Mair 1978).

When family members copied a writer's works, it was most often a younger relative either working at his elder's request or copying the literary collection of his father or uncle who had died. Bai Juyi writes of having his nephew copy out portions of his massive collection, and Pei Yanhan 裴延翰 describes collecting and copying the poems of his uncle Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852) in a preface to the latter's collected works. Wei Ai 韋藹 compiled and copied out the works of his older brother Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (ca. 836–910) while the latter was still alive; a disciple of the monk Qiji 齊己 (fl. 921) was charged with editing and copying his spiritual patriarch's poetic works after the latter unexpectedly passed away. These were labors of love and filial duty, but especially in the case of full collections, they were labors nonetheless. By a very rough estimate, copying out Bai Juyi's full collection would have taken a single person over a month of eight-hour workdays. Few writers before the Song were as prolific as Bai, and none seem to have had the same obsessive concern with maintaining their collection, but even more ordinary collections must have taken some time to compile and copy; that task does seem to have fallen primarily to younger male relatives. Indeed Han Yu's good friend Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814) once lamented that as he had no living sons to copy his writings, his "elderly chantings mostly just drift away" 無子抄文字, 老吟多飄零 (Nugent 2010: 223, 249, 255–257; *QTS* 584.6767).

A great deal of textual reproduction was undertaken by individuals simply to have their own copies of works they enjoyed or considered important. From the earliest stages of the use of paper as a writing medium, we see descriptions of the popularity of literary works being indicated by frequent copying. So many people were said to have copied Zuo Si's 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305) "Rhapsody on the Three Metropolises" ("Sandu fu" 三都賦) that, in what later became a cliché of praise, "paper in Luoyang grew costly" 洛陽紙貴. A related common phrase used to indicate popularity of a work was that "everyone copied and circulated it" 人皆傳寫.

Copying facilitated not only ownership of a work but mastery as well. The spread of affordable paper of decent quality made repetitive copying of important texts a regular part of elite education, but it was not only children who were seen as benefiting from such practice. Xiao Jun 蕭鈞 (472–493) of the Southern Qi 齊 (479–502) is said to have copied out all of the Five Classics, in part because having done so ensured that he would remember their contents (Tian 2007: 81). Zhang Shen 張參 (fl. 776) of the Tang is portrayed as having spent his twilight years writing out the text of the Classics as well, believing that "copying books was better than reading them" (Li 1978: 3.54). Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819) writes of the Buddhist Master Fangji 方及 that "Whenever he encountered the writings of an accomplished scholar, he would make a fair copy with his own hand and review it tirelessly" (Liu 2000: 25.666).

Not all "texts" that circulated did so based solely on written copies; circulation could often be based partially or even primarily on voice or the content of memory. It is clear that orality and memory played particularly important, and in some cases dominant, roles prior to the Han. We know that a great many texts were written down in this period because archeologists have found them, but the content of those texts, and the types of textual variation in particular, indicate that texts were often written down based on an aural or memorized source rather than a written one. Excavated texts of the *Poems* in particular display a substantial degree of variance that appears to be primarily based on paronomastic borrowings in which different graphs were employed to record the same word (Kern 2005: 178–179). This is a strong indication of oral circulation at some point in the transmission process. Written texts in this period existed in dependent relationships with memorized and oral versions. Some have argued that many written versions of pre-Han works would have been nearly impossible to read without the readers having previously been instructed in, and even committed to memory, most of the work in question, though this is not always apparent from the received (as opposed to excavated) versions of these works we have today (Kern 2010: 27–28). Likewise, many written texts would be reproduced orally as performances or ritual recitations, with such performances being key to their use and transmission (Richter 2013: 172; see also the discussion in Chapter 4 of this volume). The "manuscript culture" of pre-Han China was arguably as reliant on mouths speaking words (and ears hearing them) as it was on hands writing characters.

Even in later periods, when writing was clearly the dominant mode of reproducing literary works, there are numerous accounts of using oral exemplars when reproducing texts. Prefaces to literary collections often include comments that many of the author's works were scattered and lost and that some of the contents of the collection "were obtained from people's mouths" 得之於人口 or that they had been "circulated orally" 傳於人口. In his description of how he went about compiling the posthumous collection of his teacher, the monk Guanxiu 貫休 (832–912), Tanyu 曇域 notes that he sought out people who had committed Guanxiu's works to memory, or had "silently remembered them" (*QTW* 922.9604). Similarly, writing about compiling the collection of his brother Wei Zhuang, Wei Ai laments that written copies of many of the poems had been destroyed, leaving him to rely on "those that he could recite." He would also silently record his brother's scattered chantings (Wei 2002: 483–484).

CIRCULATION

For our purposes here, we can consider a text to have circulated when some or all of its content has been transferred from one person to another. A letter sent but never read has not, in the way we are using the term here, circulated; a letter that was written, never leaves the desk on which it was composed, but is read by a second person at that desk has. This distinction is important because our key issue is how literary works came to be known by an audience. Because most circulation involves textual reproduction, whether partial or full, outwardly manifest or occurring only in someone's mind, many of the issues discussed in the previous section will come into play here as well, with the role of orality proving especially crucial.

Our evidence for how texts circulated in the pre-Han period is limited, but much of it points to a web of inextricable connections between written and oral circulation. We see this in physical form in the excavated texts of the *Poems*, with their substantial variation in written graphs used to represent the same sound, and thus the same word, in the spoken language. While it is possible that any given excavated document may have been directly copied from another written exemplar, the types of variation across multiple documents strongly indicate that at some point along the process of circulation, and likely at many, these texts were reproduced from either an oral or a memorized source. In such a context we must be careful about our terms: if this is textual circulation, what constitutes the text that circulates? For the audience of the time we might say that the linguistic contents of the text circulates "successfully" even when the two copies of that text look very different because conventions of representing spoken sounds with written graphs had not yet stabilized. A teacher might recite a portion of the *Poems* to two students who then, immediately or later from memory, wrote down two very different graphic representations of what their teacher intoned. Yet if each of these students were to orally convey what they learned to their own students, the contents of those recitations might well be identical, and also identical to what they *heard* from their teacher.

The excavated witnesses give us a glimpse of a fluid and local textual world in the Warring States (481–221 BCE) and before. Circulation of such works as the *Poems* likely took place primarily within small groups of teachers and disciples. It is only in such a context of oral instruction and shared linguistic culture that these surviving written texts would lose their apparent opacity and seeming variation (Kern 2002: 164). Some scholars have argued that written instantiations of works like the *Poems* and what we now think of as philosophical texts are best seen as a secondary phenomenon, ancillary to the primary oral modes of circulation. They served as "repositories of didactic material"—small portions of a fuller educational context (Richter 2013: 172). Indeed many of these sorts of written texts could only continue to circulate in a context of continuous and repeated teaching and transmission within groups of teachers and students, both because they required explanation or previous understanding and because of their physical fragility (Lewis 1999: 55). As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 of this volume, there were textual media in early China far more durable than strips of bamboo, such as vessels cast in bronze and carved stone stelae; yet these too functioned in close connection to orality in terms of the way the texts inscribed on them circulated. Indeed the early historical tradition attributes the survival of the *Poems* through the Qin bibliocaust to the fact that people committed them to memory and transmitted them orally. The *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*) claims of these works that, "under the Qin they remained intact because they were recited from memory and not only [written] on bamboo and silk" (*Han shu* 30.1708).

With the increasing availability of higher-quality paper beginning in the third and fourth centuries, writing plays a much more dominant role in the transmission of literary works. The most basic accounts of literary works circulating take the form of clichés of praise similar to the comment that the popularity of Zuo Si's works caused the cost of paper in Luoyang to rise due to constant copying. We frequently find claims made of writers that their works were "widely circulated and copied among people" 人間盛傳寫, or that "each time he composed a piece everyone copied and circulated it" 每製一篇人皆傳寫 (*QTS* 617.7113; *QTW* 508.5165). These could refer to local circulation, such as the claim about the Early Tang poet Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (ca. 661–702) that "his writings were copied and circulated in Luoyang, and in the markets, shops, streets, lanes, and alleys they were continually recited," or of transmission across borders, as we see in an anecdote about emissaries from Korea and Japan who would visit the court and "all have people go copy [Zhang Wencheng's] writings and then leave; such were the distances to which his talented writings spread" (*QTW* 238.2412; Liu 1984: 129).

More revealing are descriptions of the specific ways in which literary works would pass from one hand to another. This process typically began with authors, who were often the first to make copies of their own works; in most cases they made these copies to pass along to other people. Throughout the Tang period, when poetry had become a truly social art, writers would be expected to have copies of some of their recent poems on hand to give to acquaintances (in addition to being able to recite a few upon request). They would also frequently send their writings through the official or unofficial post to friends stationed in distant parts of the empire. When visiting a friend and being shown some of his writings, it was not uncommon to copy some pieces out on the spot to take away and savor again later.

It was these sorts of copies, spread among friends and acquaintances, that would be sought out by later compilers putting together literary collections and anthologies. Such collections and anthologies, both large and small, played their own key roles in circulation, especially in the later parts of the period. The act of compiling gathered together works that had been scattered and might otherwise be forever lost. Collections protected these works as well; they gave them a context, both of other works by the same author and of prefaces, postfaces, and similar writings that further anchored them to the author and his biography. Anthologies of works by multiple authors drew connections between works in different ways, emphasizing the aesthetic or even moral value of the works included. Crucially, both single-author collections and anthologies not only gathered works together but also served as a base from which the works would go back into the world and circulate again. We have numerous accounts of people reading collections and anthologies—long and short, clearly partial or seemingly complete—and copying them anew (see Chapters 15, 19, and 20 for more detailed discussions of collections and anthologies).

This copying, we note again, took time and effort. As a result, people tended to copy only what they valued—whether for enjoyment or knowledge. This could happen on the scale of copying just parts of someone's collection: surely even Bai Juyi's closest friends and most ardent admirers still only took the time to copy out a limited number of pieces from his ever-growing collection. But it might also come into play on the scale of a single work. There are numerous accounts of people copying down individual lines or couplets from poems, with at least one writing manual from the Tang suggesting that those who desired to improve their own writing should keep on their person a small notebook of such excerpts. This practice was hardly new to the Tang; Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE), who, along with his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE), led the team of copyists and compilers who essentially created our received version of pre-Han literary tradition, had long before compiled such works as the *Xinxu* 新序 (*Matters Newly Arranged*) and the *Shuoyuan* (or *Shuiyuan*) 說苑 (*Garden of Persuasions*), which consisted largely of excerpts—often substantially reworked and reworded—from earlier works. The practice of "producing epitomes" (*chaoshu* 抄書), of copying out excerpts from other works, was an important part of literary culture following the spread of paper. Literate men would produce epitomes from works ranging from Buddhist sutras and Confucian Classics to histories and literary collections, both to aid their study and simply to possess their own copies of pieces and parts of works they particularly enjoyed or thought important (Tian 2007: 82–83; see also Chapter 10 of this volume).

Most of the manuscripts discussed thus far were intended for private reading by individuals. There are, however, other modes of circulation that were considerably more public. Poems were regularly inscribed on public places, and would often be transmitted to a broad audience and to distant locales through such a mode of transmission. There are over a thousand surviving poems from the Tang period alone that indicate in their title that they were originally inscribed on some sort of exposed surface (other than paper), and these no doubt represent only a small fraction of the poems that were disseminated this way (both from the Tang and from earlier periods). Poets would often inscribe a poem on a wall when paying a visit to an acquaintance, whether a friend, monk, or courtesan. While the audience for a poem on a friend's wall might be limited, the walls of monasteries and brothels were likely viewed by greater numbers of visitors. Some of the most popular spots for inscribing poems were, unsurprisingly, on transportation routes. There are examples of poems inscribed on bridges, mountain pass fortifications, taverns, and post-stations. Towards the end of the Tang, we find increasing mention of monasteries and post-stations in particular putting up "poetry boards" (*shiban* 詩板) specifically intended for the public posting of poems. There are also accounts of readers copying works from such locations and circulating them further (Nugent 2010: 199–207).

Certain features of public inscription anticipate aspects of the later print culture. Like printing blocks, a single publicly posted poem would serve as the template for multiple copies (though unlike impressions made by a printing block, each handwritten copy likely introduced variants, either intentionally or by accident). Publicly posted poems were also, like printed works, aimed at a more anonymous audience. When a poet copied out one of his recent poems to give to a friend, the circulation of his poem was circumscribed by that connection. The poem might circulate further, finding itself before the eyes of strangers, but the initial stage was an intimate one. When a poem was written up on the wall of a post-station, even its immediate audience could be unknown to the poet. Yet the poem itself maintained a tie to its creator, and could, though happenstance, still convey this connection to the right audience. One of the most poignant accounts of the circulation of literary works in the Tang describes Yuan Zhen's chance discovery of a poem by his friend Bai Juyi on a pillar of a riverside inn. As Bai describes it, "He saw that there were a few lines of characters on a dusty wall. Reading them, it turned out that it was one of my old poems . . . but he did not know who had inscribed it. [He] could not stop sighing, then composed a piece and sent it to me together with my original poem that he had transcribed. When I examined this poem, it turned out that it was a quatrain that I had given to a Chang'an singing girl, Ah Ruan, fifteen years before when I had just passed the exams" (Bai 1988: 922). By the time Yuan Zhen encountered Bai's poem fifteen years after its original composition, it had surely been read, recited, and copied by many dozens of people who had never met its author. But a chance encounter with that author's closest friend sent the poem back with a new context and additional layers of meaning that surely went far beyond what Bai Juyi imagined when, as a young man in Chang'an, he dashed off a quick verse for a singing girl.

CHANGE

Bai Juyi does not tell us whether his poem had changed over the course of fifteen years of circulation—he likely would not have remembered his original composition with enough precision to know—but it is clear that the process of circulation did change literary works over time. Indeed this is one of the fundamental features of manuscript culture and has important implications for our understanding of the stability of literary works and our notions of the role of the author.

The most basic sort of change that figures prominently in manuscript culture is that of simple loss. Indeed, a surprising aspect of this story of Bai Juyi's poem is that the poem survived at all. Literary works, especially when written on such perishable materials as bamboo strips and paper, were fragile things, in constant peril of fire, rot, reuse, and general neglect. While the extent and effectiveness of the famed Qin bibliocaust may well have been grossly exaggerated by historians in the succeeding Han period, literary works were destroyed in massive numbers when rebellions arose and ruling houses were overthrown. What was perhaps the most tragic true bibliocaust occurred at the hands of one of history's greatest bibliophiles. In 554, facing the end of his rule, the Liang ruler Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (Emperor Yuan 元帝, r. 552–555) set his great library of over 140,000 scrolls alight, destroying what may well have been the largest collection of literary works in the world up to that time (Tian 2007: 94–95). While his true motivations will never be known, the effect was clear: our understanding of pre-Tang literature would always have massive gaps.

Of course, a great number of works faded away in much less dramatic fashion; they simply did not meet readers who liked them or thought them important enough to expend the effort required to copy them. The survival of Bai Juyi's poem to Ah Ruan *was* exceptional. It was the kind of verse—written not to secure the author a place in literary history or send to possible patrons, but to fulfill the immediate needs of a very casual social situation—that likely suffered the greatest extent of loss. Yet much poetry that was written (and recited) was of precisely this sort.

Anthologies and encyclopedias (*leishu* 類書; see Chapter 10 for a detailed discussion) simultaneously preserved works, or at least portions of works in the case of the latter, and stand as indications of what was not preserved. They are the material manifestations of the selective pressures, particularly acute in a manuscript culture, that result in some works surviving while others do not. For every work that makes it into an anthology, individual collection, or encyclopedia, there are dozens left out. This proportion of loss is often noted explicitly by compilers of individual literary collections. For encyclopedias in particular, we can see it in the great number of works excerpted that we know today *only* from such excerpts, as the full works from which they came long ago fell out of circulation.

It is worth noting further that, especially in the case of individual collections, the compilers sometimes left works out not out of loss or neglect, but because they used the collections to craft a particular view of the writer. The compiler might intentionally omit works that did not fit their criteria, as when Lu Chun 陸淳 (d. 805) compiled a redacted set of the Early Tang poet Wang Ji's 王績 (590?–644) works from which he "expunged those words of action and made complete [Wang Ji's] ambition to be unbound" 祛彼有為之詞, 全其懸解之志 (Wang 1998: 388; see also Chapter 15). Similarly, Fan Huang 樊晃, dissatisfied with the subset of Du Fu's poems circulating orally in his region, put together a new collection of Du Fu's works in six *juan*. In his preface he expresses concern that the poems circulating in the eastern areas are more frivolous, and thus people there "have never known that he has lofty and upright compositions" 曾不知君有大雅之作 (Du 1980: 2237). We can easily imagine a similar economy at work but left unstated in the compilation of countless other literary collections from the period. Works that conformed to a compiler's notion of the author's proper style would be included; those that did not would be left out. Such a pattern might not only create a skewed presentation of the full range of a poet's works but also result in spurious attributions being accepted while accurate ones were not.

The fires of war, the slow decay of neglect, and the biased hands of compilers hardly ceased their work with the invention and spread of printing, but the nature of textual reproduction in a manuscript culture meant that any given work was likely to exist in far fewer copies than would printed works. It was often the case that a specific copy of a work was the *only* copy of that work in existence, or one of only a very few. We see numerous accounts of compilers hunting far and wide in taverns and private homes on the off chance that they would be able to find pieces by the author whose works they were attempting to bring together. The survival of a work in the age of manuscripts was always tenuous, with even popular works falling out of circulation and disappearing. Wei Zhuang's long narrative poem "Qinfu yin" 秦婦吟 ("Lament of the Lady of Qin") was one of the most famous and beloved poems of its day, with accounts of it being memorized and recited so widely that its title became part of Wei Zhuang's nickname. Yet Wei Zhuang eventually sought to disassociate himself from the work and did not allow it to be put into his collection. Ignored (or perhaps never seen) by Song 宋 (960–1279) printers, the famous poem disappeared for a thousand years before being found in multiple copies in the caves at Dunhuang. It is now the longest poem that survives from the Tang, but were it not for the dry desert air and the luck that protected the sealed-off caves from destruction, it would have been lost a millennium ago.

For works that did survive, a different sort of change was always at work. Alteration is an inevitable consequence when texts are copied by hand: circulation creates variation. Scholars studying medieval European literature have long known this to be the case, as the durability of parchment has left them with a substantial trove of diverse manuscripts that embody this variation. While scholars working on pre-print Chinese literature long lacked these sorts of materials, there were strong indications of variation in no longer extant manuscripts, with printed editions beginning in the Song including numerous annotative notes that "one version says" (*yizuo* 一作), followed by an alternative character or phrase. It was not until certain archeological finds became available over the last century—for scholars of the Six Dynasties and Tang, the finds at Dunhuang, and for scholars of early China, bamboo strips and silk manuscripts excavated from Warring States and Han tombs and an increasing number of inscribed bronzes—that scholars have had access to a substantial mass of written materials produced in the periods they studied. As we examine these materials, we begin to get a clearer picture of the complex array of variation whose echoes persisted into the age of print.

In the case of the Dunhuang manuscripts, we might consider much of this variation unintentional. That is, as texts were copied, the scribes made "mistakes"—changes in the original that they did not intend. This could encompass a range from accidentally writing a homophonous or orthographically similar character to "eye skips," that is, unintentionally moving to a later section with the same character or a similar phrase while copying and skipping over the text in between. In manuscripts from Dunhuang, it is often relatively easy to identify such errors when multiple copies of work have been found. Many times an accidental phonological or orthographic substitution will result in a character that simply does not (and, more importantly, *did* not) make any sense in context, and it is clear which character was likely intended. In some cases, scribes (or later proofreaders) would catch a mistake and write in a correction.

The situation is much more complex for manuscripts from the earlier periods, especially before the Han. Because regional differences in scripts were far more pronounced and homophonous substitutions very common, it is considerably more difficult to determine definitively that a given instance of variation is due to scribal error rather than to different transcription practices. As discussed above, the vast majority of variants in the excavated versions of the *Poems* are graphic in nature and involve the use of different written characters to represent the same sound (and thus word) in the spoken language. This practice was widespread, and we can thus reasonably assume that this variation was not a hindrance to understanding for the scribes and readers of the precise geographic and linguistic contexts in which these manuscripts were produced. However, already in the Han we see this graphic variation causing difficulties of interpretation that would only grow worse as time passed and readers were increasingly separated from the texts' original productive context (Kern 2002: 162, 164; Shaughnessy 2006:145–146).

In more recent work on European manuscript culture, there has been a great deal of resistance to scribal changes being reflexively described as errors, as in many cases such an assumption conceals the probability that often such alterations were intentional. Scribes, especially for secular literary works, were not mindless copyists whose only goal was to produce a perfectly faithful reproduction of the document in front of them. Rather, they saw themselves as free to alter works as they saw fit, whether to correct what they deemed to be errors or to actually improve the work they were transmitting.

While attitudes towards the integrity of texts in pre-print China do not correspond precisely to those of medieval Europe, it is clear that scribes and others in China also intentionally altered texts in the process of transmission. We have seen above how works such as encyclopedias excerpted and rearranged the written works they preserved; there are numerous accounts of professional singers, whose repertoire was based in part on contemporary poetry, truncating and altering well-known poetic works in their performances as well. A similar situation has been extensively documented from the written evidence of the practice of troubadours in medieval France, and in both cases this was probably far more common than we can determine from surviving written records. In many cases, these improvisations went the way of most oral poetry: experienced only by their immediate audience and gone forever after the performances ended. In the case of China, we can still find traces in multiple versions of *yuefu* 樂府 poems that were written down and made it into the later print cultures, or in the vastly different versions of certain popular poems from the Tang that became traditional songs of drinking and parting from friends.

Texts were altered in nonperformative contexts with some regularity as well. It is clear that in the pre-Han period philosophical texts would be rearranged and reworded in the process of transmission with little concern for fidelity to an original text, whether in written or memorized form. In later periods, there are accounts of poets revising their own poems many years after having originally composed them. Some revisions would be for aesthetic reasons, others for practical ones. For example, young men in the capital who circulated their works to possible patrons or influential officials had to carefully revise their writings to avoid the personal taboo characters of the recipients. As these *xingjuan* were apparently recycled and sold in bookshops to candidates who would then pass them off as their own, the accumulation of changes over time could be substantial (Nugent 2010: 231; Moore 2004: 150; Fu 1986: 281–282, 284).

More telling perhaps are accounts of readers altering texts by other writers. Some revision of works was likely common as a stage in the compilation of literary collections, but this could take place in less formal contexts as well. A late Tang anecdote about an exam graduate surnamed Wei 韋 provides a glimpse of what may have been a common practice. He once had a favored courtesan "copy out the poems of Du of the Ministry of Works (i.e., Du Fu). The version he had acquired was full of errors and lacunae. When the courtesan corrected them as she was copying, the meaning and order of the text was clear. Because of this, Wei was especially infatuated with her" (Li 1998: 2085;

Tian 2005: 8; Nugent 2010: 229–230). As modern readers long accustomed to thinking of the poems of Du Fu as great works of art that are unique expressions of the master's intent, we find such an attitude shocking. But though Du Fu's place in the Chinese literary pantheon was already on solid ground by the late Tang, his poems were not yet objects of textual scholarship per se. They were objects of admiration and even awe, but still part of a literary landscape that had not yet become the subject of study it would be in the Song. The implication of this anecdote is not that Wei and his concubine thought Du Fu was a bad poet and that one could make his poems better by changing them, but rather that she and Wei believed she was a sufficiently skilled reader to recognize "errors" that had crept into the poems over a century or so of transmission and could aptly correct these errors so that the proper "meaning and order" (*wenli* 文理) of the text would be restored. Texts were seen as fluid, but not all changes were for the better.

IMPLICATIONS

Grasping the realities of manuscript culture does not simply let us better envision the material conditions of literature in pre-print China, it deepens, and in some cases substantially alters, our understanding of that literature and its relationship to the received tradition. Excavated versions of the *Poems* have provided evidence that the received version of the collection may not be fundamentally different from what was apparently circulating around 300 BCE. Only a single poem of the twenty-six appearing in these excavated manuscripts is not also present in the received version. While it is true that the texts found on the excavated documents differ substantially from those found in the received *Poems*, the sounds, and thus the words the graphs represent, show far less variation. In other words, our received version of the *Poems* gives us a pretty good idea of the versions of the work from the late Warring States (Kern 2010: 21). At the same time, the graphic variation implies that the literary culture surrounding the *Poems* in the Warring States likely included a substantial oral component of which we can only see traces in the received tradition. Some scholars dispute the notion that this graphic variation and its relative diminution in the Han period are convincing evidence of a shift from oral to primarily written modes of transmission (Shaughnessy 2006: 260). In this view, the standardization of written versions of the *Poems* and other texts is due not to an increase in written transmission but to the gradual standardization of the writing system (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the writing system). In either case, attention to the specific attributes of manuscript production lets us understand this earlier context in a way that would be very difficult were we to focus only on received texts.

Similarly, excavated manuscripts of the writings of the pre-Qin philosophical "schools" have necessitated a reassessment of these works as well. There are strong indications that though there were many written texts in this period, the transcription practices they used required a previous understanding of the text to make sense of its written version, which would have been primarily nonlinear and reliant on oral exchange

(Richter 2013: 172, 174). The written depended on the oral in a way that it would not just a few centuries later. These manuscripts further imply that in many cases not only was there no real sense of separate "schools" of thought prior to the Han, but that our very notion of a "book" with a specific "author" attached is very much a result of the compilation, recopying, and reorganization undertaken by scholars in the early Han court (Kern 2010: 64; for a different account of the "messiness" of excavated pre-Qin texts, even to an audience of only five hundred years later, see Shaughnessy 2006: 131–184). It is not necessarily that the received tradition has not passed on the thought of early China, but rather that the tradition has passed it on through the filter of Han and later compilers, who molded it into something far more organized and compartmental than it was in its original context.

Understanding the realities of manuscript culture brings into sharp relief the extent to which the received tradition has been mediated by the choices made by copyists, compilers, and editors over the centuries. This in turn reveals just how tenuous the connection between an author and the specific wording of works attributed to him can sometimes be. We can see the impact of manuscript culture in this regard even when we no longer have access to contemporaneous manuscripts. By meticulously examining specific choices between variants inherited from pre-print manuscript versions of Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 (Tao Qian 陶潛, 365–427) poetic works, Xiaofei Tian has shown how the received versions of Tao Yuanming's works, to a meaningful extent, not only are the work of Tao himself but also reflect a long history of copyists and editors who had particular (and evolving) notions of what Tao would, or must, have written. Choices that seemed obvious to a Song editor may well obscure readings that might have made more sense to readers in Tao Yuanming's own time (Tian 2005: 12, 221).

When we *do* have documents surviving from pre-print times, the disjunctions can be even more jarring (as we have seen with the excavated bamboo texts). A final example from the Tang illustrates this nicely. One of the High Tang poet Li Bo's 李白 (701–762) most famous works, "Qiang jin jiu" 將進酒 ("Bring in the Ale"), includes a line that has long been seen as the highlight of the poem, even as a definitive declaration of Li Bo's exuberant and confident poetic personality. In the received version, dating back to a Song woodblock print edition, it reads "Heaven gave birth to my talents, they must be put to use!" 天生我才必有用. Scholars have used this line not only to characterize the poet himself, but also to date the poem to a specific period in his life when they feel he would have been most likely to express such confidence that his talents would indeed be put to use by the state. None of the three manuscript versions of this poem found in Dunhuang, however, ends the line this way. Instead, the last three characters of the line in those versions read "I have outstanding talents" 有俊才, which, in fact, better conforms to the likely rhyme scheme of the poem. These manuscript versions are currently the oldest texts of the poem we have and predate the Song edition by at least a century. This does not mean that they are in some sense more "original" in that they more closely match the words of the poem as Li Bo wrote it. We simply cannot know; examination of manuscript cultures consistently shows that earlier witnesses are not necessarily more "accurate." We do, however, now know that this poem circulated with quite different wordings during the Tang itself. We may think that the most unsettling possibility here is that one of the most famous declarations of Li Bo's poetic persona was written not by him but by later editors of his writings, but it is perhaps just as interesting to consider the possibility that Li Bo himself wrote his famous declaration as we have come to know it, only to have it changed into something far less striking and circulated in that form in a time not far removed from his own life (Nugent 2015).

Many issues characteristic of manuscript culture do not end with the spread of woodblock printing beginning in the late eighth century. The connections between manuscript and print cultures were arguably much stronger in China than they were in Europe following the spread of movable type printing beginning in the late fifteenth century. Even with the dominance of print in many areas of textual production in China, works continued to be regularly copied by hand well into the twentieth century. Printed copies of works would thus be transformed into manuscripts, and those manuscripts would often be the basis for a new print edition (Chia 2002: 11). Moreover, the xylographic method that defined print culture in China was more fundamentally based on handwritten manuscripts than printing with movable type would be. Every printing block was directly based on a handwritten copy that was pasted on it to be carved in reverse (Chia 2002: 42). Thus understanding manuscript culture and its influence on literature and society gives us invaluable insights not only into the period prior to the spread of printing, but into the full history of literary production and circulation in China until very recent times.

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CHAPTER 6

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CALLIGRAPHY AND PAINTING TO LITERATURE

RONALD EGAN

It is widely recognized that calligraphy and painting have a special relationship to the literary arts in the Chinese tradition. It would eventually become commonplace to speak of poetry, painting, and calligraphy as the "three excellences" (*sanjue* 三絕) or the three arts that the person of refinement ideally would master. Even if it was rare for an individual to excel at all three, the idea that a single person might cultivate them jointly speaks to the intimate connections and shared aesthetic that were perceived among the three. The pairing of painting and poetry (the "sister arts") is one that is familiar to us in Western aesthetics and can be found already in ancient Greece. It is calligraphy in the Chinese scheme of artistic expression that is apt to strike us as unexpected, so that the place of calligraphy in China, as well as its relationship to the other arts, requires special attention and explanation.

Calligraphy: Conceptual Background

From early in the imperial period, by the first and second centuries of the Common Era, there was already the practice and appreciation of calligraphy as an art. By that time, writing with the brush had become well established, and paper had been invented and was widely available. (On these developments, see Chapter 4.) It was of course the adoption of the brush, which replaced various instruments of incision previously used for writing, that made possible the distinctive traits of later calligraphy in China; the early invention of paper was also important for providing a flat, smooth, and dimensionally large medium to which writing could be applied. If the Chinese had continued to write on bamboo slips, metal, or silk, or had been forced to write, even with a brush, on papyrus or parchment (as did their Roman contemporaries), the art of calligraphy would never have developed as quickly or reached such heights as it did.

To account for the recognition of calligraphy as a major art form in China, one naturally thinks of the special features of the Chinese writing system. There are the astounding quantity of unique graphs (more than fifty thousand of them), the complexity of their form (with many individual characters requiring more than ten separate brush strokes), and the minute graphic variations that often distinguish one character from another. Surely all of these must have played a part in the elevation of writing into a high art. Yet Chinese characters can be analyzed into a rather small number of distinct stroke types. Viewed in that light, the writing system is not all that different from many others in which calligraphy never became a major art. It is possible that the formal characteristics of the Chinese writing system are not the sole reason that calligraphy developed as it did, and that cultural factors also played a part. These may include the early prestige of writing, owing largely to its centrality in ancient ritual and the operation of the bureaucratic state, and even its role in differentiating the Chinese from the peoples who lived beyond their borders.

In the Later Han period, there also appeared the earliest essays about calligraphy. These were important for setting forth notions of the art that proved to be enormously influential upon later calligraphy theory and criticism. They were also instrumental in linking the art to older ideas about the origins and nature of writing itself as well as to early philosophy and metaphysics. Here is a representative passage found in Cui Yuan's 崔瑗 (78–143) essay "Caoshu shi" 草書勢 ("The Configuration of Draft Script"):

> When we observe its models and images, there is propriety wherever we look. The rectangular forms do not match the carpenter's square; the round ones do not accord with the compass. Lowered on the left and raised to the right, from far away it looks like a leaning precipice. A bird stretches its neck, standing erect, intent on flying off. A wild animal recoils with fear, poised to race away. Here, there are dots and dabs that resemble a string of pearls which, though broken, remains intact. With anger and frustration contained inside, they display themselves with abandon and create marvelous forms. There, there are tremulous strokes perilously elongated, like a withered tree that stands on the edge of a cliff. The slanting strokes and dots off to the side are like a cicada clinging to the branch. Where the brush stroke ends and the configuration is terminated, the dangling threads are tucked in a knot, and it resembles a scorpion that has inflicted its venomous bite and darts to a crack or crevice, or a hunting snake that dives down a hole, its head disappearing but its tail trailing behind. Consequently, when you look at it from afar it resembles a peak that has collapsed or a bluff that has caved in. But when you examine it close at hand, you find that not a single stroke could be altered. Its workings are supremely subtle and its essentials are marvelous, always right but never the same. Here, I have just given an approximation of its general appearance; such is its configuration, more or less. (Cui 1974: 36.1066)

This passage has features that are typical of writings about calligraphy from all periods: the exuberant list of analogies with natural forms, the stress upon the restless changeability of the brushwork, and the assertion that ultimately the calligraphy defies description and partakes of something that can only be called “supremely subtle” and “marvelous.”

It is important to understand that this is not simply rhetorical flourish, although to be sure there is ingenious wordplay here bordering on the bombastic. In describing calligraphy this way, Cui Yuan and others after him were drawing upon a store of earlier philosophical thought about writing, “images,” nature, and the cosmos. Readers of their time would not have failed to perceive echoes of that earlier body of writing in Cui Yuan’s passage, and these echoes would have filled Cui’s passage with implications of claims of deeper significance for the “draft script” he is writing about, just as Cui intended they would.

The passage calls to mind statements in the *Classic of Changes* and commentaries on it about the invention of the trigrams in high antiquity by the legendary sage Fu Xi 伏羲. He created them, we are told, by gazing up at the sky and observing the “images” (*xiang* 象) of the heavenly bodies there and looking down at earth and observing the “models” or “patterns” (*fa* 法) in the terrain. The trigrams, from which the sixty-four hexagrams were derived, are thus inspired by natural forms but, representing human values and cosmic principles, embody more abstract and higher meaning than physical forms could ever convey. Later, it was asserted that Chinese characters were derived in much the same way. In the postface to his dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Explanation of Simple Graphs and Analysis of Composite Characters*), Xu Shen 許慎 (d. ca. 149) tells us that the ancient sage Cang Jie 倉頡 invented characters by following Fu Xi’s lead and modeling them on the tracks of animals and birds he observed: “According to their category he made images of the natural forms, and so called it ‘pattern/writing’ (*wen* 文)” (Xu 2002: 15.997). Thus, the images (*xiang*) that are symbolized by the trigrams and hexagrams are based on natural forms but also embody abstract and eternal principles of change and constancy, and characters themselves are derived from patterns found in nature. When Cui Yuan looks at draft script calligraphy, what he sees is informed by this history of thinking about the natural and cosmic derivation of “images,” “patterns,” and “models” that humans make and manipulate. (For more on early Chinese thinking about the origin of the writing system and its relation to astrological and worldly “patterns,” see Chapter 3.)

A salient feature of prose accounts of calligraphy, seen in the Cui Yuan passage, is that the images and analogies keep changing. Not only do they change, they range through a great variety in form, tone, and affect: violent, intimidating, delicate, sublime, etc. This is because the writer is recreating a particular way of viewing the brushwork (or imagining it, in Cui Yuan’s case). The calligraphed page is not viewed as a single entity, however complex, or holistically. Instead, it is “read” as the words would be read if they were ordinary writing, not calligraphy: from top to bottom of each vertical column, and the columns left to right. Through this “reading,” the viewer reenacts the movements of the brush as it was wielded down and across the page or scroll. Calligraphy is created as a linear process, and it is viewed that way too. This is reflected in the linear string of images and analogies in Cui Yuan's prose.

Yet there is a sense, in Cui Yuan's passage and other early writings on calligraphy, that calligraphy also lies beyond description and partakes of "the marvelous." No single analogy or metaphor works for long. And all of them are ultimately just that: likenesses or mere approximations. The language that writers use to evoke this quality of mystery they perceive in the brushwork varies, but they keep returning to it: "The rectangular forms do not match the carpenter's square, the round ones do not accord with the compass"; "But when you examine it close at hand, you find that not a single stroke could be altered. Its workings are supremely subtle and its essentials are marvelous, always right but never the same" (Cui 1974: 36.1066); "When you examine it close at hand, the ends and junctures cannot be distinguished, and the ideographic components cannot be traced" (Cai Yong 蔡邕 [133–192], "Zhuan shi" 篆勢 ["On the Configuration of Seal Script"], Cai 1974: 36.1064); "When you look at it closely, the mind is confused and the eye dazzled" (Wei Heng 衛恒 [d. 291], "Li shi" 隸勢 ["On the Configuration of Clerical Script"], Wei 1974: 36.1065). Cai Yong's essay "Bi lun" 筆論 ("On the Brush") says that calligraphy "must partake of physical forms" and goes on to say that it must resemble walking, flying, lying down and standing up, etc. Only then, he asserts, can it be considered calligraphy (as opposed to ordinary handwriting) (Cai 2007: 8–9). But the operative word is "resemble" (*ruo* 若). Calligraphy resembles the movements of animate and inanimate things in the world, but it is not that movement. Calligraphy as it is described in these writings hovers between the physical world that it resembles and something higher, and the latter is something words cannot fully capture. This reminds us of the "images" spoken of in the *Classic of Changes*, which are inspired by physical things but are not those things and were believed to represent cosmic principles.

But what is it, exactly, that calligraphy captures or expresses? Cai Yong makes the unexpected statement that "calligraphy is dispersion" (*shuzhe san ye* 書者散也) and proceeds to elaborate on this alliterative equivalence this way:

> One who wants to do calligraphy must first disperse everything in his heart, trust his feelings and indulge his nature, and then express them in calligraphy. If someone feels pressed upon by external affairs, then even with a rabbit-hair brush from Zhong Mountain, the brushwork will not be good. To do calligraphy, you must sit quietly and still your thoughts, make the intent appropriate to the occasion, refrain from speaking, vacate some breath, and collect and concentrate your spirit and demeanor, as if appearing before the ruler. Then whatever you produce will be outstanding. (Cai 2007: 8–9)

We see, then, that "diffusion" (or "scattering") does not refer to a complete emptying of the emotions and self, but rather purging the heart/mind of mundane external cares, so that one's inner self can be expressed without distortion. This is a conception of calligraphy as something profoundly expressive of the calligrapher's character, a notion that would become a cardinal principle of thinking about the art.

Cai Yong alludes to the calligrapher's "intent" only in passing. Later, in the writings of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361), the man conventionally considered China's supreme calligrapher, the role of *yi* 意 ("idea, intent, meaning, import") becomes a fundamental component and value. But whose or what *yi* is it? In Wang Xizhi's letters to friends, we find such statements as these: "The *yi* [in your calligraphy] has gradually become more profound"; "There is *yi* among all the dots and strokes"; "the insufficiency [of inferior calligraphy] lies in its *yi*"; "I am yet unable to make my 'flying white' script superior, but at least its *yi* is truly excellent" (Li 1984: 2.419). In such comments, the *yi* in calligraphy is not simply the calligrapher's "intent" that he had in mind as he wielded the brush. It is a quality that has become intrinsic to the brushwork itself and can be discovered there presumably by any viewer, even those who have no connection with the calligrapher and no idea what he was "thinking" or "intended" when he picked up his brush. In other words, this *yi* has become separate from the calligrapher. It has also become, in Wang's view, the single most important criterion for evaluating calligraphy. It is distinct from technical proficiency. *Yi* may be lacking when technique is excellent, and it may be present when technique is lacking. This is, then, an aestheticized and objectified *yi*. It is the "import" or "meaning" or even "style" that we appreciate in art. Calligraphy is no longer simply a projection of the calligrapher's person or self. It has become an art that may be evaluated by objective aesthetic standards (although, naturally, not all viewers will arrive at the same judgment). One more point is crucial: the *yi* that Wang Xizhi is finding (or not finding) in the calligraphy he examines has little or nothing to do with the semantic or literal meaning of the words written on the page. Apropos of this, we should note that many of surviving examples of Wang Xizhi's own calligraphy (or more probably copies of the same) are fragments of personal letters on utterly quotidian subjects, so that their literary or intellectual content is actually very slight. Yet such is Wang's stature in calligraphic history that the aesthetic *yi* of these compositions is perceived to be weighty indeed.

The historian of aesthetic thought Li Zehou plausibly suggests that such thinking is heavily influenced by the statement in the "Xici zhuan" 繫辭傳 ("Appended Words") section of the *Classic of Changes* that "the sage established the 'images' (*xiang*) in order to fully express his ideas." Moreover, closer to Wang Xizhi's time, the philosopher Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249), in his commentary on the *Changes* and elsewhere, wrote extensively on the complex relationship between "words," "images," and "meaning." It is likely that Wang Xizhi's thinking about calligraphy and his perception of *yi* "meaning" in its forms owed much to Wang Bi and other participants in the "arcane learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學) movement.

There is much in common between these early writings on calligraphy and pre-Tang writings about literary writings, whether poetry or literary prose. Literary theory is discussed in other essays in this volume (see Chapters 1 and 23); here we simply note in passing some of the common ground between the two. There is, first, a common vocabulary of key terms and concepts regarding the artist, his inspiration, and how that is channeled into artistic expression. Key terms in the discourse on calligraphy, including "idea/meaning" (*yi*), "breath" (*qi* 氣), "spirit" (*shen* 神), "thought" (*si* 思), and "image" (*xiang*), are likewise the central terms used in texts that discuss the act of writing, such as Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187–226) "Lun wen" 論文 ("Discourse on Literature"), Lu Ji's 陸機 (261–303) "Wen fu" 文賦 ("Rhapsody on Literature"), and Liu Xie's 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*). Second, there is much overlap between the processes of preparation and artistic creation described for the two arts. The dual focus on inner quiescence and outward gaze or exploration that we have seen in Cai Yong's description of the calligrapher is later replicated and expanded in Lu Ji's description of literary production. Shared as well between the two is the assumption about what the external gaze focuses upon, that is, what it is in the external world that the calligrapher mimics and what the poet derives his inspiration from; primary among these is the world of nature—specifically, seasonal floral imagery and marked faunal patterns, as well as dynamic processes in nature (animal movements, swirling waters, etc.).

Finally, there is, even at this early stage in writing about these arts, candid avowal of mysteries involved concerning both inspiration and the way in which the arts affect their audience. In fact, this takes the form of more than passing acknowledgment or reluctant admission; it is something emphasized and featured, as we have seen earlier regarding calligraphy. Later, Lu Ji would famously stress the inexplicability of the ebb and flow of literary inspiration. Liu Xie, in turn, would stress the disconnection between "word," "thought," and "meaning," and how often, for better or worse, there is an imperfect match between them. Moreover, despite his exhaustive attempt to describe all aspects of both the "literary mind" and the intricacies of what it produces ("dragon carving"), Liu Xie despairs that no critic can ever fully explain the "subtleties" of the best literary work and finally comes to the point where he must "put down his brush." The early essays on calligraphy quoted above may be said to anticipate such admission of the limitations of criticism and analysis. Still later, what has been called the cardinal principle and ideal of Chinese poetics, that there must be a "meaning" (or "affect") that surpasses the words, outlasts them, and cannot ever be described by them, may be viewed as an extension of this early awareness of the key transcendent aspect of all arts. Naturally, there are likewise themes in the writings about the arts that are not held in common, such as the pervasive insistence in writings about writing that it serve moralistic and state-centered purposes. Such a demand would be more difficult to make for calligraphy (although some much later writings about this art do make this claim, albeit indirectly, for example in the "uprightness" perceived in the calligraphy by the Tang statesman and martyr Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 [709–785]).

We will have more to say later about the conjunction of calligraphy with poetry (and painting) in artistic production and transmission. But here we have seen that in the early thinking or theoretical writings about these visual and literary arts there is already considerable common ground in terminology, concept, and beliefs about inspiration and the "meaning" of the two arts.

Painting: Conceptual Background

We turn now to the other visual art that is closely connected with poetry in the Chinese tradition. Painting had been practiced in China since antiquity, but in the early imperial period it was generally considered secondary to the "higher" visual art of calligraphy. Critical and theoretical writings on painting likewise lagged behind those on calligraphy, discussed above. When painting theory did emerge during the Northern and Southern Dynasties and Tang periods, the art was often said to share a common origin with calligraphy. In such statements, we may glimpse a deliberate effort to elevate the status of painting by connecting it with the form whose stature as a major art form, rather than a mere craft, was already secure.

Painting is conventionally thought in China to be comprised of a few conventional subjects or genres: landscape painting, birds and flowers, and portraiture (Buddhist or Daoist painting may be counted as a subgenre of the last of these). There are other subjects that are also painted, but these are the major ones. Of these three, it is landscape that is by far the most intimately connected with poetry. Yet as a painted subject, landscape was somewhat slow to develop. Its first flourishing occurred in the fourth and fifth centuries, although we usually think of it not reaching full maturity until the Five Dynasties and Song periods (10th–13th c.). In any case, the number of "landscape paintings" that have been survived from earliest times through the Tang (or even the number of paintings that contain a landscape component) is so small that it is difficult to generalize about its history and development.

We begin, then, with some remarks about concepts related to portraiture. We know from surviving works (inscribed on stone, painted on silk, etc.) as well as the textual record that early portraiture had a strong didactic element: often it was legendary cultural heroes, emperors, exemplary ministers, clan ancestors, etc. whose likenesses were recorded in portraits. For our purposes, a key aspect of early thinking about such painting was the notion that as important as formal elements may have been, there was, beyond form, something else looked for in a portrait that was considered essential. That something was usually called the *shen* 神, which was understood as the "spirit," "soul," or inner essence of the person. The belief that every person is endowed with such a "spirit" was already widespread by the Han dynasty. A dichotomy of *xing/shen* 形/神 was thus posited for portraiture: *xing* ("form, shape") designated the formal elements of the person depicted, and *shen* designated the inner nature of the person as captured in the image. One way of thinking about the dichotomy was that both elements were equally important and needed to work as a complementary pair. But the dominant way of thinking about them gave some priority to *shen*, the understanding being that no matter how skillfully the formal elements might be depicted, if in the end the more intangible "essence" of the person's character—what made him, after all, who he was—was not captured, the portrait could not be considered successful. The complementarity of the two and the primacy of *shen* as the portraitist's ultimate goal are aptly suggested by the pithy dictum coined by the early master Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 345–ca. 406) in an essay on portraiture: *yi xing xie shen* 以形寫神 ("use form to depict the spirit").

Writings about landscape painting extended this notion of there being something beyond form, the transmission of which was the painter's ultimate goal, to that subject as well. But other terms and concepts were introduced to add to and complicate the concept of "spirit" applied to persons. In doing this, critics writing on landscape painting drew upon rich bodies of philosophical thought, both classical and contemporary.

Classical Daoist thought had long before established the idea of Nature as being the embodiment of the Way (Dao) and the closest analogue to its ultimate principles. The Way cannot be described in words, but it can be glimpsed in the great pageant of Nature as evoked in countless passages in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. Closer to the time of the first seminal essays on landscape painting, of the fourth and fifth centuries, the Daoist revival of that time, the spread of Buddhist conceptions of the universe, and the school of Arcane Learning, which drew variously upon strands of Daoist and Buddhist thought, provided new impetus for a spiritualized apprehension of landscape. The "You Tiantai shan fu" 游天台山賦 ("Rhapsody on an Outing to Tiantai Mountain") by the Arcane Learning thinker Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314–371) refers repeatedly to the transcendent qualities of the mountains, using a range of roughly synonymous terms (e.g., *ling* 靈 "numinous," *miao* 妙 "marvelous," *xian* 仙 "the godly, divine," and *xiangwai* 象外 "beyond image") in describing the mountain landscape and its purifying effect upon him as he contemplates it mystically (*yi xuan dui shanshui* 以玄對山水). In a series of rhymed panegyrics on a painting on the theme of "The Shadow of the Buddha" (*foying* 佛影), the Pure Land Buddhist monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–417), patriarch of the Donglin 東林 Monastery on Lu Mountain, strongly implies that the Buddha's shadow is not just the image famously discovered on a cave wall in India but may be found manifest in the Lu Mountain landscape itself ("Wanfo yingming" 萬佛影銘 ["Inscriptions on Shadows of Ten Thousand Buddhas"]). Accounts of excursions into the mountains by Huiyuan and his followers likewise speak of the landscape as possessing "divine beauty" and "mystical sounds." It was not a coincidence that the monasteries themselves were situated deep in mountain landscapes: it was precisely because such settings verged on the "ineffable" (*buke ce* 不可測) truths of their religion.

Two seminal essays on landscape painting give prominence to such thinking, now applied not to nature but to painted representations of it. Zong Bing's 宗炳 (374–443) "Hua shanshui xu" 畫山水序 ("Preface to Landscape Painting") is the earliest extant general account of landscape painting. In the opening, he boldly posits an analogy between the relationship that landscape has to the Dao and the insight into the Dao that was possessed by the ancient sages (who invented the trigrams, writing, etc.): "The ancient sages patterned their inner spirit on the Dao, and the worthies, after them, comprehended it; landscape gives pleasing expression to the Dao with its forms, and the humane man delights in it. Are the two not similar?" (Zong 1973: 583). The statement about the "humane man" delighting in landscape comes from the *Lunyu* 論語 (the *Analects*). But no such explanation for that person's delight in landscape is given there.

The linkage with landscape's embodiment of the Dao is Zong Bing's invention. Later in his essay, Zong Bing makes a remarkable claim for landscape painting: in terms of the beneficial effect it has upon the viewer (purifying and calming his mind), it surpasses real landscape. The reason is that real landscape is so vast that the eye can only take in fragments of it. A person viewing a painting, by contrast, can apprehend an entire mountainscape in all its complexity.

Before Zong Bing, Gu Kaizhi had already written the numinous into a description of landscape painting. It is true that Gu's "Hua Yuntai shan ji" 畫雲台山記 ("Record of Painting Cloud Terrace Mountain") concerns a particular painting rather than presenting a generalized statement about the art (as Zong Bing was to do). It is important, nevertheless, as the earliest detailed account of a landscape painting by the painter himself. This was a landscape painting that depicted religious persons situated in the landscape: Zhang Daoling 張道陵, the Han dynasty Daoist and founder of the Five Pecks of Rice School, and two of his known disciples. Gu Kaizhi identifies these men in his prose description of the painting (though they are not referred to in the title of the painting and might not have been recognized by a viewer of the painting). We do not know if this painting was based on experience of the mountain or came from Gu's imagination. Regardless, it is not just that this landscape features religious persons. The landscape itself is rich with mystical meaning and was deliberately drawn that way, according to the artist himself. He tells us, for example, that Zhang Daoling is depicted in front of two sheer cliffs. The space between the cliffs, which Zhang must be gazing into, is drawn to appear "forbidding and undefiled: a place inhabited by gods" (Gu 1973: 582). Of course, the gods are not depicted in the painting, but their domain in that empty space is what Zhang Daoling is concentrating on.

This overtly religious background to early landscape painting is significant for several reasons. First, even when the subject matter becomes conventionalized and aestheticized in the later history of painting, and even after the explicit connection with religion becomes muted in the process, that connection retains a residual presence. It is always there, at least in the background, and keeps getting evoked in writings about painting even if not explicitly asserted. It would be impossible to understand the dominance of landscape in Chinese painting history without some awareness of this dimension. Second, this religious aspect of landscape painting constitutes an important link with landscape poetry of the same early period (the Jin and Southern Dynasties). This common spiritual grounding draws the two arts together. As different as were the dynamics and course of development within each form of artistic expression, they also shared aspects of their conceptual underpinning.

Third, and most important for our interests here, this early shared conceptual orientation helps us to understand a crucial later commonality in aesthetic values: it was expected that each art would express something beyond what meets the eye (brushed likenesses of nature's forms, words written on the page). To be outstanding, a composition, whether poem or painting, was required to convey some "meaning" beyond the formal features of the art, and that "meaning" (or "beauty," "feeling," "flavor," etc.) necessarily lay beyond whatever could be fully described in the words of the reader or viewer (or critic). Critics often referred to some kind of "vitality" or "liveliness" to evoke the quality that was expected. This is what we find in the first of Xie He's 謝赫 (479–502) "Six Laws" (*liufa* 六法): *qiyun shengdong* 氣韻生動 (Xie 1973: 355). The precise interpretation of this "law" has been endlessly debated, but it clearly indicates that a "vitality" (*shengdong*) must be present in the perceived "aura" (*qi*) and "bearing" (*yun*, or "resonance") of the painted subject. Once formulated, Xie He's law was regularly invoked as an ideal for calligraphy and poetry as well.

To a certain extent, the demand for something beyond mere form, mechanical representation, or literal meaning may be understood as an aestheticized transformation of the spirituality that poet and painter had first perceived in nature. We encountered this aesthetic value earlier, when discussing conceptual values shared by calligraphy and poetry. There too the world of nature played a prominent role, whether in the affinities that were perceived between calligraphic and natural forms or in the wandering forth of the poet's mind through the external world. The subject matter of landscape as treated in painting and poetry, with its deep roots in the religious contemplation of nature, was readily reconciled with and further reinforced the same aesthetic preference.

The Convergence of the Three Arts in Practice

With the conceptual background in mind, now we turn to the convergence of poetry, calligraphy, and painting in practice. Here, we must first acknowledge that the heyday of that convergence really comes in the later imperial period, which chronologically falls outside the scope of this volume. It was in the Song through Qing dynasties that the coordinated use and interplay of the three arts reached its height. But before that, in the Tang period, there was already a considerable amount of interaction among the three, which has its own interest and also anticipates future developments.

When we mention the convergence of these arts, we think first of poems inscribed on paintings (*tihua shi* 題畫詩). The practice of adding a poetic inscription on the surface of a paper or silk painting will, for most of us, best epitomize the interplay of the three "arts of the brush," for there we have, on a single surface, the painted image, the words of a poem, and the brushwork of the calligrapher who inscribed the poem onto the painting. This came, of course, to be a dominant way that the three arts coalesced in China and eventually throughout Asia as the Chinese practice spread. It should be noted at the outset that there are various possibilities concerning the provenance, order, and identity of the compositions and artists involved. The poem may be composed by the painter or by someone else (either contemporary with the painter or later). The calligrapher may be the painter, the poet, or a third person. Sometimes, it is the poem that is written first, and the painting is done to "illustrate" the literary work. In other cases, the poem that is inscribed onto a painting predates the painting but the painter did not have it in mind when he executed his work: it was a later owner or aficionado who recalled an apt poem and added it to the painting, in effect transforming the painting retrospectively into a visualization of the earlier poem.

The practice of adding a poem to a painting is already well attested in the Six Dynasties period. But in that early and formative stage of *tihua shi*, the painting tended to be a mural on a wall, or a painting on a screen, or a painted fan. It was easy for such an artwork to be damaged or lost, so that many of the inscribed poems would be lost (if a copy of them had not been separately preserved). So far as we know, the habit of inscribing a poem on a silk or paper painting became widespread only in the Tang, and with that the survival and transmission of such poems, if not the original paintings themselves, increased dramatically.

Several factors may be adduced to account for this increase in the production of poems inscribed on paintings. Painting itself enjoyed new attention and prestige at the Tang courts. The emperors of the early and High Tang periods were themselves fond of painting, and they conspicuously collected it and favored painters at their courts. A few painters, such as Yan Liben 閻立本 (ca. 601–673), came from powerful families and rose to high office themselves. Other painters, like Li Sixun 李思訓 (ca. 651–ca. 716), were even members of the imperial clan. The early Tang emperors were also collectors and devotees of calligraphy. Many stories relate Emperor Taizong's 唐太宗 (r. 626–649) obsession with Wang Xizhi's fourth-century masterpiece, "*Lanting ji* xu" 蘭亭集序 ("Preface to the *Orchid Pavilion Collection*"), the years he spent searching out the original, and his infamous command, after he finally procured the work, that it be placed in his tomb when he died. Developments in the aesthetics of painting also played a part. Before the Tang, writings about painting consistently emphasize the importance of "lifelikeness" (*xingsi* 形似) even as they also give attention to qualities that transcend formal likeness. But as we move into the Tang, distinctly more attention is given to nonformal qualities perceived in painting, variously referred to as "spirit," "meaning," "breath," etc. Formal likeness is de-emphasized as a painterly ideal. This made it easier to think of painting as an analogue of poetry, in which qualities that likewise transcended what was explicitly presented (in the medium of words rather than brushstrokes) were held to be the mark of the highest achievement. The aesthetics of the two arts, visual and verbal, grew to share more in common, and the arts themselves thus converged. It began to seem more natural for poetry to occupy space on a painting, since the ideals of the two coincided so closely. Indeed, a particular painting was sometimes singled out as a set theme in Tang civil service examinations. This was not done regularly, but that it was done at all must have encouraged literati to become accustomed to thinking poetically about painting.

Tang poets became fond of adopting paintings as the subjects of their poems. They wrote about all manner of paintings: landscapes, Buddhist and Daoist murals, sacred mountains, portraits of exemplary sages and statesmen, imperial ladies, horses, birds, and trees. Their poems are often richly descriptive of the painted images, but just as often are not confined to such description. The greatest master of poems on paintings was Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), who wrote some twenty-five poems in this subgenre, his favorite subjects being landscape, horses, and birds of prey. One of the strengths of Du Fu's poetic treatment of painting is the unpredictability of his exposition. Typically, he begins with the painted image or with the painter (who in several cases was someone he knew), but then moves on to a different topic. In poems on landscape paintings, Du Fu is apt to "enter into" the world of the painting, treating it fancifully as an alternative and idealized space that stands in contrast to the world the poet (and others) actually inhabit. His poems on horses or birds of prey tend to juxtapose the painted image as one of virility and strength with its counterpart in the real world, which by contrast is timid or weakened. These are poems that are infused with Du Fu's celebrated vexation over the condition of the empire, wracked as it was by rebellion and incompetent leadership. Whatever the subject and direction of the exposition, Du Fu's poems, several of which are lengthy and complicated in their structure, feature reflections on a few enduring issues: the relation of the artistic image to its counterpart in reality; the creative process itself, that is, the dynamic between the painter and the art of painting; the effect of art upon the viewer (usually the poet); and the meaning and value of art. As a group, Du Fu's poems on paintings mark a new stage in thinking about painting and its larger cultural significance and also bring the two arts together as never before. These poems were a powerful inspiration for and influence upon the later development of poems on paintings in the Song and later dynasties.

What was the relation of the calligraphy of the inscribed poem to the painting on which it was inscribed? This question assumes, first, that "poems inscribed on paintings" were actually written on the painting, or on a piece of paper (or silk) added to the original painted scroll. We cannot be sure that this was always so. In some cases, probably even with some of Du Fu's "poems on paintings," the poem may simply have taken the painting as its subject rather than actually have been written for inscription on the painting. The number of authentic Tang paintings with poetic inscriptions that have survived is so tiny, if there are any at all, that it is impossible to generalize about the practice. We know from later periods that the calligraphy of such inscriptions on paintings was sometimes executed in such a way as to interact visually with the style of the brushwork in the painting, either as a close stylistic complement or, in rare cases, a deliberate and eye-catching contrast to the painter's brushwork. But we do not know if this kind of interplay was cultivated as early as the Tang.

It was not only in poetic inscriptions on paintings that the "arts of the brush" converged. Calligraphy itself was often poetic; that is, the text that was written out on a calligraphic page or scroll might well be that of a poem, composed either by the calligrapher or some earlier writer and then selected by the calligrapher as a text. Even when the text was not a poem, it was likely to be a piece of literary prose (e.g., a preface to a poetry collection, a dedicatory inscription for a temple, an encomium for a person, a sutra, or a selection of a classic), so that the finished work would likewise present to the viewer a text of some literary or historical interest together with brushwork of aesthetic appeal. When the Tang monk Huaisu 懷素 (737–799) composed his "Autobiography"—which, written out in his "wild draft" (*kuangcao* 狂草) calligraphy, would become his most iconic work—he filled it with quotations of poems and couplets descriptive of his own incomparable brushwork. There is also the special case of essays or treatises on calligraphy that are themselves prized for their brushwork. The *Shupu* 書譜 (*Treatise on Calligraphy*) composed by Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (646–691) is such a composition. What is believed to be the preface to the work written out in Sun Guoting's own hand, in a style derived from the draft script of Wang Xizhi, is one of the premier examples of Tang-period draft script (now held in the collection of the Palace Museum in Taipei). Such calligraphic masterworks inspired their own succession of later colophons and inscriptions, appended to them by collectors and other aficionados, much as paintings did.

We have been concerned here with the elite and scholarly tradition of inscribing poems or other writings onto paintings, which helped to give Chinese painting its distinctive "literary" look and meaning. It should be mentioned that more popular traditions of painting also frequently featured the addition of written inscriptions. Religious paintings, for example the Daoist and Buddhist paintings from the medieval period discovered in the caves of Dunhuang, also often have inscriptions, whether they are passages from religious texts or poems or colophons. The elite painting tradition may be the best known today, but elite artists did not have a monopoly on the impulse to combine visual images with textual inscriptions.

It may be prudent to conclude with some cautions regarding how we think about the convergence of the three arts of the brush. There is no question that poetry, calligraphy, and painting share much in common in the Chinese tradition, including the same tools of writing brush, ink, and paper (often this is the case, but not always, because there are, indeed, special brushes for painting and calligraphy, not to mention colored pigments); a vocabulary used to describe the practitioner's state of mind, relation to the material, inspiration, and the moment of artistic execution; certain aesthetic values; reverence for the natural world and the idea of artistic inspiration drawn from nature; and grounding in a shared background of Confucian-Daoist-Buddhist thought. Still, it is easy to overstate the closeness of the three arts. This is especially apt to happen when "Chinese art" is invoked as a foil or contrast to artistic expression elsewhere (as in "the West") or when diachronic change within the Chinese tradition is ignored in favor of the construction of overarching generalizations. We may consider the case of the Tang figure Wang Wei 王維 (701–761). Wang Wei is known, above all else, for his quietist nature poetry. He was also an occasional painter, and a long scroll of his famous mountain estate, Wangchuan Villa, depicts scenic sites on the grounds that, in some versions of the scroll, are inscribed with Wang Wei's well-known quatrains on those same sites. The scroll exists in numerous later engravings and copies that are supposed to derive from an original painting by Wang Wei himself. Ever since the Song dynasty poet and critic Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) declared that "there is poetry in his painting and painting in his poetry," Wang Wei has epitomized the supposed "interchangeability" of painting and poetry in China, that is, their shared aesthetic and common purpose. One problem with this approach to Wang Wei, however, is that he was not thought of this way until some three centuries after his death. Tang dynasty sources take very little note of Wang Wei's activity or achievements as a painter. Furthermore, the idea that he excelled equally in the two arts, as well as the assertion that his work in one form was essentially equivalent to his work in the other—these are both Song dynasty inventions that have little currency in his own day.

This habit of thinking about Wang Wei is part of a larger tendency to reduce poetry and painting to replicas of each other. The impulse to do so may be understandable, traceable perhaps more than anything else to the ubiquity of inscribed landscape paintings from the later dynasties, which are so familiar in museums and publications around the world. The truth is that as much as the two arts did share, there were always important aspects of each that had no counterpart in the other. This is clearest with poetry. The ballad tradition in Chinese verse, narrative poetry, much of occasional poetry as well as the verse of social exchange, poems on historical sites, frontier poetry, romantic songs—nearly every subject category, subgenre, and mode of poetic expression aside from nature poetry and poetry on certain "objects" (e.g., fans, birds, flowers, etc.), is sparsely represented in Chinese painting. Once we throw calligraphy into the mix, the expressive uses and purposes of the three arts of the brush are seen to be even more scattered. Actually, the enduring high stature of calligraphy in China, which seems to have no close parallel in most major cultures, and which clearly fulfilled expressive purposes that neither poetry or painting could approach, may serve as a reminder of just how diverse is the range of artistic forms and aesthetic effects in the native context.

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II. Institutions of Literary Culture

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION (XIAOFEI TIAN)

IF the last four chapters of this volume aim to demonstrate that literature cannot be separated from its physical manifestations, the five chapters in this subsection represent a series of inquiries, all interrelated, into the institutions of literary culture from early through medieval China. The themes of these chapters include education and the civil examination system, commentary, encyclopedia and epitome making, and libraries and book catalogues. The keyword is literary learning, and the central issue shared by the chapters is the state's relationship to literary culture and the educated elite's use of literature as cultural capital. The story is, simply put, one of a tug of war between the state's monopoly and private individuals' desire to break down that monopoly.

Much of the early and medieval literary tradition was tied to the court, which remained the center for cultural production well into the eighth century. The state, embodied in the person of the ruler, acted as the custodian of culture, and affirmed its political legitimacy by playing such a role. The state sponsored large, synthetic scholarly projects, including the compilation of literary encyclopedias and anthologies as well as the translation of Buddhist scriptures. In the Tang, the state also oversaw the writing of dynastic histories and the consolidation of previous scholarship on Confucian classics in the form of commentaries. The chapters in this section all manifest the great influence of the court on, and its vested interest in, literary culture.

The arena of education is where social relations are reproduced through the dissemination of knowledge. Education, especially advanced education in the cultural curricula of a society beyond a basic level of literacy, was always a privilege of a special social class. The civil service examination that emerged in early medieval times and matured in the Tang (618–907), though designed as a system to recruit men into government service based on merit, was not exactly an effective venue for true social mobility, especially in the period covered by this volume. Nevertheless, it did bring about some measure of upward movement for lower-level elites. The composition of poetry and poetic expositions or rhapsodies (*fu*) was incorporated into the examination in the late seventh century, and despite sporadic suspension, continued to be a popular component of the examination throughout the dynasty. The impact was profound for literary culture. Literature, politics, and intellectual life were closely connected through the examination system in many ways.

Gender and class were important factors in premodern education that played out in intricate dynamics. Although only men could participate in the civil service examination, women of upper social classes in medieval times more often than not were well educated and undertook the elementary education of their children, and some of the notable developments in the civil service examination were instituted under the leadership of a female ruler, Empress Wu Zhao 武曌 (624–705), better known as Wu Zetian. If state-sponsored and private education was largely geared toward preparing men for civil service, religious establishments such as Buddhist monasteries provided a venue for both men and women from humble backgrounds to pursue an education and sometimes even to achieve cultural prominence. Large Buddhist monasteries were often a storehouse of texts and, because they were a sanctuary in chaotic times, a place where conscientious authors deposited a copy of their works for better preservation.

Commentarial tradition was first developed as a way of teaching and instructing students in a given classic. The preservation of an early text is often inseparable from the particular version of that text used and transmitted by a certain exegetical tradition, such as in the case of the *Shijing*. In early medieval times, commentaries on belletristic writings such as poetry and rhapsodies began to appear. Li Shan's 李善 (d. 689) commentary on the sixth-century literary anthology *Wen xuan* 文選, which glosses words by citing from earlier texts, exerted a great influence on subsequent literary commentaries. Nevertheless, the attempt to present the same usage of a word or phrase in the earliest source texts available, though appropriate in Li Shan's time, would prove much more problematic—even "disastrous," as Stephen Owen calls it—when a much later commentator followed suit thoughtlessly, because a literary work produced in a later time might in all likelihood make an allusion to an earlier literary work, but not necessarily to the earliest available source text.

Both chapters on text and commentary in this section take pains to stress that commentaries are, contrary to common perception, not necessarily subservient to the original text and indeed have their independent value in the literary tradition. This observation applies just as aptly to later fiction and drama commentaries, which are important works of literary criticism in their own right. In the period covered by this volume, particularly noteworthy is an author's commentary on his own work, which, as far as we know, first appeared in the late fourth and early fifth century. In the case of Yan Zhitui's 顏之推 (531–ca. 591) autobiographical rhapsody, the text in rhymed prose and his commentary in plain prose form two distinct voices that deliberately offset each other and constitute a striking phenomenon in literary history.

With the widespread use of paper came the ease with which texts were disseminated and books were produced; with the proliferation of books appeared the book trade and private libraries, as opposed to the predominance of the imperial library in the early period. In the fifth century, records indicate that there was a robust book market in Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing), the capital of the southern dynasties, and merchants carried books back and forth across the border separating the north and south Chinese empires. From the fifth century on, the early medieval Chinese elite developed a penchant for the artful use of dense allusions in their literary writings, a development that by necessity depended on personal book collections as much as on impressive feats of memory. The preference for using allusions in writings, the rise of belletristic literature, and the proliferation of books together gave rise to encyclopedias (*leishu* 類書) in this period. A *leishu* is a compilation of extracts classified under different categories, and it was a depository of received knowledge to primarily serve the needs of writing. The import of *leishu* nevertheless goes far beyond its immediate purpose. The best-preserved and best-known medieval encyclopedias were all imperially commissioned and sponsored, large-scale group projects; they aimed to demonstrate the cultural power and political legitimacy of the state as embodied by the monarch who had commissioned such works. For us they preserve many literary texts that would otherwise have been lost and present the medieval Chinese conception of the cosmos in its comprehensive, structured arrangement of ideas, concepts, and things.

Unlike Rome, China did not develop a public library; the antithesis of private libraries was the imperial library, supervised by learned elite members appointed by the emperor. The first project of ordering the received textual legacy in Chinese history, commissioned a little more than a decade after the founding of the first public library at Rome, took place in the imperial library of the Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE), as the great empire was unifying and ordering the massive and messy textual legacy inherited from the short-lived Qin and the much longer period of division before Qin. Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and his son Liu Xin's 劉歆 (d. 23 CE) work was comparable to that of the scholars at the famous library of Alexandria in their ordering of the mass of Hellenic texts. The results were "standard editions" of classical works to be passed on to posterity as well as an impressive descriptive book catalogue, which, though lost, provided the foundation for the bibliographical chapter of the *Han shu* (*History of the*

Former Han) from the first century CE, which has survived. The father and son's work is the first bottleneck in the history of the Chinese book through which earlier literature had to pass.

In subsequent centuries through the Tang, catalogues and bibliographic notes were compiled for the imperial library collections; it was not until the Song (960–1279), outside the temporal range of this volume, that private book catalogues began to appear and survive. And yet, it is remarkable that the greatest medieval book catalogue of its day, which claims to have incorporated the titles in both imperial library catalogue and the catalogues of private collections, was put together by a private individual who adamantly refused to serve in court despite his high aristocratic background and imperial kinship connection. In the catalogue's preface, which is extant, the compiler Ruan Xiaoxu 阮孝緒 (479–536) strikingly asserts that he had compared the catalogues of private book collections he had obtained with the imperial library catalogue and found that many titles were missing from the latter. The state's struggle for control over textual tradition and the ever-proliferating books, and the books' constant eluding of such control, are mirrored in the individual's resistance to the state's power. In some ways, this struggle continues in contemporary mainland China, where the government's desire to "order and arrange ancient works" (*zhengli guji* 整理古籍) and its enormous financial investment in this regard can be better understood if situated in its historical context, while the individual scholars constantly lament that, if they want state funding and support, they must engage in those projects proposed and sanctioned by the government.

Finally, it is worthwhile to keep in mind that most of the titles recorded in early and medieval catalogues and bibliographies are lost or exist only in fragments, and the awareness of that immense textual legacy enables a better assessment and understanding of the tradition. The customary Chinese literary historical landscape is dotted by extraordinary figures standing in isolation, yet these figures represent no more than a fraction of the world "out there" and need to be re-examined in the context of that lost world.

CHAPTER 7

EDUCATION AND THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM

REBECCA DORAN

The importance of education and the civil service examinations in the life of the aristocratic elite is a common theme in discussions of traditional Chinese culture. Even a cursory study of premodern China reveals the profound influence exerted by particular educational ideals in all areas of elite culture. This chapter proposes to examine educational practices and the examination system in historical perspective. Special attention will be paid to the relationship between the examinations and literature, in particular literary composition as a method of evaluation in the examination process; to the development of new genres centering around the examinations or examination culture; and to the permeation of examination-related tropes in the broader literary arena.

An Overview of Learning and Education in Historical Perspective

The institutional history of education can be understood as a negotiation between practical considerations and the expectations engendered by these particular orientations to learning. The educational systems that would develop in relation to the civil service examinations were reserved for upper-class men who had already acquired a fairly high level of literacy and who aspired to government office. Less information is available about education targeting groups not eligible for government service, such as minors and women, but we can reconstruct some information regarding their studies. Surviving childhood primers, such as the *Jijiu* 急就 from the first century BCE, emphasize succinct, easy-to-memorize phrases of uniform line length, the content of which stressed useful facts and names of things (such as the colors, common surnames, and types of cloths and dyes) (Lee 2000: 438; see also Chapter 10). Other primers are notable for not repeating characters, or for doing so only very rarely; the aversion to repetition suggests the goal of teaching young students a variety of useful characters (Lee 2000: 439–440).

Lee has argued that early childhood primers are, for the most part, gender-neutral; it is only in texts used to educate students who had already acquired basic literacy that the emphasis on appropriate gender roles becomes prominent (Lee 2000: 468–469). The inculcation of gender division is most explicitly articulated in educational tracts for women, arguably the most famous and influential of which are the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (*Biographies of Notable Women*), compiled by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE), and *Nüjie* 女誡 (*Instructions for My Daughters*), by Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca. 49–ca. 120). In these works, women are praised for fulfilling the traditional roles of mother and wife assigned to them within the patriarchal system (Idema and Grant 2004: 33–42; Kinney 2014: xxvi–xxxi).

However, the emphasis on gender division should not lead us to the mistaken impression that upper-class women were merely functionally literate. Little is known of women's education before the mid-Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE) period, but throughout the Han and later periods highly educated women were well versed in the same classical texts as were highly educated men and could often be quite learned (Kinney 2014: xxiv–xxvi). The existence of various anthologies and compendia intended for a female readership attests to the participation of elite women in literary life (Tian 2007: 190–191). One of the earliest and most often repeated traditional justifications for the education of women is their life role as their sons' first teachers. On rare occasions, highly educated women even took on male students or acted in an official capacity in the palace. For example, Ban Zhao is said to have continued her brother Ban Gu's work on the *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*) and to have tutored scholars in how to read the text. She also acted as teacher and political advisor to Empress Dowager Deng 鄧, who dominated the court in the early second century (Idema and Grant 2004: 17–33). During the fourth century CE, Lady Song 宋, the keeper of a family tradition of learning in the text *Zhou guan* 周官 (*The Offices of Zhou*), was summoned by Fu Jian 苻堅 (338–385), the emperor of the Former Qin (350–394), to transmit the text to 120 students from behind a red silk curtain (*Jin shu* 96.2521–2522; Spade 1979: 28–30; Idema and Grant 2004: 53–54;). The late seventh and early eighth centuries saw the rule of the highly educated and intelligent Wu Zhao 武曌 (r. 690–705), China's only female emperor, as well as the appearance of a host of other talented and powerful female politicians. While these women were clearly exceptional, their presence nonetheless indicates a tradition of respected "talented women" that valorized literary erudition in women.

In turning to systems of higher education, we see that education and the transmission of learning were by no means limited to a particular venue or framework (institutionalized or otherwise). The discussion here will focus on three main areas: state-sponsored education; private education; and the monastery as a setting for acquiring learning.

State-sponsored Education

Evidence regarding educational systems during the ancient Shang and Zhou periods is complicated by the nature of existing sources, which often date to much later than the periods that they describe and which portray the ancient period according to later ideals (Yang 1965: 197–198; Keightley 2000; Denecke 2010: 32–89; Schaberg 2010; Li 2013). The Western Han is the earliest period from which more comprehensive information about the institutional history of education survives. This is also the period during which educational ideals that would prove fundamental come into focus and gain force. During the reign of the powerful Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE), in particular, scholars articulated to a greater extent than ever before an ethical-social system that reinforced the state's prerogative to determine orthodoxy in learning. Emperor Wu not only established classical, or Confucian, learning as the state-sanctioned curriculum, but also authorized particular commentarial traditions of the Classics (Lee 2000: 200).

The state authorization of particular versions of the Confucian Classics under Emperor Wu was linked to the establishment of the Imperial University (Taixue 太學) and the transformation of the system of Boshi 博士, or "Erudites," inherited from the Warring States (481–221 BCE) and the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE) (*Han shu* 56.2512). Although scholars debate how formalized the system of *wujing boshi* ("Erudites in the Five Classics") was, the Boshi were appointed to transmit the sanctioned versions of the Five Classics to university students (*Han shu* 6.159; Elman 2000: 5; Loewe 2006: 25). Initially, the Imperial University, located in the Western Han capital, Chang'an, functioned on a small scale, with only fifty students, but it was gradually expanded over the course of the Eastern Han (25–220) (*Hou Han shu* 1.84; Lee 2000: 50; Loewe 2006: 72–76). The university students were by and large the sons of official or local aristocratic families—that is, officials-in-training who attended the Imperial University both to further their education in the classical and ritual curriculum and to benefit from the contacts gained in capital official circles (Lee 2000: 50). While the Taixue was reserved for the elite class, during the late Eastern Han powerful eunuchs, who occupied key political roles, supported an academy called the Hongdu men xue 鴻都門學 (Hongdu Gate School), which accepted students from nonelite or more humble backgrounds (*Hou Han shu* 8.340, 60.1998).

Indeed, the disintegration of the Han Empire and subsequent political disunity ushered in various important changes in the educational arena. In their bid to present themselves as legitimate inheritors of the empire and put in place the institutional underpinnings necessary to become such, regional rulers often attempted to establish national educational systems that evoked the Boshi and Taixue that had operated under the Han. The Western Jin (265–316), which briefly unified the empire in 280 before rapidly disintegrating, not only continued to support the Imperial University complex, but also took the pioneering step of establishing the School of National Youth (Guozi xue 國子學), a smaller, more elite institution for male descendants of the ruling house. During the Era of Division (317–589), the southern regimes periodically revived the

School of National Youth as part of the two-university system, often in connection with the overthrow of one regime and establishment of another (*Song shu* 14.356, 14.367, 32.935; *Nan Qi shu* 9.145; *Liang shu* 2.49–50). In the north, at the turn of the fifth century, Emperor Daowu of the Northern Wei 北魏道武帝 (Tuoba Gui 拓跋珪, r. 386–409) appointed Erudites in the Five Classics and increased the number of students enrolled in the Imperial University and School of National Youth to 3,000 (*Wei shu* 2.35). Later, in the south, the talented and energetic founding emperor of the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557), Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 502–549), restructured and enriched the educational system, establishing the "Five Institutes" (Wu guan 五館), where Erudites were appointed to lecture on the Five Classics and engage in scholarship on the classics (*Liang shu* 3.96, 48.672).

The unification regimes of Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) drew upon the heritage of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589) in establishing their higher educational policies, institutions, and terminology. The Tang adopted the Sui institutional framework, which was underpinned by three major schools of higher education: the Imperial University, with an enrollment of 500, comprised of sons and grandsons of third-degree officials and above; the School of National Youth, with an enrollment of 300, comprised of sons of fathers and grandfathers of the fifth degree and above; and the School of the Four Gates 四門學 (*Simen xue*), with an enrollment of 1,300, comprised of sons of fathers and grandfathers of the seventh degree and above and commoners of great ability (McMullen 1988: 18–20). These schools were under the auspices of the State Academy Directorate (Guozi jian 國子監), the main educational body of the Tang bureaucracy (McMullen 1988: 17). In addition to the three main schools, which were designed to train promising young men for careers in civil service, there were also specialist or technical schools in law, calligraphy, mathematics, and medicine, which were lower in status than the main schools (*Tong dian* 15.41a; tr. Herbert 1988: 201–202). The establishment of literary academies that admitted scholars or students suggests the increasing importance of literary skill as a prerequisite for official appointment and the cultural prominence of men appointed based on literary renown (*Jiu Tang shu* 44.1160–1163; *Xin Tang shu* 48.1267; see also Jia 1999: 227).

Private Education and the Master-Disciple Relationship

Education throughout the early and medieval periods was by no means limited to, or even primarily centered, in the state-sponsored systems. The private setting constituted a major mode through which students acquired an education and through which knowledge (in general or relating to particular texts) was transmitted. Records concerning private education frequently take the form of notices, often contained in historical biographies of scholars or recluses, that a particular individual had studied with or received an education from such-and-such a person (*shou xue yu* . . . 受學於 or *jiu/cong* . . . *shou xue* 就/從 . . . 受學), or that a particular teacher accepted various students. A memorial dating to 514 CE and preserved in the biography of official Jiang Shi 江式

(d. ca. 523) in *Wei shu* 魏書 (*History of the Wei*), for example, describes how Jiang Shi's sixth-generation ancestor Jiang Qiong 江瓊 and his cousin both studied with [*shou xue yu*] Wei Ji 衞覬 (155–229). As a result, Jiang Qiong was praised for his ancient "seal script" calligraphy and his mastery of earlier texts such as the Western Han dialect dictionary *Fangyan* 方言 (*Regional Expressions*) and *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Explanation of Simple Graphs and Analysis of Composite Characters*) (*Wei shu* 91.1964).

Whereas some passages seem to describe individualized tutelage or discipleship, other records describe scholars who took on multiple or vast numbers of students. For example, historical records state that the renowned Eastern Han scholars Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166) and Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), who had studied with Ma Rong, each gathered thousands of student followers (*Hou Han shu* 60.1972; *Hou Han shu* 35.1207–1208). The sheer number of students alone suggests the operation of a private school or academy. Private education, in its more or less formalized incarnations, flourished from Han through Tang times (Lee 2000: 54–56, 69–70, 76–77). The ninth century saw the emergence of what would become important developments in educational systems and practice. The appearance of private schools run by wealthy clans is especially noteworthy. In particular, as we move into the tenth century, some of these clan schools contracted scholars to serve as instructors. Starting in the ninth century, the term *shuyuan* 書院 begins to appear. The term *shuyuan*, literally indicating a place where books are kept, was associated with educational activities and came to designate private schools or academies. After the Tang, during the Five Dynasties and into the Song period, *shuyuan* and clan or lineage schools became increasingly important as a setting for education (Lee 2000: 84–85).

Buddhist Monasteries and Learning

Once Buddhism entered China in the first century CE, monasteries and nunneries also became important sites for both religious and secular learning, from primary to advanced levels. Although during the Northern and Southern period and into the Tang the monastic lifestyle attracted individuals of very high social status, monasteries and nunneries played an important role in providing an avenue through which men and women from more humble backgrounds could acquire a good education. The educational role of Buddhist monasteries and nunneries involved both education within the *saṅgha* (clergy), that is, religious education, and the "educational role of the *saṅgha* vis-à-vis the laity" (Zürcher 1989: 23). The most elite members of the clergy received a top-notch education that enabled them to move seamlessly in upper-class society, but even the average monk (as opposed to the average layman) was required to reach a basic level of literacy and memorize a certain amount of text (Zürcher 1989: 28).

In terms of participation in educational and other activities centered in the monastic community, the distinction between clergy and laity was not cut and dried. In addition to novices who vowed observance of the Ten Rules, boys sometimes as young as four or five came to the monastery as *tongzi* 童子 (sometimes translated as "postulants"), who accepted the Five Rules of the laymen and studied in the monastery. The early age of some of the *tongzi* indicates that the training they received must have included basic literacy acquisition (Zürcher 1989: 30–31). Evidence from Dunhuang further indicates the presence at monasteries of individuals who signed their practice texts as "young scholar" or "young student" (*xue shi lang* 學士郎). The texts that the *xue shi lang* were engaged in copying appear to have been largely secular in nature (Confucian classics, character dictionaries, etc.) (Zürcher 1989: 43–45).

The monastery as an educational setting provided a scholastic start to some who went on to become prominent writers and political figures. Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s), author of the seminal work of literary criticism *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*), was orphaned at a young age and was not able to marry because of his poverty. However, he was diligent in his studies and went to live and study for an extended period with the monk Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518). Liu Xie acquired his extensive education and erudition under Sengyou's tutelage and later also worked on the sutra collections at the Dinglin Monastery (*Liang shu* 50.710). The Tang period has numerous further examples of literary and political figures who received early education in the secular literary-historical tradition in monasteries (Zürcher 1989: 49–50).

The nunnery provided the chance to receive an education for women who otherwise might not have had the opportunity to study. In addition, some especially learned and respected nuns traveled and participated in elite intellectual society to a degree not often possible for secular women. Nuns traveled to different Buddhist monasteries and nunneries to further their study, engaged in intellectual discussions with monks and officials, and were even welcomed to the imperial precincts to give lectures and discuss Buddhist principles in the royal presence (Spade 1979: 21–25; Tsai 1994: 29–30, 33–34, 48–49, 64, 79–80, 91–92). While these renowned figures only accounted for a tiny elite of all nuns, their lives and careers suggest the educational role of the Buddhist establishment, as well as demonstrating that Buddhist and Confucian systems of learning were not separate or sectioned off from each other.

Recruitment and the Examination System

Records suggest that, dating back to at least the Han, recruitment methods privileged morality and educational background. The mainstream orientation of state-sponsored elite education was rooted in the ideals associated with the Confucian tradition. These ideals were, to a greater or lesser extent, linked to the interests of the state. At the elite level, education, both public and private, was geared towards preparing students for civil service, and the possession of particular Confucian-identified virtues was deemed desirable or even a prerequisite for potential officials.

Under Emperor Wu of the Han, a nationwide system of recommendation and recruitment, established under the previous emperor, was further developed. In 134 BCE, Emperor Wu, at the recommendation of his trusted advisor Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–ca. 104 BCE), instituted the *xiaolian* ("filial and incorrupt") system of annual recruitment (*Han shu* 6.160; 56.2525), whereby the heads of various units of administration were required to nominate local men who were renowned for their characters (Lee 2000: 113). The *xiaolian* was one of several annual and sporadic methods of recruitment instituted during the Han period. While some recommendations called for men skilled or experienced in specific areas, such as astrology, military affairs, and governing difficult regions, the majority echoed the *xiaolian* in seeking men possessing culturally revered virtues (of filial piety, honesty, and so on) (Lee 2000: 115–119). The recruitment system was, in theory, meritocratic—any man whose virtue attracted the notice of local leaders, for example, was eligible for recommendation as a Xiaolian—but, in practice, recruitment strongly favored local elites with personal ties to the recommenders.

The tension between the meritocratic ideal and selection practices which strongly favored the elite class continued to characterize educational policy throughout the subsequent centuries. In the second decade of the third century, Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), founding figure of the Wei (220–265), established a recruitment system known as the "Nine Grades" (*jiupin guanren* 九品官人), whereby potential officials were classified into nine grades for recommendation purposes (*Sanguo zhi* 22.635). The edicts issued by Cao Cao during this time laying out his views regarding bureaucratic selection emphasize the primacy of talent (*cai* 才) over moral worthiness (*xian* 賢) in official appointments (*Sanguo zhi* 1.32; partial translation Lee 2000: 124–128). However, the "central and impartial" (*zhongzheng* 中正) officials deputed by the central government to classify individuals often hailed from the districts they had been deputed to evaluate and were thus themselves members of the local elite. As a result, the nine grades system tended to institutionalize and perpetuate the position of powerful regional groups (Lee 2000: 129–130).

During the late Southern Dynasties period, sociocultural and political systems were very complex, and family or political clout did not necessarily translate into cultural cache (Tian 2007: 26–38, 111–125). In terms of appointment for office, written tests for recruitment coexisted alongside status-based ranking systems. Building on the work of Luo Xinben, Albert Dien has suggested that during this period quota recommendation exams, such as the *xiaolian*, may have been a more attractive route to official appointment for men from less eminent backgrounds (Dien 2001: 101–103). At any rate, these exams provided an important basis for later methods of recruitment.

During the Sui and Tang, earlier systems were extended and tweaked, and the basic outlines of the resulting system would exert a profound influence upon the practice of civil service selection throughout subsequent imperial history. The increasingly important role of literary composition as an evaluated subject in the examination process is of particular significance to the examinations as a cultural phenomenon.

As in earlier periods, examination candidates first sat for local provincial examinations. There were regional quotas for successful candidates, who would then go on to the national examinations held in the capital (Wang 1962: 1, 7, 9). The national-level examinations can be divided into regular examinations and irregular examinations, or examinations by imperial decree, which were conducted under the auspices of the Bureau of Merit Assessments (pre-736) or the Board of Rites (post-736) and held annually at a special compound in Chang'an (McMullen 1988: 23–24). There were three main higher-level doctoral examinations, the *xiucai* 秀才 ("refined in talent"), *mingjing* 明經 ("understanding the Classics"), and *jinshi* 進士 ("presented scholar"). The *xiucai* examination tested candidates' knowledge of statecraft and government policy (*Jiu Tang shu* 43.1804, 1809; *Xin Tang shu* 44.1161). The *xiucai*, which was used in different versions in earlier regimes, was soon eclipsed in popularity by the *mingjing* and *jinshi* and was discontinued altogether in the mid-eighth century (*Tong dian* 15.37a; Herbert 1988: 163–164; see also *Xin Tang shu* 44.1159–1164). The *mingjing* examination tested candidates' knowledge of classical texts, which were classified into "major classics" (*dajing* 大經), "medium classics" (*zhongjing* 中經), and "minor classics" (*xiaojing* 小經) (*Xin Tang shu* 44.1161–1162). Candidates were given "quotation questions" (*tiejing* 貼經), which required them to finish by memory a partial quotation from a classical text. They then underwent an oral test, an examination on the broader significance of classical passages, and an essay test on current government policy issues (*Xin Tang shu* 44.1161).

The *jinshi*, the most famous and, by the second half of the Tang, most prestigious of the civil service examinations, underwent repeated changes in terms of form and content. In general, the *jinshi* consisted of a three-pronged evaluative method involving quotation questions, essays on statecraft and current issues, and a section testing candidates' literary composition (literally, the "miscellaneous literature," or *zawen* 雜文, section). Among the three categories of the *jinshi*, the emphasis shifted repeatedly through the dynasty; at the beginning of the dynasty, for instance, the exam seems to have emphasized policy and quotation questions (Wu 1997: 145). The *zawen* portion of the exam was instituted in 681, but the precise nature of the *zawen* requirement—in particular, which genres were tested—is debated (Moore 2004: 16–18; Vedal 2015: 39–40). In the exam lore, the test of poetic composition has come to play an especially important role. Although the precise year is debated, the poetic requirement was instituted during the late seventh century and endured, with minor lapses, to the end of the dynasty (Vedal 2015: 38). The compositional genre to be tested also varied from exam to exam based on, among other factors, the interests and affiliations of examiners (Wu 1997: 149–150, 153–155). Compositional genres included *lüfu* 律賦 ("regulated *fu*") and *lüshi* 律詩 ("regulated verse"), most often the six-couplet *pailü* 排律.

Successful *jinshi* would all sit for a special palace examination presided over by the emperor. The outcome of this examination had a bearing on the positions that would be assigned to the *jinshi*. Whereas the examinations conferred official status (*chushen* 出身) upon candidates, graduates did not receive immediate official appointment. However, over the course of the Tang, the *mingjing* and especially *jinshi* gained in prestige and were seen as routes to illustrious civil service careers (Wu 1997: 13–14). The extent to which, over the course of the Tang, examination culture came to saturate elite culture is indicated by the wealth of exam-specific customs and vocabulary that emerged. A "golden card" (*nijin tiezi* 泥金帖子) notified successful candidates that they had passed (Wang 1985: 40); men who passed the examination together referred to each other as "same years" (*tongnian* 同年); and those who ate and drank excessively to cope with examination failure were said to be "expelling sadness" (*da maosao* 打毷氉) (Wang 2007: 85). The examination system and culture extended beyond China's borders and were also important in the histories of Korea and Vietnam (see also Chapters 33–36).

In examining historical developments in the recruitment system, scholars have traditionally traced a narrative of increasing meritocracy, as recruitment methods moved away from personal recommendation and toward "objective" examinations. It is true that the Tang examinations were more open than during previous periods and that some talented men from obscure backgrounds did gain entry into the imperial bureaucracy through excellent examination performance. However, higher education itself was the preserve of only the very privileged few, and examination graduates represented a tiny percentage of the men who entered the bureaucracy each year (McMullen 1988: 23–24; Herbert 1988: 20). In comparison with the small number of examination graduates, far more men acquired official status through hereditary privilege, reserved for the descendants of high-ranking officials, or as the holders of honorific titles, granted to men who had spent years as low-level "petty officials" (Herbert 1988: 24). In addition to institutional disadvantages, outsiders who had not been raised in the midst of elite capital society were confronted by daunting cultural barriers, including unfamiliarity with court society, "incorrect" accent, and lack of social connections in the capital (Herbert 1988: 110–111).

The class barriers experienced by these men, of course, paled in comparison to the gender barriers faced by women, who were categorically excluded from the examination experience, as lamented by the ninth-century woman poet Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 (844–868):

> Cloud-covered hilltops fill my eyes,
> I revel in springtime light,
> here clearly ranged are the silver hooks
> that grew at their fingertips.
> I have bitter regret that skirts of lace
> hide the lines of my poems,
> and lifting my head in vain I covet
> the publicly posted name. (Tr. Owen 1996: 510)

THE EMERGENCE OF EXAMINATION GENRES

The dissemination of examination culture within elite society affected the development of important literary genres and led to the creation of new genres. As mentioned above, the *zawen* portion of the exam tested compositional genres, including the *lüfu* and *lüshi*. *Fu* is a form of rhymed prose that allows exposition on a particular topic. *Lüfu* is divided into sections, with rules governing the rhyme used in each section. The emergence of the *lüfu* during the Tang has been linked specifically to examination requirements (Chen 2009: 11–15). Following a Tang source, scholars have also suggested that the *jinshi* played an important role in the promulgation of the standard *lüshi* (Feng 1958: 15; Jia 1996; Wu 1997: 144). According to the rules "regulating" *lüshi*, as they were eventually codified, a "regulated poem" rhymes on the even line, with one rhyme word used throughout the poem, and is also governed by tonal rules. However, scholars have convincingly demonstrated that, in Tang verse in general and examination poetry in particular, rhyme and tonal rules were not followed to the strict degree that became the norm during later periods (Duanmu and Stiennon 2005: 1–32; Vedal 2015: 53–60). Therefore, other considerations, such as the use of allusions and exposition, seem to have been more crucial as evaluative criteria. The limited survival of sources makes it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions; only several hundred examination poems survive (from what must originally have been thousands). Moreover, the poems that have survived are generally those written by passing candidates or are practice examination poems that were not written for any actual examination, so that it is not possible to compare passing and failing poems and thereby draw further conclusions regarding standards of evaluation.

In terms of topic, the surviving Tang examination poems treat themes based on genres of landscape description, historical episodes, events of recent history, famous pieces included in the seminal sixth century anthology *Wen xuan* (see Chapter 19), and allusions to the Classics. Although they are fairly common in examination poetry, poems on allusions to the Classics are not common in Tang poetry in general (Vedal 2015: 40–41). Candidates would be given a prompt and then expected to produce a responding poem that demonstrated their familiarity with the literary-historical allusions underlying the prompt at the same time that they incorporated other conventional related allusions and imagery.

For the examination in 811, for instance, candidates were required to write a "Jingu yuan huafa huaigu shi" 金谷園花發懷古詩 ("Flowers Blooming in the Jingu Garden: Poem Reflecting on the Past"). The topic refers to the Jingu villa built to the northwest of Luoyang by the wealthy Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300). Shi Chong's estate was famous as a gathering-place for a grand party in 296, as described in the "Preface to the Jingu Poems" written by Shi Chong just a few years before his death. Poems on this topic would be expected to allude to the literary-historical lore of Shi Chong and his legendary gathering and to adhere to the nostalgic theme of "reflection on the past." In particular, the prompt points the writer towards the conventional poetic posture of noting the passage of time through referencing the contrast between the lushness of the vegetation at a particular historical site and the absence of the famous figures associated with the site. Four poems from the 811 examination survive. The following is Hou Lie's 侯洌 (811 *jinshi*) contribution:

> Jingu one thousand years later—
> The spring flowers bloom, filling the garden.
> The red flowers in vain smile towards the sun,
> Their resplendent luxuriance still welcomes the carriages [of Shi Chong
> and his guests].
> Rain moistens the faint light, softening it;
> Wind waves the fragmented shadows, turning them over.
> One still suspects that they are unrolling the brocade screen,
> Sighing that the crimson silk is no more.
> With dejected bearing, the orioles' chanting is harsh;
> Like a tear-filled face, the dew-drops are copious.
> One may earnestly inquire into the affairs of the past—
> But the peaches and plums in the end have nothing to say. (Peng 2006: 177–178)

The poem opens by referring directly to the topic of the prompt and goes on to describe the garden landscape in such a way as to continually evoke the contrast between the past splendor of Shi Chong's estate and the present scene, in which the site has been reclaimed by nature. The "brocade screen" (*jin zhang*) of the fourth couplet is an allusion to the "Biography of Shi Chong," which describes how he commissioned a huge and elaborate brocade screen as part of a competition in extravagance with his equally wealthy and high-born associates (Peng 2006: 177). The last line alludes to a Western Han proverb found in the *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*): "Peaches and plums don't speak, but a path naturally forms beneath them" (*Shiji* 109.2878). The meaning is that the beauty and sweetness of the fruits naturally attracts people to them without their having to say a word. Here the allusion might be meant to reference both the illustrious historical personages and the actual silence of the natural scene, which is now without its famous former residents.

The three other poems on this topic that survive from the 811 exam reveal a considerable overlap in terms of imagery and vocabulary. All of the poems begin by naming Shi Chong's estate and describing the blooming of the flowers. The poems all call attention to the present loneliness of the scene in comparison to past days, and Wang Zhi's poem also references the peaches and plums proverb. Words such as "turn over" (*fān*), "copious/lush" (*fán*), "light" (*qing*), "embellish/connect" (*zhui*), and "brocade" (*jin*) also appear in multiple poems. The shared vocabulary of the poems suggests a similar mode of preparation and internalization of conventional imagery relating to a particular theme.

In addition to poetic genres, already by the early sixth century the forms of prose disquisition required for the examination had also emerged as literary genres to be recorded and learned. While the sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan*, organized by genre, does not preserve the essays written by examination candidates, it does preserve, under the category of *wen* 文 ("essay"), the examination questions (*cewen* 策文 or *cewen wen* 策問文) posed to candidates for examinations held in 491, in 493, and in 504. In response to the questions, candidates would be expected to write "response disquisitions" (*duice* 對策),

through which they set forth their political stance. The examination questions focus on contemporary policy questions as well as on governmental issues that are time-honored and not specific to any particular era: how to entice talented and morally lofty men to government service, how to encourage agricultural productivity, the proper use of punishments, fixing the calendar, how to encourage upright remonstrance, and so on (*Wen xuan* 36.504–511).

The questions are written in the voice of the monarch (the imperial "we"), but are composed by eminent literary figures Wang Rong 王融 (468–493) and Ren Fang 任昉 (460–508). They employ highly formal, allusive language and parallel prose. A question on worthy ministers from the examination of 491, attributed to Wang Rong, refers to various classical passages on virtue and wisdom, including two stories from *Zhuangzi* in which sagely advice is given. The prompt closes by likewise sagaciously requesting advice from the candidates:

> We have respectfully received the Heavenly Mandate, reverentially formulating a long-range plan. . . Sleeping and waking, Our thoughts are on fine plans for governing the state, awaiting the loyal and true [ministers]. The men of state earn their reputations through study, and it is fitting that they should assist the ruler. We urge you to lay out the key points regarding the three ways [of governance, personnel, and direct speech or remonstrance] in order to illuminate the most important aspects of the four subjects for evaluating individuals [as referenced in the *Analects*: behavior, speech, knowledge of governmental affairs, and literature; also used in the Han recruitment system]. We look forward to experiencing the harmony of salt and plum [i.e. worthy ministers]. (*Wen xuan* 36.504–505)

The question assumes extensive knowledge of the classical tradition but is itself is quite general; "lay[ing] out the key points about the three ways [of governance, personnel, and direct speech]" would be useful in any political context but here is not explicitly connected with contemporary political issues or circumstances. Other questions, including a question from the early Liang dynasty written by Ren Fang, address more pressing immediate circumstances, including taxation policy and public granaries (*Wen xuan* 36.510–511; Dien 2001: 105–106).

Unfortunately, as *Wen xuan* does not include the candidates' answers, it is impossible to assess the way in which they would have responded to this type of question. However, Dien has discussed examination answers preserved in other sources, including *Bei Qi shu* (*History of the Northern Qi*) and a manuscript retrieved from a tomb that contains answers to a 408 examination held in the regime of the Western Liang 西涼 (400–421). The manuscript in particular suggests prevailing standards for examination answer format and content that varied considerably from those indicated by other surviving examination materials preserved in standard historical and literary sources (Dien 2001: 107–113).

As we move into the Tang, more questions and the responses of successful candidates have been preserved. Surviving examination essays include those by famous literary figures, including Shangguan Yi 上官儀 (608–665) and Zhang Changling 張昌齡 (d. 660).

The questions to which Shangguan and Zhang responded ask candidates to assess the use of punishments, discuss methods of recruiting worthy men, and consider the nature of lofty and high-minded men (*QTW* 155.1584–1585, 161.1650–1651). The questions and answers are notable for likewise employing parallel prose and complementary examples, as well as for the ways in which the candidates' answers showcase their erudition by reworking in a subtle manner phrases and motifs from the questions.

The Examinations and Literary Culture

The emergence of examination prose as a literary genre in its own right is indicated not only by the preservation of example questions and responses in anthologies and literary collections (see Chapter 15), but also by the complaints of ministers, who registered their displeasure that examination candidates were only studying previous passing examination essays, as opposed to engaging in study of the classics (Wu 1997: 147). Beyond delineating which texts ambitious young men did or did not read, the penetration of examination culture into elite culture is reflected broadly in a variety of genres. The literary importance of the examinations stimulated the development of new genres and influenced stylistic and thematic innovations found in existing genres.

The *biji* 筆記 (miscellany) genre is rich in episodes dealing with all aspects of the examination experience. There are rags-to-riches stories about men who rise from obscurity and poverty to become nationally renowned through their examination success; there are anecdotes that focus on the relationships forged through the examination process, including the patronage networks formed among senior literary figures and young hopefuls and the friendships or rivalries that develop between men who study or take the examinations together; there are anecdotes that describe the ritual and the less formal celebratory customs surrounding the examinations (e.g., Wang 1962: 1, 10–12, 17, 47–52, 73–74). These stories are found in a variety of Tang and post-Tang anecdote collections. The tenth-century *Tang zhiyan* 唐摭言, compiled by Wang Dingbao 王定保 (870–ca. 940), deals exclusively with the Tang recruitment and selection process and includes a wealth of entries that suggest the pressures and concerns of the candidates and recent graduates (Moore 2004). Wish-fulfillment narratives include the story of *jinshi* candidate Lu Zhao 盧肇 (843 *jinshi*), from a poor family in Yuanzhou (in modern Jiangxi). En route to the exam, he was treated poorly by the commandery leadership, who feasted only his wealthy traveling companion and ignored him. However, Lu Zhao got the last laugh, returning the following year as an illustrious successful candidate (Wang 1962: 40). One can easily see the appeal of this type of anecdote to struggling young men preparing for the exams, as well as its role in perpetuating the dream/myth of the exam as a viable route to glory for men of all walks of life, including those of humble origins.

Other anecdotes describe the anguish experienced by the failed candidate. One particularly notable story describes the failed candidate Wen Ding 溫定, who, having "long suffered in the examinations," was extremely resentful of the successful candidates and "devised an unexpected plan to humiliate them": he disguised himself as a woman to sneak onto the party boat where the successful examination candidates were celebrating their victory. The candidates were all fooled and mistook Wen Ding for a high-class beauty. However,

> Right when the revelry was reaching its height, Wen Ding's foot dropped out from in the midst of the curtains, and his knee and calf were large and hairy [revealing that he was a man]. When [the candidates] suddenly caught sight of it, they all covered their faces with their sleeves in laughter, and sent out the urgent command to turn the boat back to get away from him. Someone said, "That must be Wen Ding!" (Wang 1962: 42)

While Wen Ding's behavior is obviously held up as extreme, a pervasive strain in anecdotes about the examinations suggests the perspective and interests of the candidate or recent graduate. Anxiety about the examinations is perhaps most directly expressed in the proliferation of anecdotes about the young scholar whose future is jeopardized either by circumstances beyond his control or by his own folly. The subgenre of the "cheater who gets caught" is especially amusing in this regard (Wang 1962: 210).

Similar anxieties are implied in the proliferation of anecdotes about the role of fate or randomness in determining success or failure. In some cases, success is predicted by dreams or other bizarre omens. According to one anecdote, one night the candidate Bi Xian 畢諴 (802–864) and two friends were staying up late "listening for omens" (*ting xiangbu* 聽響卜). They heard someone throwing a bone on the ground and dogs coming to fight over it. Then they heard someone else say, "The one who comes last will be sure to get it" 後來者必銜得 (Wang 1962: 85). The first two syllables in the phrase *bi xian de* 必銜得 ("will be sure to get it") are homophonous with Bi Xian's name, so that the stranger's words could be interpreted as an omen predicting that Bi Xian would "get it" [pass the exam].

Just the fact that Bi Xian and his friends stayed up all night to "listen for omens" (instead of, for instance, studying more) indicates the association between the examinations and fate, as well as the stock that candidates set in such notions of destiny and omens. In the same section, *Tang zhiyan* records multiple anecdotes in which dreams, mysterious Daoist masters, or other supernatural forces predicted examination outcomes (Wang 1962: 84–85). In exploring failure and success in the examination process, other stories emphasize not supernatural destiny, but rather the role played by what can be best described as randomness or dumb luck, including men who were passed by mistake (Wang 1962: 87–88). The closing of one entry explicitly articulates the moral suggested by this type of story: "Thus we know that success or failure is not the result of one's effort, but rather is brought about by circumstances beyond one's control" 乃知得喪非人力也, 蓋假手而已 (Wang 1962: 88).

The importance of the examination system as a catalyst in the literary and cultural arenas is indicated not only by the growth of a body of literature specifically about the examination experience, but also by the appearance of examination-related tropes in works of literature not primarily concerned with the examinations. One of the most significant developments in this regard is the emergence of the young scholar or examination candidate as the romantic male ideal par excellence in Tang literature. He would remain firmly entrenched in this role throughout subsequent dynastic periods.

The famous Tang tale "Li Wa's Story," for instance, follows the tribulations of a prefect's son who, having passed the local prefectural exam, goes to the capital Chang'an to take the *jinshi* examination. His father gives him a generous stipend to provide for his expenses while he is away from home, but the hapless young man soon becomes enamored of a beautiful courtesan named Li Wa and spends all of the money on her. Once the money runs out, she abandons him and disappears. He is eventually reduced to the brink of death and wanders the streets as a beggar, having been cast out by his family. As he roams the streets of Chang'an in his sorry condition, he chances to pass by Li Wa's new residence. Shocked at seeing the state into which he has fallen and guilty about her role in his downfall, she takes him in and nurses him back to health. Once he has recovered, she oversees his preparation for the *jinshi* examination, transforming from a dangerous femme fatale and con artist into a mouthpiece for the values of establishment education. Even after he has passed the *jinshi* exam, she insists that he not rest on his laurels and urges him to continue preparing for an upcoming special palace examination (Ma and Lau 1996: 169). The young man also passes the special examination and goes on to an illustrious career. He reconciles with his father, who urges him to take Li Wa as his official wife in thanks for all she has done for him.

In "Li Wa's Story," the young man's success in the examination is the key to his reintegration into his family and his original, "proper" sociocultural role. Li Wa's role in his rehabilitation likewise earns her respectability and the status of an official's first wife, a social role from which, as a courtesan, she would normally be barred. The resolution of "Li Wa's Story" suggests some of the major issues discussed in this chapter. We see the way in which the examination system moves beyond its function as a method of recruitment to become a means through which sociocultural norms and values are defined, enforced, and reflected. The examination as an ideal and a practice gradually transformed the value system through which social capital was acquired and understood.

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CHAPTER 8

TEXT AND COMMENTARY

The Early Tradition

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A tendency exists to think of the development of a literary tradition in rather simplistic ways: in the early period authors write texts, and then later authors write commentaries to those earlier texts in order to explain what the earlier authors wrote. Such a narrative does not work particularly well for any literary tradition, but for few traditions are we as amply supplied as we are in the classical Chinese tradition with materials that allow us to paint a different picture.

Text and Context in Early Chinese Literary Production

A. K. Ramanujan once wrote: "No Hindu ever reads the *Mahābhārata* for the first time." His point was that one grows up in Hindu societies hearing stories from the *Mahābhārata*, listening to bits of the *Mahābhārata*, and watching scenes of the *Mahābhārata* being performed. So ubiquitous are these performances that, when turning to the text, one is always reading something one has already heard or read before.

If one were to make an analogy with early China, it would be not with a single great text but rather with a repertoire of ever-changing stories, anecdotes, and snippets of poetry. Literary production in classical China occurred against a background of a constantly circulating body of stories and poems. Stories concerning stock characters would be told and retold in shifting forms, so that one would endlessly be hearing different versions of them. One would, to paraphrase Ramanujan, never hear a story concerning Yao or Shun (both legendary sage emperors) for the first time.

The key to the use of these stories was to allude to them in particular contexts, changing some aspect of the stories in order to create a certain response or make a particular argument. Poems, too, would circulate as lines that would be quoted, referenced, alluded to, and altered from previous uses in order to elicit responses in different situations.

The concern with these tellings and retellings was not, therefore, with the intrinsic meaning of a story or of a poem in itself. The focus was rather on bringing particular portions of the stories or particular lines of the poems into new contexts, quoting them or alluding to them as might seem appropriate. Successful allusions would then become part of the web of associations of the stories or lines of poetry—associations that later references and allusions would then build upon and play with as well.

Early texts in classical China should be understood as in part coming out of these constant readings and rereadings of earlier materials. Many of the texts were based upon utilizations and readings of earlier materials, and themselves became part of this endless process of reading and rereading as well. Indeed, many of the texts that we now possess were themselves formed to a significant degree by these later readings. Our texts, in other words, were in part commentaries to earlier materials, and were in turn shaped into what we have come to know as texts by the commentarial tradition. This complex interplay of text and commentary defines much of the early literary tradition.

The Art of Quoting and Telling

Let's begin with poetry. The collection that we have since come to know as *Shijing* 詩經 or the *Classic of Poetry* is a series of poems that came together over a number of centuries. The earliest stratum appears to consist of ritual hymns from the Western Zhou (ca. 1046–771 BCE) court; later strata include, for example, love poems in which natural imagery would be used to bring out certain emotional responses comparable to those of the human figures in the poem.

Quotations of the *Classic of Poetry* abound in early Chinese texts. Intriguingly, however, one rarely if ever encounters a full poem. Rather, one encounters particular lines, taken out of context of the full poem, quoted in often surprising and counterintuitive ways. When a particularly creative utilization of a set of lines would occur, that utilization would be remembered and built upon in later utilizations. Over time, each of these creative utilizations would become part of the range of associations of a given set of lines.

Putting this in strong terms, the interest was less in finding an inherent meaning in any particular poem and more in the ways that lines of poems could be quoted and utilized according to the contexts.

This same process occurred with stories as well. Certain figures—often historical or putatively historical figures—would be portrayed in various story cycles. In different situations, different versions of the stories would be told, and the interest of the stories would come out of the variations, that is, out of the particular ways in which a particular story would be told. In one version, Bo Yi and Shu Qi, retainers of the last Shang king, retreated into the mountains and starved to death after the Zhou conquest instead of supporting the new Zhou ruler. Knowing that they had acted properly, they died without rancor. In another version, they died filled with resentment, cursing Heaven for the injustices of the world.

Although the main figures are often putatively historical figures, these differing versions were told not as historical claims, in the sense of a debate about what actually happened in the past. On the contrary, the interest of the stories would lie precisely in the variations, in the meanings that could be played upon—whether, in the example above, we live in a moral or amoral cosmos—as the fragments of stories would be retold and altered in different situations.

AUTHORS AND COMMENTATORS

Given the nature of this circulation of poetic and story fragments, the focus was not on associating a poem or story with a particular author and then attempting to explicate the meaning of the work as a whole. The focus was rather on utilizing the various lines or shifting the story according to context. As we will see, this focus on utilization would become one of the key aspects of later interpretative and commentarial traditions.

And it even became a key aspect of the development of a notion of an author.

Over the course of the fourth and third centuries BCE, a new vision of authorship began to emerge—one focused on great figures called sages. The view was that, in the midst of what was perceived to be a period of decline, the sages who in previous times would have become rulers and brought order to the world were no longer able to gain political power. Accordingly, they instead had to write texts in order to lay out their visions for how to order the world.

Mencius, a figure in the fourth century BCE, argued that Confucius had been the most significant of these sages who wrote in order to bring order to the world:

> As the generations declined and the way became obscure, heterodox teachings and violent practices arose. There were instances of ministers killing their rulers and sons killing their fathers. Confucius was worried and created the *Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Chunqiu* 春秋]. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* is an undertaking for a Son of Heaven. This is why Confucius said: "Those who understand me will do so through the *Spring and Autumn Annals*; those who condemn me will do so through the *Spring and Autumn Annals*." (*Mengzi zhushu* 6.117)

The *Spring and Autumn Annals* would at first glance appear to be a dry, chronological listing of events that occurred in the minor state of Lu from 722 to 481 BCE. But the small state of Lu is where Confucius lived. And once the text was attributed to Confucius—the only work that Confucius was said to have written—the dry chronicle had to be interpreted to reveal the sage's intent in composing such a work.

But immediately this created a problem. If this is a great work, written by a great sage to bring order to the world, then how does one read it as such? And how does one relate what Confucius wrote to a subsequent world that would appear to be radically different?

The problem, of course, is related to the one we were discussing before: how to read and interpret earlier materials into new contexts. Now, however, the concern is with explicating these materials as the product of a great sage. Here one begins to see the idea that an author wrote a text that must be read and deciphered as a whole.

Intriguingly, many of the crucial mechanisms for making such an interpretation are already implicit in the *Mencius* quotation. One of the keys is to understand the context within which Confucius would have composed such a work, to understand Confucius's intention in composing the work, and to understand how the principles one can find in the work can and should be applied to other contexts.

Later commentarial traditions to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* were attempts to do precisely these things. One of the more influential of these was the *Gongyang* 公羊 commentary, which read the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as an attempt to lay out timeless principles of proper governance. Another, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*), involved arranging other stories related to the state of Lu in order to provide further context to Confucius's pithy statements in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

The result of this process is that, over the course of the fourth to second centuries BCE, a dry, pithy chronicle from the state of Lu came to be read as a great work of sagely complexity. Instead of a process of texts being written as texts, to which commentaries would later be affixed, we are instead seeing a process by which early self-defined commentaries defined the texts they were commenting upon.

Similar processes can be seen with the *Classic of Poetry*. Over the course of the Warring States (481–221 BCE) and early Han (206 BCE–220 CE), Confucius came to be seen as the figure who had assembled the *Classic of Poetry* by selecting exemplary poems and organizing them into a collection. And commentaries started being written to explicate the meanings of the poems selected by Confucius.

These commentarial traditions developed out of the earlier layers of associations that the lines of the poems had developed. For example, the Mao commentary from the Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE)—involving a reading of what would appear to be love poems in the "Guo feng" 國風 ("Airs of the States") section as allegories of political relationships—developed out of a tradition of placing lines of the poems into new contexts and reading them accordingly. Now, however, the rereadings were being undertaken in the form of a commentary to a work that was in turn reread as a unified collection of poems put together by the sage Confucius.

SAGELY TEXTS IN THE LATE WARRING STATES AND EARLY HAN

Such a vision of a sage as an author or compiler of texts was to continue thereafter as a major force in textual production. Many figures would try to emulate Confucius in the role of either a great sagely author or compiler, while many others would try to stop the progressive growth of claims of sagacity.

As we have noted, Mencius claimed Confucius to have been a sage. And the disciples of Mencius would later claim that Mencius too was a sage, and that his ideas as well needed to be collected into a text.

Successive texts were written about, and eventually by, people who were claimed—or claimed themselves—to be sages. The result was the development of a form of competitive sageliness, in which texts would be written to be longer and more comprehensive—more sagely—than their predecessors.

The high point of this process occurred in the early imperial period (late third and second centuries BCE). The beginning of the imperial period witnessed claims by rulers to be creating states greater than any of their predecessors', and the same was the case with textual production. A clear example can be seen in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, a work of the second century BCE, the postface of which explicitly argues that the text is greater than and supersedes all previous texts. And Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) postface to his *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*) appears implicitly to claim the work to be greater than the *Spring and Autumn Annals* of Confucius.

Commentary appears in this tradition as well, but often within the form of a competitive sageliness. For example, one of the chapters of the *Huainanzi* opens by quoting the lines of an earlier text, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, about the absurdity of trying to provide a cosmogonic account of the universe. The *Huainanzi*, after quoting these lines, then provides a line-by-line commentary to them. And the commentary involves a lengthy cosmogonic account of the universe. The positioning, in other words, is not one of placing oneself in a subservient role to an earlier text that one is claiming simply to explicate. The goal is rather an extreme variant of the work of reading that we were mentioning above: the earlier passage is not only being read, used, and interpreted in a new context; it is, to use a strong wording, being misread to demonstrate the superiority of the latter text to the text it is ostensibly commenting upon.

UNDERSTANDING THE SAGES

This strong form of sagely competitiveness, and the strong forms of reading—and intentional misreading—that played out within such a textual production, reached its height in the mid-Western Han dynasty. By the end of the Western Han, however, a reaction against such claims to sagacity and such attempts to write grandiose works developed, along with a concurrent reaction against the forms of imperial statecraft that had dominated the earlier Western Han.

This shift had two major implications. To begin with, we see a self-conscious attempt to bring an end to the great age of the sagely texts. At the end of the Western Han these texts (*Mengzi, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Huainanzi*) were classified under the rubric of Masters Texts (Denecke 2011) —a classification that both defined the category under which such texts were to be understood and, at least for some, marked the closing of the category as well.

Also by the end of the Western Han one sees another, and directly related, development; the texts associated with Confucius became defined as the Five Classics: the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Classic of Poetry*, the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書), the *Records of Rituals* (*Liji* 禮記), and the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經). The *Spring and Autumn Annals*, as we have seen, was the one text that Confucius was seen as having written, while the other four he was seen as having edited.

With this definition of the works of Confucius came a concurrent attempt to define Confucius as the greatest sage—greater, in other words, than the masters that had come after. Claims, whether implicit or explicit, to supersede Confucius came increasingly to be seen as hubristic. For many, the goal should rather be to understand the teachings of the greatest sage, and the discussion of such texts would then be positioned as one of subservience—simply trying to explicate the meanings of the great works of the past.

The kind of commentarial work needed to explicate these texts associated with Confucius became a significant source of textual production over the ensuing two centuries of the Eastern Han (25–220). Throughout these commentaries, the sense was that Confucius was a great sage and that he had written or edited the works in question in order to pass on deeper meaning. The goal of the commentaries was to lay out that deeper meaning.

A telling example of how strong this sense of subordinating oneself to earlier sages became can be seen by looking at a major exception: Wang Chong 王充 (27–after 100 CE). Wang Chong very much opposed the growing cultural prohibition against claims to sagacity. Wang Chong argued on the contrary that sages were still rising, and that they were continuing to write sagely texts. It is quite clear, indeed, that Wang Chong saw himself as such a sage, writing a great text, the *Lun heng* (*Balanced Discourses*) to rectify the errors of the day. But his arguments fell on deaf ears: claims to sagacity in this sense no longer held the cultural resonance they once did.

As the writing of commentaries on the contrary became an increasingly strong intellectual focus, the materials from the past were seen as texts that were written or organized by sages, and one of the key goals was thus to place oneself in a subsidiary position vis-à-vis these earlier texts and simply to help explicate the words of the great sages. But then, of course, the question became how to define the texts to be commented upon and what strategies should be employed to interpret them. The problems were particularly acute for the Five Classics, which were being used in part for governing an empire—hardly problems the texts would appear overtly to be speaking to.

One method of interpretation that developed was to claim that esoteric teachings had been handed down in the tradition that would explain the larger meanings behind the classics. According to one body of such material, called the apocryphal (*chenwei* 讖緯) texts, the classics organized by Confucius provided an exoteric teaching, while the *chenwei* texts claimed to be in possession of an esoteric teaching. The claim here was that Confucius was a profound figure who wrote or edited complex works that needed to be explicated through highly sophisticated hermeneutics.

INTERPRETING WITHOUT SAGES

But even the claim that a sophisticated hermeneutics was required to unlock the profound thoughts of a mysterious sage from the past was hotly debated. Indeed, an entire strain of Eastern Han commentarial writings developed that attempted to avoid an overly complex hermeneutics, as this would potentially put too much power in the hands of the interpreter.

One telling alternative approach was attempted by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), one of the leading commentators of the Eastern Han period. Zheng Xuan based his commentarial practice not on discovering the esoteric meanings hidden in a text by a sage but rather on reconstructing a past moment. For Zheng Xuan, the Western Zhou was the period in which rituals were done properly. Confucius, for Zheng Xuan, was a great sage, but he was also a sage who lived after the age of greatness. Confucius's goal, according to Zheng Xuan, was to preserve as much as possible the Western Zhou. As such, the five classics edited and (in the one case) written by Confucius were particularly important. But they do not offer a complete picture of the Western Zhou. Any other text that might be useful for filling in details could therefore be used.

Guiding Zheng Xuan's hermeneutics, then, was a claim that the Western Zhou was a unified system, and that texts after the decline contained clues of what that system had been. The goal of the commentator was thus to work through the textual corpus to find remnants of the Zhou system. If these remnants could be put together successfully, then the result would be a reconstruction of the Western Zhou. In other words, Zheng Xuan was concerned not with uncovering the intentions of a sage but in reconstructing an era, and his commentarial work consisted not in developing a complex hermeneutic to interpret the earlier texts but rather in simply putting together the fragments of material we possess, with minimal analysis.

An even more extreme example can be seen in the *Taiping jing* 太平經 (*The Scripture of Great Peace*). Although a composite text, the portion of the text that will concern us here probably dates to the Eastern Han. The portion consists of a dialogue between a Celestial Master and his disciples. The Celestial Master, sent by Heaven, explains that all of the previous sages of human history were in fact also sent by Heaven. The teachings they were offering, therefore, were Heaven-sent and correct. But they were misunderstood and misapplied by humans, and over time these misunderstandings had accumulated. This accumulation of mistakes has now reached the point that the entire world is in danger of collapse. The solution offered by the Celestial Master is not to send yet another sage to offer yet more revealed teachings, as this would simply lead to the same problem again. On the contrary, the Celestial Master calls on his disciples to simply take every piece of writing from the past and put it all together. Since each would contain remnants of the same revelation, the resulting document, once properly collated, would contain one single sagely statement:

> If the sages of higher antiquity missed something, the sages of middle antiquity may have obtained it. If the sages of middle antiquity missed something, the sages of lower antiquity may have obtained it. If the sages of lower antiquity missed something, the sages of higher antiquity may have obtained it. If one arranges these by category so they thereby supplement each other, then together they will form one good sagely statement. (Wang 1992: 132.352)

Completely gone, therefore, is any claim that one is confronting a text written by a great human sage, or that any kind of complex hermeneutic would be needed to tease out the complex meanings of the earlier text. On the contrary, the texts contain remnants of one single (repeatedly given) revelation, and the goal is simply to put the remnants together, with no interpretation.

Or a final variation can be seen in the *Xiang'er* 想爾 commentary to the *Laozi* 老子. The *Xiang'er* commentary was probably written during the second century of the common era. The text was either composed in or at least later appropriated by the Celestial Masters, a millenarian movement that emerged in the second half of the Eastern Han.

According to the *Xiang'er* commentary, the *Laozi* was not written by a human sage at all. It was rather written by a deity named Laozi. Laozi, in fact, was the Way itself. But the Way would periodically take human form to offer revelations. And the text of the *Laozi* was one of these revelations.

The *Xiang'er* commentary was written to explicate the proper way to read the revelation. One of the key mistakes, according to the *Xiang'er* commentary, is that people have mistakenly read the text as having been written by a human sage, and as having been written in a complex form that required a sophisticated hermeneutic to understand. On the contrary, the *Xiang'er* argues, the *Laozi* is in fact offering a very clear set of guidelines written in very straightforward prose, and the commentary presents itself as simply laying out the obvious meaning of this revelation. The human author is denied altogether, as is any kind of complex interpretation or hermeneutic.

For all of their differences, all these approaches involved attempts to relegate wisdom to the past (instead of seeing sages as continuing to appear), to subordinate oneself to such a past, and to at least claim that one is not interpreting the past in a complex way that might entail too much power on the part of the interpreter.

THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE MYSTERIOUS LEARNING

If one of the dominant pushes of the Eastern Han commentarial tradition consisted in trying to claim the commentator to be subordinate to the text under consideration, a dramatic shift occurred with the development of *xuanxue* 玄學 ("mysterious learning" or "arcane learning"), a new commentarial practice that emerged in the third century.

This shift was related to a larger shift in the culture of the time. We often think of the Han dynasty as a great empire, and the fall of the Han as a shift into a period of disunity. But this was not the view at the time. The ensuing Wei dynasty (220–265) was a powerful empire that dominated the north China plain. There was every expectation in the Wei court that it could be every bit as great an empire as the Han. The fact that we know, from historical hindsight, that the Wei would not be as large or as long-lasting an empire as the Han should not lead us to misinterpret the sensibility at the time.

Such optimism was evident in the reading practices at the time as well. Although some figures certainly continued to take a subordinate position to the earlier textual corpus, presenting themselves as simply attempting to understand the texts of earlier sages, one sees during the Wei dynasty a resurgence of strong claims of sagehood. Whereas for much of the previous century there had been a powerful stricture against proclaiming oneself to be a sage, such claims become more and more frequent in the early Wei.

But the vision of sagehood that flourished at this time was not one of a sage writing mysterious texts that would have to be decoded by later figures. On the contrary, sages came to be defined as figures who were able to respond to situations perfectly. True sagacity was something that could not be communicated through writing. The model was thus not of a Confucius, for example, writing the *Spring and Autumn Annals* but rather of the Confucius one sees in the *Analects*—a great sage responding perfectly to his disciples, quoting lines of the *Poetry* to affect the mood of those around him. A world of sages would be one that replicated such interactions—a world that, in a sense, replicated what existed before the period when sages had to resort to writing texts. If Wang Chong was looking back nostalgically to an age when sages would write great texts, the "mysterious learning" scholars were looking back to an age when one could, in particular situations, respond perfectly, without the need for writing at all.

One text devoted in part to providing anecdotes concerning such figures was the fifth-century compilation *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*). The story told there about Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) —one of the most influential commentators of the era—is revealing of the norms of the time. In the anecdote, a certain Pei Hui 裴徽 asks Wang Bi about Confucius and Laozi:

> Generally speaking, nothingness (*wu* 無) is actually that which forms the basis of the ten thousand things. As such, the sage [Confucius] was unwilling to speak about it, yet Laozi elaborated on it without end. Why is this?

To which Wang Bi purportedly responded:

> The sage embodied nothingness. Nothingness furthermore cannot be explicated. Thus, words necessarily reach to something (*you*). Laozi and Zhuangzi did not refrain from something; their constant explication is where they were insufficient. (Liu 1982: 4.199)

Sagehood, in essence, is embodiment.

But then what about texts? And what about commentaries?

Let us return to Wang Bi as an example. Nothingness is understood as that from which things emerge. Sages, by embodying nothingness, equally generate an order around themselves. Since any sage understands these processes, it is possible to see through whatever is written in order to understand the sagely meaning behind it.

Accordingly, gone is any claim that the commentator must be subservient to an earlier, greater text, and gone is any claim that the commentator needs to accept the grouping of texts organized by earlier figures. Instead of, for example, reading the Five Classics to understand the teachings of the great sage Confucius, one can, if one is a sage, organize the earlier textual tradition as would be, from the current sagely perspective, philosophically proper. With Wang Bi, for example, this entailed a concern with the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Laozi*, and the *Classic of Changes*. Each of these for Wang Bi revealed the workings of nothingness as embodied by Confucius. And the work of the commentator was essentially to lay out these sagely teachings to non-sages. But Wang Bi was not presenting himself as a lesser figure trying to understand earlier texts written by greater figures. On the contrary, Wang Bi becomes, in a sense, like Confucius himself—a great sage organizing materials from the past for non-sages.

CONCLUSION

We often assume that the development of literary traditions begins with a "classical" period in which authors write texts. The greatest of these texts then form the corpus on which later commentators work. The goal of the commentators is to explicate the complex meanings of the earlier texts.

But the early Chinese material points to a different trajectory. Early literary production in China should be understood in terms of an endless process of accretion, in which poetic lines were constantly being utilized in new and surprising ways and in which stories were constantly being altered and varied according to context. Although we are only getting a tiny portion of this process, even the tiny portion we can see demonstrates it clearly. The development of the tradition thus puts an incredible weight on utilization and active interpretation. Out of this active interpretation develops the notion of sages, who are able to utilize and alter to even greater degrees, and out of this in turn develops a complex debate about who is a sage, how one should interpret works by sages, and whether one should be actively and overtly interpreting such works into new contexts or on the contrary claiming to simply subordinate oneself to these higher teachings.

In short, the texts of the classical period emerged together with the commentaries to them, and literary production in the early period developed in part out of contested visions of how to define text and commentary, author and interpreter. Looking in depth at how comparable processes played out in other manuscript traditions in Eurasia over the same time period would well repay the effort.

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CHAPTER 9

TEXT AND COMMENTARY IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

YU-YU CHENG

CANON formation in the Chinese tradition during this period involves the following developments: first, the appellation of *jing* 經 (classic), as with *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) and *Li sao jing* 離騷經 (*Classic of Encountering Sorrow*); second, the formation of exegetical traditions—*Shijing*, for example, spawns the Mao Tradition, the Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) commentary, and the Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) subcommentary; third, inclusion in anthologies such as the sixth-century *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*); fourth, the generation of criticism and evaluation (e.g., Zhong Rong's 鍾嶸 [d. 518] *Shipin* 詩品 [*Gradations of Poets*]). This chapter will focus on several works of commentary from the Eastern Han 漢 (25–220) to the Tang 唐 (618–907), including Wang Yi's 王逸 (fl. 130–140) *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句 (*Chapter and Verse Commentary to the Verses of Chu*), Yan Yanzhi's 顏延之 (384–456) and Shen Yue's 沈約 (441–513) commentaries on Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210–263) "Yong huai shi" 詠懷詩 ("Poems Singing My Cares"), Liu Jun's 劉峻 (better known as Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標, 462–521) commentary on *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*), Li Daoyuan's 酈道元 (d. 527) *Shuijing zhu* 水經註 (*Commentary on the Classic of Rivers*), and Li Shan's 李善 (d. 689) commentary on the *Wen xuan*. My goal is to demonstrate the influence of these commentaries on structures of knowledge, cultural history, and literary history.

In the aftermath of the book burning during the reign of the First Emperor of the Qin 秦始皇 (r. 246–210 BCE), two Han monarchs, Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) and Emperor Cheng 成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE), undertook comprehensive attempts to seek out lost texts, to collate and edit extant texts, and to compile bibliographies. The court put whole-hearted effort into the establishment of an imperial library, with Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE) playing a crucial role in editing and collating texts (see *Han shu* 30.1701; discussed in Richter 2013: 2–7). We should note that "editing and collating" in this context refers not only to the collection and preservation of texts; what is at stake is a more fundamental process of selecting, stabilizing, and finalizing texts from a bewildering profusion of source materials. This procedure involves more than the delineation of word order or meanings; it is endemic to the "fixing" of these texts as "canon" (see also Chapter 11).

For this process of canon formation, commentary is of even greater import than collating and editing. Take the example of *Shijing*, the earliest anthology of poetry in the Chinese tradition. The extant *Shijing* contains 305 poems; in addition we have six titles for which we have no text. The creation of these poems might have spanned about five centuries, from the Western Zhou (ca. 11th century BCE) to the mid-Spring and Autumn Period (ca. 6th century BCE). But it is only by the late Warring States (481–221 BCE) or the Han period that "the poems" or "the three hundred poems" came to be honored as the *Classic of Poetry*. The earlier uses of these and other poems (the so-called "lost poems" or "uncollected poems" [*yishi* 逸詩/軼詩]) for the purposes of eulogy, negotiation, remonstrance, and persuasion on diplomatic occasions are well attested in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*, ca. 4th century BCE), but in most cases, the speaker "cut the section and took the meaning" (*duanzhang quyi* 斷章取義), that is, quoted only a few lines from a poem to suit the speaker's intent and the context. The issue at this stage is thus the functions of the poems rather than their explanation or exegesis. The Han dynasty saw the emergence of four exegetical traditions: the Qi 齊 (Yuangu Sheng 轅固生), Lu 魯 (Shen Peigong 申培公), Han 韓 (Han Ying 韓嬰), and Mao 毛 (Mao Heng 毛亨and Mao Chang 毛萇) traditions (the scholars associated with the beginnings of these traditions were active circa third to second century BCE). By the Eastern Han, Zheng Xuan's exclusive attention to the Mao tradition raised it to new prominence. The Tang scholar Kong Yingda and his team compiled *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (*The Correct Significance of the Mao Poems*) based on the Mao tradition and the Zheng Xuan commentary, which further consolidated the preeminent status of the Mao-Zheng tradition. This henceforth became the only prominent tradition of *Shijing* exegesis, and the other three exegetical traditions (Qi, Lu, and Wei) as well as their versions of *Shijing* all went into decline and oblivion.

The Mao preface to "Guanju" 關雎 ("Fish Hawks"), the first poem in *Shijing*, came to be known as the "Great Preface" ("Daxu" 大序), as distinct from the much shorter prefaces for the other poems. Its definition of *shi* as "where the intent goes: what is in the heart is intent; once manifested as words it becomes poetry" emphasizes the affective-expressive dimension of poetry. The "Great Preface" then proceeds to explain how poetry can serve the purposes of suasion, remonstrance, and instruction. Not only is poetry the manifestation of intent, it also directs such articulation in the interest of sociopolitical order and the moral transformation of the people. The canonization of *Shijing* as transmitted in the Mao tradition thus establishes "articulation of intent" (*yanzhi* 言志) and "instruction through poetry" (*shijiao* 詩教) as fundamental precepts in the later literary tradition.

Commentaries on *Shijing*, besides elucidating meanings of words and phrases, often appeal to the principle of "comparison and affective image" (*bi xing* 比興) to explain the relationship between things and people or events in the poems. Sometimes a historical context is averred as the source of meaning; sometimes the associations of an "affective image" point to emotive valence or probable intent. There is a clear departure from the original context of *shi* performance with its elements of song, dance, lyric, and music. Instead, the emphasis of exegesis shifts to the meanings and implications of words—for example, beautiful peach blossoms are taken to refer to brides, the harmonious cries of fish hawks are interpreted as symbolizing the ruler's relationship with his consorts, herds of grazing deer on the plain are thought to invoke the joyous feast of ruler and subjects, and so forth. Not only do such metaphorical associations become the basis of later exegetical traditions on the classics, but they also establish a structure of knowledge underlying the reading and writing of the Chinese language. The exegesis of *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*) also belongs to this interpretative system built on "comparison and affective image."

The text of *Chuci* in sixteen scrolls was compiled by Liu Xiang. Liu Xiang selected works attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BCE) and Qu Yuan's supposed disciple Song Yu 宋玉, adding to them Han imitations of such *Chuci*-style works (*saoti* 騷體, the "*sao* meter"), including his own "Nine Sighs" ("Jiutan" 九歎). Later, during the reign of Emperor Shun of the Han 順帝 (r. 126–144), Wang Yi added his "Nine Ruminations" ("Jiusi" 九思), creating a version of *Chuci* in seventeen scrolls, and also wrote a "chapter and verse commentary" to it. In exalting Qu Yuan, Wang Yi departs from Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) disparaging account of the poet. According to Ban Gu, Qu Yuan flaunted his talent and was overly self-righteous; that was why he drowned himself in frustration and despair. Furthermore, recurrent references to a fantastic landscape (e.g., Mount Kunlun) or legendary figures such as the unattainable goddess Fufei 宓妃 flout the decorum proper to canonical classics (Yan 1987: 25.611). For Ban Gu, Qu Yuan's corpus belongs to the tradition of flowery "rhapsodies" (*cifu* 辭賦) and cannot be placed on a par with *Shijing*. Wang Yi, however, rejected this judgment: not only did he commend Qu Yuan's uncompromising integrity in embracing death to realize his moral vision, but he also honored "Li sao" 離騷 ("Encountering Sorrow") as a "classic" (*Li sao jing*, see above). Further, in "*Li sao jing* xu" 離騷經序 ("Preface to the *Classic of Encountering Sorrow*") and "*Chuci zhangju* xu" 楚辭章句序 ("Preface to Verse and Chapter Commentary to the *Verses of Chu*"), he repeatedly claims that Qu Yuan, in creating "Li sao", "follows the principles of the *Shijing* poets," "adheres to the idea of evoking affective associations in *Shijing*," and "establishes significance by referring to the Five Classics." Thus Wang Yi's exegetical method is two-pronged: first, he expertly identifies the correspondences between "Li sao" and canonical texts such as *Shijing, Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*), and *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Classic of Documents*) in order to affirm the genealogical roots of Qu Yuan's corpus in the classics; second, he classifies the images in "Li sao" and pursues analogies between the attributes of things and human qualities. For example, "noble birds and fragrant plants are matched with men of loyalty and integrity; evil winged creatures and foul things are compared to slanderers and flatterers; the Distant Spirit and the beauty are linked to the ruler; Fufei and the fair lady are metaphors for worthy ministers; horned dragons and phoenixes refer to noble men; drifting wind and rainbow denote petty men" (Wang Yi 1967: 21).

Wang Yi's exegesis follows the mode of "comparison and affective image" in *Shijing* to describe the author's intent and emotions. At the same time, it delineates allusions and phrases used in "Li sao" in order to establish the system of knowledge formed through linguistic filiation to the Five Classics. In thus combining speculation about authorial intent with an exegesis based on a particular system of knowledge, *Chuci zhangju* was a milestone in the Chinese exegetical tradition. Subsequent commentaries do not deviate from these two directions; it is largely a matter of changing emphasis and shifting balance.

A representative example of elaborating authorial intent is the commentaries on Ruan Ji's "Yong huai" poems by the fifth-century poets Yan Yanzhi and Shen Yue, incorporated into Li Shan's commentary on the *Wen xuan*. Ruan Ji lived during the waning years of the Cao-Wei dynasty (220–265), when the powerful minister Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211–265, the father of the first Western Jin 晉 [265–316] emperor) was maneuvering to replace Cao-Wei rule and to extend sovereignty over the rest of China. Ruan Ji's poems contain "laments of anxieties over the perils of existence" (*yousheng zhi jie* 憂生之嗟), but it is believed that political dangers necessitated caution and reticence. At the end of the first poem of the series, beginning with the line, "Sleepless in the middle of the night" 夜中不能寐, is a comment commonly believed to have been made by Yan Yanzhi:

> Ruan Ji served the dynasty during a time of chaos and was constantly fearful of incurring slander and encountering disaster. This inspired his poems, hence the frequent laments of anxieties over the perils of existence. Although his intent is to criticize abuses, his writings are often indirect and reticent. After a hundred generations it is difficult to ascertain the truth. That is why I only broadly illuminate his general meanings and concisely indicate the hidden import. (*Wen xuan* 23.1067)

In other words, the composition and interpretation of these poems leave much room for conjectures that are difficult to prove or disprove. Unfortunately, very little is preserved of Yan Yanzhi's commentary. Of Shen Yue's commentary more remains. Shen does not at all shy away from the anxieties and sorrows that are supposedly implicit in Ruan Ji's poems, speaking as if he were Ruan Ji's "soulmate." More particularly, Shen Yue zeroes in on Ruan Ji's laments on what befalls him "infinitely/inexplicably" (*wuduan* 無端) and on "losing the Way" (*shidao* 失道). In commenting on the couplet "Spring and autumn alternate without cease,/how can one keep wealth and a noble position indefinitely?" (春秋非有託[訖], 富貴焉常保), Shen writes: "Spring and autumn follow each other, just as infinitely and inexplicably as a circle. . . How much more so for riches and poverty, exaltation and debasement to alternate and come upon one" (*Wen xuan* 23.1070). He believes that this delineates Ruan Ji's mental state of anxiety and disquiet, his feeling that he can depend on nothing and that sudden, unpredictable calamities may befall him. The mental state described is in turn explained by the loss of the Way. In regard to Ruan's lines "Petty men calculate merits,/noble men adhere to constant principles as their Way./Why would I regret ending in wearied distress?/Intoning these words, I compose this poem" 小人計其功, 君子道其常, 豈惜終憔悴, 詠言著斯章,

Shen writes: "For it is because noble men have lost the Way that wearied distress comes of a mental condition that should have had no place. Petty men calculate their merits and achieve success, while noble men adhere to constant principles as their way and are blocked. That is what leads to [the poet's] wearied distress" (*Wen xuan* 23.1073). This comment paints a picture of the reversal of values and the confusion of judgment in the chaotic age Ruan Ji is perceived to have lived in.

This interpretative mode of empathy and imagined communion with the poet is not, however, the dominant mode of commentaries in early medieval times. An overview of Chinese cultural and literary history indicates that the period from Han to Tang was one in which the copying, transmission, collecting, and bibliographic organization of books flourished. Varieties of comprehensive collections (*zongji* 總集), individual collections (*bieji* 別集), and encyclopedias (*leishu* 類書) were produced in great numbers, which means that commentators had more opportunities than the original authors to compare and supplement sources (see Chapters 10, 15, 19, and 20). Commentaries developed in the directions of ever finer and more multifarious citations, and thus turned into a locus for collecting and transmitting knowledge.

A prominent example is Liu Xiaobiao's commentary on *Shishuo xinyu*, completed ca. 507–508 (see Yu 1989: 233). *Shishuo xinyu* was compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444), a prince of the Song dynasty (420–479, also known as Liu-Song), and his coterie. It records the words and actions of about 650 notable persons spanning the period from the Eastern Han (25–220) to Jin (265–420) and Song, and comprises thirty-six categories and 1,134 entries. Reflecting contemporary interest in appraising character, *Shishuo xinyu* is famous for capturing the essence and spirit of a person through limpid, concise, and witty prose. It is recognized as one of the first works "recording human characters" (*zhiren* 志人), a category defined in conscious distinction from writings "recording the strange/supernatural" (*zhiguai* 志怪). When Liu Xiaobiao wrote his commentary on *Shishuo xinyu*, not only was he sorting out the bibliography for the book collection of the Liang court, but he was also compiling *Leiyuan* 類苑 (*The Garden of Classified Extracts*) in 120 scrolls by organizing categories of things and events copied from those books (for the compilation date of *Leiyuan*, see Xiao 1992: 55; see also Chapter 10). His ready access to these materials naturally influenced his way of compiling his commentary.

Liu cites over 400 texts in his commentary. Besides explaining the context and background for the entries, he also supplies additional biographical sources and corrects errors. Furthermore, he never loses sight of the fundamental premise of *Shishuo* as a kind of sketchbook of characters, whose forte is the brief but memorable depiction of a person's spirit and essence. For example, according to the chapter "Speech and Conversation" ("Yanyu" 言語), Master Gaozuo 高座道人, a monk from Central Asia, did not speak Chinese but secured the high regard of Prime Minister Wang Dao 王導 (276–339). Liu Xiaobiao in his commentary cites the "Biography of Gaozuo" ("Gaozuo biezhuan" 高座別傳) and explains that Gaozuo conducted himself most properly despite not knowing Chinese. His gestures and deportment showed such ease and equanimity that those engaging in discussion with him could often "apprehend by spiritual communion and obtain his meaning before the words" without relying on translation (Liu 1976: 2.78–79). In another example, although the minister Xie An 謝安 (320–385) knew that the commander Huan Wen 桓溫 (312–373) was plotting to kill him at a banquet, he still calmly attended the banquet and further showed his ease by chanting Xi Kang's 嵇康 (or Ji Kang, ca. 223–ca. 262) poems in the style of Luoyang scholars ("Luosheng yong" 洛生詠). Liu Xiaobiao in his commentary cites a now lost fifth-century text, *Wenzhang zhi* 文章志 (*Account of Literary Writings*), which fills in the dialogue between Xie An and Huan Wen. The source also explains the "Luoyang" chanting style: the tone was somewhat thick and slurred, and none could compare to Xie An in this style of intonation because of his nasal accent. Xie An's inimitable chanting vividly captures his unperturbed demeanor. As a result of Xie's ability to keep calm, Huan Wen's conspiracy did not come to pass (Liu 1976: 6.282–283).

This type of commentary, based on details cited from a wide range of sources, is even more prominent in Li Shan's commentary on the literary anthology *Wen xuan* compiled by the Crown Prince Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531) (see Chapter 19). *Wen xuan* is the earliest extant multigenre anthology in the Chinese tradition. It has even been regarded by some scholars as a "literary encyclopedia," inasmuch as it classifies literary writings in as many as thirty-eight genres (Fang 1971). Phonetic annotations on the *Wen xuan* appeared as early as the Sui dynasty (581–618), but Li Shan compiled the most important and influential commentary on the *Wen xuan* during the reign of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang 唐高宗 (r. 649–683). Li Shan's commentary edition, in sixty scrolls, does not stop at elucidating the pronunciation and meanings of words. Citing over 1,600 sources, Li Shan develops the citation mode of exegesis to its fullest extent. All his explanations are based on source texts, including early lexicographic works such as the *Erya* 爾雅 and *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (see Chapter 1). He cites commentaries on classics such as the Mao exegetical tradition of *Shijing* and Wang Yi's commentary on *Chuci*. For linguistic usage in the works in the *Wen xuan*, Li Shan tries his best to find antecedents and verbal reverberations to show how linguistic genealogies and developments shape the construction of lines or the turns of phrases. Around the same time, several years before the completion of the *Wen xuan* commentary, *Wujing zhengyi* 五經正義 (*The Correct Significance of the Five Classics*), compiled by Kong Yingda and the team of courtiers led by him, was officially promulgated (653). *Wujing zhengyi* set out to standardize classical scholarship and became the official "textbook" for the category of "understanding the Classics" (*mingjing* 明經) in the civil service examination. Considering this development, we may surmise that Li Shan's commentary on the *Wen xuan* amounted to an aid to the understanding and composition of various poetic and prose genres, and as such served as the best learning tool for preparing for the civil service examination (see Chapter 7).

As noted above, the commentator may describe authorial intent and emotions or elucidate words, phrases, and lines by citing earlier texts. In a few cases, the author himself steps forth to explain his method in a commentary, sometimes using his personal experience to offer an interpretation of his own work. We will first consider Yan Zhitui's 顏之推 (531–ca. 591) commentary on his own "Guan wo sheng fu" 觀我生賦 ("Rhapsody on Contemplating My Life"). Yan Zhitui served Emperor Yuan of the Liang 梁元帝 (r. 552–555) as an official. After the fall of Emperor Yuan's capital Jiangling (in modern Hubei), he served the Northern Qi 齊 (550–577) and lived through violent dynastic transitions as the Northern Zhou 周 (557–581) destroyed the Northern Qi and later as Sui overthrew the Northern Zhou. "Guan wo sheng fu" and Yu Xin's 庾信 (513–581) "Ai Jiangnan fu" 哀江南賦 ("The Lament for the South") were composed around the same time. Both works were created by southern members of the elite detained in northern courts as they looked back nostalgically to their past and their lost homeland. Unlike the dense and difficult "Ai Jiangnan fu" with its overwhelming number of allusions, "Guan wo sheng fu" is less complex. Yan Zhitui's self-commentary does not draw upon textual sources to explain allusions or specific lines; instead, it offers an account of the dynastic transition as "explanative historical context" (*benshi* 本事), presenting for the reader historical changes in the south. Yan Zhitui writes in the rhapsody: "In my one life I have gone through three transformations,/tasting to the full barbs and bitterness" 予一生而三化, 備荼苦而蓼辛; but the tone of his self-commentary is quite calm. In the commentary, he no longer uses the first-person accusatory tone of the rhapsody itself, and instead sounds more like a dispassionate observer who is resigned to his fate and "does not dare to blame heaven" 不敢怨天 (for a summary of the various interpretations of this rhapsody, including the views of scholars such as Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 and Tian Xiaofei 田曉菲, see Qi 2012: 625–656).

From an earlier period, we have Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) own commentary on his "Shanju fu" 山居賦 ("Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains"). Xie was a scion of the prominent aristocratic clan of the Eastern Jin (317–420). "Shanju fu" describes the Xie clan's home estate in Shining 始寧 (in modern Zhejiang). Using as its model grand Han poetic expositions that delineate space by encompassing the center and the four directions, Xie details his construction of the Shining estate and his purviews and experience in that place. Perhaps this piece vindicates the Xie clan's pride in hereditary entitlement and its proprietary desire to own and exercise power over mountains and rivers. However, Xie Lingyun's self-commentary does not demonstrate the conceit of possession, nor is it geared to a system of knowledge explaining words or things. Instead, it uses his personal perception and experience to construct geographical awareness and spatial writing. The relationship between place and things is revealed through the human agent's acts of climbing, surveying, passing through, seeing, plucking flowers, and cutting down trees (see Cheng 2007: 193–219). Xie Lingyun's self-commentary is obviously different from the usual citations or analogical reasoning in exegetical writing. This mode of experiencing landscape through personal journey also informs Li Daoyuan's commentary on *Shuijing* 水經 (*Classic of Rivers*).

When Li Daoyuan wrote his *Shuijing zhu* in the early decades of the sixth century, he drew upon the citation mode of exegesis but combined it with fieldwork and concrete investigation. *Shuijing*, traditionally dated to the third century, consists of brief entries on 137 rivers. When we get to Li Daoyuan's *Shuijing zhu*, whose length is about twenty times that of *Shuijing*, the scope is expanded to include accounts of 1,252 waterways. On the basis of extensive reading, Li Daoyuan cites a wide range of sources, comparing them and adjudicating their reliability. More importantly, he verified his information through his journeys and personal investigation; of course, this largely pertains to northern China, where he could actually travel around at the time. *Shuijing zhu* offers accounts of irrigation, produce, population, cities, agriculture, mineralogy, and geology in the areas through which the rivers flow. All these continue to arouse great interest in readers, and accounts of limestone topography (e.g., stalagmites and stalactites), petroleum distribution, ancient fossils, hot springs, and mining and refining minerals have gained special attention (see Chen 1985).

Li Daoyuan's *Shuijing zhu* is different from traditional Chinese geographical texts. The latter are comparable to historical geography, providing records of administrative units, distribution of tributary domains, and customs and mores, with anecdotes and legends mixed in. Li Daoyuan's work is, however, typical of geographical writings from about the late fourth and early fifth century onward that devote more attention to the mountains and rivers themselves. Geographical treatises (*dizhi* 地志) on mountains and waterways proliferated in this period, These include *Dili shu* 地理書 (*The Book of Geography*), which Lu Cheng 陸澄 (425–494) compiled by bringing together 160 sources; *Di ji* 地記 (*Records of Terrains*) compiled by Ren Fang 任昉 (460–508) on the basis of Lu Cheng's text by adding 84 sources; and *Yudi zhi* 輿地志 (*Geographical Records*), compiled from various sources by Gu Yewang 顧野王 (518–581) (*Sui shu* 33.988).

From the stylistic perspective, a more self-consciously literary style developed in geographical writings from the fourth century to the sixth century. Take for example this passage from Sheng Hongzhi's 盛弘之 (fl. fifth century) *Jingzhou ji* 荊州記 (*Account of Jingzhou*), cited in *Shuijing zhu*, which describes a boat journey on the Yangzi River: "Sometimes one leaves White Emperor City in the morning and reaches Jiangling by the evening, covering the distance of 1,200 leagues in a day. Even riding a swift steed or being carried by the wind is no faster than that" (Li 1999: 34.2834). Li Bo's 李白 (701–762) lines are surely inspired by this passage: "In the morning I took leave of White Emperor City among rainbow clouds,/To Jiangling, a thousand leagues away, I return in one day" 朝辭白帝彩雲間, 千里江陵一日還 ("Leaving from White Emperor City Early in the Morning" 早發白帝城). When it comes to the Yellow River Basin, the region Li Daoyuan was most familiar with, his prose is particularly impressive. For example, he describes Mengmen Waterfall as being shrouded in twirling mist year-round: "the fall plunges a thousand yards . . . it rumbles as if the mountain is shaking" (Li 1999: 4.282). The grandeur of the Yellow River and its mighty waterfalls is vividly captured. There were many temples along the shore of the Yellow River flowing past Mount Hua and turning south, as well as narrow caves: "The inside of the caves twists and turns, winding abruptly as one goes up . . . on the mountains are small, trickling streams flowing into these 'wells' without bringing too much moisture . . . if one wants to come out of these 'wells,' one gazes at the empty space and sees brightness, just like looking at the window from inside a chamber" (Li 1999: 4.313). Personal investigation underlies such vibrant accounts, and it is no wonder that the Ming writer Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1684), himself a master stylist, praises Li Daoyuan as "supreme among ancients who wrote about mountains and waterways" (Zhang 1985: 211).

From the above discussion, we can conclude that commentaries in this period approximate dictionaries or encyclopedias as they strive to encompass different ways of understanding the text. Not only do the commentators cite liberally from other source texts, but they also sometimes undertake on-site investigation in order to annotate a text. In some cases, the commentary can be several times the length of the original, in effect forming another text on its own. In addition to the works mentioned above, a notable example is Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (372–451) commentary, lauded as "immortal" by Emperor Wen of the Song 宋文帝 (r. 424–453), on Chen Shou's 陳壽 (233–297) *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (*History of the Three Kingdoms*). Through supplementary information and competing interpretations, Pei Songzhi greatly expands the scope of the original.

In citing sources and authenticating or disputing the text, the commentator not only displays broad learning and extensive reading, but sometimes also tries to explain the author's intent and psychology, and by doing so reveals the commentator's own feelings and desires. This in effect turns the commentary into an absorbing literary work on its own merits. Finally, while we commonly assume that a commentary is subservient to, dependent on, or marginal to the original text, a commentator can, through a diachronic perspective, evaluate the authenticity of a text and speculate on its authorship, trace its sources, or construct its genealogy, thus adjudicating and establishing the canonical status of an author and a text.

[Translated by Wai-yee Li]

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CHAPTER 10

LITERARY LEARNING

Encyclopedias and Epitomes

XIAOFEI TIAN

Lazy King and Fatigued Prince

In Chinese antiquity, reading was a rare and cumbersome activity. It was a privilege of the ruling class, and yet a ruler might not always have the time or patience to engage in it. Knowing this to be the case, the tutor of a Chu king made an epitome of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, a work of history, for his royal pupil. The "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志 ("Monograph on Arts and Writings") of the *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*) from the first century CE records a title *Duoshi wei* 鐸氏微 (*Mr. Duo's Subtleties*) in three scrolls. No longer extant, it is believed to be the very epitome made by Tutor Duo for King Wei of Chu 楚威王 (d. 329 BCE), who was "unable to read the entire *Springs and Autumns*" (*Shiji* 14.510).

One might attribute the king's "inability" to royal lethargy, but ever since the increasing use of paper from the first century CE on, there simply have been too many books. Even in an age when people were producing and reproducing books without word processors, printers, and copiers, the sheer volume of books could seem overwhelming. In the words of a sixth-century prince, one of the greatest book collectors of the time and an avid reader since his early teens:

> Philosophers emerged during the Warring States, and literary collections first flourished in the Han. Nowadays, each family produces writings, and every person has a collection. What is well written may give voice to the author's feelings and purify customs; what is poorly written proves no more than a waste of sheets that will only wear out the later-born. The texts of old pile up high, with more texts being produced ceaselessly. A person raises a foot and walks down the road of learning, and yet, even when one's hair turns white, one will not have exhausted everything. (Xiao 2011: 164)

Although the two types of work discussed in this essay—encyclopedia (*leishu* 類書) and epitome (*chao* 鈔)—emerged in response to many needs, they both are, first and foremost, expedient ways of dealing with the problem of the quantity of books. Encyclopedias and epitomes are closely related and yet remain distinct. A crucial part of the educational and literary tradition in premodern China, they were two of the most important forms of organization and dissemination of knowledge in the period covered by this volume and beyond.

The "Imperial View": Toward a Definition of *Leishu*

Leishu is literally a "classified book." In the simplest definition, it consists of extracts that are taken from a variety of earlier writings and classified under different categories. Beyond this simple definition, however, complications arise. Chinese scholars have debated for a long time about the origin, nature, and scope of *leishu*. From *Erya* 爾雅, the oldest surviving Chinese "dictionary," and Masters Texts (*zishu* 子書) to the *Classic of Poetry* or the sixth-century literary anthology *Wen xuan* 文選, almost anything and everything has been regarded as either a source of or associated with *leishu*, based on the recognition that all of the above-mentioned works, broadly speaking, have two things in common: they contain in themselves an "assembly of all sorts of things," and they represent a certain order of arrangement and classification (Sun 2007: 3–4). The confusion about what constitutes or, more precisely, what does *not* constitute a *leishu* is tied to the ironically troubled classification of a "classified book" according to the traditional Chinese bibliographical scheme of the "four parts" (classics, histories, Masters Texts, and literary collections; see Chapters 11 and 12–15). The eighteenth-century editors of the grand *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 *(The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*) exclaim with some exasperation: "A 'classified book' may incorporate classics, histories, Masters Texts, and literary collections, but it is not a work of any of the four and cannot be classified under the four parts" (*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 135.2781).

Despite these vagaries and contestations, there is a general consensus that the first real *leishu* was the *Huang lan* 皇覽 (*Imperial View*) from the early third century. We will begin with this work, for its compilation embodies several important characteristics of the Chinese *leishu* and demarcates the boundaries of a typical *leishu* as discussed in this essay.

The central figure in the project was Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), also known as Emperor Wen of the Wei 魏文帝, his posthumous title. The son and heir of warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), the real power behind the throne in the last years of the Han empire, Cao Pi had grown up as a de facto prince, if not one in name until 217. Cao Pi took a passionate interest in literary writings and cultural matters. To him is credited the first extant discussion about literary genres in his *Dian lun* 典論 (*Normative Discourses*), a work of Masters Literature. Such a work usually consists of a number of chapters on social, ethical, and political issues, each chapter under a subject heading. While from Eastern Han on it was customary for such a work to include a chapter on rhetoric or some aspect of writing, Cao Pi presented a slightly permuted version by devoting a chapter to textual literature, in which he famously praises literary works as "the grand achievement in the management of state, a splendor that never decays," and evaluates contemporary as well as past writers (Yan 1987b: 8.1098).

The great plague of 217 that took the lives of many of his literary friends provided an impetus for Cao Pi to intensify his cultural pursuits. Judging from an assortment of brief mentions in historical sources, Cao Pi had commissioned the compilation of the *Imperial View* in 220, after he succeeded to his father as the King of Wei but before he founded the Wei dynasty in place of the Han. The project involved a number of scholars, including Wang Xiang 王象 (d. after 222), Huan Fan 桓範 (d. 249), Liu Shao 劉劭 (d. 240s), Wei Dan 韋誕 (179–251), Miao Xi 繆襲 (186–245), and Miao Bu 繆卜, and took several years to complete. The *Imperial View* was a compilation of extracts from "the five [Confucian] classics and various works," which were "classified and divided into different sections" (*Sanguo zhi* 21.618). The "various works" presumably include both histories and Masters Texts. The compilation, when completed, "had altogether over forty categories [*bu*], each category consisting of several dozen chapters [*pian*], totaling over eight million characters" (*Sanguo zhi* 23.664). Another comment affirms that the *Imperial View* had "over a thousand chapters" (*Sanguo zhi* 2.88). In the first half of the sixth century, this work might still have been largely intact, in a bulky 680 scrolls, in south China, but after the massive destruction of books during the fall of the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557), it seems that only abridged versions produced in the fifth century had survived (*Sui shu* 34.1009; *Xin Tang shu* 59.1562), and not many scholars had seen even these. Sima Zhen 司馬貞, an eighth-century scholar, regarded the *Imperial View* as a book that "records the tombs and mausoleums of historical personages," perhaps based on the citations of the book in that particular category in later encyclopedias (*Shiji* 1.5). Ironically, the reconstituted *Imperial View*, pieced together from citations in commentaries and encyclopedias by the eighteenth-century scholar Sun Pingyi 孫馮翼, indeed mostly consists of entries on mausoleums and tombs (*Huang lan* 1–7). This is perhaps because the rest of the *Imperial View* largely overlaps with other early sources, including the numerous encyclopedias compiled from the sixth century onward, with only the section on tombs and mausoleums being a unique source of information.

The above account of the *Imperial View* epitomizes a number of crucial characteristics of a typical *leishu*. Commissioned by a ruler who was deeply concerned with cultural matters, it was a large-scale project that required the participation of more than one scholar, and whose completion spanned several years; it was classified into many topics; and, judging from its size, it aimed to be comprehensive and encyclopedic. Compiled for the sake of "imperial view," it was also designed to reflect the vista of the imperial person. Although the ruler himself did not have a hand in the compilation, the fact that he employed many scholars at his court to accomplish this project is significant: while the work itself becomes a gathering place for earlier writings, the process of compilation, too, involves the collaboration of the finest scholars in the empire.

The first direct descendants of the *Imperial View* that appeared in the late fifth century inherited every aspect of the original work in terms of royal sponsorship and large scope. Between 480 and 482, the founding emperor of the [Southern] Qi 齊 (479–501)

commissioned scholars at his court to compile the *Shi lin* 史林 (*A Forest of Histories*) in thirty scrolls "in the tradition of Emperor Wen of the Wei's *Imperial View*" (*Nan shi* 4.113). If this work seems relatively modest, the emperor's grandson, Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (460–494), the Prince of Jingling 竟陵, commissioned men of letters to compile a much better known work that was explicitly "modeled upon the example of the *Imperial View*." Consisting of the "extracts of the five classics and works of a hundred schools" and spanning a thousand scrolls, this work was entitled *Sibu yaolue* 四部要略 (*An Epitome of Books of the Four Categories*) (*Nan Qi shu*, 40.698). With this work, we see the first golden age of the premodern Chinese encyclopedia, which coincided with the rule of the sophisticated Liang dynasty and in many ways represented the highest point of the cultural and literary development of early medieval China.

The compilation of *leishu* in the Liang dynasty reveals an acute awareness of the cultural prestige and authority associated with the compilation of an encyclopedia. Xiao Xiu 蕭秀 (475–518), the brother of Emperor Wu of the Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502–549), had supplied the learned scholar Liu Jun 劉峻 (better known as Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標, 462–521) with books and asked him to put together a compilation of extracts from the books, which was subsequently named *Leiyuan* 類苑 *(The Garden of Classified Extracts*). The compilation proved so popular that it went into wide circulation even before it was completed. It was said that upon the completion of the work, which stood at 120 scrolls, Emperor Wu felt so competitive that he commissioned five scholars to compile something grander based on the imperial book collection. The project began in 516 and was finished eight years later; the end result was entitled *Hualin bianlue* 華林遍略 (*The Comprehensive Extracts of the Park of Flowering Groves*) in 700 scrolls (*Nan shi* 49.1220, 72.1782–1783).

Buddhist encyclopedias also flourished. Emperor Wu commissioned the compilation of *Fo ji* 佛記 (*Record of the Buddha*) in the early 500s and then *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相 (*Differentiated Manifestations of Sutras and Laws*) in 516, the latter now the only extant encyclopedia from before the seventh century. Prefaces to both compilations stress that they aim to facilitate retrieval of information from a vast number of sutras. A third Buddhist encyclopedia, *Fabao lianbi* 法寶連璧 (*Joined Jade-Disks from the Treasures of Dharma*) in 220 scrolls, was commissioned by prince Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551) and completed by about forty courtiers in 534. In interesting contrast, no Daoist encyclopedia was commissioned during this period, although the famous Daoist Tao Hongjing 陶宏景 (456–536) had initiated a general *leishu* named *Xue yuan* 學苑 (*The Garden of Learning*) that reportedly contains 150 topical headings (*Yunji qiqian* 107.371). A Daoist encyclopedia, *Wushang biyao* 無上秘要 (*Supreme Secret Essentials*), supposedly compiled (more likely commissioned) by Emperor Wu of the Zhou 周武帝 (r. 560–578), is preserved in the *Daozang* 道藏 (*Daoist Canon*). There is, however, only a single mention of the Zhou emperor's involvement with such a work (Ren and Zhong 1991: 888); it is impossible to say whether the extant *Wushang biyao* was the same one commissioned by Emperor Wu of the Zhou, especially considering the fact that, as has been pointed out, the Daoist scriptures cited in the compilation were largely from scriptures of the Shangqing and Lingbao textual traditions that were embraced by the southern elite (Zhou 2011: 60).

Copies of *Hualin bianlue* were clearly not limited to an exclusive audience in the Liang court but could be accessed by anyone with the financial means to hire a scribe and make a copy of it. A copy was carried over by traders to north China, which was ruled by non-Han peoples at the time, and offered for sale to Gao Cheng 高澄 (521–549), the powerful minister of the Eastern Wei 魏 (534–550). Gao Cheng asked the seller to leave the book with him for browsing first, and summoned an army of scribes to copy out the whole volume within a day and night. He then returned the book to the seller, saying: "I have no need for it" (*Nan shi* 47.1737).

At the Eastern Wei court, Pei Jingrong 裴景融 (495–546) was put in charge of making an encyclopedia also to be called *Sibu yaolue*, but the project was never brought to a finish (*Wei shu* 69.1534). It was not until the last years of the Northern Qi 齊 (550–577), the most cultured of the northern dynasties, that a *leishu* of scope and length more or less comparable to those of the southern encyclopedias was commissioned and produced in the north; it took a group of scholars about six months to complete, and was presented to the throne in the winter of 572. The accompanying memorial states:

> In the past, Emperor Wen of the Wei [ordered] Wei Dan and others to compile the *Imperial View*, which incorporated various discourses and was divided into thematic categories. When enjoying some leisure from affairs of the state, Your Majesty is fond of the silk scrolls [books] and has thoroughly browsed the writings of the Magnolia Terrace and the storehouse of bundled bamboo slips [i.e., the imperial library]. Your Majesty believes that in reading one prizes wide-ranging scope, but within the wide-ranging scope one must prize obtaining the essentials; to save time and yet double the results, one requires ease and simplicity. Previously, at the Hall of Promoting Culture, Your Majesty commanded us to research the former canon and compile from various books. We humbly applied our shallow talent and immediately set to work. Emulating the numbers of heaven and earth, we came up with fifty categories; reproducing the sum of yarrow stalks needed to form the Qian and Kun Hexagrams, we completed three hundred and sixty scrolls. (Yan 1987a: 7.3865)

Like the other encyclopedias cited above, this compilation, known as *Xiuwen dian yulan* 修文殿御覽 (*Imperial View at the Hall of Promoting Culture*), was put together for the practical purpose of helping a reader navigate in the sea of books and facilitate the retrieval and reuse of information by organizing it under appropriate headings. The references to the numbers of heaven and earth and to the sum of yarrow stalks in the above passage deserve special attention. Taken from the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*), a divination manual that has come to be regarded as the most important work in Chinese intellectual history, these references indicate the deliberate matching of the numbers of categories and scrolls of a *leishu* with the mystical cosmic numbers. A *leishu* is thus much more than just a chest of drawers serving as a repository of knowledge and material aids to memory: it possesses in miniature the dimensions of the cosmos. Like the imperial garden, from which a *leishu* frequently takes its name, it is supposed to present an organized system of knowledge of the world, reflecting an orderly universe in its comprehensive, structured arrangement of ideas, concepts, and things. Its compilation, imperially commissioned, is also a means of demonstrating the state's cultural power and political legitimacy.

The Earliest Surviving Encyclopedias

Two of the oldest encyclopedias to have survived are from the early seventh century: *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (*Extracts from the North Hall*) and *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (*Classified Extracts from Literature*). *Beitang shuchao* was compiled by Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638) when he was working in the imperial library of the Sui 隋 (581–618); it reportedly consisted of eighty main categories in 801 scrolls, but now only nineteen categories and 160 scrolls are extant, and these fragments can hardly represent the original version because of heavy interventions and interpolations during the book's vexed history of textual transmission (Zhu 1981: 30–37). *Yiwen leiju*, on the other hand, is preserved in a much better shape and remains largely intact. Spanning one hundred scrolls, it was commissioned by the founding emperor of the Tang dynasty in 622 and completed two years later by a team of leading northern and southern scholars, including Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641), Chen Shuda 陳叔達 (d. 635), Yuan Lang 袁朗 (?–?), Pei Ju 裴矩 (d. 627), Zhao Hongzhi 趙弘智 (572–653), and Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (563–666). A quick review of the structuring of *Yiwen leiju* will illustrate the way in which a *leishu* organizes knowledge and the values and beliefs reflected in the organization.

Yiwen leiju includes forty-six categories (or forty-eight, depending on how one counts) and 727 subcategories. It begins with the concepts of heaven, earth, and man, followed by social, political, cultural, and religious institutions, and moves on to things of nature such as plants, minerals, birds, beasts, fish, and insects, ending with auspicious and inauspicious omens manifested in the world of nature. The first thirty-seven scrolls are arranged as follows:

Scroll 1–2	Heaven
Scroll 3–5	Seasons
Scroll 6	Earth; Prefectures; Commanderies
Scroll 7–9	Mountains; Rivers
Scroll 10	Imperial Signs
Scroll 11–14	Emperors and Kings
Scroll 15	Imperial Consorts
Scroll 16	Crown Princes
Scroll 17–37	Human Beings

The encyclopedia predictably opens with heaven and earth. Scroll 10, "Imperial Signs" (i.e., heavenly signs portending a ruler's enthronement), transitions from heaven and earth to the human realm, and yet it is clear that the imperial family constitutes a special category above ordinary human beings. It is also interesting that administrative units—prefectures and commanderies—precede the two categories of natural landscape. The world is envisioned, first and foremost, in terms of empire. Much can be gleaned about medieval Chinese views of the world from the way in which the encyclopedia is conceived: the arrangement of the categories and subcategories, and the inclusions and exclusions. The eighteenth-century editors' criticism of the "omissions" and "miscategorization" is based on a lack of understanding of the historical forces at work in the compilation of a *leishu* and on an implicit assumption that cultural values never changed. For instance, they complain that the subcategory of "princess" is appended to the category of "Crown Princes" while the subcategory of "princes" is placed under the category of "Offices" (*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 135.2783), without realizing the immense power and influence of the female members of a family—imperial family included—in the northern culture during the period of disunion (317–589), and that the Tang, though ruling over a unified China, was very much a northern dynasty. The female dominance at the Tang court culminated in Empress Wu Zhao's 武曌 (624–705) establishment of her own dynasty from 690 to 705 and only gradually faded after the eighth century. The princes, on the other hand, were regarded as officers of the empire, albeit the officers at the very top, above the prime minister, because unlike princesses, who could wield political power invisibly, the princes could and did hold public offices. Modern Chinese scholars often attribute such "miscategorization" to the *leishu* compilers' "historical limitations," and yet it might be the critics who have failed to historicize the values and beliefs behind the compilation of an encyclopedia.

After making the customary declaration of the overwhelming quantity of existing books, the preface by Ouyang Xun states:

> [The emperor] puts martial concerns to rest and promotes cultural matters, establishes schools and opens seminaries, desiring for every family to be rich in Sui pearls and everybody to hold the Jing jade. In the view of His Grace, previous compilers each executed his own plan: the [*Collection of*] *Literature Arranged by Genre* [*Wenzhang liubie*] and *A Literary Anthology* [*Wen xuan*] only include literary writings; the *Imperial View* and *Comprehensive Extracts* [*of the Park of Flowering Groves*] straightforwardly record the plain facts [about a given category]. As their editorial principles differ, it is difficult for the reader to consult and research. Thereupon He issued an edict that we compile both plain facts and literary compositions. (*Yiwen leiju* 27)

Two things are worth noting here. One is that it makes a point of systematically including extracts from literary writings—poetry, poetic expositions, and so forth—under all categories, which, according to its preface by Ouyang Xun, is a new feature compared with earlier encyclopedias that only "record plain facts [about a given category]" (*zhi shu qi shi* 直書其事). Although the writings are in most cases excerpts instead of complete texts, *Yiwen leiju* has preserved numerous pre-seventh-century literary compositions that would otherwise have been lost. For writings of which we do have alternative sources, it presents us with some of the earliest textual variants available, thus enabling us to catch a glimpse of different versions of a text and of the messy state of manuscripts in circulation from the age of manuscript culture. The other remarkable point about *Yiwen leiju* is its manifest purpose of public consumption and education. It is meant to be a treasure chest open to all, or at least all members of the elite.

Nowhere is the pedagogical value of a *leishu* better revealed than in *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (*A Primer for Beginners*), an encyclopedia of thirty scrolls with twenty-three categories and 313 subcategories. Commissioned by the Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) to help his young sons in their literary compositions, it was presented to the throne in 725. Ironically, the earlier *leishu* were now considered by the emperor as too large and cumbersome for quick retrieval of information, and he wanted something smaller for easy use and speedy results (Liu 1984: 137). Though condensed, *Chuxue ji* remains just as comprehensive in terms of its coverage as *Yiwen leiju*. It also has a distinguishing feature: besides extracts offering basic information ("plain facts") about a given category and extracts of pertinent literary writings, it includes a section known as "parallel allusions" (*shidui* 事對). For instance, in the category of "Seas," the "parallel allusions" section gives a number of paired allusions related to ocean lore:

> *tong tian / dong di* 通天/動地 (joining heaven / moving earth)
> *busi cao / fanhun shu* 不死草/返魂樹(death-defying plant / soul-returning tree)
> *qingxie baichuan / huifu wanli* 傾瀉百川/迴洑萬里 (water pouring from a hundred rivers / currents whirling for ten thousand leagues)

These phrases, ranging from two to four characters, all appear in pairs; a slash is inserted here to separate the two parts of a pair, which form a perfect grammatical parallel with each other. Each pair is followed by relevant quotations from the textual sources. The parallel both constitutes a mnemonic aid and can be readily used in the composition of "regulated verse" (*lüshi* 律詩), which requires two parallel couplets in the middle, or of a piece of parallel prose, both forms in vogue in the Tang and for centuries to come. As traditional Chinese lyric theory stresses that poetry comes directly from the historical experience of an individual poet, *Chuxue ji* structures one's experience as much as it structures one's utterance of it. The inclusion of the "parallel allusions" section, providing an aspiring writer with essential building blocks, thus establishes a *leishu* firmly at the heart of literary learning: it teaches one how to conceive the world and how to articulate the world, and the two mutually reinforce each other.

The section of "parallel allusions" is reminiscent of a contemporary children's primer entitled *Meng qiu* 蒙求 composed by Li Han 李瀚 (fl. mid-eighth century) (Fu 2004: 58–64). This rhymed work, in the tradition of earlier primers like the *Jijiu* 急就 of the Han and spawning many similar works in later times, is a series of parallel four-syllable phrases featuring anecdotes about well-known historical figures, designed for easy memorization and primary education (see Chapter 6). Although it has no discernible order or classification, it has been catalogued under *leishu* since the Song (960–1279), apparently because of the pedagogical aspect of a *leishu*. The other precedents of the "parallel allusions" section are compilations of parallel phrases that were produced as an aid to literary composition, especially poetry writing. One such precedent is *Yu dui* 語對 (*Phrases in Pairs*) in thirty scrolls by Zhu Danyuan 朱澹遠 (fl. mid-sixth century), who also compiled *Yu li* 語麗 (*Lovely Sayings*) ("li" also means "parallel") (*Sui shu* 34.1008). Neither is extant; but according to Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (ca. 1179–ca. 1262), *Lovely Sayings* was classified into forty categories (Chen 1987: 423). The other precedent, whose fragments (of doubtful authenticity) are extant, is *Bian zhu* 編珠 (*Strung Pearls*), which was reportedly compiled by Du Gongzhan 杜公瞻 in 611 at the command of Emperor Yang of the Sui 隋煬帝 (r. 605–618) (*Song shi* 207.5293; *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 135.2782).

A fragmentary Tang dynasty *leishu* from the Dunhuang manuscript trove, given the name *Yu dui* 語對 by the modern scholar Wang Sanqing 王三慶, also adopts a similar format (Wang 1985).

PEARLS, BLOSSOMS, "MINCED MEAT FOR PYE," AND "PRIVATE RUBBISH OF SORTS"

Chuxue ji, like *A Forest of Histories*, is a "forest" that will supply the woodcutter with trees to be reused to construct a new edifice, just as Ben Jonson (1572–1637) had called his commonplace book *Timber*. During the Tang, there were many vast encyclopedias compiled under imperial auspices, such as the *Sanjiao zhuying* 三教珠英 (*Pearls and Blossoms of the Three Teachings*) commissioned by Empress Wu, although nothing else besides *Yiwen leiju* and *Chuxue ji* has survived. There are also a number of privately compiled *leishu* listed in the bibliographic chapters of *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (*Old History of the Tang*) and *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang*). Only a small portion has survived, such as the famous poet Bai Juyi's 白居易 (772–846) *Jing shi shilei* 經史事類 (*Classified Allusions to Classics and Histories*, better known as *Baishi liutie shilei ji* 白氏六帖事類集) in thirty scrolls; *Lei lin* 類林 (*Forest of Categories*) in ten scrolls by Yu Lizheng 于立政 (627–679), which resurfaced in Dunhuang (Shi 1993); and Du Sixian's 杜嗣先 (633–712) *Tuyuan cefu* 兔園策府 (*Storehouse of Bundled Bamboo Slips from the Rabbit Garden*), a fascinating compilation commissioned by a Tang prince and adopting a "Q and A" format, as in the civil service examination (Qu 2001: 126–129).

There are also a number of compilations discovered among the Dunhuang manuscripts and generally referred to as "*leishu*" by modern scholars for convenient labeling. Compared with the imperially sponsored and collectively produced *leishu*, these private compilations are all on a small scale and do not aspire to be comprehensive. For instance, one of the largest, best preserved compilations of this lot, known as *Li zhongjie chao* 勵忠節鈔 (*Extracts Encouraging Loyalty and Integrity*), focuses on moral and ethical values and codes of political conduct (Qu 2007). *Shi lin* 事林 (*Forest of Facts*) and *Shi sen* 事森 (*Grove of Facts*) look like individual notebooks made by a man with some basic education for his personal use (Bai 1999: 53–54). *Shi lin* begins with two lines of doggerel: "You must establish yourself,/Don't get intimate with the alehouse." It records nothing more than a few anecdotes about the diligent studying of eight historical figures. The fragmentary *Shi sen* records forty stories on various types of virtuous conduct; an inscription at the end reads: "*Shi sen*. On the tenth day of the fourth month in the *wuzi* year, Yuanyi recorded them while copying books." This is followed by another piece of doggerel, which begins: "If one does not drink ale while copying books,/one often sees the brush drying up." Clearly Mr. Yuanyi was constantly feeling pulled by a desire for ale. On the back of the paper were copied a few miscellaneous poetic expositions (*fu*), signed by "Student Lang Yuanyi 郎員義 of the Jingtu Temple at the Dunhuang Commandery on the fifth day of the eighth month in the *guisi* year, the fifth year of the Changxing era." There was no "fifth" year of the Changxing era, which stopped with the fourth year in 933, but it was common for people living far from the capital not to learn of the change of reign titles in a timely manner.

There are similar types of texts from Dunhuang that are no more than notebook collections of copied passages, such as *Yingji chao* 應機鈔 and *Qin dushu chao* 勤讀書鈔. Although scholars loosely refer to them as "Dunhuang *leishu*," the passages in these notebooks are not even always grouped under different headings, defying the basic sense of a *leishu*. Insomuch as these texts fulfilled the needs of primary education at lower levels of society in a provincial region, they evoke the "poetry manuals" that became popular in the Tang (see Zhang 2002). Those manuals claim to teach a beginner the "know-how" in poetic composition or promise to unravel the secrets of writing good poetry, which became a required part of civil service examination in the seventh century (see Chapter 6). If the Dunhuang notebooks demonstrate how members of the lower strata of society obtained knowledge, a work like *Jin yue* 金鑰 (*Golden Key*), a small collection in two scrolls put together by the famous writer Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858) and divided into four categories, seems to represent the other, elitist end of the spectrum of note-taking (*Song shi* 207.5293; Chen 1987: 424).

These notebooks are not unlike the numerous specimen of the Western commonplace book from the Renaissance period onward. Indeed, it has been suggested by scholars of medieval Chinese literature that *leishu* bears a similarity to the commonplace book in the Western tradition. *Leishu* has also been occasionally translated as "commonplace book." For this reason, a closer look at commonplace books may prove helpful in highlighting some of the unique characteristics of *leishu* proper, i.e., the kind that is imperially commissioned and sponsored.

"Commonplace" in the Western tradition had had a prestigious origin in Aristotle's works; its original usage, whether the *topos koinos* in Greek or the *communes loci* in Latin, was closely associated with the rhetoric and oratory of ancient Greece and Rome. Commonplaces were "the general and universal ideas used in all argumentation and persuasion" (Lechner 1962: 228). In the Renaissance period, scholars such as Erasmus developed elaborate methods for keeping a notebook of excerpts in a structured arrangement to aid their discussions and debates (Havens 2001: 28). However, the term "commonplace book" went through many changes over centuries of development. From 1700 onward, commonplace books are often no more than scrapbooks, with the copied quotations that "first defined their purposes" forming only one part of their diverse contents. They were sometimes neatly written and sometimes scribbled, on material ranging from folders of loose sheets to printed almanacs, often mixed with a drawing or even a pressed flower (Miller 1998: 35). After 1800, with cheap newsprint, some people even used clippings from newspapers to replace hand-copied notes (Allan 2010: 29). An English squire, William Congreve (not the earlier playwright), describes his commonplace book as "private rubbish of sorts," and a Mrs. Piozzi wrote simply on the cover of one of her commonplace books, "Minced Meat for Pyes" (Allan 2010: 28). One notable trait these commonplace books have in common is that they were privately, individually compiled and more often than not intended for the compiler's use only. They were also made as often by women as by men after the Renaissance. Most important, even the printed commonplace books from the Renaissance do not aspire to be encyclopedic, but usually focus on one area, whether literature, law, science, or theology.

In contrast, premodern Chinese *leishu*, beginning with the *Imperial View*, are distinguished by their public, comprehensive nature; that is, they were more often than not imperially commissioned, large-scale group projects that aspired to be encyclopedic in coverage. They were also intended to be circulated, not restricted to private use or even to a small audience. From the tenth century onward and throughout imperial China, colossal *leishu* continued to be commissioned by imperial rulers and collectively compiled, and were meant to demonstrate the state's role as the custodian of culture.

Chinese scholars sometimes trace the origin of *leishu* to early philosophical treatises, specifically the so-called syncretic works from late Warring States and early Han such as *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and *Shuoyuan* (or *Shuiyuan*) 說苑 (*Garden of Persuasions*). Here again a cursory comparison sheds light on the unique features of a *leishu*. *Lüshi chunqiu*, also known as *Lü lan* 呂覽 (*Lü's View*), was compiled under the direction of the powerful chancellor Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (d. 235 BCE). Its "comprehensive nature of the material" and its "systematic presentation" have led to the suggestion that it was "an encyclopedia of knowledge for the time" (Loewe 1993: 325). *Huainanzi* is a monumental work compiled at the court of the Han prince Liu An 劉安 (ca. 179–122 BCE); *Shuoyuan*, composed by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE), is a collection of material taken from earlier texts and arranged in twenty thematic chapters. Despite internal inconsistencies and diversity, *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi* are both synthetic works with an inner coherence; even *Shuoyuan* contains Liu Xiang's own creations, adaptations, and comments, with each chapter beginning with his prefatory remarks expounding the chapter's theme.

Compared with these works, a *leishu* merely presents existing material. The relation to earlier texts underwent a radical change from the *Lü's View* to the *Imperial View*: if a philosophical treatise like *Lüshi chunqiu* or *Huainanzi* seeks to integrate, then an encyclopedia preserves extracts as they are. This shift is a complicated indication of several interrelated cultural phenomena emerging from the third to the fifth century. The age of massive encyclopedic Masters Texts was gradually replaced by an age of literary writings much shorter in length (Tian 2006; see also Chapter 15); those shorter literary writings required an adroit, artful use of allusions to earlier texts, and the need to make use of earlier writings in one's own compositions could be satisfied by consulting a *leishu*. This is particularly true in poetic writings from the fifth century onward, coinciding exactly with the boom of encyclopedias. The importance of *leishu* as a writing aide was tied to the value being placed on one's literary writings, and one can easily understand why, as such, it first emerged in the early third century under the auspices of a prince who was passionately interested in literature.

The Making of an Epitome

The modern scholar Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899–1946) noted the important relation between *leishu* and literary compositions long ago (Wen 1998), yet, as Teng and Biggerstaff point out, "encyclopedias have never been in very high repute among Chinese scholars, both because of their nature as secondary sources and because most scholars have considered it degrading to resort to short cuts to knowledge" (Teng and Biggerstaff 1971: 84). The attitude has changed in recent years as the significance of *leishu* in literary and intellectual history has been increasingly recognized (Ge 2001; Tang 2008). Nevertheless, the practice of copying out extracts from a work to make an epitome, known as *chao* 抄/鈔, *chaoshu* 抄書, or *chaocuo* 鈔撮, has received little attention. Although a *leishu* is entirely made from extracts, an epitome is not necessarily a *leishu*. A *leishu* consists of many extracts from different works arranged by category, but an epitome (as noun, *chao* or *shuchao* 書抄) is usually based on either one work or one type of work. For instance, scholar and writer Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) once made a *Shiji chao* 史記鈔 (*An Epitome of Shiji*) in fourteen scrolls (*Xin Tang shu* 58.1463); Cao Cao, father of Cao Pi, was credited with making an epitome of various works of military strategies which he named *Ji yao* 接要 (*Assembly of the Essentials*) and subsequently circulated as an independent title (*Sanguo zhi* 1.2; *Sui shu* 34.1013–1014).

In modern Chinese, *chaoxie* 鈔寫 has become a compound simply indicating "copying," but in early medieval times *chao*, used as a verb (to make an extract) or as a noun (extract), is defined against *xie* 寫, to copy (Tian 2007: 79–82). The former requires active selection: one chooses what are considered important passages from a work for copying, and sometimes summarizes or paraphrases in one's own language the content of a work. The practice of *chaoshu*, a prized act of learning, spread far beyond the making of an encyclopedia, and accounts of *chaoshu* abound in early medieval times (see Tian 2007: 82–83). Strikingly, in dynastic histories, the epitomes produced by a biography subject are frequently listed next to, and on a par with, his own writings as part of his textual accomplishments. The passage from Yu Zhongrong's 庾仲容 (477–ca. 550) biography in *Liang shu* 梁書 (*History of the Liang*) is typical:

> Zhongrong made an epitome of Masters texts in thirty scrolls, one of various literary collections in thirty scrolls, one of various geographical works in twenty scrolls, and one of women's biographies in three scrolls. He also authored a literary collection in twenty scrolls. All went into circulation. (*Liang shu* 50.724)

Yu Zhongrong's *Zi chao* 子鈔 (*Epitome of Masters Texts*) was reworked by Ma Zong 馬總 (fl. early ninth century), who renamed the epitome *Yi lin* 意林 (*Forest of Ideas*). A large part of it is extant and proves a precious source of many Masters Texts that have since been lost.

A passage from Zhang Mian's 張緬 (490–531) biography is also illustrative of the status of epitome-making in this period:

> Mian reconciled the differences of the various histories of the Later Han and of the Jin dynasty, and subsequently produced a *Record of the Later Han* in forty scrolls and

> an *Epitome of the Jin* in thirty scrolls. He also set out to make an epitome of the literary collections from the south, but did not get to finish it. (*Liang shu* 34.492)

Again, Zhang Mian's epitomes were treated as his unique accomplishments, and his failure to finish the epitome of the literary collections by southern authors was considered a regrettable loss. Indeed, a popular phrase in the Southern Dynasties histories is *chaozhuan* 抄撰, literally to produce extracts and compile (e.g., *Liang shu* 25.381, 49.689; *Nan shi* 50.1246; *Chen shu* 27.353). The only "original" aspect of *chaozhuan* is to exercise one's judgment in reconciling differences of one's sources; otherwise, *chaozhuan* is a scholarly activity that does not involve creative writing, as can be seen clearly in the statement that Emperor Wen of the Song 宋文帝 (r. 424–453) once ordered scholar He Shangzhi 何尚之 (382–460) to *chaozhuan wujing* 抄撰五經 ("produce extracts from the Five Classics and compile them") (*Nan Qi shu* 54.943).

Nevertheless, *chaozhuan*, unlike a professional copyist's copying of a book (*xie shu* 寫書), is not an entirely passive process. Zhang Mian's epitomes of the histories of the Later Han and the Jin were based on a variety of sources that clearly contained differences and conflicts, and he had come up with a synthetic work of his own—one might even call it a "critical edition." As the *Sui shu* historian stated, "Since the Later Han, scholars have often made an epitome of earlier histories and therewith produced a historical work of their own" 自後漢已來, 學者多鈔撮舊史, 自為一書 (*Sui shu* 33.962).

Many works recorded in the bibliographic chapters of the *Sui shu* are entitled "X or Y chao," indicating that they are epitomes made from X or Y; the names of the epitome-makers are frequently noted whenever they are known. Such is no longer the case in Tang dynastic histories. While occasionally a biography still mentions epitome-making, it no longer constitutes a common feature. Values had changed.

Apparently, however, the practice of epitome-making had remained. People in the Tang continued to make epitomes, and this is nowhere more clearly seen than in the case of *bieji*, literary collections of individual authors (see Chapter 15). The evidence can be seen in the process of Northern Song scholars putting together a critical edition of a Tang author's literary collection. As Owen demonstrates, a complete collection of a Tang author more often than not had to be assembled from many manuscript copies of an author's partial writings by Song editors, and it was the norm to copy out selections from a collection—known as *xiaoji* 小集, the "little collection" or an "anthology" of a single author's work—based on the reader/copyist's individual taste and preference rather than reproducing the entire tome (Owen 1997: 303–312). From copying extracts and making an epitome of a lengthy work to collecting "anthologies" of an author's work and assembling them to rebuild a complete collection, we have come full circle.

CODA

Encyclopedias and epitomes are important ways of organizing and transmitting knowledge in medieval China. Though overlapping, the two remain distinct. Their popularity was closely associated with the proliferation of books and the difficulty of obtaining or reading many books, and with the need of literary composition. With regard to the classics, histories, and Masters Texts, one wanted to obtain the "gist" (*yao* 要); as for literary collections, one followed personal taste and preference and copied selectively. People did not always, or even generally, reproduce or read a work in its entirety. The making of encyclopedias and epitomes and their circulation (*xing* 行) raise a number of important questions in intellectual and literary history, about what and how people were reading in medieval Chinese society. The imperial commissioning of a large-scale encyclopedia is also a way of demonstrating the state's cultural power and political legitimacy.

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CHAPTER 11

LIBRARIES, BOOK CATALOGUES, LOST WRITINGS

GLEN DUDBRIDGE

Two Perspectives

Depending on your point of view, a literature can present two entirely different faces. On one side, authentic and authoritative writings stand together in an ordered structure, recognized, sanctioned, and classified by their society's cultural arbiters. Creating and maintaining that structure is the work of critics, editors, bibliographers, publishers, and librarians. Between them they generate the complex business of recording, preserving, and evaluating what becomes in time a textual heritage. But the other face shows a fluid, anarchic scene in which writings do not rest stable but mutate, overlap, and blend. They may be transmitted, but are never the same. They can resist structured classification. They can communicate in unexpected ways. They can acquire layers of often contradictory commentary and presentation. They are, ultimately, the property of open society.

The moment at which, in China, the first vision imposed itself upon the second is plainly recorded in a passage from the *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*, 30.1701). It begins as a narrative of loss and recovery: the profound words of Confucius, fount of all wisdom, had come to an end with his death, and his great principles went awry when his followers in their turn died; proliferating rival traditions attached themselves to the Sage's texts; authenticity was challenged in a time of political turmoil, and the voices of many thinkers contended in a chaos of words. From today's perspective, those are all signs of creative energy, rich pluralism, and intellectual questing. But for the Han Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), the loss of written records and ritual institutions brought personal grief, and he took measures for the collection and copying of books.

A century later, in 26 BCE, Emperor Cheng 成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE), with mounds of writing on bamboo and silk piled up inside and outside the palace precincts, launched a project that would begin China's proud tradition of state library development and bibliographical scholarship over the next two thousand years. Stewards were sent to gather lost writings throughout the land, and a team of specialists led by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) were tasked to collate all the assembled bundles of bamboo slips and scrolls of silk with a view to establishing sound texts. A principle of subject classification was already at work: each specialist addressed his own field of expert knowledge, of which there were six—Confucian scriptures, Masters, Poetic Works, Military Works, Divination, and Medical Techniques. From this operation emerged standard editions of books on which, one by one, Liu Xiang submitted individual reports to the throne. For each book he itemized the contents, identified the textual source material, outlined the author's life and historical background, and reviewed questions of authenticity, transmission, and value. The works themselves were transcribed on dried bamboo slips, fixing definitive texts for future copying. Liu Xiang's individual reports were appended to these. And finally the reports were edited into a single collection, the *Bie lu* 別錄 (*Separate Transcripts*) (cf. van der Loon 1952: 359–366).

Seven Parts

Liu Xiang did not live to complete his task. But his son Xin 歆 (d. 23 CE) did, and summarized the whole scheme in a descriptive catalogue entitled *Qi lüe* 七略 (*The Seven Summaries*). Now the foundations were in place, not only for the long-term imperial structure of Chinese book culture but also for the enduring institution of state libraries and their staffing, development, and cataloguing work. Liu Xin's own catalogue opened with a general survey, then followed the six-part classification built into his father's project. And, though largely lost to later transmission, it did provide the substance of the *Han shu*'s bibliographical chapter (*juan* 30) known as the "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志, which is based upon it. That chapter, dating from the late first century CE, now gives us the clearest view of early imperial China's structure of human knowledge, and it comes with the authority of inclusion in a standard dynastic history.

For a comparable surviving document we have to wait until 656, with the appearance of a bibliography included in the *Sui shu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui, juan* 32–35). Yet the known record of the intervening centuries gives us rich evidence of bibliographical and cataloguing activity through the regimes that came in between. It was a period of intense intellectual grappling with the changing, volatile organism of book culture. How could the officers of the state libraries both respect structures inherited from the past and also accommodate a flood of newer writings, many representing new fields of experience? The record of their cataloguing projects shows what devices and expedients they used as they tried to control two simultaneous but clashing tendencies—loss of the old and proliferation of the new.

Overwhelmingly, the post-Han catalogues emerged as commissioned projects on behalf of the imperial libraries. Certain patterns recurred. As a new regime took power, concern would develop about the loss and disorder suffered in the imperial collections; an individual would be appointed to bring fresh order to books handed down from the past, while also supplementing the stock with newer writings; and his catalogue, often built upon older models, would reflect a growth in bulk and complexity that grew steadily larger with the passing centuries. It is interesting that these catalogues (now lost, though known to us through references elsewhere) were always associated with named individuals, some of them literary celebrities in their own right. By implication, their cataloguing work was no mere bureaucratic exercise but an active contribution to written culture, guaranteed by their scholarly credentials and delivering a considered perception of structured knowledge.

Another regular feature was a recycling of the numbers seven and four in presenting classification schemes. "Seven" had been an apparent total rather than a real one even for Liu Xin. His *Seven Summaries* in fact offered a six-part classification, plus an opening section that gave a conspectus of the whole scheme. When in 473 Wang Jian 王儉 (452–489) submitted to the Song 宋 (420–479) throne a catalogue entitled *Qi zhi* 七志 (*Seven Monographs*), he was consciously following the *Seven Summaries* precedent, though restyling most of the six headings and adding a new section of maps and diagrams to make up the total. He also appended two separate classes for Daoist and Buddhist writings, which in practical terms made up the total to nine (Ruan 1927: 109b). So the "seven" in his title merely symbolized the ancestral link to Liu Xin. His work was later (after 508) heavily expanded by He Zong 賀縱, though keeping the *Seven Monographs* headline.

Then, still consciously in the "seven part" tradition, the self-styled hermit scholar Ruan Xiaoxu 阮孝緒 (479–536) reviewed that whole heritage and produced his own catalogue, *Qi lu* 七錄 (*Seven Lists*). The work as a whole is lost, but we enjoy the huge benefit of having its preface, complete with content headings and a detailed list of earlier catalogues, which provide much of our information on the players, the institutions, and the thinking involved in shaping the structure of Chinese book culture. Ruan explains how, for instance, the placing of "histories" began for Liu Xiang and his son as an appendage to *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*The Spring and Autumn Annals*) in their section of *Liu yi* 六藝 (Six Confucian Scriptures). Wang Jian had followed their example in his renamed *Jingdian* 經典 (Scriptures) section. But Ruan now argued that while this was fitting in Han times when historical writing took up only a modest bulk, by his own time the literature of record had grown to such volume that he decided to give it an independent section in his revised scheme, with twelve subheadings. So the now familiar separation of Confucian scriptures from historical writings was not fixed from the start, but evolved through pragmatic calculations of balanced distribution.

Ruan's own nod to the "seven part" tradition took a new and distinctive form: he shaped his catalogue from five "inner" sections (Scriptures, Records, Masters/Military, Literary Collections, Techniques/Skills), and two "outer" (Buddhism, Daoism). His reasoned explanations of the many changes involved suggest that he was working towards a notion of what we now call "disciplines." To take an interesting example, he explicitly separated specialist Daoist practices (alchemical, sexual, and magical) into the "outer" zone of his catalogue, while other technical practices (astronomy, prophecy, calendar, divination, punishment, healing, etc.) remained in the "inner" zone. He also carefully explained that, unlike his predecessor Wang Jian, he gave priority to Buddhism, not Daoism, for "we follow different traditions, and also because of the relative depth and shallowness of their teachings" (Ruan 1927: 109c).

Resolute conservative instincts kept the "seven part" tradition lingering on for centuries. Xu Shanxin 許善心 (558–618), appointed vice-director of the Sui dynasty's palace library in 597, produced a catalogue entitled *Qi lin* 七林 (*Seven Forests*) in direct imitation of Ruan Xiaoxu. In the early eighth century, a small group led by Ma Huaisu 馬懷素 (659–718), director of the palace library under the Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756), extended Wang Jian's *Seven Monographs*. And a last distant echo came even in the thirteenth century, when the book collector Zheng Yin 鄭寅 (d. 1237) consciously shaped the catalogue of his own collection in seven parts. But by then, in the palace library precincts, the seven-part tradition had long since given way to a four-part tradition, developed in parallel from early times and eventually imposing itself upon Chinese culture for good.

Four Parts

From the time of the Wei 魏 (220–265) in the third century CE, the palace archives and book collections were in the charge of a Privy Directorate of Books (*Bishu jian* 秘書監). And the books held in three halls of the palace compound received critical attention from the staff of that body—director (*jian* 監), vice-director (*cheng* 丞), and assistants (*lang* 郎).

It began with the Wei Assistant Zheng Mo 鄭默 (213–280), whose *Zhong jing bu* 中經簿 (*Register of the Central Canon*) was later adopted and updated by the Western Jin 晉 (265–316) Director Xun Xu 荀勖 (d. 289). Now for the first time appeared an overall division into four parts, not yet marked by general headings, but by plain numbers (using the top four Heavenly Stems). First came the Confucian scriptures, their phonology and exegesis; then came Masters of earlier and more recent times, together with military topics, cosmology, and divination; third came historical and miscellaneous records; and fourth came poetic literature, charts, and maps, plus a group of works written on bamboo slips recently recovered (in 279) from the ancient tomb of King Xiang of Wei 魏襄王 (r. 318–296 BCE) (*Sui shu* 32.906; see also Chapter 3).

We see here already the outline of later four-part systems. We can also see the cataloguer's struggle to control both established canonical literature and newer accessions. When he moved the growing body of historical records away from the Confucian scriptures into a section of its own, Xun Xu anticipated Ruan Xiaoxu's reasoning in a later century (see above): this was a rational way to redistribute bulky holdings. Xun Xu was also apparently the earliest state cataloguer to report a body of Buddhist literature, though we have no information on its place in the classification. The last of his four parts (*ding bu* 丁部) looks less homogeneous than the other three, but what stands out in it most strongly is the cache of previously unknown ancient literature on bamboo slips only just brought to light. To bring that unexpected novelty into the great system must have seemed bold, even radical, and it well illustrates the lasting challenge that would face cataloguers through the ages—how to build fresh, unfamiliar material into a time-honored system of classes.

From this ancestral catalogue grew the long tradition of four-part classification (cf. Chapters 12–15). New catalogues were often stimulated by political catastrophes in which dynasties fell, palaces were sacked, and their libraries ravaged. That is what happened in the troubles that soon brought an end to the Western Jin and removed that dynasty to the south as Eastern Jin (317–420). "Less than one-tenth" of the palace collection survived, according to Ruan Xiaoxu, and it fell to Li Chong 李充, an editorial director, to bring order to materials reassembled under the new ruler Emperor Yuan 元帝 (r. 317–322). He produced *Jin Yuandi sibu shumu* 晉元帝四部書目 (*A Catalogue of Books in Four Parts for Emperor Yuan of the Jin*), expressly following Xun Xu's four-part model, but reversing the order of its second and third parts so that histories now came in second position. This became the model for future generations.

A succession of *Four-part Catalogues* now followed during the Southern Dynasties of the fifth century. Some bore dates: 408 (by Qiu Shenzhi 丘深之 [fl. ca. 405–433], originally Qiu Yuanzhi 丘淵之); 431 (attrib. Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 [385–433]); 473 (by Wang Jian, see above); 483 (by Wang Liang 王亮 [d. 510] and Xie Fei 謝朏 [441–506]). Another, by Yin Chun 殷淳 (403–434), was undated. All are now lost.

When the Liang dynasty opened in 502 under a monarch, Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 502–549), famed ever since for his patronage of literary culture and commitment to Buddhism, a more complicated scene developed. It was a scene that Ruan Xiaoxu (see above) knew and could reflect on at first hand. He describes in his preface how it began with the early appointment of Ren Fang 任昉 (460–508) as privy director of books, charged with restoring losses to the collections in the recent wars and bringing order to their chaos. Ren, who is said to have tried and failed to make personal contact with the reclusive Ruan, produced his *Bige sibu shu mulu* 祕閣四部書目錄 (*Four-Part Catalogue of the Books in the Privy Halls*) in 505 (var. 506). A new version, compiled by Vice-Director Yin Jun 殷鈞 (484–532), followed almost at once in 507. But alongside these ran another cataloguing project—based on a separate imperial collection housed in the Wende Hall 文德殿—in which the academician in charge, Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標 (462–521), decided to take out the writings on cosmology and divination to form a set of their own. The catalogue for that specialized unit was entrusted to the mathematician Zu Xuan 祖暅, and another was produced for the emperor's collection of Buddhist writings kept in the Hualin Park 華林園. Here then were signs that the four-part scheme lived in parallel, rather than integrally, with a flourishing body of Buddhist scriptures and writings.

In his preface to *Seven Lists*, Ruan Xiaoxu wrote about his learned friend Liu Yao 劉杳 (487–536), who had generously supplied bibliographical material for Ruan's own catalogue project. This same Liu Yao is credited in his official biography with a *Gujin sibu shumu* 古今四部書目 (*Catalogue in Four Parts of Books Ancient and Modern*), which has been interpreted as a personal project reaching beyond the scope of contemporary literature and of the imperial Privy Directorate (see Yang 2011: 78).

One more catalogue of the Liang period foreshadows the terrible ending of that era of sophisticated library culture. Compiled by Liu Zun 劉遵 (d. 535), it bore the title *Liang Donggong sibu mulu* 梁東宮四部目錄 (*Four-part Catalogue of the Liang Eastern Palace*). This Eastern Palace holding of 30,000 scrolls was the personal collection of the Crown Prince. But it went up in flames when the rebel Hou Jing 侯景 (d. 552) took the capital city Jiankang 建康 in 548. Around 553, Emperor Yuan 元帝 (r. 552–555) had the remains of the imperial collections moved to his new capital at Jiangling 江陵, yet within just a few years a new invasion from the north led him, in an act of nihilistic despair, to personally order the torching of that collection too (cf. Dudbridge 2000: 41–44). Once again, then, carefully nurtured collections of books and their well-articulated catalogues were lost to plunder and fire.

Yet the few slight documents that remain from those times do give a strong and often clear sense of the tensions, adjustments, and devices worked out by Southern Dynasties bibliographers, whether in public office or in private life. One way or another they met the challenges of a live written culture and worked at bringing it to a state of structured order. When the Tang dynasty came to power in the early seventh century, it was clear that the hard thinking about the structures of book culture had already been done and the basic decisions already taken.

Several sources tell us that the Tang emperors inherited a collection of more than 80,000 scrolls. And there are signs that from 628 (var. 629) Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643), as privy director of books, led a project to re-establish the imperial library with a four-part system. No trace survives of any such catalogue from before the time of his death in 643, but it is likely that his team's work fed into what now comes down to us as the bibliographical chapters in the *Sui shu*, completed in 656. The preface to those chapters gives its own account of the long tradition described above. But both this and the contents of the bibliography acknowledge the influence of earlier (now lost) catalogues, particularly Ruan Xiaoxu's *Qi lu* (*Sui shu* 32.908, 33.991). Within the general four-part division, a second order of classification numbers fifty-five sections (*pian* 篇)—exactly the same total as the fifty-five parts (*bu* 部) in *Seven Lists*. And throughout each section there are titles noted as held in the Liang but now lost—with a clear implication that the same source was checked for information about lost books (van der Loon 1984: 1–3; Zhang 1998: 276–279). The Sui bibliography again follows its predecessors in keeping Daoist and Buddhist writings separate from the main four parts in a final appendix. No titles are listed there, only classification headings and numbers of holdings, but even they reflect the influence of *Qi lu* (van der Loon 1984: 2). All this can be seen as work of consolidation rather than development.

The same judgment surely applies on a grander scale to the vast project undertaken a century later under Emperor Xuanzong. The *Qunshu sibu lu* 羣書四部錄 (*Four-Part Catalogue of All Books*) was a detailed descriptive catalogue, completed in 721. It ran to 200 scrolls in length, later condensed into a revised version of forty: *Gujin shulu* 古今書錄 (*Catalogue of Books Ancient and Modern*). Alongside this the same editor, Wu Jiong 毋煚 (d. 722), also compiled a ten-scroll catalogue of the Buddhist and Daoist books in the imperial library—the *Kaiyuan nei wai jing lu* 開元內外經錄 (*Catalogue of Inner and Outer Scriptures in the Kaiyuan Reign*) (*Jiu Tang shu* 46.1963–1966; van der Loon 1984: 3). All these works are lost, and our only insight into their contents comes from a boiled-down list of titles and authors copied into the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (*Old History of the Tang*) of 945. It confirms the general conclusion that the four-part model in Chinese bibliography was not only there to stay, but had also settled the old problem of where to put Buddhist and Daoist writings by separating them firmly from the mainstream. The Buddhist *saṅgha* in any case had a prolific catalogue tradition of its own, dating back to Sengyou's 僧祐 (445–518) *Chu Sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (*A Collection of Records of the Translated Tripiṭaka*).

It is clear from this discussion that custody of a textual and cultural heritage had become and remained an inherent part of dynastic legitimation. It took institutional form in the creation of state libraries, staffed by officials with responsibility for conservation and critical bibliography. The initiators of that tradition in the Western Han had faced the task of creating a conceptual ground plan to organize what they now saw as bibliographical items. And what then began as a seven-part classified system would later evolve, harden, and eventually atrophy, in bibliographies and catalogues, as a four-part system.

To contemplate that process is to recognize it as contingent, not essential. If a system could develop in one direction, it might as easily develop in another. Yet in the centuries following the year 900 the self-reinforcing four-part system would stay in place, with only minor tremors disturbing its fault lines. Despite the growing disproportion in bulk between the different parts, despite all the creative innovation in informal, vernacular, and performance literature that played out in the next thousand years, that ancient system would still dominate the state-led perception of Chinese literature. To a striking extent, it does so to this day, not least in privileging the Confucian scriptures as a discrete body of canonical literature.

Transmission and Loss

In the past, there must surely have existed a wealth of writings in Chinese that were neither preserved nor reported in later times. If so, they are truly lost and beyond our knowledge. What tempts our imagination in their direction is a complex pattern of relationships between early catalogues, books that come down in known transmission, fragments of writings both transmitted and lost that appear transcribed in medieval texts, and other writings recovered in the course of time from the environment, often in tombs and caves. Generations of editorial, textual, and paleographic scholarship have explored those relationships, and the results have disturbed the clear vision that ancient bibliographers aimed to achieve.

We have seen that each successive catalogue project was driven by a sense of loss and disorder. When great public disasters ravaged and depleted the imperial collections, they left gaps that could be identified by checking earlier catalogues, but could be filled only by finding replacements from society at large. Inevitably, each quest fell short of its targets. It could succeed only if missing titles had been transmitted out there in the wider world, and if not, then those titles were gone for good. Open transmission was the engine at the heart of this process. Why then were some writings successfully transmitted over long centuries, and others not?

Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162) faced this question in an essay on "Textual Collation" (*Jiaochou* 校讎) included in his *Tong zhi* 通志 (*General Record*) (see Dudbridge 2000: 9–12). He argued that if traditions of Confucian scholarship had been maintained even after the Qin regime had set out to destroy them, it was because followers of those traditions were determined to preserve them. Similarly the textual traditions of medicine, Buddhism, and Daoism had survived through turbulent and destructive times, while other ancient schools of thought had not. According to Zheng Qiao, specialist followers of clearly defined schools of learning were the agents that ensured successful transmission. It followed that systematic classification of all branches of written culture, guiding attention to those specialized pockets of transmission, was the only way to recover their concealed traditions. This thinking clearly reflected the influence of classified catalogues over the previous thousand years, and Zheng Qiao would indeed go on to add his own to the number. He had little to say about losses deliberately wrought by government policy after the Qin era: the fifth and sixth centuries, for instance, saw fierce efforts by governments to be rid of a class of apocryphal texts that gave voice to traditions of political prophecy. But it is hard to dispute his main point that writings are preserved and transmitted only when someone has the motivation to make copies of them, in those days a business costly in time, labor, and money. So in practice the works that survive are chiefly those that attract a continuing interest in each new generation. And older writings that find little favor with newer readers easily fade away.

These conclusions sound simple, but they conceal awkward problems. For a start: what does successful transmission mean? Many mainstream works sponsored or promoted by imperial governments through the ages now sit on our shelves with every appearance of full transmission—Confucian scriptures, dynastic histories, and the like. Yet most have suffered complications in their transmission history—descent through single commentarial traditions, partial or complete loss, tinkering and patching by editors early and late. Both the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*) and the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) have come down to us in single traditions tracing back to particular recensions and commentaries (Wang Bi 王弼, 226–249, and the Mao 毛 family of the Han), leaving behind the richer materials once available to Liu Xiang (see *Han shu* 30.1703–8). The *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*) originally lacked "Monographs" chapters, and annotated substitutes from another work were later added to it. The *Jiu Wu dai shi* 舊五代史 (*Old History of the Five Dynasties*) disappeared so completely that it had finally to be patched together from fragmentary quotations in multifarious sources. All this of course still takes no account of the original assembly of such texts before their defining appearance in an official catalogue, nor of their far from simple relationship with earlier sources beyond our reach.

If accidents and expedients like those disturbed even mainstream, orthodox texts as they passed through time, the broader run of texts scarcely fared better. Each passing generation's renewed interest in certain earlier writings always came at a price. Editors who, by winning official endorsement or general popularity, ensured the transmission of early writings were each following an agenda of their own time. They did not hesitate to present texts from the past in forms that answered their own needs. We can see a particularly clear example in the (often unique) transmission of writings from the centuries of disunion in the seventh-century compilation *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (*Classified Extracts from Literature*) (see Lin 2014). With approval from the throne, this became a standard reference for students of classical literature, and still is now. Yet certain extracts in it, to all appearances organically complete, can be checked against versions transmitted elsewhere, which show that they have undergone heavy cutting and remodeling (see Chapter 10). Works that once had firm roots in a given time and situation have been trimmed back and repositioned. And those rewritten, essentially new, compositions now entered the canon of recognized literature, in turn to find their way into general and individual collections and leave their own imprint on future generations of readers and writers.

Where in all this does authenticity lie? Or authority? Faced with such questions, we have to turn from the perception of a timeless canon to that other vision of writing as a volatile, mutable medium.

Lost Writings Restored

If the process of transmission lies in the hands of editors, commentators, schools of specialist learning (for Zheng Qiao), and other enthusiasts, so too does the control of loss. Among the vast numbers of titles listed in early catalogues that vanished over time, there were still many that left scattered remains behind them. For this we must thank the editors of those anthologies, collections, compendia, and encyclopedias that from early times brought the themes of China's culture into focus. The *Shijing* clearly stood at the head, and it was followed by a massive and still ongoing tradition. Over many centuries, compilers picked out textual material from far and wide, then shaped the extracts into classified formats of their own devising.

The long-term effects have been both enriching and disturbing. Certainly, without that mass of extracts and quotations coming down through the centuries we would lose precious access to many otherwise untransmitted writings, and our reading of Chinese literature would be dramatically poorer for it. Partial and secondary access is plainly much better than none at all. But we need to recognize that the extracts too have come down in a transmission system of their own. Compilers and editors drew heavily from earlier compilations, and always with their own agenda in mind. The impact on textual integrity is easy to imagine. It is most obvious in the large number of compilations that take passages from their sources and then separate them for free distribution at will around the editors' classification system. The words are there, but their relationship together is lost. And when in time later editors drew on older compilations for their own purposes, the effect was doubled, disorientation grew, a greater distance from the source works opened up, and the quotations became like objects cast off from ships, bobbing freely in the ocean.

This has not deterred generations of scholars from attempting to rebuild those scattered fragments into skeleton versions of lost writings. Among many others, even the prophetic apocryphal scriptures so vigorously suppressed in the fifth and sixth centuries have been patiently pieced together (see *Weishu jicheng*). That kind of work relies upon hypothesis, critical judgment, and argument, and the results can vary in quality. For Western readers, the process has been worked out most elaborately in the case of the minor pre-Qin thinker Shen Dao 慎到 (ca. 360–ca. 285 BCE), and his example will put the matter into perspective (cf. Thompson 1979). Quotations from a work called *Shenzi* 慎子 are found scattered in sources from between 400 and 1050 CE, most richly in the anthology of political philosophy *Qunshu zhiyao* 群書治要 (*Main Principles of Government in All Books*). A product of Wei Zheng's imperial library project in the early seventh century (see above), this work offered extracts from the *Shenzi* organized in seven sections, and very likely provided material in turn for later reconstructions. But by the twelfth century it too was lost in China, and survives now only thanks to its early transmission in Japan. So all the subtle work of text-critical comparison between this and other sources rests upon that delicate structure of transmission. And it still only takes us back to the authority of a book held in the early Tang imperial collection, a good 900 years later than the ancient thinker himself. Only the recovery of a truly early text might take us closer to him. But meanwhile it is the voice of the medieval fragments that speaks in his name to Chinese readers: authentic or not, that is how his impact has been delivered.

It should follow that extracts taken directly from writings closer in time to the compilations have better chances of a robust relationship with their sources. This can be tested for the period down to the tenth century, when the compilation culture found its climax in great projects launched by the Song emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) in his Taiping xingguo 太平興國 reign (976–984) (see Dudbridge 2000: 1, 13–18). Two of them in particular have offered large scope for rebuilding texts from fragments: *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*Extensive Records for a Time of Supreme Peace*, otherwise translated as *Extensive Records from the Taiping Reign* in this volume), submitted in 978, and *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (*Imperial Reader for a Time of Supreme Peace*) in 984. Both were produced by the same editorial board, using the resources of the imperial library of the early Song (Dudbridge 2000: 13–18). Their commissions directed them to existing compilations, as well as to "books in general," so for early writings multiple layers of quotation are only to be expected. However, for the literature of the previous two and a half centuries, the editors had access to many directly transmitted books, and thanks to this we can read materials from those times that have otherwise been lost.

Even at that short range the results have again been disturbing as well as enriching. The *Taiping guangji* in particular has certainly laid open a world of informal narrative writing that is otherwise very thinly transmitted. Yet when textual comparison is possible, it often shows that editorial interventions could be cavalier and standards of copying surprisingly sloppy. These editors set titles of their own devising on the narrative items, using what we would now call keywords, and imposed a uniform third-person narrative style, even when original texts used the first person (Dudbridge 2013: 37–8). They also followed the old practice of breaking up single texts into pieces for distribution around their system of classes (Dudbridge 2000: 53–71). So this important and influential body of Chinese literature reaches us only through a heavy filter—something that readers rarely take into account. Behind the bland facade of an imperial compilation, a more complex and dynamic background culture lay hidden, also partly reflected by smaller and more ruthlessly edited collections in the following centuries. Over the past thousand years, those texts too have suffered the accidents and distortions of their own eventful transmission. Here, then, the view of literature as a fluid, unstable, and changeable quantity comes forward once more.

Lost Writings Recovered

When, according to tradition, Kong Anguo 孔安國 (fl. ca. 120 BCE) produced a cache of "ancient texts" (*gu wen* 古文) found inside a wall of the Kong 孔 residence in Qufu 曲阜, it led to a debate on the textual authority of Confucian canonical works that still resounded in the twentieth century (Nylan 1994; van Ess 1994). Aside from its significance in intellectual history, this was also the earliest and most spectacular example of its kind. Through the ages, the chance reappearance of textual material from the deep past has shaken assumptions and challenged norms. The bamboo slips recovered from a tomb in 279 (see above) included the *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 (*Bamboo Annals*), which offered alternatives to previously accepted historical narratives and chronologies. Similar impacts have followed from the long sequence of discoveries made by modern archaeology in the twentieth century.

The list is impressive. Already in the opening years of the century came both the huge body of Bronze Age oracle bone texts found near Anyang (in He'nan) and the medieval manuscript library in the cave complex of Dunhuang (in Gansu). Each corpus established new understandings of ritual, institutional, and literary culture in its own era. And meanwhile finds of brushed manuscripts on bamboo and silk from pre- and early-imperial times have kept coming over a stretch of more than a hundred years, regularly outpacing expectations with new surprises. Dunhuang County alone has yielded Han-period bamboo slips steadily from 1907 to 1992. Several other provinces have a similar record.

From one point of view, these writings, not "lost" but "found," should not really claim a place in this discussion. Yet even here they have insights to offer. Taken individually and as a whole, the discoveries have delivered both familiar and unfamiliar textual material. There are writings transmitted elsewhere, and writings otherwise unknown. Even the "known" writings present unfamiliar material alongside the familiar. We might expect these ancient texts to bring clarity and authority to our perceptions of early literature, but instead they have brought complexity and uncertainty.

The manuscripts on silk found in 1973–1974 at Mawangdui 馬王堆, Hu'nan, illustrate this well. There, enclosed in a tomb from 168 BCE, were traditional mainstream works like *Yijing* and *Laozi* (in two copies); but their textual traditions, and even their structure, have turned out to be distinct from transmitted versions. In the same tomb, there were documents recording events of the late Warring States period, some of which overlap with narratives used by Liu Xiang in compiling the work he entitled *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*). These give some samples of the unsystematic source materials that lay before him, and suggest how vigorously he acted to bring them to order in his attempt to create a selective but definitive book (cf. Crump 1970: 1). Among other previously unknown writings at Mawangdui, there were some reflecting on political matters in a transcendent philosophical mode. They have clearly stimulated an urge to classify them into known schools, yet modern scholarship has failed to find a consensus on how that is best done: were their authors Huang-Lao 黄老 Daoists? Yin-Yang 陰陽 specialists? How indeed should those schools be defined? (Cf. Yates 1997: 10–43). And is it in the end a good idea to try to classify that fluid intellectual scene?

All this brings home how weak a hold we have on a universe of writing, still lost, that extends beyond our familiar horizons. It has also brought us full circle to the situation of the Han Emperor Cheng in 26 BCE, and to the moment when his scholars confronted those "proliferating rival traditions" and "voices of many thinkers contending in a chaos of words" to create the tension between studied order and rich profusion that shapes our experience of Chinese literature.

But hindsight of the ensuing nine hundred years brings out a new irony. The grip of central authority would fumble uncertainly with the organic underlying culture, as it moved blocks around different parts of its scheme, made room for what was new and unfamiliar, and let non-Confucian materials into or out of the mainstream. Over much of those nine centuries, the studied order itself proved restless and mutable, and in the end imperial authority stepped back from shaping China's written culture into a single unified system.

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SECTION THREE

LITERARY PRODUCTION

I. Traditional Genre Spectrum

Editor's Introduction (Wai-yee Li)

The title of this section raises the question: Should the four textual categories discussed in the following chapters be characterized as "genres"? The next four chapters present "Classics" (*jing* 經), "Histories" (*shi* 史), "Masters" (*zi* 子), and "Collections" (*ji* 集) both as concepts and as evolving bibliographic categories, whose contours are explored through specific examples. Implied (and occasionally self-conscious) reflections on the meanings and boundaries of these categories periodically come to the fore, but there is no place for the kind of normative and prescriptive discourse one finds in, say, Aristotle's definition of tragedy in the *Poetics*. For Aristotle, the genre of tragedy has an extratemporal "nature" or "entelechy": "Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped" (*Poetics* IV, Adams 1971: 50).

In the Chinese context, the comparably normative discourse of "defining genres" (*bian ti* 辨體) arises not from discussions of bibliographic categories but from reflections on modes of writing and composition. Thus Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) sums up the essential attributes of eight genres with four words. Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) offers more elaborate definitions of ten genres. Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s) devotes twenty out of fifty chapters in *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*) to tracing the history and norms of twenty genres. In these examples, the genres considered range from very broad ones like poetry (*shi* 詩) or rhapsody (*fu* 賦) to function-determined ones such as elegy (*lei* 誄), eulogy (*song* 頌), remonstrance (*zhen* 箴), or memorials to the throne (*zou* 奏). The Chinese term *ti* 體 overlaps with the idea of genre but also encompasses the notion of normative style not only for genres but also for periods, authors, topics, or occasions. "In other words, while everything we would call a genre was a *ti*, not all *ti* were genres" (Owen 2007: 1392).

Rules invite both conformity and defiance. Writers and scholars have both disparaged and celebrated the audacity to mix genres (*can ti* 參體, *wenti hucan* 文體互參) or to break the genre (*po ti* 破體), a metaphor borrowed from the Tang discourse on calligraphy. From about the eleventh century on, debates about breaking generic rules recur in critical discourse, even as distinctions proliferate (Wu 1991) and Yan Yu's 嚴羽 (1191–1241) advocacy of "original form" (*bense* 本色) points to a heightened awareness of generic boundaries (Jiang 2008). Thus Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031–1095) complains, for example, that Han Yu's 韓愈 (768–824) poetry is merely "rhymed prose" 押韻之文, and the woman poet Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–1151) takes Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) to task for writing song lyrics (*ci* 詞) that end up being no more than "*shi* poems in uneven lines" 句讀不葺之詩. From another perspective, generic norms cannot remain constant if they are to accommodate changes in literary history, as Liu Xie already argues in "Continuity and Transformation" ("Tong bian" 通變, *Wenxin diaolong*, Chapter 29). Rules of genres have to be negotiated through the fusion (or tension) between tradition and individual talent, between supposedly perennial norms and the exigencies of the historical moment. Perhaps that is why late imperial critics who write extensively on "defining genres," such as Xu Shizeng 徐師曾 (1517–1580) and Xu Xueyi 許學夷 (1563–1633), also implicitly justify the need for flexibility.

Modern scholars are prone to affirm the breaking of boundaries as regeneration: "Famous authors and famous pieces often break the rules of genres, which thereby gain breadth and sweep" (Qian 1980: 3:890). While there are antecedents for such views (e.g., Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 [1746–1809]), the dominant position in pre–twentieth-century writings usually judges "miscegenation" according to the hierarchy of genres—"carrying the high to the low" 以高行卑 or "the ancient to the more recent" 以古行近 is admissible or even praiseworthy, but the reverse is unacceptable (Jiang 2008). For example, one can debate the merit of using *shi* poetry diction in song lyrics (*ci* 詞) or even applaud it, but a song lyric taking up the colloquialisms and sensuality of popular vernacular songs (*qu* 曲) or operatic arias would definitely be decried as vulgar. Some of the most famous couplets in Tang poetry flout the syntactical rules of regulated verse (e.g., Cui Hao's 崔顥 [d. 754] lines, "The yellow crane, once gone, will never return,/White clouds, for a thousand years, endure in vain" 黃鶴一去不復返, 白雲千載空悠悠): using the more rugged rhythm and imperfect parallelism of old style verse in regulated verse can mark a lofty sensibility. A poet who brings the aesthetics of regulated verse to ancient style poetry, however, is likely to be faulted for being too mannered.

The categories discussed in the following four chapters are usually not referred to as *ti* (except perhaps sometimes for "Histories"). Their parameters and historical transformations belong less to literary thought than to "bibliographical scholarship" (*mulu xue* 目錄學), which encompasses the collation and cataloguing of texts and their organization into a coherent system. But if they are not "genres" as usually understood in the Chinese tradition, they are rooted in the need for system, taxonomy, and textual order, which are germane to conceptions of "genre." Classification answers concrete questions of "where to put (and find) what" in imperial libraries. By the Tang dynasty, scrolls in the palace library were divided into the four categories we will discuss, each distinguished by wooden rollers, silk ribbons, and ivory clasps in specific colors (*Tang liu dian* 唐六典, 9.280). Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162) compares bibliographic organization to "the method of organizing armies" 部伍之法 (Zheng 1987: 71.831). Military division requires relatively even distribution. Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602) observes: "From the Tang dynasty on, the number of scrolls for the four divisions are comparable" (Hu 1958: 25).

This four-part system, first traceable to Zheng Mo 鄭默 (213–280) and Xun Xu 荀勖 (d. 289), eventually took hold by the seventh century after absorbing and transforming bibliographic categories from other classification systems (see also Chapter 11). Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801) describes this trajectory as inevitable (Zhang 1985: 2:956), but "pragmatic calculations of balanced distribution" (Chapter 11) played a key role. Thus the emergence of "Histories" as a separate category and the assimilation of writings about warfare and the technical arts into "Masters" from the third century on merely reflected an evolving textual reality. The proliferation of historical writings meant that they could no longer be subsumed under *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) and classed with other "Classics" (as in "Monograph on Arts and Writings" ["Yiwen zhi" 藝文志] in *Han shu* 漢書 [*History of the Former Han*], while the more modest number of military (*bingshu* 兵書), divinatory (*shushu* 數術), and technical (*fangji* 方技) writings (each an independent classification in the *Han shu* Monograph) and of post-Han Masters Texts meant that they could be coalesced into the category of "Masters."

Shifts in the boundaries of these categories or their internal organization yield insights into social, cultural, and intellectual history. "Classics" is the most elevated category, comprising the ancient texts that became the sources of the Confucian tradition. Its status as official learning is evident in its close ties with the bureaucracy, education, and later the examination system. Labeled "Six Arts" (*liu yi* 六藝) in the "Monograph on Arts and Writings," the appellation of the category as "Classics" only caught on after Wang Jian's 王儉 (452–489) *Qi zhi* 七志 (*Seven Monographs*). Although *Shi* 詩 (*Poetry*; later *Shijing* 詩經 [*Classic of Poetry*]) and *Shu* 書 (*Documents*; later *Shangshu* 尚書 or *Shujing* 書經 [*Classic of Documents*]) are most frequently cited as authoritative texts and listed first in the enumeration of the "Six Arts" or "Six Classics" in pre-Qin materials, *Yi* 易 (*Changes*; later *Yijing* 易經, [*Classic of Changes*]) is listed first in the *Han shu* Monograph, either because it was considered the most ancient or because it was the first set of canonical texts to resurface in early Han after the

Qin destruction (Li 2011: 12). All subsequent catalogues follow this sequence, implicitly claiming a cosmological foundation for the moral and political precepts embodied in the Classics.

Exegetical commentaries and subcommentaries on the Classics are listed in the same bibliographical category with their "parent texts." Apocryphal and prophetic texts that purport to "interpret" the Classics (*chen wei* 讖緯 or *wei shu* 緯書) are included in "Classics" in the bibliographic chapters in *Sui shu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui*), *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (*Old History of the Tang*), *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang*), Chen Zhensun's 陳振孫 (ca. 1179–ca. 1262) *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題 (*An Annotated Record of the Books in Zhizhai's Collection*), and Ma Duanlin's 馬端臨 (1254–1323) *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (*Comprehensive Textual Investigations*), sometimes with stated reservations. Such texts disappeared from later bibliographies and catalogues, reflecting the decline of these fanciful elaborations. In general, the antiquity and difficulty of the Classics granted interpretive commentaries a special authority. The fact that the three exegetical traditions of *Chunqiu* came to be considered three independent Classics in the "Nine Classics" during the Tang indicated acknowledgement of *Chunqiu*'s daunting opacity when considered on its own.

Although *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*), *Mengzi* 孟子 (*Mencius*), *Xiaojing* 孝經 (*Classic of Filial Piety*), and the dictionary *Er ya* 爾雅 were not called *jing* during the Han dynasty, court academicians (*boshi* 博士) were appointed to teach and interpret them. References to the "Seven Classics" (e.g., *Sanguo zhi* 38.973) probably include the *Analects* and *Xiaojing. Analects, Xiaojing*, and *Er ya* come under "Six Arts" in the "Monograph on Arts and Writings" in *Han shu* and are included in the category of "Classics" in Ruan Xiaoxu's 阮孝緒 (479–536) *Qi lu* 七錄 (*Seven Lists*) and the "Monograph on Bibliography" ("Jingji zhi" 經籍志) in *Sui shu*. In other words, even before they became part of the "Twelve Classics" carved on stelae in 837 under imperial auspices, these three texts enjoyed the de facto status of "Classics," probably because they were considered fundamental for ethical training and linguistic competence. In the *Han shu* Monograph, *Mencius* is put in "Masters," and there it remained until the late twelfth century, when Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) elevated the *Analects, Mencius*, and two chapters from *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*), *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學) and *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸), as the Four Books. By the 1190s, Mencius was printed as one of the annotated "Thirteen Classics." The Four Books with Zhu Xi's commentary became the basic texts for the civil service examination after 1313, and "Four Books" became a subset under the category of "Classics" in the bibliographic chapter in *Ming shi* 明史 (*History of the Ming*, late seventeenth century) and in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*, 1773–1782). Although "Classics" is arguably the most stable component of the four-part division, changing boundaries suggest that notions of continuity and exemplarity—the semantic associations of *jing* (Chapter 12)—evolved over time.

As mentioned above, "Histories" was originally classified under *Chunqiu* in the *Han shu* Monograph. Its separation as an independent category in Xun Xu's scheme was reversed by Wang Jian's *Qi zhi* but confirmed by the delineation of nine subcategories (including "histories of illegitimate domains" [*weishi* 偽史], "miscellaneous histories" [*zashi* 雜史], and "ghosts and spirits" [*guishen* 鬼神]) under "Records and Accounts" ("Jizhuan" 紀傳) in Ruan Xiaoxu's *Qi lu*. Ruan's subdivisions might have influenced the broad compass of "Histories" (with thirteen subcategories and 13,264 scrolls, twice as much as any of the other three categories) in the bibliographic chapter in *Sui shu* (see also Chapters 13, 18). The wealth of materials and range of genres (some of which would be classified as "fiction" in the twentieth century) under an independent bibliographic category, as well as theoretical discussions of historical writings by Liu Xie and Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721), suggest that a new historical consciousness had emerged between the third and seventh centuries (Lu 2000; see also Chapter 13).

Put in the third place in Xun Xu's scheme, "Histories" was ranked second after "Classics" in the *Sui shu* bibliography and thereafter retained its eminent place as being secondary to, but also complementary with, the "Classics." *Chunqiu* and its exegetical traditions, which are supposed to concretize moral and political precepts through records about past events, establish close ties between the first two bibliographic categories. But there are also unresolved tensions. Voices raising doubts about the exegetical filiation of *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*, fourth century BCE) to *Chunqiu* typically aver that *Zuozhuan*'s commitment to historical narrative sometimes leads to dubious value judgments. The Song Neo-Confucian scholar Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) chided his disciple Xie Liangzuo's 謝良佐 absorption in the details of historical writings as "toying with things and losing [moral] ambition" (*wan wu sang zhi* 玩物喪志). Zhu Xi also sometimes elevated the Classics at the expense of historical writings. Espousing the opposite position are important Ming and Qing thinkers and writers arguing from various perspectives that historical instantiations are necessary for moral truths, among them Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590), Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602), Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804), and most famously Zhang Xuecheng, who (like Li Zhi) maintained that the "Six Classics are all Histories" 六經皆史 (Zhang 1985: 1:1).

The section on "Various Masters" (*zhuzi* 諸子) in the *Han shu* Monograph lists ten schools. Of these, the Sophists (Mingjia 名家) and Mohists are only represented through pre-Han works, while Confucians, Daoists, and Yin-yang specialists continued their traditions up to the first century BCE. In other words, the *Han shu* Monograph presents intellectual lineages of varying duration and relevance to the present. Xun Xu made a distinction between "Early Masters" (*gu zhuzi jia* 古諸子家) and "Recent Masters" (*jinshi zi jia* 近世子家), by which he probably meant post-Han Masters. Chapter 14 focuses on pre-imperial and Han Masters, who best exemplify, respectively, the sense of fervent intellectual debate and the close ties to statecraft and scholar-officials. While the *Analects* was never put in the bibliographic category of "Masters," to consider it as one of the Masters Texts is to draw attention to its engagement with other intellectual positions from late Warring States to Han. Exegetical texts in the category of "Classics" present Confucius as the Sage mediating and augmenting Zhou tradition. From the perspective of Warring States thought, Confucius represents less a unifying system of ideas than a point of reference, the crucial medium or catalyst through which other thinkers articulate their differences.

The bibliographic chapter in *Sui shu* follows Xun Xu in expanding the scope of "Masters," incorporating military writings (*bing* 兵), astrology (*tianwen* 天文), calendrical and mathematical expertise (*lishu* 曆數), and divinatory and esoteric arts (*wuxing* 五行). "Masters" became a category both for thought and "expertise literature" (Chapter 14). The same label can conceal significant shifts. While *zajia* 雜家 in the *Han shu* Monograph feature Syncretic works like *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*) and *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (*Master Huainan*), *za* 雜 in the *Sui shu* bibliography encompasses in addition a host of miscellaneous texts, texts difficult to classify, and encyclopedias and epitomes (see also Chapter 10), as well as some Buddhist and Daoist writings (Cheng and Xu 1988: 159–161). (The *Sui shu* bibliography lists most Buddhist and Daoist texts separately; later fourfold classifications will include them in "Masters" and sometimes in "Histories.") This trajectory of *za* is symptomatic of the fate of "Masters" as a bibliographic category. The expansion is driven by numbers and the need for "balanced redistribution," but it might also have reinforced the hierarchy between "Classics" and "Masters."

The fact that "Poems and Poetic Expositions" (*shi fu* 詩賦) in the *Han shu* Monograph—the antecedent of later "Collections" by substance if not by conceptual frame—constitute a separate category, while historical writings are grouped under *Chunqiu*, might simply have been a function of the size of the respective corpora: there are 411 *pian* 篇 (bundles of bamboo slips) for historical writings but 1,317 *pian* for "Poetry and Rhapsodies." Whatever the rationale, the separate grouping of "Poems and Poetic Expositions," while germane for later notions of literary production, was a far cry from "Collections" as a conceptual and bibliographic category (Chapter 15). With "Collections," we arrive at the heart of classical literature, for its very idea signifies a vital link between life and writings and implies self-conscious literary production (Chapter 15). Most of the works discussed in our volume fall under this category. Just as *Chunqiu* and its exegetical traditions traverse the conceptual boundaries of "Classics" and "Histories," *Shijing* is a Classic that is organizationally no different from a collection or an anthology. The separate categorization of *Shijing* under "Classics" notwithstanding, the model of *Shijing* will continue to be invoked in literary production by the authors in "Collections" (Chapter 12). More generally, works from the first three bibliographic categories provide endless ideas, images, and topoi for authors of collections. The Ming writer Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559), for example, underlines this continuity by listing lines from Masters Texts and historical writings that could have passed for "poetic lines" by later reckoning (Yang 2008: 1:58–62). At the same time, emergent literary self-consciousness in the Six Dynasties means that for some even Classics, supposedly a higher category, should not be the model of emulation for poets. Thus Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551, Emperor Jianwen, r. 549–551) disparaged poets whose lines are reminiscent of *Liji, Shangshu*, or *Yijing* (*Liang shu* 49.690). Commenting on this passage, the Qing critic Ye Jiaoran 葉矯然 (1614–1711) implicitly elevates poets above scholars of Classics: "One should know that these words do not merely show how differences between genres and positions (*tiwei* 體位) matter when one prepares to compose. It also shows that the romantic élan (*fengliu* 風流) of great poetry cannot be falsely assumed (*guituo* 詭托) by scholars of moral learning in solemn garb" (Ye 1983: 2:937). "Literariness" came to be considered a separate sphere: "Criticism of Poetry and Prose" ("Shi wen ping" 詩文評) eventually became a subcategory in "Collections" in *Siku quanshu*.

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CHAPTER 12

CLASSICS (*JING* 經)

DAVID SCHABERG

THE semantics of the "classic" (*jing*) in Chinese intellectual history derived from notions of continuity, cultural reproduction, and fidelity to models from the past. The word *jing* signified the long or warp threads in a woven material, and it belonged to a family of words with meanings like "passing through," "flowing through," and "path" (Lewis 1999: 297–300; Schuessler 2007: 317). In the writing system, this word was rendered by the graph 經, the left-hand component representing silk, the right perhaps representing the loom (Karlgren 1957: 219). A technology for prestigious manufacture thus furnishes China's single most powerful metaphor for cultural reproduction. Bronze casting technology supplied many other basic terms for cultural reproduction: *xing* 型, for instance, was a casting mold and also the "correct form" that every successive generation inherited and attempted to follow; the *fan* 範 was likewise a casting mold, or metaphorically a "rule" or "principle," and the *mo* 模 too was a casting instrument and a "norm." The word *wen* 文, likewise, relates to elite techniques, though in this case they are the ceremonial manufacture of statutes and collective action as exemplified in sacrificial ritual and warfare, famously the two great affairs of the state and its leading families (Durrant, Li, and Schaberg 2016: 2:802–803). *Wen* could mean the design in cloth, the commander's flag, the benevolent authority of the morally perfect ruler, the embellished speech, the written word, or any of several other things, all instances of useful or beautiful patterning. The contemporary Chinese term for "literature," *wenxue* 文學, reflects a later narrowing of the word's semantic range to meanings related to writing, including not only the individual graph but also the well-crafted, internally patterned composition (see Chapter 1). In the metaphorical world of *jing* and *wen*, history looks like the sum of succeeding years' additions to the long weave of history, and every generation has as its most clearly expressed duty the prolongation of the weave pattern their forebears had begun.

Chinese terms for cultural reproduction, including *jing*, had nothing to say about a distinction between high and low, though the culture to be reproduced was no doubt that of the rulers and the controllers of Bronze Age means of production. The texts in question were figured not as tokens of elite culture but as tools and templates for reproduction itself, coming notionally before any of the social distinctions that might be reproduced. During the centuries after the invention of writing, this sense of classical texts as a mechanism of correct social replication would gain new force as various statesmen and thinkers drew connections between classically expressed ideals and newly elaborated views of the fundamental norms at work in nature and society. Even by the Han dynasty the old theme of continuity had prompted repeated claims of fidelity to early models and gestures of encompassing syncretism (Brashier 2011: 1–17), and this early history ensured that the litterateurs and thinkers of later ages would always face the problem and possibility of cultivating a continuity defined by *jing*.

Despite the many passages in Chinese classical texts that hold up cultural continuity as an ideal, and despite the aptness of the word *jing* to this ideal, the early semantics of *jing* hardly tells the whole story of the term's application to these materials. Some of the five "Confucian" classics clearly enjoyed great prestige by about 500 BCE, but it was not until the Warring States period that some or all of these texts came to be referred to collectively as *jing*, and not until the Han dynasty that the term was applied to any single work among the five. These dates raise the distinct possibility that our five *jing* were not the first texts to be referred to in this way, and further that the whole notion of a particular text as a *jing* may not have originated among the Ru traditionalists who practiced ritual and taught texts, or even among self-identified devotees of Confucius's ideas. Instead, we find that in the third century Han Feizi was dividing some chapters of his work into *jing* (the basic texts, the "canons") and *zhuan* 傳 ("transmissions" or "traditions") or *shuo* 說 ("explanations") of these *jing* and was treating the *Laozi* as a classic of sorts by producing "explanations" (*jie* 解) and "elucidations" (*yu* 喻) for select passages (see also Chapter 14). Meanwhile, the Neo-Mohists, building on work attributed to Confucius's contemporary Mozi, were teaching their students sets of fundamental propositions labeled *jing* (Graham 1978: 22–23). Certainly, it is significant that in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*), a fourth-century BCE historical work that articulates many of the concepts that would come to underlie classicist and Confucian thinking in China, *jing* refers to the good ordering of society, to the ordering effects that ritual can have, and to principles of moral order, but never to a text, written or recited. The "Confucian" classics were at first one set of *jing* among others and were, like those others, a basic set of ancient or otherwise fundamental texts that demanded continual hermeneutic work because they were constantly used in teaching. Only the later canonization of the "Confucian" works in education and officialdom has tended to obscure the competitive scene of early *jing* and make it seem as if our five *jing* were always seen as the sole vehicle of antiquity and exemplars of Zhou ideals of continuity.

The "Five Classics" of the Han were the basis for the "Nine Classics" (*jiu jing* 九經) of the Tang dynasty and ultimately for the set of the "Thirteen Classics" (*shisan jing* 十三經) devised in the Song dynasty (Nylan 2001: 18). This final reframing of the set included the original five with each of their constituent exegetical texts enumerated as separate works, plus two fundamental texts about Confucius and his disciples (*Lunyu* or the *Analects* and *Mengzi* or *Mencius*), a short work on filial piety, and a dictionary. The reorganization of and additions to the canon reflect both an attention to the texts themselves, as opposed to the larger teaching tradition (ritual, songs, etc.) each of them belonged to, and a pairing of these *jing* texts and their many commentaries with texts and commentaries on the words of Confucius and Mencius and their followers. Both explicitly "Confucian" teachings and lexicography were elevated by their enumeration in these larger versions of the canon, even as *Lunyu* and *Mengzi* became rich sources of allusion in later literary writings. Further, starting in the Han dynasty, there gathered around the *jing* or "warp thread" texts a penumbra of "weft thread" texts (*wei shu* 緯書) related to the emerging canon but often invoking the texts in mystical or divinatory ways.

While the texts that would become the "Confucian" classics were disparate in character and in origin, each can be understood as the manifestation of a long discursive tradition that traces back to first millennium BCE practices of communication that helped in the creation and consolidation of social networks. *Shi* 詩 (*Poetry*) collects songs of ancestor worship, sympotic celebration, hunting, military campaigning, aristocratic weddings, praise, blame, and other ritual and social occasions. *Shu* 書 (*Documents*) purports to collect speeches attributed to early predynastic and dynastic rulers and exemplifies ideals of royal command. *Yi* 易 (*Changes*) derives ultimately from Western Zhou divination practices and the associated divination songs and also incorporates later generations' efforts to systematize and intellectualize their predecessors' methods. *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) and its three associated commentaries originate in ritualized court record-keeping but come to encompass a method of historical narrative and judgment. The three ritual classics, known collectively as *Li* 禮 (*Rituals*), are codifications of and in some cases investigations into the underlying principles of ritual and political practices attributed, often erroneously, to the Western Zhou. Finally, *Yue* 樂 (*Music*), a title for which no text survives, was either the corpus of Zhou and earlier ritual music or a collection of theoretical reflections on music. Ultimately each of the texts would come to be referred to as a *jing*, with certain titles becoming standard by our time, especially *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), *Shujing* 書經 (*Classic of Documents*) or *Shangshu* 尚書 (perhaps "Revered Documents"), and *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*). For the sake of clarity, I will use *Shijing, Shangshu*, and *Yijing* as titles even for the formative period of these texts (i.e., before they were called *jing*), despite the risk of anachronism.

SHI (SHIJING)

Shijing is a collection of 305 poems ranging from 6 to 120 lines long, with as few as two and as many as nine graphs/syllables per line. Most lines contain four graphs/syllables, and in imperial times imitations of pieces in *Shijing* were most often composed in tetrasyllables. The collection is divided into four parts. The first part, and the latest to be composed, is the "Airs of the States" ("Guo feng" 國風), 160 pieces presented in 15 sections corresponding to different regions and states of Zhou China. The second, containing 74 pieces, many of them longer and likely earlier than the "Airs," is the "Lesser Elegantiae" ("Xiao ya" 小雅). The "Greater Elegantiae" ("Da ya" 大雅) follows, with its 31 pieces, among them the longest poems in the collection. Finally, the "Hymns" ("Song" 頌), numbering 40, includes sacrificial hymns sung in the early Western Zhou court, as well as later pieces supposed to have been used in the courts of the Shang dynasty and its later descendants and pieces used in the court of the state of Lu. The order of presentation of these sections of *Shijing* is roughly the reverse of the order of composition. The language of the poems makes it likely that the "Zhou Hymns" are the oldest pieces in the collection, dating perhaps to the tenth or eleventh century BCE, while the "Greater Elegantiae" were composed perhaps a century or two later, and the other sections later still, in the centuries before 600 BCE. Style differs considerably, from minimally patterned and sometimes entirely unrhymed early hymns to rhymed, stanzaic, highly repetitive folk-song-like pieces in the "Airs." The collection appears to have been regarded as a complete set of three hundred pieces by the time of Confucius (*Analects* 2.2). The *Analects* itself is now dated by many scholars to the mid-second century BCE (Makeham 1996; Hunter 2012) and may not precisely reflect historical realities of earlier times, but *Shijing* does seem to have been a closed canon from about 600 BCE on.

Despite the existence of other highly influential poetry from the subsequent centuries, especially the *Chuci* 楚辭 or *Verses of Chu* (Chapter 16), it was *Shijing* that would come to be regarded as the founding work and source of the Chinese literary tradition. It introduced themes that would be taken up again and again by later poets in a wide range of poetic subgenres: reverence in sacrifice, praise for ancestors and rulers, blame for the feckless and perverse, military triumph and the woes of the soldier on long campaign, the happy sociability of feasts and weddings, and the emotions of friendship, love, and heartbreak. And some of China's most enduring assumptions about the purpose and function of literature were first articulated in the teaching traditions that gave rise to distinct late Warring States and early Han commentarial traditions on *Shijing* (Chapters 8, 9). Narratives about the life of the Spring and Autumn period elite suggest that many noblemen and even noblewomen knew some odes from *Shijing* by heart and were prepared not only to cite lines in support of moral and political claims they were advancing in speeches, but also to recite stanzas or whole poems during banquets and ritual gatherings with other nobles, often from different states. The underlying assumption behind these recitations is that the reciter is capable of using a piece from *Shijing* to express his own particular commitments and aims, his *zhi* 志, and that he is further able to understand the *zhi* coded in his fellows reciter's performances (Van Zoeren 1991: 56–68). From this perspective, *Shijing* comes to look like a tool for maintaining a Zhou cultural identity that transcended local political boundaries (Schaberg 2001: 234–243), and it is not surprising to find early writers on poems from *Shijing* asserting broadly that "the poem articulates an aim" (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志) and that "the poem is where the aim goes" (*shi zhe zhi zhi suo zhi* 詩者志之所之) (see Chapter 23). Although in the earliest times the *zhi* seems to have had a normative sense, so that the reciter was trained to accommodate his own will and desires to *Shijing*'s exemplary verbal and moral forms, later poets extended the scope of *zhi* while retaining the contrast between a hidden internal aim and an expression in poetry, and literary activity was to a certain extent defined by the assumption that expression was always sincere but always in some way coded, so that only the talented reader could discover the overwhelming *zhi* that prompted the act of composition (Yu 1987: 31–37; see also Chapter 16).

For more than five centuries after *Shijing* was complete, few or no new pieces were composed under the name *shi*, and the sorts of poems and songs that were composed generally differed markedly from poems in *Shijing* in vocabulary, theme, and meter and were identified as belonging to other genres. By the early Han dynasty, teaching traditions on *Shijing*, perhaps showing the effects of a largely oral transmission of the contents, did vary considerably in their versions of specific poems, and three distinct lineages or schools were identified (Han, Qi, and Lu). These traditions, apparently associated with different states, were soon overshadowed by the Mao school of commentary, which was said to have derived from the teachings of the early Han exegetes Mao Heng 毛亨 and Mao Chang 毛萇 and acquired a lasting canonical status with the appointment of a dedicated court academician (*boshi* 博士) in the reign of Emperor Ping (1 BCE–CE 6). Forever after, the Mao commentary would shape both readings of *Shijing* and poetics itself. In the Mao approach, individual pieces were explained as responses to, and often as expressions of moral indignation over, historical deeds and moments, while the "Great Preface" ("Da xu" 大序), transmitted with this commentary and often attributed to Wei Hong 衛宏 (first century CE), is the first great work of Chinese literary theory, offering a forceful vision both of the spontaneous expression of aims (*zhi*) in poetry (*shi*) and of the ways in which *Shijing* was thought to transmit the moral values of the Zhou—including the old cult of continuity—throughout the land and its people (see also Chapter 23).

Seen from the point of view of later literary history, *Shijing* in its overtly Confucian Mao recension was important first for its examples of literary works on diverse subjects, including even some mildly erotic pieces, domesticated as tools for unified political and cultural organization. The poetics implicit in the Mao commentary reflected early performative and recitative uses of *Shijing*. In time, however, the term *shi* would come to refer to newly made pieces that in some way shared the style and the political and personal earnestness of *Shijing* (Raft 2007: 33–143). Within another three centuries, *shi* was becoming the standard generic term for a regularly rhymed (and, in later ages, tonally regulated) poem in consistently tetrasyllabic or pentasyllabic lines, and even as the themes and personae and subgenres of the new poetry multiplied, the presumptive link with the Mao *Shijing*'s political and pedagogical projects remained (Owen 2006: 48–72). The effect of the repurposing of the generic term of *shi* was to establish the social performance habits of the early Zhou and the moralizing and politicizing poetics of the Mao school as a touchstone for much of China's later literary activity (see Chapters 16, 23).

SHU (*SHANGSHU*, *SHUJING*)

Shu, otherwise known as *Shangshu* or, much later, *Shujing*, is the only *jing* among the five that had a history as long as and a cultural authority nearly as great as that of *Shijing*.

The earliest Chinese title of the collection means simply "writings," rather than the specific sort of official or reference materials that the English word "documents" implies, while for the most part the gathered texts are recreations (or purported transcriptions) of speeches, introduced by simple framing narratives and stage directions. It may be that these speeches are referred to as "writings" because they were preserved with other sorts of written records in court archives, but it seems also to have been the case that the proclamations, harangues, commands, and instructions attributed to the Zhou founders, to legendary earlier dynasts, and to certain other leaders were "writings" because, unlike *Shijing*, they were used throughout the Zhou and into imperial times as linguistic and rhetorical models for certain kinds of elevated written compositions (Schaberg forthcoming). In a more basic sense, the contents of *Shangshu* are documents of legend and myth, and they represent the most detailed early representations of how the Zhou was founded and ruled in its early decades and how pre-imperial thinkers imagined the deeds and words of predynastic sage kings and fundamental models of law and social order. As in the larger ideology of *jing*, continuity is again a prominent theme, and the past is understood as a guide and mirror for the present.

The textual history of *Shangshu* is extraordinarily complicated. First, the dating of individual texts varies widely in its reliability. Some of the purported early Western Zhou pieces may actually date from that period, while many of the speeches supposed to have been delivered centuries earlier by sage kings and rulers of earlier dynasties were clearly composed later, near the end of the first millennium BCE (Nylan 2001: 123–136). It is even possible that the collection and some of its constituent texts were shaped by and for the uses of the Qin court, which despite its anti-traditionalist reputation had much use for ceremonial proclamations (Kern 2000: 111). Second, there is no clear early indication of closure as we have in Confucius's statement about *Shijing*, and enumerations of the contents of *Shangshu* varied widely depending upon the texts included and the ways in which longer texts were subdivided. At its most expansive, *Shangshu* was believed to have contained one hundred pieces, though this seems to be an idealization with little basis in fact. More credible is the enumeration of twenty-nine "modern script" (*jinwen* 今文) chapters, so called because they were supposed to have been transmitted orally through the Qin dynasty's ban on public circulation of many traditional texts, then written down anew in the character forms standardized by the Han. The standard version read by scholars down to the Qing dynasty was in fifty chapters and included a number of fourth-century reconstructions of (and in some senses forgeries of) chapters for which only the titles had previously been known (Nylan 2001: 127–136).

The importance of *Shangshu* for the later literary tradition lies partly in the way it represents real or supposed early moral and political values, thus reinforcing positions represented in other ways in the other classics and contributing to a comprehensive vision of the models of high antiquity. To the extent that the recounted speeches and interactions hold up ideals of royal authority tempered by careful consultation, the work makes a prominent place for rhetoric and careful expression as instruments of political management. More concretely, the archaic language of the work, lexically and grammatically quite different from the Classical Chinese found in most parts of the other classics, became a model of style for certain kinds of imperial inscriptions and pronouncements in the Qin and thereafter, and the fact that some later writers had to master this idiom meant both that they made themselves the agents of literary and political continuity and that they implicitly celebrated their rulers as successors to the sage kings who ruled through careful speech. If writing into a tradition in this way is a matter of interpellating or identifying oneself, then *Shangshu* scholarship and the associated archaist style of writing helped to create expectations for literary activity by binding writers to the state and its past.

CHUNQIU

To judge from the speeches attributed to noblemen of the middle first millennium BCE, *Shijing* and, to a far lesser extent, *Shangshu* had already acquired canonical status, though they were not yet being referred to as *jing*. The next work to begin to acquire this status was *Chunqiu*. In a pattern that will become familiar, the title designates both a specific work and a teaching tradition that transmitted that work. In the narrowest sense, *Chunqiu* is a chronicle of events in and involving the eastern state of Lu. In brief headline-like entries on military campaigns, interstate meetings, deeds of the Lu ruler, noble weddings and funerals, eclipses, ominous weather phenomena, and the like, amounting to no more than a few dozen graphs per year, the work covers each year from 722 to 479 BCE. It was clearly composed according to very strict rules for form and usage (Van Auken 2006), and it is known that other states besides Lu maintained similar records, but the precise purpose of these texts is not known. Contemporary evidence suggests that they were understood as vehicles for communicating important news to deceased ancestors and to future generations of descendants, groups whose judgment was formidable enough to exert some control on the rulers and nobles whose deeds were recorded. One view holds that *Chunqiu* was a sort of ritual ledger, a record of diplomatic and religious services (and disservices) rendered and received (Durrant, Li, and Schaberg 2016: 1:XLII). What matters for the later commentarial and literary tradition is that the anonymity of the work, its narrow attention to historical facts, and its silence about its own raison d'être made it an open text capable of supporting an elaborate system of interpretation.

It is possible that Confucius, who spent much of his life in Lu, taught *Chunqiu* to his students, instructing them in the forms of expression and in the context of the events noted. But it is certain that within a century of his death the text was coming to be understood, somewhat along the lines of the *Shijing*'s distinction of aim and expression (according to the Mao Tradition), as a compendium of Confucius's coded judgments of the individuals and events mentioned. Intense line-by-line readings of *Chunqiu*, presented largely in questions and answers of the kind one would find in a teaching setting, sought to explain each word as the deliberate choice of Confucius the editor or even supposed author of *Chunqiu*, determined to communicate his views to the suitably subtle reader. A number of commentarial traditions issued from this approach, most famous among them the *Gongyang* 公羊 and the *Guliang* 穀梁 commentaries, both of which were transmitted orally for some time before being committed to writing in the Western Han and ultimately attaining canonical status with the appointment of academicians to teach them in court. Especially as they complemented the Mao school's poetics of coded *zhi, Chunqiu* readings of this kind were the fullest flowering of early Chinese hermeneutics and a tendentious, slightly obsessive exercise in close reading. The vision of the virtuous but unappreciated scholar-official, forced to entrust his deepest aims and judgments to coded utterances or writings, was to have a long life in later Chinese literary history (Wilhelm 1957), and the habits of *Chunqiu* exegesis presaged a high tolerance for allusive obscurity in some forms of later literary writing.

One more early commentary on the *Annals* took a very different approach to the text. *Zuozhuan* (*Zuo Tradition* or *Zuo Commentary*) does include some exegetical material explaining the supposed intent beyond wordings in individual *Chunqiu* entries, but it offers something much more important, without which *Chunqiu* and all its other interpretations would be barely intelligible: for many of the events noted in *Chunqiu*, and for many others besides, it gives a narrative or a series of linked narratives. These narratives resemble anecdotes in that they are self-contained and rarely more than a few hundred characters long, and they are appropriate to the annalistic form in which *Zuozhuan* as we now have it presents its material. Proceeding from year to year, one reads accounts taking place in the Chinese states along and between the Yellow and Yangzi river valleys during those centuries. Sometimes in a single narrative, sometimes in a series stretching over years, the nobles and ruling groups in these states go to war, conduct rituals and diplomacy, marry, bicker, and debate. Although the narratives do not hew consistently to a unitary view of the world and its workings, they do come back again and again to the value of ancient models, *Shi* (*Shijing*) and *Shu* (*Shangshu*), and the principle of "ritual propriety," according to which every human being is charged to perform the duties proper to his or her place in the overall ritual-political hierarchy. Many of the narratives feature superlative examples of deliberative and epideictic oratory, whether from nobles speaking among themselves or from courtiers counseling their rulers. Taken all together, these narratives and their embedded speeches amount to an image of the world well adapted to the later elaboration of Confucian values: a hierarchical world of power concentrated in states and noble lineages, where ritual and other elements of traditional thought are frequently invoked as bulwarks against relentless pressures of historical change (see also Chapter 13).

In addition to its powerful naturalization of a proto-Confucian view of the world, *Zuozhuan* provided the tradition with enduring models of prose style. While its speeches, with their examples of parallel phrasing and symmetrical construction, foreshadowed the formal ornamental style of *fu* 賦 (rhapsody) and parallel prose (see Chapter 23), its compressed and emphatically nonparallelistic way of recounting events would inspire the essays of *fugu* 復古 stylists like Han Yu 韓愈 (see Chapter 26) and the classical tales (*chuanqi* 傳奇) of the Tang and later ages (see Chapter 18). *Chunqiu* and its commentaries established a special prestige for historical narrative and, more generally, for fictional tales. Behind the conventional narrator—almost always third-person and omniscient, often anonymous—there always lingered a ghost of Confucius the historian, with a vestigial authority conveyed through a style and narrative technique derived ultimately from *Zuozhuan* and similar texts.

CLASSICS OF RITUAL AND MUSIC

Shijing, Shangshu, and *Zuozhuan* are all classics of ritual in the sense that they describe and in many cases prescribe the words and procedures of numerous ceremonies, particularly those relating to Zhou rule and ancestor worship. Certainly the teaching tradition that transcribed and transmitted these texts sought to preserve useful models, precedents, and solutions to ritual problems. But the collection of materials later to be known as *Li* (*Rituals* or *Classic of Rituals*) represented different approaches to some of the same problems. Of the three texts categorized as classics of ritual, *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*) has the broadest significance. A compilation of essays and brief didactic narratives, the text addresses such questions as the theory of ritual and its centrality to the ordering of human life within society and the cosmos, fine points of ritual behavior under ambiguous or conflicting circumstances, the conduct of various sacrifices and ceremonies (e.g., funerals, archery contests, banquets, the capping ceremony that marks a boy's passage to adulthood), the idealized calendar and the correlative properties of each month, the theory of royal governance, and the principles and practice of education. A large number of brief narratives are devoted to the words and exemplary deeds of Confucius. In a sign of the relative lateness of the text (which likely includes materials from the second century BCE; Nylan 2001: 174–176), the chapter "Explaining the Classics" ("Jing jie" 經解) offers one of the first treatments of the five *jing* texts and the lost *Classic of Music* as a complete set, thus helping to establish the ideal of these texts as a comprehensive and sufficient canon of traditional norms.

Two other ritual texts take different approaches. One, the work commonly known as *Yili* 儀禮 (*Etiquette and Ceremonies*), provides detailed stage directions for several rituals as they are ideally to be conducted among members of the lower ranks of officialdom: the capping ceremony, weddings, visits, banqueting, archery, funerals, and the like. That the chapters confine themselves to detail and rigorously avoid theorization has resulted in the text's being by far the least-cited of any among the classics, though in general terms its inclusion in the canon contributes to the impression that the ritual system of old is fully available for later readers' inspection and imitation. Similarly, *Zhou li* 周禮 (*Rituals of Zhou*), a grand elaboration of the kind of depiction of royal governance that is found also in other texts, conveys the sense that the model of the early Zhou is fully understood and available for emulation by later rulers, if they would only devote themselves to the text. Before its assimilation to the canon, the text was known as *Zhou guan* 周官 (*Offices of Zhou*), and indeed it consists largely of a list of all the official positions of a royal government, each with a description of the office holder's duties and function.

The text holds up an ideal of the royal court as controlling its adherent states through careful maintenance of ritual norms, management of communications and commerce, and mastery of information (Schaberg 2009). Reformers of later eras like Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE–23 CE) and Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086) would invoke *Zhou li* in classicizing efforts to remake the policies of their own times.

Yue, in early times sometimes called a *jing* and named with the other five as one of the six classics, is really little more than a placeholder now. If, like some of the other *jing* names, it originally referred to a field of expertise in practice, then it must have denoted the body of music associated with the royal and noble rituals referred to in other texts. If it denoted a written text, it may conceivably have referred to musical notation, though there is little evidence that there was any early system for recording music in writing. What we do have now, and what we might regard as vestiges of *Yue*, are texts like the "Record of Music" ("Yue ji" 樂記) chapter of *Liji*, which advances the common early Chinese view that music exerts a strong normative influence on emotions and is therefore a tool of moral and political suasion. The same view is expressed in connection with *Shijing* in the Mao preface to that work.

YI (*YIJING*)

Many of the ritual texts included in the above section seem to incorporate material from as late as the second century BCE and to reflect concerns both of the Warring States period and the early Han. The body of divinatory practices, teachings, and texts known as *Yijing* likewise includes layers added in early imperial times. Its deepest roots, however, may be as old as those of *Shijing* and *Shangshu*. In the way it connects traces of very early practices with elaborations proper to a much later era of cosmic and political theorizing, *Yijing* aptly captures the overall trajectory of the "Confucian" classics during the first millennium of their history.

Without going too far into the obscure and complicated textual history of *Yijing*, it is possible nonetheless to discern a number of strata and their likely order of accumulation. In the earliest times, perhaps as early as the tenth century, there was a body of rhyming divination song. We have examples of songs of this kind independently transmitted in accounts of yarrow stalk divination in *Zuozhuan* and other texts. Very early on, probably during the Western Zhou, yarrow stalk divination was organized around a set of sixty-four hexagrams (stacks of six lines, each line broken or unbroken, totaling $2^6 = 64$ distinct figures). Each act of divination produced both a hexagram and an indication of how one or more of its lines were likely to change, transforming it into another hexagram. As divinatory language was matched with the hexagrams and the earliest written *Yijing* began to take shape, existing divination songs seem to have been adapted and incorporated line by line as "line statements" (*yaoci* 爻辭), brief, usually enigmatic entries presented as if to explain each line of the hexagram in order from the bottom up. Each hexagram is also furnished with a "hexagram statement," incorporating some technical language of prognostication and often quite as opaque and imagistic as the line statements. Together, the hexagrams, hexagram statements, and line statements form the oldest stratum of the text, which in *Zuozhuan*'s representation of Spring and Autumn period life is already used by diviners and on rare occasions cited by noble speakers just as *Shi* (*Shijing*) and *Shu* (*Shangshu*) are. Sometime later, probably during the Eastern Zhou, the hexagram statements were supplemented with additional lines of "Decision" (*tuan* 彖) commentary and "Image" (*xiang* 象) commentary explaining the hexagram and its lines according to the configuration of broken and unbroken lines and according to a large set of natural images (e.g., mountains, thunder, marshes) associated with specific configurations of three adjacent lines (or trigrams) within the hexagrams. One account of the origin of *Yijing* places the invention of trigrams first, attributing them to a legendary sage who was thought also to have invented writing, and then credits the elaboration into hexagrams to King Wen himself, the revered founding king of the Zhou (Nylan 2001: 203–204).

Like *Chunqiu* and the Classics on ritual, *Yijing* denoted a general field of practice and theory, and it came to incorporate both early textual material and commentary on this material in the centuries before its canonization. In the case of *Yijing*, these commentaries are known as the "Ten Wings" and are attributed variously to a series of early sages (including King Wen) or to Confucius. The "Decision" and "Image" commentaries are perhaps the earliest among the "Ten Wings," which include a number of essays on the human, political, and philosophical significance of *Yijing*. Most influential among these is the "Appended Words" ("Xici" 繫辭), which holds up *Yijing* as a source and enduring inspiration for moral and cultural advancement and as a guarantor of an abiding connection between natural and human orders.

The tradition of *Yijing* interpretation, like the other *jing* traditions, would continue to produce new commentaries throughout imperial times and down to the present day. Like the *Chunqiu* tradition, the *Yijing* tradition prized a kind of ingenuity in interpretation, and in this case an ingenuity in drawing connections between images and meanings. Contrived as these connections might seem, they had the implicit authority of the canonized work behind them, and for many generations of readers and writers they endowed the phenomena of the world with meaning. In the "poetry of arcane discourse" (*xuanyan* 玄言) of the third century and more generally in philosophically oriented poetry, *Yijing*'s mode of seeing the world would be a constant inspiration. Particularly in the landscape poetry of Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), a devoted reader of *Yijing*, climactic moments of revelation come when, by way of an allusion, the poet shows that he has come to see the natural world through the words of the classic.

CONCLUSION

Constructed as a comprehensive set, taught both at the highest levels of government and in locales across China, and periodically furnished with new commentaries that created ties between ancient material and contemporary problems, the classics became a fundamental touchstone for philosophy and political thought in China and throughout the parts of Asia that were influenced by the Chinese experience. Their influence on literary life took a number of different forms. Because they were studied from childhood, long passages from them being committed to memory, they formed the basis of both literacy and literary training. Even as students prepared themselves to demonstrate the classical knowledge that was expected of them in the civil service examinations and its various precursors, they were being initiated into a world of commonplaces and allusions and, more generally, a vision of their culture as a textual web stretching back to the sages and maintained through every generation's new writing.

With the identification of the five "Confucian" *jing* as a set and especially with the appointment, starting in the Han dynasty, of academicians (*boshi* 博士) who were responsible for setting norms for interpretation and teaching of these texts at the level of the imperial court (Nylan 2001: 33–41; Lewis 1999: 348–351), the *jing* were separated from and elevated above other texts, including many others that had had *jing* status in their own traditions. Official recognition had important implications for the literary significance of the classics. Poetry, especially poetry linked stylistically or ideologically to the poems in *Shijing*, would always have at its disposal a venerable stance of political and moral seriousness. The higher registers of political communication would echo both archaic and classical styles exemplified in the *jing*. Historical narrative would always enjoy deep authority as a way of representing truth, as would its ways of capturing and recreating speech, and every dynasty would maintain the records that would allow it to be commemorated in detail. Ritual would remain a central value both in education and in social and political life. Perhaps most important, the hermeneutic expectations established in *Shijing, Yijing*, and their commentaries would inform both official modes of interpretation (such as court teratology) and a whole poetics of personal signification, according to which writers could be expected to be understood, if only obscurely and only by their most qualified readers, through their choice of fragmentary natural imagery and autobiographical detail. More than anything else, the canonization of the *jing* established some enduring ways of reading the world and offered the realm of texts as an encyclopedic counterpart to the world (Lewis 1999: 351–360).

Finally, neither the aggregation of the several *jing*, nor their canonization, nor their ultimate cultural influence would have followed without the several moves of attribution by which Warring States and Han readers came to associate each of the texts with the person of Confucius (Chapter 24). For thinkers of those centuries and for long after, it was Confucius who chose the three hundred songs of *Shijing* from a corpus ten times larger, who similarly distilled *Shangshu*, who edited or wrote *Chunqiu* and taught orally the materials in its commentaries, who adjudicated questions of ritual and exemplified its perfection, and who wrote the commentaries on *Yijing*. Confucius famously said that he "transmitted without creating anew" (*Analects* 7.1), and the attribution was never meant to efface the contributions of many other hands, mostly anonymous. Still, everything in the pre-imperial portions of the canon was implicitly understood to have the sanction of Confucius, who was constructed retrospectively as the architect both of the canon and of the various realizations of the texts in the medium of society and politics. And this assumption about authorship brought into being a corresponding assumption about readership: the implied ideal reader of the classics was himself or herself always an aspiring counterpart to the sage, the imagined perfect audience or *zhiyin* 知音, and—given the texts' focus on governance—also someone who might share the sage's status as a potential ruler or "uncrowned king" (*su wang* 素王). The combination of perfect canon, perfect author, and perfect reader in the world of the classics would mean that literature, as the long elaboration of *wen* from its early roots, would always have some claim to legitimacy and prescriptive force, and could always offer the sincerities of the individual writer as contributions to the old project of continuity.

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CHAPTER 13

HISTORIES (*SHI* 史)

STEPHEN DURRANT

"HISTORIES" is a translation here of the Chinese word *shi* 史. Along with "Classics," "Masters," and "Collections," it constitutes one part of the four-part scheme of text classification that arose during the Six Dynasties period and became common for organizing libraries and bibliographies (see also Chapter 11). The word *shi* originally referred to an official who performed an array of tasks, mostly of a religious or ritual nature. Among these tasks was the making of a written record of important events. This latter task eventually came to be recognized as this official's core duty. For Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58–ca. 147), who compiled China's first etymological dictionary, a *shi* is simply "One who makes a record of events" 史, 記事者也, with his word for "events" carrying the connotation of political events. Thus, the English word "scribe" is often used to translate *shi* when it pertains to this official, even though such a translation does not reflect the wide range of activities the original *shi* actually performed (Vogelsang 2003/4).

By the third century CE, *shi* came to be equated with what the scribes supposedly wrote down, hence its eventual use as the name of a category of texts. The English word "history," which derives from the Greek word *historía* and means "a systematic investigation," does not graft perfectly upon the Chinese term. The latter, as a result of its earlier usage, carries two implications not reflected in *historía* or its derivative "history": first, an ultimate connection to government officials, which belies the fact that several of China's earliest histories were private undertakings; and second, that the *shi* records were simply written down as reports of events that took place or were alleged to have taken place. Both of these implications, as we shall see below, influenced early Chinese historiography.

MEMORY, AUTHORITY, AND THE RISE OF HISTORY

What conditions cause a civilization to turn toward the past? Scholars of historical writing answer this question in various ways, but one common answer is that some new threat or breakdown in an existing order creates a wedge between past and present, causing a people to look to the past as something very different from the present, sometimes to idealize it, sometimes to search out the distant and proximate causes of what has gone wrong (Le Goff 1988: 31–33). Such a breakdown came with the disintegration of central Zhou authority, which culminated in the relocation of the Zhou capital to the east in 770 BCE, the emergence of virtually independent states during the Spring and Autumn period (722–476 BCE), and, especially, the increasing interstate conflict in the Warring States period (475–221 BCE). This picture of decline into chaos from a well-governed unity is itself a creation of Chinese historiography and summons the distant past as an idealized corrective to the present. When China finally was unified once again in 221 BCE under the expansionist Qin state, an attempt was made to smooth over that long breakdown with "the idea of a single, unified time marked out by the genealogical sequence of rulers and the numerical counting of their reigns . . . which became accepted throughout Chinese history" (Lewis 2011: 460).

Chinese historical writing, with attention to chronology, a concern with cause and effect, and an awareness of real change over time, emerges during the Warring States period against the backdrop described briefly above. It then matures during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), which promotes "the idea of a single unified time" and "a genealogical sequence of rulers"; flourishes throughout the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties (220–589), a period during which rival "legitimate" genealogies compete; and culminates for purposes of this essay in the creation of the Tang dynasty Bureau of History and its complex bureaucratic apparatus in 629. In tracing the emergence and development of Chinese historical writing, it is instructive to balance the study of a pure sequence of texts, exploring what additions each new text brings to the tradition, with early Chinese conceptions of the past and how it is to be properly represented.

A concern with a pure sequence of texts leads us to China's earliest writings, which appeared in the last centuries of the second millennium BCE: the oracle-bone inscriptions, addressed to ancestors and other divine forces, and bronze inscriptions cast or etched on the surface of vessels used in ceremonial offerings for the deceased. While such inscriptions sometimes contain valuable historical information and do show a concern with giving events the permanence of bone and metal, they derive from a strictly ritual context and reflect a mentality that "not merely preserves the past but, first and foremost, defines it" (Kern 2005: 61).

Such a characterization of bones and bronze inscriptions could also apply to the next two texts of significance in our chronological survey, *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Classic of Documents*) and *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). Both were later numbered among the five "Confucian" classics and were featured prominently in early Chinese conceptions of the formation of their own historiographical tradition (see Chapter 12). Recent textual discoveries indicate that *shu* 書 "documents," the genre from which *Shangshu* is derived, "were or pretended to be contemporary records," very often "formal speeches by model kings and ministers from ancient times" (Allan 2012: 547). At least by the Warring States, and perhaps even earlier, various collections of these documents began to circulate and were quoted here and there in historical and philosophical texts with an almost scriptural authority. The complicated later history of these documents and the process by which they took shape in the collection now known as *Shangshu* need not be traced here. While these documents have been correctly described as "profoundly ahistorical, in the sense that they have not been preserved in order to construct a connected sequence of events" (Nylan 2001: 122), the type of rhetorically polished speeches they preserve will become a staple of the later tradition of historical writing and also serve, more generally, as a model of "rhetoric and careful expression as instruments of political management" (Chapter 12).

The other classic, *Chunqiu*, could hardly be more different. It does not contain a single spoken word and is instead an annalistic record from the state of Lu comprising some fifteen hundred brief, dated entries arranged in chronological order and extending from 722 to 479 BCE. Most of these entries, which court scribes wrote in a highly formulaic language, concern diplomatic meetings or visits, the deaths of rulers, important rituals, famines, astronomical phenomena, etc. Some dispute exists as to whether such entries were composed primarily to announce important events in the Ancestral Temple, thus serving a primarily religious function, or were composed to preserve a record of important events for later consultation, although these purposes need not be mutually exclusive. *Chunqiu* was only one of a number of annals maintained by individual states during the long period of political disunity. It has been preserved, while most others have been lost, because a tradition developed that Confucius had edited the text into its present form and had encoded it with subtle political principles. This idea was to spawn a rich commentarial tradition that attempted to identify and explain *Chunqiu*'s hidden messages. What we must stress here is that this is the first extant attempt to list events—real events, most researchers believe—in a clear, dated, chronological order. As such, it marks a significant step forward in the rise of historical writing. At the same time, any connection between one event and another—that is, a causal chain—is not explicit but is sometimes construed later as implied.

At the end of the period under discussion here, the great Tang dynasty historiographer Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) wrote his monumental *Shitong* 史通 (*A Comprehensive Study of Historical Writings*), providing another perspective on the rise of Chinese historical writing. He claims that history arises from the fundamental human realization that life is terribly brief. However, as long as the office of the scribe exists, "People might have died and mysteriously become part of the empty obscurity, but their deeds seem to be present, shining forth just like the stars and the Milky Way" (*Shitong* 11.145). History, in this conception, is essentially a "labor against death," to quote Michel Certeau's poignant phrase (1992: 5). Such emphasis upon preserving names and deeds from the darkness of death is already reflected in the bronze inscriptions described above, which sometimes record the name of the person commissioning the bronze and end with the wish "may my sons' sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally treasure and use it" 子子孫孫永寶用 (Shaughnessy 2011: 381). And, of course, as descendants use the sacred vessel to make offerings to their ancestor, the inscription reminds them of his names and deeds, keeping him alive at least in memory.

Another critical part of Liu Zhiji's conception of the rise of historical writing is the link he forges between the office of the scribe and the preservation of names. Historical writing, he says, derives from the official bureaucracy; it is a responsibility of political power. In this claim, Liu follows a very old belief, in fact something that had almost become a cliché. The Han dynasty historian Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), for example, traces the rise of historical writing to the same office of the scribe, linking this to Confucius's imperative as recorded in the *Analects* (3.9): "Can I speak of Xia ritual? Its successor, the state of Qi, has not preserved enough evidence. Can I speak about Yin ritual? Its successor, the state of Song, has not preserved enough evidence. There are not sufficient records and not sufficient wise men; otherwise, I could draw evidence from them."

This connection, so frequently made, between the rise of historical writing and officialdom is an exaggeration stemming from at least two sources: first, the historian's desire to enhance his own status by portraying historians of the past as possessing a political position that may even, at times, constrain a ruler's power; and second, a tendency, after the Qin political unification, to put all cultural institutions under the imperial seal. While the writers of *Shangshu* and, even more so, *Chunqiu* might have been fulfilling some official function, what is striking about the succession of historical masterworks, from *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*) to *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*), *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*), and even *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*), is the dominance of works Hans van Ess describes as "not founded in a state office of history, but in projects of private historiography" (van Ess 2014: 2). The most significant steps in the advance of early historiography did not come from government initiative, Liu's assertion notwithstanding, but from a private desire to assert the authority of the historian himself, and to some extent to create a vision of the past that differed from and perhaps rivaled those of kings and emperors. Nevertheless, most of these historians, though not writing history as an official responsibility, were either themselves government officials or certainly striving to be so. Thus, it would be an error to draw the conclusion that their works preserve the views of outsiders looking in. Furthermore, after the establishment of the Bureau of History in 629, all standard dynastic histories were compiled under imperial direction by the official bureaucracy.

Creating a Form for the Formless Past

No extant history from early China is structured like that of the Greek Herodotus, with its numerous digressions and sprawling multicultural scope, nor like that of Thucydides, with its tight focus on a single, largely contemporary historical event. When Chinese history does reach full maturity in works like *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji*, the form provided to the formless past is one quite different from what we encounter in Greece or elsewhere in the ancient world.

Liu Zhiji turns to the early Chinese text *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*) to identify two primary forms of Chinese historical writing and, true to his inclination to trace the roots of historical writing to the office of scribes, he says: "Anciently words made up *Shangshu* and events made up *Chunqiu.* The two types of scribes, those of the left and right, shared this duty" (*Shitong* 3.16). According to *Liji,* it was a so-called Scribe of the Left who registered actions and a Scribe of the Right who registered speech (13.545), whereas the responsibilities of the two scribes are reversed in *Han shu* (30.1715). This picture of scribes following a ruler or some other luminary around, some recording on bamboo strips what he is doing while others are busy inscribing what he says, almost certainly comes not from any reality of ancient officialdom but from conjecture about the forms of the earliest historical writings, specifically *Shangshu*, a "record of speeches," and *Chunqiu*, "a record of acts," and possibly also from the early Confucian emphasis upon the matching of words and acts. More noteworthy is Liu's claim that the two forms converge in *Zuozhuan*: "When Master Zuo wrote his text, he did not follow the ancient norm but put both events and words in his Commentary" (*Shitong* 3.16). Here Liu captures a significant moment in Chinese historiography: the production of the first genuine work of history as a marriage of two quite different earlier forms. And, in fact, anyone who picks up *Zuozhuan* cannot but be struck by the alternation of extremely terse narratives describing events and highly patterned, rhetorically complex speeches (Schaberg 2001).

Zuozhuan, as the name implies, has been transmitted as a commentary to the canonical *Chunqiu*, although its original form was probably not, strictly speaking, commentarial. The longest text to come to us from the Zhou dynasty, *Zuozhuan* probably took shape in the fourth century BCE at the end of a process of layered accumulation, although the text was reorganized centuries after its completion. The period covered in the text is 722 to 468 BCE, and the focus shifts from state to state, with scholars disagreeing on its exact geographical provenance (Durrant, Li, and Schaberg 2016: 1:xvii–xcv). Traditionally *Zuozhuan* has been ascribed to Zuo Qiuming, a rather poorly known senior associate or disciple of Confucius, but this ascription is implausible.

Two consequences derive from the fact that *Zuozhuan* is presented as a commentary to *Chunqiu* and therefore follows a strictly dated chronological sequence: first, the text is fragmented, reporting unrelated events occurring in the same year and splitting apart accounts of a single event that transpires over several years; second, the text sometimes flashes backward in time (analepsis) or forward (prolepsis) to provide either the necessary background or some distant consequence of a particular event. Unlike its predecessors, *Zuozhuan* shows a deep concern with causality. In fact, one of the major messages of this text is that the future can be discerned by means of careful attention to signs that exist in the present, such as the way a person talks, the way he moves, his words, or just the general disposition of things. What the *Zuozhuan* compilers appear to say, looking backward from their later vantage point, is that the course of past events is readable; it makes sense, albeit sometimes in the very subtlest of ways (Li 2007).

The *Zuozhuan* narrator, whoever that narrator might be, is never a personal presence in the text, perhaps an influence of the impersonal and anonymous scribal style encountered in the earlier *Chunqiu* tradition. Instead, evaluative comments or judgments are typically deflected as the voice of third persons, the most prominent of these an anonymous "noble man" (*junzi* 君子) who comments, sometimes rather surprisingly, on events and persons appearing in the text. This all gives *Zuozhuan* an authoritative tone, almost as if the "truth" itself rather than any individual is speaking. Such a matter-of-fact presentation of events, some quite unbelievable, has fostered disputes about the text's reliability and its sources. Conclusions vary. One scholar sees *Zuozhuan* as a fairly reliable account of changes taking place in Confucianism during the Spring and Autumn period (Pines 2002), another as a layered response to philosophical discussion that occurred in the fourth century BCE (T. Brooks 2003/4), and yet another as a complex collection of sources whose historical reliability must be evaluated individually (Blakeley 2004). While this is an issue of consequence for those who would write a history of the Spring and Autumn period, it has until recent times prevented analysis of how this text works as a complex and fascinating piece of literature and how literary constructions themselves shape the form of history (Li 2011: 429).

Guoyu 國語 (*Discourses of the States*), one of the few major texts from pre-Qin China that as of yet has no complete English translation, is often read alongside *Zuozhuan* precisely because it covers many of the same events, though at times presenting a different perspective on those events. Early on, *Guoyu* was regarded as either a work by the same author as *Zuozhuan*, a theory now disproved, or as a history made up of texts at some point edited out of *Zuozhuan*. Unfortunately, such an approach, which regards *Guoyu* as virtually a supplement to another text, has cast *Guoyu* into the shadows, so that too few studies concentrate on this work alone. The balance between "events" and "speech" found in *Zuozhuan* shifts very much toward speech in *Guoyu*, with just enough narration to establish a setting for a long speech or remonstrance. In contrast to the straightforward chronological structure of *Zuozhuan, Guoyu* is arranged according to the state in which speeches were given. Some have suggested that the same arrangement might have originally characterized *Zuozhuan*. Possibly *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu* were differently selected from the same large body of stories, speeches, and anecdotes that circulated in various bundles of bamboo strips during the Warring States period (see also Chapter 5).

A similar emphasis upon speech also characterizes *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), which was compiled from a variety of sources by the Han scholar Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and is arranged, like *Guoyu*, according to state. While *Zhanguo ce* has often been used to fill in our somewhat murky knowledge of Warring States history, its value as a historical source is severely limited (Crump 1964). Much of the text contains models of skillful persuasion that may have been useful to would-be ministers and others seeking political influence in that time of increasingly sharp interstate conflict. However, the "amoral, sometimes immoral use of persuasion for strategic advantage" (Chapter 14) reflected in so many *Zhanguo ce* speeches insured that classicist scholars would sometimes publicly condemn this text, while privately enjoying its considerable literary merit.

The great authority attributed to *Chunqiu* inspires other significant works. Two of these, *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 (*Gongyang Tradition*) and *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳 (*Guliang Tradition*), preserve exegetical traditions that claim to uncover "the great principles conveyed in subtle words" (*weiyan dayi* 微言大義) Confucius supposedly transmitted when he edited *Chunqiu*. In pursuing, perhaps mostly imagining, a profound, hidden meaning in *Chunqiu*, these two commentaries often attribute deep significance to particular word choices or even to items excluded from the canonical text. One could label them "anti-historical" in that they mainly seek eternal principles beneath the shifting facade of particular events, pushing *Chunqiu* away from the historical context supposedly elaborated in *Zuozhuan* toward something that is almost transcendent. Still, each contains insights for the historiographical endeavor that have not always been fully explored. One of these, to give a single example, is the *Gongyang Tradition*'s (1.17) insistence, expressed in the text's first year, on drawing a distinction in recording history between what one has seen (*suojian* 所見), what one has only heard about indirectly (*suowen* 所聞), and what has been transmitted from the distant past (*suo chuanwen* 所傳聞). But perhaps what these texts have in common with *Zuozhuan* is discomfort with a straightforward list of past events such as what one encounters in *Chunqiu*. To gain legitimacy in a Chinese world increasingly soaked in pedagogy, the past must convey lessons. And where lessons do not seem to exist, they must be "discovered." To put it somewhat differently, "The apparatus of conviction was not the veracity or accuracy of any representation . . . but the manner in which these reinforced commonly accepted propositions" (Olberding 2012: 174).

Other texts with no obvious relationship to the Lu annals also appear with the productive term "*Chunqiu*" in their titles: *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (*Master Yan's Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Chu Han chunqiu* 楚漢春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals of Chu and Han*, now largely lost), *Wu Yue chunqiu* 吳越春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue*), etc. These encompass a collection of remonstrations directed at incompetent rulers (*Yanzi chunqiu*), a philosophical text filled with historical anecdotes (*Lüshi chunqiu*), and collections of historical anecdotes and stories focusing upon a particular period (*Chu Han chunqiu*) or upon an earlier state rivalry (*Wu Yue chunqiu*). What these texts have in common, apart from their names, is the inclusion of many fairly short historical narratives or anecdotes, a form especially consonant with pedagogical contexts. Such historical anecdotes may have circulated independently or as a part of other texts and were eventually collected together around some particular person, set of teachings, or historical situation. The type of anecdotal material found in these texts is also scattered throughout other works typically categorized as "philosophical." That is, history—or perhaps we might say "pseudo-history," particularly in the form of the historical anecdote—is everywhere (Schaberg 2011: 410–412). Rather than anchoring ideas in largely abstract language, early Chinese philosophical discourse tends to favor specific illustration drawn from some real or imagined past event, a practice that could only enhance the authority of history.

The early texts mentioned above, and many others as well, are digested in a vast historical project initiated by Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BCE) and completed by his son Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE). The result of that project, *Shiji*, is a vast, comprehensive history extending from the legendary Yellow Emperor, ca. 2500 BCE, to the last years of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (r. 141–87 BCE). One can fairly argue that *Shiji* "provides a textual form to a world empire" (Lewis 1999: 308) that took shape under

Han rule. Sima Qian presents early history as a succession of dynasties all joined to the emperors of antiquity, the Yellow Emperor first among them. Despite long periods of political fragmentation, unity prevails and can be identified not only in political ancestry, laid out clearly in one section of *Shiji*, but in shared political and cultural institutions as defined in yet another section of this great text. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Sima Qian, in the course of creating *Shiji,* also creates China.

From the point of view of historiography, much could be said about this work, but two features seem paramount. First, the overall structure of *Shiji* is new (although its sections draw upon precedents), and its organization exerts tremendous impact on subsequent Chinese historical writing, particularly that long series of texts entitled "The Twenty-Five Dynastic Histories" (*ershiwu shi* 二十五史), which were composed across the span of the following two millennia. The second feature does not have an enduring impact upon most historical writings but has endeared Sima Qian to generations of readers: he is a highly self-conscious and sometimes emotional presence in his text and thereby leads us "into the process of historical inquiry, as he explains how he reads his sources, draws upon his experiences, avows his intentions and sympathies, defines his categories" (Li 1999: 44).

Shiji is divided into five sections: "Basic Annals" (*benji* 本紀), which by and large contain dated entries and focus on the central court; "Tables" (*biao* 表), showing in simple schematic form the temporal and geographical relationships of events; "Treatises" (*shu* 書), providing detailed information on particular institutions, such as music, the calendar, etc.; "Hereditary Houses" (*shijia* 世家), for the most part following the structure of "Basic Annals" but focusing on powerful hereditary lineages other than those of kings and emperors; and "Biographies" (*liezhuan* 列傳), sometimes called "Traditions," which register accounts of particular individuals or groups of people significant in the early Chinese world. Generally speaking, the structure of this text flows from the center of the political world, reflected in the "Basic Annals" and to some extent in the "Hereditary Houses" as well, outward to individuals and groups, described in the "Biographies," whose importance results less from birth than from their particular contribution to the events of their time.

Liu Zhiji calls the form of historical writing encountered in *Shiji* the "annals-biographies form" (*jizhuan ti* 紀傳體), taking his term from the first and fifth sections of that text, and distinguishes it from the pure "annalistic form" (*biannian ti* 編年體) (*Shitong* 2.13). The organizing principle in the latter, exemplified in simplest fashion by the strictly chronological arrangement of *Chunqiu*, is rendered vastly more complicated in the "annals-biographies form," where the organizational principles force an investigator seeking a full picture of an event or individual to turn from section to section, often with the various sections providing a slightly different perspective on the subject under investigation. Such a structure creates at times a dizzying, multi-perspectival view of the past (Hardy 1994). While this new annals-biographies form gains great traction as the model for later official historiography, nostalgia for the earlier annalistic form remains strong and will resurface, for example, in the work of Xun Yue 荀悅 (148–209) noted below.

Sima Qian's historical writing, especially the "biographies" section, gives considerable emphasis to the individual personality, indeed sometimes to individual eccentricities. Probably this, among other aspects of his work, led the stern Confucian scholar Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) to criticize him as being "fond of curiosities" (*haoqi* 好奇). The dominant personality in *Shiji* may actually be Sima Qian himself, who, as noted above, is far from the "absent narrator" encountered in earlier Chinese historical writing. Sima Qian transforms the tradition of an anonymous "noble man," who speaks sporadically in *Zuozhuan* and several other early texts, into a formal comment at the end of virtually every chapter from the mouth of the historian himself. *Shiji*, we must acknowledge, is largely a compilation from earlier sources, but in these final comments, the historian speaks directly to the reader and often does so with considerable emotion and vagaries of judgment as he sighs, weeps, and sometimes expresses opinions that seem to conflict with the content of the chapter itself. This feature, as well as Sima Qian's autobiographical postface to the text, chapter 130, has drawn substantial attention to the personality and experience of the historian-author, particularly his "suffering" (see also Chapter 24), some would say to the detriment of a deeper understanding of the complexities of *Shiji* itself (Nylan 1998/99).

With the appearance of *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji*, some of the formal contours of traditional Chinese historiography are more or less established. New forms, as we shall see, emerged, especially during the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties period, leading to discussions that continued throughout the Tang and into later imperial China regarding both the general boundaries of historical writing and the relationship between official state histories and materials found in sources that were produced outside of the government bureaucracy. The legacy of Chinese historical writing was to remain a rich and variegated one, despite frequent attempts to limit and rigidify its formal presentation.

CONTROLLING THE LESSONS OF THE PAST

As noted earlier, the past had come to be used as a source of lessons or models. Liu Zhiji also affirms this perspective when he says: "The function of the historian is to record merits and regulate faults, to distinguish the good and to show abhorrence for the bad" (*Shitong* 25.95). The problem, as complex texts like *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* repeatedly reveal, is both that the past is messy, thereby resisting easy moralizing, and also that the motives of a historian, however inclined he might be to a pedagogical vision, are rarely singular. Much that is found in early Chinese historical writings seems to be designed largely to astonish or entertain, despite the supposed Confucian intent of its authors.

Part of the reason for the expansive commentarial tradition of *Chunqiu*, described briefly above, resulted from the link of this text to Confucius and the idea that, if "correctly" read, it must convey significant moral and political lessons. This project of reading the past, perhaps reading into the past, led to what David Schaberg has described as "the Confucians' near-monopoly of early historiography" (Schaberg 1999: 25). But the *Shiji*, in its attempt to create a unified vision of the past from such a vast array of sources and conflicting visions, is far from univocal. Consequently, scholars still hold different opinions, for example, as to whether Sima Qian is best considered a Confucian, a Daoist, or perhaps something else. China's next great historian Ban Gu, for his part, condemned his predecessor for "giving priority to Huang-Lao Daoism and degrading the Six Classics" (*Han shu* 62.2738). Put somewhat differently, Sima Qian, in the view of Ban Gu, had not successfully controlled the lessons of the past.

The early transmission of *Shiji* is rife with questions. One thing is certain: within a century or so, a significant number of scholars, even such major scholars as Liu Xiang and Yang Xiong, began to write continuations of Sima Qian's history. When the author of one of these *Shiji* supplements, a Han official named Ban Biao 班彪, died in 54 CE, his son Ban Gu continued on with the project. Someone revealed this activity to the Emperor and Ban Gu, somewhat strangely, was accused of "privately changing and writing state history" and imprisoned. Once the Emperor actually examined Ban Gu's writings, however, not only was Ban Gu released, he was ordered "finally to complete what he had been previously writing" (*Hou Han shu* 40.1332). This does not mean Ban Gu's project was an official one in the sense of later dynastic histories, but it was a step in that direction: an attempt, however preliminary, for the state to control "the story."

The result of Ban Gu's labor, actually completed by his brilliant sister Ban Zhao 班昭 (fl. 90s–110s CE), was the one-hundred-chapter *Han shu*. Unlike Sima Qian's comprehensive history, *Han shu* is a "period history" (*duandai shi* 斷代史) covering just over two hundred years from the early Han up to the Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9–23 CE) "usurpation," a term for Wang Mang's rule that comes in part from Ban Gu's negative portrayal. Despite its vastly narrower temporal boundaries, *Han shu* is significantly longer than even *Shiji*, reflecting the gradual "thickening" of historical writing that had steadily continued since the time of the exceedingly terse *Chunqiu* and can be observed as well in several *Shiji* chapters. As is the case with *Shiji*, much of *Han shu* is drawn from earlier sources, so that Ban Gu's work almost at times becomes an anthology not only of official documents but of literary works as well. In addition, despite Ban Gu's criticism of his predecessor, he quotes extensively from Sima Qian, introducing minor and subtle changes that sometimes alter the meaning significantly (van Ess 2014).

Structurally, *Han shu* largely follows *Shiji*, although Ban Gu dispenses with the "Hereditary Houses" section, which was rooted in Sima Qian's acknowledgement of a long period of disunity, the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, that fell outside the temporal scope of Ban Gu's work. (Han ministers and commanders granted fiefdoms, included in the "Hereditary Houses" section in *Shiji*, are moved to the "Biographies" section in *Han shu*.) On account of the many similarities of these two great histories, there arose a strong scholarly tradition of comparing and evaluating them one against the other, with some scholars preferring Sima Qian while others preferred Ban Gu. Certain persistent stereotypes about *Han shu* have derived from such comparisons: that it is difficult compared with *Shiji*, that it is uniformly orthodox and not as lively as its predecessor, that it is dry, etc. Suffice it to say that for several centuries *Han shu* was generally preferred to *Shiji*, and historians have continued to admire *Han shu* because of its supposedly superior reliability. This latter perception, however, may stem in part from the somewhat more restrained and dignified stance of the historian himself. Perhaps another result of this tradition of comparison and the judgment that *Shiji* is more literary is that few full-length studies of *Han shu* have been undertaken in the West, a circumstance that is now, hopefully, beginning to change (Clark 2008, van Ess 2014).

The gradual thickening and increasing complexity of Chinese historical writing was not always judged positively. Concerned that some of the most politically valuable lessons of the past were being obscured, Emperor Xian (r. 189–220) ordered the Han official Xun Yue to edit and summarize *Han shu*. The result of Xun Yue's labors was *Han ji* 漢紀 (*Han Annals*), which gleans events from Ban Gu's much larger work and puts them in strict chronological order, thus following the older annals form of *Zuozhuan* rather than the annals-biographies form initiated in *Shiji* and followed in *Han shu*. What makes *Han ji* historiographically significant, at least if we can believe Xun Yue's preface, is that it is unambiguously "official," with the emperor even supplying the financial and human resources to complete this work. Xun Yue makes it crystal clear that the purpose of his work is to glorify the dynasty and present lessons to future generations (Ch'en 1980). This imperial attempt to control the message of history came right at the moment when the Han faced a political crisis in the form of the strongman Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), who threatened to become another Wang Mang, the "usurper" that *Han ji* was written in part to discredit.

HISTORY AS A BIBLIOGRAPHER'S CATEGORY

The first, somewhat problematic, attempt to create a library category for historical writing is in the "Monograph of Arts and Writings" ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志) in *Han shu*, which is based on bibliographies compiled several decades earlier (see also Chapter 11). This chapter, with its accompanying list of texts found in the Imperial Library, begins with a large category of writings described as part of the "Six Arts" (*liuyi* 六藝), and each of these Arts or fields of classical learning in turn is made a subcategory in this classification scheme. Most of the texts from the earlier period that we now regard as "history," such as *Zuozhuan, Guoyu, Shiji*, etc., fall under the *Chunqiu* subcategory. Put somewhat differently, a supposed connection with *Chunqiu,* or at least some whiff of inspiration from *Chunqiu,* defined historical texts. Ban Gu links the tradition of history to antiquity with the following words: "For generations the kings of antiquity maintained an office of scribes. When the ruler arose to take action, it was sure to be recorded. That is why he took care with his words and deeds and illuminated the rules and models" (*Han shu* 30.1715, based on *Zuozhuan*, Zhuang 23.1). History in this conception is derived from an official context and exercises a restraint, or at least so it was imagined, upon the ruler's behavior.

After the Han dynasty fell, a long period of political disunity in China began. Freed from strong political control and Confucian orthodoxy, historical writing flourishes. When Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s) wrote his monumental study of literary aesthetics, *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*), he included a special chapter on historical writing, a clear indication that this genre had taken on a life of its own and was not regarded simply as an extension of the classics. Liu Xie's work can be seen as a precursor to Liu Zhiji's book-length study of historical writing, which we have cited several times above. Clearly, history had now become a recognized genre of writing and a specialty of its own quite free from any connection to classical learning.

The *Han shu* bibliographical chapter mentioned above lists only twenty-three items in the *Chunqiu* category, a number that could be supplemented with several items listed in other categories, but in the "Monograph on Bibliography" ("Jingji zhi" 經籍志, 656) in *Sui shu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui*), while the *Chunqiu* category is preserved and includes works like *Zuozhuan,* a full 874 works are separately categorized as *shi* 史 "histories," with thirteen subcategories, among them "standard histories" (*zhengshi* 正史), "ancient histories" (*gushi* 古史), "miscellaneous biographies" (*zazhuan* 雜傳), "notes on the daily activities and repose of the emperor" (*qiju zhu* 起居注), and "geographical records" (*dili ji* 地理記). This list of historical texts, the majority of which have been lost, is conceptually extremely broad. "Histories" had not only become a category very much of its own but had digested all sorts of material that might not fall comfortably into the modern reader's somewhat narrow notion of what historical writing properly includes (see also Chapter 18). Even in the case of the rather strict composition of "Standard Histories," much material was absorbed from more informal sources such as clan records and independently written biographies.

To be sure, the writing of "Standard Histories," sometimes called "Dynastic Histories," continued and constitutes the first subcategory of the *Sui shu* bibliography. Of the five dynastic histories produced during this period of time, two deserve brief mention: Chen Shou's 陳壽 (233–297) *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (*History of the Three Kingdoms*) and Fan Ye's 范曄 (398–445) *Hou Han shu*. Chen Shou was an excellent literary stylist, and his vivid portrayal of the primary characters and events of the Three Kingdoms period was one stimulus for the growth of a rich tradition of historical fiction that culminated, many centuries later, in the great novel *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*). But *Sanguo zhi* is also important because of Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (372–451) commentary, which corrects errors and adds material "where Chen Shou's text was inadequate" (Dien 2011: 523) or at least perceived to be so (see also Chapter 9). As is the case with certain commentators on philosophical texts who use commentary as a way of voicing their own views, several commentators on historical texts, Pei and later the *Han shu* commentator Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) chief among them, make contributions to our understanding of history almost equal to the text they are commenting upon.

Hou Han shu was Fan Ye's personal project, continuing in this respect the tradition of the authors of *Zuozhuan, Shiji,* and, to some extent, *Han shu*. It is a bit unusual in being written more than two hundred years after the fall of the dynasty it describes. Fan relied on an array of historical documents, primarily *Dongguan Han ji* 東觀漢紀

(*Han Records of the Eastern Lodge*), a history of the Eastern Han written in several stages during the Eastern Han itself, which he quotes extensively. Like his predecessors Sima Qian and Ban Gu, Fan Ye can be described as an editor who is largely quoting earlier sources, but, as in their case, this stereotype is not entirely fair, especially since he appends a series of "disquisitions" (*lun* 論) to some of his biographies that go well beyond the short judgments Sima Qian and Ban Gu attached to their chapters. Later periods single out *Shiji, Han shu, Sanguo zhi*, and *Hou Han shu* in a grouping called "The Four Histories" (*si shi* 四史), which exerted particular influence not only in China but also, for certain periods, in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam (see also Chapter 35).

Perhaps the most intriguing aspects of Six Dynasties historiography as presented within the broad scope of the *Sui shu* bibliography are texts that readers today might situate at or beyond the margins of historical writing. In terms of sheer numbers, the largest subcategory of historical writing listed in *Sui shu* is "miscellaneous biographies," which includes a rather startling 217 items. Obviously this was a period when writers valued and attempted to document the individual life, sometimes in its more eccentric manifestations. Listed in this section are such highly imaginative works as *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 (*Biographies of Transcendents*) and *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (*Biographies of Divine Transcendents*), works that contain Daoist reports of a highly miraculous nature. It is not only in the "Miscellaneous Biographies" section that miraculous or supernatural accounts can be found. Elsewhere we find, for example, Gan Bao's 干寶 (d. 336) *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (*In Search of the Supernatural*), one of the forerunners of the literary genre known as "strange tales" 志怪 (see also Chapter 18). Gan Bao was a historian who wrote the now lost *Jin ji* 晉紀 (*Annals of Jin*) under imperial command. What is interesting about his *Soushen ji*, at least from the perspective of this essay, is the sober, factual way in which Gan Bao describes "events" of the most bizarre, supernatural type, with some of this material even finding its way into the "standard" *Jin shu* 晉書 (*Jin History*) as omens and celestial signs.

How are we to explain the inclusion in *Sui shu* of these and many other similarly imaginative works under the category "history?" It is not enough to say that historical works from the beginning, *Zuozhuan* to give an obvious example, contain reports of the supernatural. Such reports abound in early historical writing, as readers of Herodotus know, but they typically play a subordinate role among what are mostly this-worldly accounts. With works like *Shenxian zhuan* or *Soushen ji* we have moved almost entirely into a world many modern readers would consider as imaginative fiction (see also Chapter 18). Two points need to be made. First, as the distinguished historian Lu Yaodong 逯耀東 emphasizes, the decline of Confucian influence during these years had brought with it an entirely different aesthetic: "The historical writing of this period emphasizes beauty of verbal expression and also particularly the nebulous language and ethereal charm of religion. Simply speaking, historians and men of letters become one, with the boundaries of historiography and literature exceedingly difficult to distinguish" (Lu 1998: 19). Liu Zhiji, the sober Tang historiographer, was troubled by precisely this trend and complained of a tendency to "disregard real events and fashion ornate [language]" 輕事雕彩, blurring boundaries so that "literature is not literature, and history is not history" 文非文, 史非史 (*Shitong* 22.86, see also Chaussende 2014: 174). Here we see, then, a tension between an expanding conception of history and a much more conservative construction of precisely what history should be.

The second point is perhaps even more telling. Gan Bao, as noted above, was not only the author of *Soushen ji* but of a dynastic history as well. In the preface to his collection of predominantly supernatural stories, he notes that his record sets forth "what has been received from earlier accounts" or "has been garnered from inquiries into recent events" (*Jin shu* 81.2150; trans. Campany 1996: 148). In other words, these accounts follow a tradition not of critical inquiry (i.e., *historía*), but of recording events that reportedly took place. The *Sui shu* itself gives a rationale for including material of this sort: "Mixed together here are many fanciful and bizarre stories. But when we trace their origin, they probably also reflect the lesser concerns of the Bureau of Scribes" (*Sui shu* 33.982). In other words, major events are recorded in the major histories, but minor events, maybe even highly dubious events, should also be collected and preserved. Such a way of thinking also led to a variety of nonstandard collections of stories or traditions about famous persons from the past, which are sometimes called "uncouth (or unofficial) history" (*yeshi* 野史) or what we might refer to as "fictionalized history."

What constitutes the category "history" at any moment in time, as we should know from the way such works as *The Book of Saints* has been understood over time in the West, is a function of the beliefs of that period. Gan Bao, after all, ends his preface to *Soushen ji* by saying, "when it comes to what is set down here, it suffices to make clear that the way of spirits is not a fabrication." And Lu Yaodong concludes his discussion of the inclusion of such texts in Six Dynasties historiography by noting that works such as Gan Bao's will be categorized as fiction (*xiaoshuo* 小說) from the Tang and Song dynasties on, "but in the Wei-Jin period, they were considered as true and were included within the boundaries of historiography" (Lu 1998: 12).

THE FORMAL BUREAUCRATIZATION OF HISTORICAL WRITING

The relationship of early historical writing to centers of political power in China, as we have seen, is a complicated one. Several general conclusions can be drawn: first, some of the earliest records, *Chunqiu* among them, were almost certainly undertaken at the behest of state leaders as a part of official ritual and maybe also for subsequent consultation; second, most of the grand projects of early Chinese historical writing were not official projects, although it is almost certainly wrong to suggest that leaders had no interest in such projects; third, such works sometimes reinforced power and sometimes might have attempted to curtail or shape political power. During the Sui dynasty (581–618), perhaps in response to growing anxiety about the proliferation of historical writings and a feeling that this undermined imperial prerogatives, Emperor Wen (r. 581–604) proclaimed, "Those among the people who are compiling state history and offering evaluations of persons are commanded in all cases to desist" (*Sui shu* 2.38). While this proclamation did not curtail private historiography, the beginning of the Tang dynasty was to witness increased concern about the power of historical writing to shape future remembrance. Thus, Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649), the son of the founder of the Tang dynasty, in 629 established a Bureau of History, which followed a highly organized and formal procedure for the compilation of history. This procedure required officials to maintain diaries of imperial activities and calendars of state events that could be later fashioned into "Veritable Records" (*shilu* 實錄) for individual emperors, which after the conclusion of the dynasty, became the basis for an official dynastic history. This does not mean that private historiography came to an end, but the imperial court, which had all along played some role in the writing of history, now had an elaborate bureaucratic apparatus to fashion and present an entirely official record (Twitchett 1992).

From its early inspiration in the bare-bones list of events in *Chunqiu*, Chinese historical writing has made a long and complicated journey. Providing a full shape to this journey will require additional research and publication. Many of the major texts in the tradition—*Guoyu, Han shu*, and *Hou Han shu*, to give three obvious examples—are badly in need of additional study, and new conceptual frameworks can perhaps help us further untangle the many difficult questions surrounding the emergence of the rich and highly complex genres we have labeled here "the histories."

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CHAPTER 14

MASTERS (*ZI* 子)

WIEBKE DENECKE

Called *zishu* 子書 in the traditional fourfold bibliographical scheme, "Masters Literature" (or "Masters Texts") constitutes one of China's most influential and productive text corpora. The bulk of the corpus was written during the Warring States into the Han, the foundational period of Chinese thought and literature. Featuring debates about fundamental questions of social order, the good life, governance, heavenly justice, human character, and the cosmos, some texts were later canonized and became the fountainhead of cultic practice and systematic philosophical reflection, such as *Laozi* 老子 as scripture in religious Daoism and the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) and *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子) as parts of the "Four Books" of Neo-Confucianism. Beyond China, the Masters had a broad impact on East Asia, furnishing a repertoire of philosophical concepts, historical anecdotes, and pithy aphorisms appearing in texts as diverse as Japanese court poetry, Japanese medieval warrior tales, or early modern Korean and Vietnamese vernacular novels. Today the Masters belong to a Chinese "hypercanon" of texts that have traveled exceptionally well across temporal and cultural borders. While some of the venerable "Classics" (*jing* 經, Chapter 12) and foundational texts from the "Collections" (*ji* 集, Chapter 15) category still await complete translation into contemporary English, the core texts of the Masters, sometimes even with classical commentaries added, have generated a solid number of multiple translations. *Laozi* is probably China's most translated text.

Despite the prominence of the corpus, since antiquity it has been fraught with uncertainty. Except for recently excavated materials, the Masters Texts come to us through the efforts of Western Han scholars and bibliographers and later scholars who edited and compiled the vast and fluid textual material that had accumulated in the imperial library. Comparison with the legacy of Greek philosophy lets us appreciate the layers of uncertainty regarding places, people, and texts at stake in Masters Literature. Despite debates about details, we know the location of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum based on textual evidence and modern excavations (Caruso 2013); this is not true for any of the pre-Qin "schools" that we know existed, such as Confucians (*Ru* 儒; also called "Ruists" or "Ru traditionalists" in English to show their pre-Confucian roots and distinguish them from later forms of canonized state Confucianism since the Han) and

Mohists. Thanks to the Hellenistic "biographies" and "doxographies" (collections containing doctrinal tenets of various thinkers) produced by Alexandrian scholarship, we know many details even about the daily lives of Greek philosophers from Diogenes Laertius's *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (3rd cent. CE). Chatty and unreliable as Diogenes might be, Sima Qian's few and short chapters mentioning pre-Qin master figures pale in comparison to Diogenes's lengthy and vivid portrayals of his protagonists, testifying to the rich Hellenistic biographical and doxographical scholarship partially preserved. Also, whereas we have lists of successive "scholarchs" who headed the Academy, the Lyceum, the Stoic School, and Epicurus's Garden through the centuries, such information is sparse for pre-Qin Masters Literature; the Neo-Confucian lineage (*daotong* 道統) linking Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) and Mencius (fourth century BCE) back to Confucius emphasized spiritual lineage over succession in an actual school setting. Lastly, for no Chinese master can we trace the development of his thinking through "early," "middle," and "late" periods as with Plato's dialogues. Instead, Masters Texts like *Zhuangzi* 莊子 or *Guanzi* 管子, though attributed to an eponymous master, contain a wide variety of intellectual positions recorded over several centuries.

This chapter explores the rich tradition of Masters Literature in the face of much uncertainty through three questions. How have people defined the corpus of the Masters from antiquity to the present, and how do divergent definitions affect our understanding of this textual genre? What are the central intellectual concerns at stake in Masters Texts, and what are the major rhetorical formats and strategies used to make convincing arguments? And, lastly, how is Masters Literature significant today, and what kind of debates has it catalyzed for the present?

THE CORPUS OF MASTERS LITERATURE

Masters Texts, Han Dynasty scholars, traditional bibliographers and, later, modern philosophers and literature scholars have drawn the lines differently and in shifting fashion when defining the beginning, end, and even content of this genre. Regardless of intellectual outlook, pre-Qin Masters Texts share a common "playing field," evident in the intense preoccupation with a limited set of central keywords and an increasingly agonistic spirit expressed in arguments and polemics against perceived opponents. Thus the "Masters" are defined by intellectual contention and lineage filiation rather than by emulation and variation, which characterizes the "Histories" and "Literary Collections."

Opponents

Whereas Confucius (551–479 BCE) became the first and foremost master—the Master of all Masters—Mozi 墨子 (fifth century BCE) and his followers created Masters Literature as a discursive space through their vitriolic attacks on Confucius's teachings. In "Against

Confucians" ("Fei Ru" 非儒) Mozi attacks the *Ru* for their wasteful obsession with ritual, mannerist antiquarianism, and failure to abide by their own values. In contrast, the *Analects*, which was likely compiled during the Western Han when Confucius was canonized as the sage master-author compiling the "Classics" but contains material dating back to the fifth century BCE, keeps to a world of undisputed sagehood: the Master might have adversaries, but no intellectual opponents. Attacking other masters and their values became common from the fourth century BCE onwards. Mencius argues against other masters with patient persuasion rather than aggressive polemic. By the third century BCE, we see attempts to systematize the increasingly complex world of contending masters into intellectual camps and lineages. In "Against the Twelve Masters" ("Fei shi'er zi" 非十二子)," *Xunzi* 荀子 (fl. ca. 280s–230s BCE) presents six pairs of masters, with each pair representing roughly opposite opinions on the concept of human nature, the guiding principles of ordering society, and the importance of precedents set by former kings. Xunzi's desire to curb intellectual diversity and project a sense of orthodoxy produces a strict and symmetric typology that says more about the author of the essay than the masters under discussion. But with the unification, argumentative modes promoting integration became popular during the Western Han: *Zhuangzi*'s "All Under Heaven" ("Tianxia" 天下), presenting six master groups, praises all masters as sharing a deeper truth about the ancient Way, except for Zhuangzi's belligerent friend-and-foe, the sophist Hui Shi 惠施. Here contention disappears into mutual complementation and symbiosis.

Experts

The two most influential schemes that have defined the corpus and categorization of Masters Literature come from Western Han scholars and bibliographers. Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) father Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BCE) proposed a scheme of "Six Experts" (*liujia* 六家): "Yin-Yang specialists," "Confucians," "Mohists," "Legalists," "Logicians/Sophists," and "Daoists." The "Confucians" and "Mohists" certainly existed in some institutional form during the pre-Qin period. The "Daoists," in the peculiar form of Huang-Lao 黃老 Daoism claiming descent from the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝) and Laozi, were a contemporary intellectual force. But the other three "expert traditions" had less pedigree and probably represented types of expertise in divination and calendrical calculation (Yin-Yang), disputation (Logicians), and statecraft (Legalists), amalgamating Warring States figures with Han exigencies and practices (Smith 2003, Csikszentmihályi 2002, Csikszentmihályi and Nylan 2003).

Library Books

When asked by Emperor Cheng in 26 BCE to edit and catalogue the books in the imperial library, Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) faced an eminently practical task. Continued by his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE), the "Seven Summaries" ("Qi lüe" 七略) became the basis of the bibliographical treatise of the *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*), the "Monograph on Arts and Writings" ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志) (see also Chapter 11). The category of "Various Masters," featured alongside "Classics," "Poetry and Rhapsodies," "Military Books," "Divination and Mantic Arts," and "Medicine," was subdivided into ten groups: the "Six Experts" of Sima Tan plus the "Strategists/Orators," "Syncretists," "Agriculturalists," and "Storytellers." Later bibliographies in the dynastic histories continued to adopt most Master groupings from the *Han shu* bibliography, but the fundamental changes in the post-Han intellectual landscape left revealing traces in the bibliographical schemes (see also Chapter 11). Increasingly, practical arts were collapsed into the "Masters" category, as with the treatise of the *Sui shu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui*), which established the traditional fourfold bibliographical scheme and integrated the previously independent categories for military books, astronomy and mantic arts, and medicine into the Masters. New productive categories were added, as with the bibliographical treatise of the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (*Old History of the Tang*), which added "Encyclopedias," "Meridians," and "Miscellaneous Arts" (featuring, for example, works on chess playing—a Masterly art). "Buddhist" and "Daoist Scriptures" had appeared in an appendix to the *Sui shu* catalogue, but the *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目 (*The Comprehensive Catalogue of the Hall of Venerating Culture*) of the Song Dynasty and the bibliographical treatise of the *Ming shi* 明史 (*History of the Ming*) integrated them into the Masters, with the latter collapsing the "Sophists" and "Legalists," which had become unproductive, under "Miscellaneous."

The bibliographical definition of the Masters diverges most strongly from the widely accepted assumption that the Masters constitute the finest and deepest of Chinese thought. Going by the sheer number of texts, the "expert" traditions of military strategy, calendrical sciences, divination, and medicine (among others) were the most productive categories throughout imperial China. This would certainly be the least accepted definition of the corpus of "Masters Literature." But we should not forget that Masters Literature was alive as a field of practical arts and sciences on the larger epistemological map of traditional China and that these forms of knowledge are constitutive parts of Chinese intellectual history (Ge 1998, Ge 2014).

Philosophers

Over the past century, "Chinese philosophy" has become a well-established academic discipline in China, which looks to the pre-Qin Masters Texts as the fountainhead of Chinese thought. *Zhexue* (J. *tetsugaku*) 哲學 is a nineteenth-century neologism coined in Japan and later adopted in China to translate the Western discipline of "philosophy," a concept propagated by Plato with a complex, almost two-and-a-half-millennia-long intellectual and institutional history in the West. Jesuit missionaries from Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) on realized the importance of targeting the literati class with their China mission, and understood the advantages of presenting Confucius, and the Masters in his wake, as "philosophers." Thus the first translations from the

Neo-Confucian canon of the *Four Books* into a Western language (started by Michele Ruggieri and Ricci, but published in 1687 under the names of Prospero Intorcetta and Philippe Couplet) was called *Confucius, Sinarum Philosophus sive Scientia Sinica latine exposita* ("Confucius, the Chinese Philosopher or: Chinese Science Explained in Latin") (Meynard 2011). With the arrival of Dominican and Franciscan missionaries, who rejected the Jesuit "accommodation" of Chinese ancestral rituals and the imperial cult as secular practices, the Jesuits became even more eager to present Confucius as a "philosopher" to avoid conflicts with Rome (Jensen 1997). This resulted in the "Chinese Rites Controversy" and repeated bans by several popes and the Holy See during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; it also, indirectly, led to a downplaying of Confucius's role as a cultic and religious figure that continues to this day (Eno 1990, Wilson 2002).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese students studying in Japan or Europe and the influx of Western texts led to the appropriation of the Masters as the core of a "Chinese philosophy." While Liu Xizai 劉熙載 (1813–1881) in his *Wengai* 文概 (*Outline of Prose*) of 1873 still presented the Masters genre in its traditional form as a guide to self-cultivation and a model for prose composition, two decades later the Japanese Buddhist scholar Matsumoto Bunzaburō 松本文三郎 (1869–1944) published his *Shina tetsugaku shi* 支那哲学史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy*), the first history of "Chinese Philosophy." It proudly featured the novel concept of "wisdom study" (J. *tetsugaku*, Ch. *zhexue*) in the title and made the Masters into "philosophers" and their teaching into neologisms such as "political theory" or "dialectics." Hu Shi's 胡適 (1891–1962) *Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱 (*Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*) of 1919, a fruit of his studies with the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952) at Columbia University, marks the breakthrough in China in the creation of a "Chinese philosophy" that aimed to live up to universal claims of method, rationality, objectivity, and systematization. Together with Feng Youlan's 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy*) of 1934, it laid the foundations of the modern discipline and still impacts its present scope.

The philosophical approach has been the dominant interpretive paradigm for the pre-Qin Masters. Roger Ames, sometimes in collaboration with David Hall, has made the resonance between pragmatic philosophy and Confucianism inspiringly fruitful for contemporary ethics and comparative philosophy (see for example Ames and Hall 1987). Angus Graham's masterful *Disputers of the Dao* traces the unfolding of "rationality" in China, and his fascination with analytic philosophy led him to direct attention to the lesser-known Masters Texts, such as the "Sophists" and the Later Mohist explorations of logic. The most radically "philosophical" reading of the Masters is probably Chad Hansen's *A Daoist Theory of Thought*, which has such high standards of "philosophicality" that for him already Han Fei 韓非 (ca. 280–ca. 233 BCE) constitutes the end of the Masters and is harshly scolded as a "nonphilosopher" (Hansen 1992: 345). The assumptions of this paradigm have been criticized on various fronts, not least because it tends to impose Western philosophical assumptions on Chinese thought and thereby threatens to distort the Masters, leading to misconceptions of their intellectual preoccupations and their place in the Chinese tradition (Defoort 2001; Ge 2006: 6–11; Møllgaard 2005; Denecke 2011).

"Masters Literature"

Literature scholars, attuned to questions of genre and the unfolding of textual traditions, have studied the argumentative formats and rhetorical strategies in conjunction with the intellectual claims in Masters Texts and coined the term "Masters Literature" for *zishu* (Zhang 1996, Denecke 2011). This approach highlights the authoritative role of the master figure as a social and rhetorical construct at the center of the genre; it analyzes the intellectual implications of the main formats of Masters Literature, such as the "scene of instruction," (on this see also Lewis 1999, Chapter 2) "scene of persuasion," the "expository essay," or the use of poetry, analogy and allegory, and anecdotes and exempla (see next section); and it attempts not just to "decolonize" the Chinese Masters from the imposition of Western philosophical frameworks, but also to free the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition from the imposition of modern frameworks, in particular those of Western analytical philosophy. This approach rejects the tendency of philosophical interpretations to see the Masters and their "philosophical vibrancy" end with the Qin. Masters Texts continued to be produced in large numbers not just during the Han but throughout the early medieval period until the fifth century CE, after which writers began to invest their creative energies and individual concerns in more contemporary genres, in particular *shi* 詩 poetry (Tian 2006).

LINEAGES, ARGUMENTS, FORMS

Debate and argument are central to pre-Qin Masters Literature. This resonates well with the modern assumption that the multistate system of the Warring States Period, during which an increasingly small number of hegemonic states vanquished weaker states and engaged in constant warfare over territory, resources, and power, fostered intellectual debate, much as the city-states in Ancient Greece enabled the blossoming of classical philosophy and created political ideologies and practices like Athenian democracy. Modern Chinese scholars have proverbially called this period a time of "A Hundred Schools Competing In Argument" (*baijia zhengming* 百家爭鳴)," a slogan used by the Communist Party in the "Hundred Flowers Campaign" of 1956 to encourage criticism from the people, which later led to the identification and persecution of opponents and enemies. In the West, the popularization of the notion of the "Axial Age" (Achsenzeit) has further encouraged this view, as it has projected the model of the rise of Greek philosophy unto Warring States China. The German philosopher Karl Jaspers argued that around the "axis" of 500 BCE, the world's foundational philosophical and religious systems, which still determine our present, emerged simultaneously in the absence of direct mutual influence (Roetz 1993; Bellah and Joas 2012).

Pre-Qin Masters Texts are rife with agonistic debate. During the fourth and third centuries BCE, a "playing field," a rather limited set of shared and contested conceptual vocabulary emerges. The acts of defining, redefining, sharing, and deriding keywords come to take a central place in Masters Literature. Although the definition of key concepts became a systematic philosophical enterprise and pedagogical method only with Song Neo-Confucianism and works like *Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義 (*Chun's Explications of Terms*) by Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) disciple Chen Chun 陳淳 (1159–1223), gestures of definition are strategic in pre-Qin Masters Texts. Confucius's definitions in the *Analects* are often elliptic, suggestive, and playful, using puns and targeting the particular interlocutor or situation rather than aiming for a universal statement. Definitions in *Laozi,* in contrast, usually take the form of pointed redefinitions and rejections of received wisdom; this happens through grammatical negation, so pervasive in the text, but also through ridiculing one's opponents' values (*Laozi* 18, 19), or through rejecting the very act of definition (*Laozi* 25).

Some key concepts are shared beyond intellectual contention: the way (*dao* 道), vital energy (*qi* 氣), virtue (*de* 德), or heaven (*tian* 天); they became so central to the Chinese tradition that the first two are now part of the English lexicon. We also know of alternatives that were less successful, such as *Taiyi* 太一 ("Great Unity"), the ultimate origin of the cosmos and a celestial deity for the pole star, a concept akin to "the way." It appears from the Late Warring States Period on in texts from various intellectual camps, but failed to gain the universal appeal of *Dao* (Cook 2012: 324–340). Other concepts were shared but contested, though not rejected. One example is "human nature" (*xing* 性): it is a "new" term that appears only twice in the *Analects* but became a focal point of contention in *Mencius, Zhuangzi*, and *Xunzi* during the fourth and third centuries BCE. Still other keywords were dismissed as the wrong-headed ideas of one's opponents, such as Confucian "benevolence" (*ren* 仁); or ridiculed and widely rejected, such as Mohist "universal love" (*jian'ai* 兼愛).

Confucians, Mohists, Persuaders

The Spring and Autumn Period, during which Confucius lived, saw the decline of the Zhou royal house and the Bronze Age aristocracy and the rise of a new class of "servicemen" (*shi* 士). Regional rulers, who would eventually usurp titles and privileges formerly reserved for the Zhou ruling house, became prominent and bolstered their states through territorial expansion and annexation, military mobilization, and administrative centralization. The adoption of iron technology during the Warring States led to the rapid growth of agricultural production and military capacity and the replacement of the traditional warrior nobility with large mass infantry armies engaged in ever more frequent wars between and within states. Rather than relying on birth and wealth, the "servicemen" derived their status from the services they provided to the rulers of the various states. Often they constituted the lower level of the social elites, but some rose to the highest offices. Many master figures belonged to this class of "servicemen," which eventually gained a reputation for moral authority and leadership.

Pre-Qin Masters Literature of all colors is marked by a discomfort with the present, the sense of a world out of tune and in need of rectification. Ruthless pursuit of power and wealth and acts of brazen pretense or violence on the part of local rulers and clans were a driving force behind the debates preserved in Masters Texts. Confucius and his followers sought remedy in the models of the Zhou founders, in particular King Wen, King Wu, and the Duke of Zhou. Sensing a strong distance from Western Zhou institutions, the *Ru* cherished the careful transmission and interpretation of actions and words of kings and ministers of antiquity as guidelines for the present and future. Confucius was born in the small dukedom of Lu, in the Shandong peninsula, which King Wu had bestowed on his younger brother, the Duke of Zhou. It was a state particularly proud of preserving Zhou culture. Confucius's biography is paradoxically buried in the rich and fanciful lore developing around his person that accompanied his canonization in the Han. He was a teacher, especially of Zhou ritual traditions preserved in *Shangshu* 尚書 or *Shujing* 書經 (*Classic of Documents*) and *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), and thus embodied learning and sagehood; he was surrounded by disciples and contemporaries engaging him in dialogue; despite encounters with rulers of various states, he lacked a successful official career and thus became a model for retreat from political life during turbulent times, a choice often embraced by the unappreciated scholar who "does not meet his time" (*bu yu* 不遇) and finds no match in a worthy ruler (see also Chapter 27). He appears as a master beyond the world of writing, mainly of the word (in the *Analects* and much of Confucius lore), but also, since at least Mencius, as a master author, the compiler-author of the later "Confucian Classics" and in particular *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*), whose terse annalistic prose supposedly encoded the master's indirect praise and blame of historical events as a moral guide for the future and a model for textual exegesis (see also Chapters 12, 13).

Because Confucius eventually became the "Master of Masters," he is both the most exemplary and the most exceptional master (Fingarette 1972). By the Han, he appears as the fountainhead of various textual traditions in the bibliographical chapter of the *Han shu*, which laments the fragmentation of his legacy due to the divergent transmissions of his disciples. Although by the Han Dynasty Confucius appears in many texts as an established (or ridiculed) authority figure, the most canonical recension of his teachings is the *Analects,* a collection of anecdotes in twenty books written in terse and often suggestively cryptic style that casts the master as the center of "scenes of instruction" (except for Book 10, which shows the master in silent action, thereby reinforcing the point that words must match actions). It was probably compiled as an authoritative Confucius collection during the Western Han in the context of the canonization of Confucius and the establishment of a State Academy devoted to the teaching of the Classics associated with him.

In the *Analects*, Confucius appears as a charismatic master blessed with vision, wisdom, and humor, imagining the good life as structured by family hierarchies and virtuous state authority modeled on the Zhou past. To reach his full potential endowed by Heaven, the "superior person" or "noble man" (*junzi* 君子) must cultivate himself through ritual, study, and timely action. He becomes a useful part of society through proper ritual performance—ranging from daily rituals to state events of cosmological importance—and through the study of canonical texts and the understanding of historical precedents. The *Analects* celebrate the vision of an alternative community where individuals can lead a happy life governed by each member's focus on the propriety of words and effective action according to one's social role.

The "scene of instruction" is the seminal format of Masters Literature. Not only was it probably the earliest form of the emerging genre—unlike Greek philosophy, which emerged from the poetry and prose treatises of the pre-Socratics—it was one of its most influential formats. It emphasizes the master's intimate physical presence and showcases his teachings in the most "embodied" (though highly stylized) way possible in texts.

Mozi and his followers arguably "created" Masters Literature as they refuted Confucius's received wisdom with their spiteful attacks. But there are salient similarities: the Confucians and Mohists were probably the only pre-Qin "schools" posited by Han scholars that indeed existed as an institution and developed lineages and branches; they both rely on retrospective ideals, however different, and frequently invoke the authority of sage kings of antiquity; and they could be slandered or praised together (e.g., in *Zhuangzi* or by Han Yu). We know little about Master Mo, but tradition presents him as an expert craftsman and military strategist, and modern scholars have celebrated him as the one master figure of lower class. Ten core doctrines, preserved in three versions possibly representing three branches of the Mohist school (Chapters 8–39), contain the fundamental Mohist teachings, while the "Dialectical Chapters" feature treatises on language and logic probably produced by the school of "Later Mohists" (40–45); the last part of *Mozi* includes treatises on defensive warfare and military technology, a famed forte of the school. The Mohists were expert in taking the role of the opponent, castigating the loss of human and material resources invested in Confucian ritual and music and exalting frugality. They believed in the use of rewards and punishment to instill moral behavior and shared a deep anxiety over social order. They thus posited, uniquely in Masters Literature and the Chinese tradition as a whole, the importance of absolute standards, natural laws, and the necessity of universal love regardless of social difference. Unlike Confucius's vision—which relied, suggestively, on constant striving and learning, but also on the power of spontaneous, naturalized action and effect, embodied in the sage emperor Shun of high antiquity, who supposedly ruled the realm through "non-action" (*wu wei* 無為) simply by taking his ritually proper seat facing south (*Analects* 15.5)—the Mohist cosmos is filled with activist, even coercive, powers. Sages appear as creators of human inventions and conveniences, and spirits and ghosts actively reward or punish human behavior (Puett 2001). In tune with the claim to universal standards, most of the Mohist corpus (except for the "Dialogues," Chapters 46–51) consists of systematized treatises on statecraft and human life, though at times put into the disembodied mouth of the master in a remnant form of the "scene of instruction." The Mohists died out in the Western Han, and *Mozi* was recovered from the *Daoist Canon*, where it had survived, through the painstaking work of Qing philologists. The rather repetitive and systematic argumentative style in the *Mozi* corpus certainly lent itself to the philologists' attempts to fix corrupted passages based on parallelism.

Fourth- and third-century BCE followers of Confucius took up the Mohist challenge. Mengzi (latinized as Mencius) allegedly studied with a disciple of Zisi 子思, Confucius's grandson. He came from Zou, close to Confucius's hometown, and was for some time associated with the Jixia Academy, sponsored by the rulers of the powerful state of Qi. Many master figures were at some point associated with the academy, which became, in later cultural imagination, a model of vibrant intellectual exchange under government patronage. Unlike most other Master Texts, *Mencius* (late fourth century BCE) is less layered and more clearly datable to Mencius's approximate lifetime and that of his immediate disciples. *Mencius* consists largely of anecdotes featuring the master in conversation with rulers and other contemporaries, but the arguments are much longer and sustained than in the *Analects*. We see a shift from "scenes of instruction" to "scenes of persuasion," a focus away from the charismatic master figure to weak and conflicted ruler figures in need of subtle transformative persuasion for the moral good. Mencius operates in a new intellectual milieu: he is surrounded by other master figures like Mozi, Yang Zhu 楊朱, or Gaozi 告子. Against this diversification of the intellectual stage, Mencius establishes Confucius as the authoritative master (and also author of *Chunqiu*) and himself as the second master upholding Confucius's legacy, thus creating the concept of a "*Ru*-lineage." Various *Ru* lineages developed strongly divergent interpretations of the teachings of Confucius and engaged in debates beyond the horizon of Confucius's teachings.

The debates about "human nature," which only emerged in the fourth century BCE, illustrate the novel challenges. Mencius argues that humans are endowed with an inborn potential towards virtue rather than being motivated by self-interest, as Yang Zhu argued. In his argument with Gaozi, he uses analogies and striking philosophical metaphors, such as comparing innate goodness to the grain of "willow wood," which fulfills its nature by becoming a beautiful utensil, and the natural gravity of "water," which obeys natural law in flowing downwards. For Confucius, the match between inner intention and outward manifestation in action was still unproblematic, but Mencius was troubled by the possibility of a mismatch between the two. Claiming that human nature is inherently good gave him the confidence that good inner intention would lead to virtuous outer manifestation. This problem of depth and interiority occupied him also on the level of the human body—he claimed that a person's real intention could only be gleaned from the pupils—and on the level of textual exegesis of the Classics—he warned that one should not "harm" a poet's deeper intention by clinging to the literal surface meaning of a poem (*Mencius* 4A.15 and 5A.4). Although Mencius is famous for justifying the assassination of tyrants, he often adopts an oblique approach of Socratic midwifery ("maieutics"), guiding the ruler gradually toward understanding his mistakes through pointed indirect analogies.

Mencius is an example of how recently excavated texts have changed our understanding of the early *Ru* lineage in particular. The discovery of a lost text *Wuxing* 五行 (*Five Virtues/Phases*) in tombs at Mawangdui (ca. 168 BCE) and Guodian (ca. 300 BCE) has sparked feverish interest in uncovering the history of a Zisi-Mencius lineage, mentioned in *Xunzi* as propagators of such a theory and elaborated by Song Neo-Confucians invested in strengthening the ties between Mencius and Confucius in their creation of an orthodox Confucian lineage. Several Guodian texts associated with Zisi have led some scholars to claim them as parts of a lost *Master Zisi* text. While debates remain inconclusive (Cook 2012: 110–121), the excavated texts have allowed us to flesh out the figure of Zisi (credited with the transmission of *Zhongyong* 中庸 [*Doctrine of the Mean*], one of the Four Books), to uncover a much richer and more unexpected repertoire of Confucian intellectual stances during the Warring States Period, and to better appreciate the material, bodily approaches to Confucian self-cultivation with their connection to medical and physiological discourses (Csikszentmihályi 2004).

Our traditional understanding of the early *Ru* lineage is dominated by Xunzi's polemics against Mencius. He was from Zhao, served at the Jixia Academy in Qi and obtained high office at home in Zhao and as a magistrate of Lanling in Chu, where he lived out his life. *Xunzi*, largely datable to the period around Xunzi's lifetime, shows the diversification of textual culture in the third century BCE: for the first time, we see expository essays in the first person working systematically through central themes such as heaven, ritual, music, learning, names, or human nature. *Xunzi*'s contribution to the notion of authorship in early China (see Chapter 24) is most evident in his famous first-person argument against Mencius in "Human Nature is Evil" ("*Xing e*" 性惡). Despite the provocative title, the essay makes a case for the creativity and agency of humans (Puett 2001: 64–73), giving human ritual, social, and political institutions a major role in shaping human community and creating order. Yet Xunzi also appears in the guise of a traditional persuader in chapters delivering pragmatic political advice, and even couches his praise of former kings and vision of governance in programmatic, sometimes propagandistic verse in "Working Songs" ("Cheng xiang pian" 成相篇) and "Rhapsodies" ("Fu pian" 賦篇). His call for strong government lived on in Qin and Han ideology, informed by "legalists" like Han Fei, Xunzi's disciple. Eventually *Xunzi* lost out to *Mencius*, whose humanistic optimism became the core of Neo-Confucianism.

The *Ru* lineage had conflicted connections to the world of professional persuaders during the Warring States. Known by various names, these itinerant orators traveled from court to court offering their persuasion skills, like many master figures. The bibliographical chapter in *Han shu* recognized them as a "School of Strategists" (*zonghengjia* 縱橫家). Their amoral, sometimes immoral use of persuasion for strategic advantage and often explicit catering to the rulers' lust for territory, wealth, and power set them apart even from Masters Texts that reject moral rules such as *Laozi, Zhuangzi,* or *Han Feizi*. We can grasp their world in the brilliant persuasion vignettes in *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), Sima Qian's biographies of famous persuaders, essays on the art of persuasion in late Warring States and early imperial texts, and the vast compilations of historical anecdotes serving as repertoire of exempla for speeches (Schaberg 2011). *Ru* traditionalists certainly abhorred the persuaders for their opportunistic brilliance, but both shared a belief in the power of the word. Sima Qian emphasizes this in his biography of Confucius's disciples (*Shiji* 67) by crediting Zigong's extraordinary political success to his persuasions and, two chapters later, by praising the persuader Su Qin as a man of prolific learning and pragmatic wisdom in an attempt to save him from the bad reputation of his craft (*Shiji* 69.2277).

Lao-Zhuang, Huang-Lao, Statecraft Specialists

While Sima Qian connects Confucius's legacy to the world of orality, he endows his *Laozi* lineage, in which he includes Zhuangzi, Shen Buhai 申不害, and Han Fei in a collective biography, with the prerogative of writing (*Shiji* 63). He is unclear about who this "Laozi" might have been, but his three suggested candidates are all associated with scribal expertise. The legend that a border guard had Laozi jot down a book on the "Way and Virtue" (*Daodejing* 道德經) before leaving westwards fits Sima Qian's interest in dramatized notions of authorship under duress. For him Han Fei, a stutterer stunning the king of Qin (and later First Emperor) with his writing skills, is the pinnacle of writerly virtue, and Han Fei's "Difficulties of Persuasion" ("Shui nan" 說難) is the only piece of writing by a pre-Qin master included in Sima Qian's history.

Laozi consists of eighty-one short rhythmic and rhymed sections in two parts. Despite variants and difference in sequence from the received text, the *Laozi* versions excavated at Guodian and Mawangdui show that the text was remarkably stable by 300 BCE. Though it possibly contains an ancient core of an oral wisdom tradition (LaFargue 1994), it appears as a heavily layered text that polemicizes against Confucian values on a logical level (with frequent negations like "The Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way" 道可道非常道 [*Laozi* 1]); on a conceptual level (e.g., rejecting Confucian ideas like "benevolence" [*ren*] and "rightness" [*yi* 義]); and, most importantly, on a rhetorical level: unlike *Ru* texts that abound with people, places, and historical specificity, *Laozi* lacks protagonists and is a textual collage of aphorisms in which an anonymous first-person voice utters words of gnomic wisdom on the natural way, the counterintuitive power of nonaction, and the art of controlling oneself and others.

The credit for creating an actual "Master Laozi" figure goes to *Zhuangzi*, which features the old sage in "scenes of instruction," alongside a new set of counterintuitive master figures such as cripples and convicts, eloquent mythical creatures, and skulls. In comparison to the texts in the *Ru* lineage, *Zhuangzi* is a messy text, containing "Inner Chapters" (1–7) dating to the time of the putative master (fl. second half of fourth century BCE); "Outer Chapters" (8–22) by his followers, including more radically "primitivist" thought and Yang Zhu materials from the Qin-Han transition; and a final layer of "Syncretist (or Miscellaneous) Chapters" (23–33) from the second century BCE when the text was compiled (Graham 1989: 172–174). The little we know about the historical Zhuangzi is based on the extravagant Zhuangzi figure featured in *Zhuangzi* and is a programmatic metaphor for the ideal recluse seeking fulfillment in exuberant, unperturbed life. There is Zhuangzi the crazy recluse, refusing to serve as prime minister of Chu, preferring to "drag his tail in the mud" just as the 3,000-year-old turtle in the temple would have preferred to drag his tail in the mud rather than being killed and having its shell honored as sacred; Zhuangzi the iconoclast who violates mourning customs and voluptuously welcomes death; and Zhuangzi the brilliant thinker infatuated with serious argument and its parody (mirrored in his ambivalent friendship with Hui Shi), one who speaks in rhapsodic effusions and indulges in fictionalized scenarios through parables, dreams, and spirit travels.

Zhuangzi's Core Chapters are fascinated with perspective and drastic changes in scope, moving between the limited world of frogs in a well to the cosmic proportions of the giant *peng* 鵬 bird in no time. These sudden vertiginous changes capture a world beyond human cognition; the implied speaker erases distinctions, praises the useless, and delights in the counterintuitive. This anarchic streak coexists, paradoxically, with a strong belief in positive body knowledge and a "secondary spontaneity" gained through tireless practice, expressed in anecdotes about the sublime skill of craftsmen like Wheelwright Bian and Butcher Ding. *Zhuangzi* was popular wherever intense reflection and the absurdity of human life (and sometimes humor) met; it influenced phenomena as diverse as medieval "metaphysical learning" or "arcane learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學), Chan Buddhism, and Matsuo Bashō's *haiku* (Qiu 2005).

Although *Zhuangzi* differs dramatically from *Laozi* in its acceptance of death and noisy rejection of political engagement, Han scholars grouped them into a Lao-Zhuang lineage, now commonly distinguished from later Daoist religious movements as the philosophical underpinnings of Daoism. But the most popular form of Daoism during Sima Qian's time was Huang-Lao, drawing on the authority of Laozi and the Yellow Emperor and merging *Laozi*'s thought with the "legalism" of statecraft specialists. This short-lived blend of authoritarian government, self-cultivation, medicine, and Yin-Yang cosmology was hard to grasp until the discovery of four apparently related texts among the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, which give advice for the aspiring hegemon.

Huang-Lao and the Masters grouped under Sima Tan's "legalism" label had similar goals: creating a strong state based on bureaucratic structures governed by law and embodied in the figure of a supreme ruler. Theorists of the bureaucratic state appeared in Qin in the fourth century BCE with the figure of Shang Yang 商鞅 (d. 338 BCE), the prime minister of Qin whose policies initiated the centralization and militarization of the state, which eventually resulted in Qin's unification. In the book attributed to him, Shang Yang propagates the rule of law through a system of rewards and punishments and the building of a bureaucracy directed against the privileges of the nobility; even the ruler is expected to act according to law.

The most prolific and articulate spokesman of the statecraft specialists was Han Fei, an aristocrat from the state of Han, who studied under Xunzi, served the King of Qin, and was later slandered and forced to commit suicide in 233 BCE (Goldin 2013). In *Han Feizi*, the connection to the Laozi lineage, which Sima Qian pointed out, is evident: two chapters commenting on *Laozi* passages impose a coercive interpretation of *Laozi*'s "nonaction" to create a self-regulating state based on laws. *Han Feizi* is the longest pre-Qin Masters Text and is remarkable for its interest in rhetoric, as evident in chapters on the art of persuasion and the large body of anecdotes, exempla for use in argument-making, which make up a third of the text.

Encyclopedic Compendia

Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 (*Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*, 239 BCE) and *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (139 BCE) transcend any school affiliation. They have been categorized as "syncretic" or "eclectic" (*za* 雜), but are actually "synthetic," since they are carefully arranged compendia of contemporary knowledge about mankind, governance, and the cosmos written as guidebooks for an aspiring ruler. Both were compiled at a court that allegedly gathered thousands of scholar-retainers, testifying to the monumental ambition of the enterprise. Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (d. 235 BCE) was born into a merchant family, rose to the position of minister, and was eventually forced to commit suicide by King Zheng of Qin, later the First Emperor (r. 221–210 BCE). His compendium opens on twelve monthly "Almanacs," followed by "Examinations" (13–20) and "Discourses" (21–26). The central theme is how to create harmony between Heaven, Earth, and Mankind and how to correlate natural cycles with the actions of the ruler and his administration. It promises to reveal the principles leading to order and anarchy, survival and destruction. *Huainanzi* emerged from debates at the court of Liu An 劉安 (ca. 179–122 BCE), Prince of Huainan and the grandson of the founding Han emperor. He was a prolific writer of rhapsodies and was also known for his commentary on "Li sao" 離騷 ("Encountering Sorrow"), and he composed the postface to his compendium, which he presented to Emperor Wu in rhapsody form (Kern 2014). Eight "Core Chapters" are devoted more specifically to the Way and its workings, while the following twelve "Branch Chapters" show applications and illustrations of the basic principles laid out in the first part.

Most of the themes in these compendia are not new, combining Huang-Lao and Legalist governance with Confucian values and Yin-Yang cosmology, but the systematic integration of knowledge and the epistemological vision of a book that promises to encompass, and to almost *embody,* the cosmos is startlingly novel. Liu An puts it most poignantly:

> Place this book in a hairbreadth space: it will obstruct nothing.
> Extend it to the world: it will fill it all! (Zhang 2013: 2200)

In their grasp for knowledge of the world, both compendia also represent Masters Literature as a repository of the practical sciences of the calendar, agriculture, medicine, and divination, similar to the way the Masters category expanded in post-Han bibliographies.

Han Masters and Scholar-Officials

Han Masters Literature has received scarcer attention, because it appears less philosophically appealing and more historically specific than the body of pre-Qin Masters Texts. Yet, we must remember that Masters Texts continued to be written into the fifth century CE, although the genre changed considerably during the early empires in terms of the social position of its authors, its occasions and forms, and its place in the changing literary landscape.

The image of the itinerant advisor associated with many pre-Qin masters gave way to the profile of the scholar-official, who produced texts informed by the exigencies of the court and the State Academy. Lu Jia's 陸賈 (ca. 228–ca. 140 BCE) *Xinyu* 新語 (*New Discourses*) consists of twelve memorials written at the request of Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (r. 202–195 BCE), and Jia Yi's 賈誼 (200–168 BCE) *Xinshu* 新書 (*New Writings*) contains many memorials submitted to Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE); *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 (*Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*), attributed to Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–ca. 104 BCE) and reflecting his expertise in the chronicle and its Gongyang commentary, represents the new exegetical literature produced by Han scholars in the context of the rise of textual scholarship and the State Academy established under Emperor Wu.

Thriving textual exegesis also produced distinctive forms of classicism. Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), serving partly during the interregnum of Wang Mang's 王莽 (r. 9–23 CE) rule, modeled his *Fayan* 法言 (*Model Sayings*) on the *Analects* and emulated the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*) with his *Taixuanjing* 太玄經 (*Classic of Supreme Mystery*). Yang Xiong's attempt to turn the rhapsody genre to purposes of political remonstration and his later rejection of these "youthful" illusory attempts show the changed literary landscape of the Han: many authors of Masters Texts also wrote rhapsodies, a novel and ambivalent genre caught between imperial entertainment and political and moral remonstration.

With the Eastern Han and Wang Chong 王充 (27–100 CE), a voracious polymath who never served in higher office but was the author of the longest Han Masters Text, *Lun heng* 論衡 (*Balanced Discourses*), the great age of sagely authors creating canonical works for posterity was over (Puett 2007). Wang Chong saw his "discourses" (*lun* 論) as a weak form of writing compared to the creations of the sages of antiquity like Confucius, but he believed that in his time brilliant "literary scholars" (*wen Ru* 文儒) could still produce superb writing, as opposed to "mundane scholars" (*shi Ru* 世儒) caught in sterile exegesis (*Lun heng jiaoshi*, 1150–1151).

The "discourse" genre carried the waning ambitions of Masters Literature into the medieval period. With Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187–226) "Discourse on Literature ("Lun wen" 論文) in *Dian lun* 典論 (*Normative Discourses*) (not to forget, a Masters Text listed in the "Confucian" category), writing became a business of labor division, with authors endowed with individual talent but reduced to excellence in specialized literary genres. Cao Pi singles out for praise his advisor Xu Gan's 徐幹 (171–218) *Zhong lun* 中論 (*Discourses on the Mean*) as a comprehensive achievement and a text capable of establishing its author's teachings and name.

Just as Yang Xiong renounced his earlier rhapsodies to write emulated Classics, Xu Gan turned away from writing in the belles-lettres genres of his time, such as *shi* poetry, eulogies, or encomia, to write a Masters Text at the end of his life (Makeham 2002: xxxv). By that time, the genre of Masters Literature had grown old, and some of its central themes—personal integrity, observation of the cosmos, response to injustice, authenticity of word and action—came to be voiced in new genres for novel times.

Epilogue: Masters as Catalysts

Of the four categories of traditional bibliography, the Masters have arguably catalyzed the most influential set of intellectual debates, with public ramifications in the modern period. They have enabled fierce debates over the existence and nature of a "Chinese philosophy" and inspired methodological discussions about comparative and globalized intellectual history. Excavated texts have stimulated manuscript studies, questions of transmission, tradition, and loss of cultural memory, as well as debates over notions of authority, orality, and authorship.

The Masters, in particular forms of Confucianism, have also impacted contemporary public affairs and political developments, triggering discussions about human rights, "Asian values," and Confucian family ethics (credited with the spectacular economic performance of Southeast Asian and East Asian countries) and about the future of democracy in East Asia.

After Confucius received severe beating during most of the twentieth century for everything that was considered reactionary and destructive in the Chinese tradition, he has recently emerged as a prime national icon of Mainland China. Rituals at Confucian temples have been reinstated; television shows feature a new brand of popular educators like Yu Dan, bringing Confucius's message close to viewers' hearts and minds; the Olympics in Beijing in 2008 showed Confucian scholars singing the opening lines of the *Analects* and a supposed descendant of Confucius carrying the Olympic torch; and the hundreds of recently established "Confucius Institutes" across the world, financed through the PRC government, promote Chinese culture through language teaching and research support and are considered China's new form of soft power and global influence. Masters Literature has become the source of national identity, cross-cultural dialogue, comparative reflection, and global marketing and is alive and well at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

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CHAPTER 15

COLLECTIONS (*JI* 集)

XIAOFEI TIAN

With *ji* 集, "collection," the last of the "four-part" bibliographical scheme (see Chapter 11), we now stand at the center of classical literature: collections of literary works.

Ji bu 集部 derived from the fourth category (*ding bu* 丁部, literally Category No. 4) in Xun Xu's 荀勖 (d. 289) four-part division of the imperial library collection, but Xun Xu's category notably includes a mixture of *shi* 詩 (poetry) and *fu* 賦 (poetic expositions), encomia inscribed in paintings, and a cache of ancient books discovered by grave-robbers (*Sui shu* 32.906). In the fourth century, Li Chong 李充 (fl. 320s) defined the fourth category as consisting of poetry and poetic expositions; according to Zang Rongxu 臧榮緒 (415–488), Li Chong's division subsequently became established as a "permanent rule" by the imperial library (*Wen xuan* 46.2075). In the "Monograph on Bibliography" of *Sui shu*, the *ji* section includes three kinds of collections. The first is *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*), a collection of rhymed verses attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BCE), his "disciple" Song Yu 宋玉, and later works from the Han in that tradition. The second is *bieji* 別集 ("separate collections" or collections by individual authors). The third is *zongji* 總集 ("comprehensive collections" or anthologies). In modern as well as premodern times, *Chuci* and *Shijing* have been regarded as not only the origin but also the foundation of *shi* poetry, which was the privileged literary genre throughout imperial China. Nevertheless, *Shijing* had always been firmly placed under the "Classics" (*jing*) in the traditional categorization of texts. This small but significant fact demonstrates the complexity of the traditional Chinese conceptualization of *wen*, "literature," "literary," or "literariness" (see also Chapter 1).

Ji is central to our understanding of the premodern Chinese conception of literature. As *zongji* or anthologies and anthology-making are given separate consideration (see Chapters 19 and 20), this essay focuses on *bieji* by introducing some of the basic issues regarding *bieji*: how a collection was constituted, circulated, transmitted, and reconstituted; what a *bieji* might include; and in what ways a collection is important to a historicized understanding of what constituted "literature" in the Middle Period.

THE EARLY HISTORY

The term *bieji* first appears in Ruan Xiaoxu's 阮孝緒 (479–536) book catalogue known as *Qi lu* 七錄 (*Seven Records* or *Seven Lists*, see Chapter 11). It forms a subsection under "Wenji lu" 文集錄 ("The List of Literary Collections"), alongside three other subsections, "Chuci," "Zongji," and "Zawen" ("Miscellaneous Writings") (Tian 2014: 318). Presumably, the word *bie* is used to differentiate *bieji* ("*individual* collections") from *zongji*, "*comprehensive* collections." The term is used again in the "Monograph on Bibliography" of *Sui shu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui*):

> The name *bieji* was first created in the Eastern Han. From Qu Yuan onward, there have been numerous authors of literary writings. Their aims and aspirations were not the same; their manners and styles were all different from one another. Gentlemen of the later times wanted to observe an author's normative form and momentous energy, and to bring to light [*jian/xian*] his heart and mind, and so assembled [the said author's] writings in a separate volume and named it a *ji*, collection. (*Sui shu* 35.1081)

The above passage stresses a *ji*'s connection with the historical person of an individual author; it also stresses the later readers' desire to *jian/xian* 見—to see and to bring into manifestation—an author's "heart and mind" through compiling the author's collection. The passage uses the word *bie* twice to talk about the "difference" (*bie*) of the authors' manners and styles, and about the separate (also *bie*) assemblage of their writings. In the latter case, "separate" could refer to these individual collections' distinction from an anthology as well as to the discrete entity of each individual collection; each stands independently from one another, just as the authors themselves were all different from one another in terms of temperament and writing style. The historical person of an author and his or her writings are thus seamlessly connected.

Sui shu might have had its sources, now lost, in making the claim about the emergence of the term *bieji* in the Eastern Han. By focusing on the dating of the *term*, the *Sui shu* historian wisely stayed away from the thorny issue of the origin of the *bieji* itself: such knowledge likely could never be obtained with any accuracy, and indeed also largely depends on how one defines a *bieji*, for various definitions have led to different theories about when *bieji* first emerged. The late-Qing scholar Yao Zhenzong 姚振宗 (1843–1906) believes, for instance, that the "collections of poems and poetic expositions" by various authors recorded in the "Monograph on Arts and Writings" of Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*) constitute the origin of *bieji* (Yao 1995: 629). And yet these "collections," marked as the "twenty-five *pian* 篇 [lit. 'bound bundle of bamboo slips'] of Qu Yuan's poetic expositions," or the "four *pian* of Tang Le's poetic expositions," seem no more than items on an inventory list of the imperial library. Upon the death of the prestigious Eastern Han prince Liu Cang 劉蒼 in 83 CE, the emperor issued an edict that all of the prince's writings should be gathered together and sent to the capital for the emperor to "look at collectively" (*ji lan* 集覽), but that was more a "package" than a "compiled/edited collection" (see *Hou Han shu* 42.1441).

The compilation of an individual author's collection that includes multiple genres, as opposed to the single-genre "collections" on Ban Gu's inventory list, dates to the mention of a female author's posthumous collection compiled by her daughter-in-law. In *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*) compiled by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), we find the following passage in the biographical note on Ban Zhao 班昭 (fl. 90s–110s CE), a prominent writer and scholar:

> Her poetic expositions, odes, inscriptions, elegies, inquiries, commentaries, lamentations, letters, discussions, memorials to the throne, and deathbed instructions amounted to sixteen sections [*pian* 篇] altogether. Her daughter-in-law, Madam Ding, compiled them into one collection and also composed an "Encomium on the Dame." (*Hou Han shu* 84.2792)

Ban Zhao, Ban Gu's younger sister, is thus the earliest known author who, shortly after her death, had a collection of writings compiled, *zhuan* 撰, a word indicating a measure of editorial care. Her collection seems to have been capped with an encomium (*zan* 讚) about her life and career. However, not only is it an isolated instance from this period, but *Hou Han shu* itself came from a much later time. In the fifth century, compiling a recently deceased author's writings into a *bieji* had become an established practice. It is impossible to evaluate the credibility of Fan Ye's sources, or to judge to what extent his representation of Ban Zhao's collection might have reflected a later view of how a collection came about.

The first unambiguous mentions of compiling literary collections as a self-consciously significant act are from the early third century. This was a time of new happenings and significant transitions in literary and cultural history. On the one hand, the writing of a multichapter treatise on social, ethical, and political issues, with each chapter under a subject heading and often complete with an autobiographical "self-account" (*zixu* 自序), continued to be considered the most important way of self-representation for an early medieval elite Chinese male. On the other hand, poetry and poetic expositions were gradually rising to the forefront of people's consciousness in terms of their self-representational powers. Unlike the grandiose poetic expositions of the earlier times, such as the *fu* on the imperial parks, imperial hunts, or imperial capitals, many shorter, occasional poetic expositions appeared in the third century, sometimes dashed off at social gatherings. Many poetic expositions from this period have a narrative preface that details a personal experience as the occasion of composition, such as the illness and recovery of an infant son. These details of an author's everyday life endow a poetic exposition with a sense of intimate quality. Poetry, too, gradually emerged from the formal social exchanges or the general expressions of common sentiments to become a more individualized articulation of the experience of a historical person.

Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343), an eminent scholar and writer from south China and a cultural conservative, complains that his contemporaries "all treasure shallow, diminutive writings such as poetry and poetic expositions, but scorn the profound, beautiful, rich, and comprehensive 'masters' books' " (Ge 1997: 105). Two things are noteworthy about this complaint: one, it is significant that poetry and poetic expositions, two central belletristic genres, are defined negatively against "masters' books," i.e., the multichapter treatises mentioned above; two, the complaint highlights the fact that in the cultural stock market of the fourth century, the stock of poetry and poetic expositions was on the rise. In another instance, Ge Hong again pits the writing of "poetry, poetic exposition, and miscellaneous prose pieces" against the writing of a multichapter treatise, saying, "When I was in my twenties, I regarded the creation of those small, fragmentary writings as a waste of time. . . . Subsequently I began to work on a 'master's book' " (Ge 1997: 697). Ge Hong certainly conceived of the opposition between these two different kinds of writings partially in terms of length, as he stresses in each case the "small and fragmentary" (*xi sui* 細碎) nature of belletristic writings.

The opposition may be traced back to the early-third-century preface to Xu Gan's 徐幹 (171–218) *Zhong lun* 中論 (*Discourses on the Mean*). The anonymous preface states:

> He [Xu Gan] saw that lettered men followed one another in the contemporary fad of composing pretty writings, but there was never one among them who elucidated the fundamental import of the classics to disseminate the teachings of the way, or who sought the sages' point of balance to dispel the confusion of popular contemporary mores. For this reason, he abandoned such [literary] writings as poetry, poetic exposition, eulogy, inscription, and encomium, and wrote the book *Discourses on the Mean* in twenty-two chapters. (Yan 1987b: 55.1360; based on John Makeham's translation with modifications, Xu 2002: xxxv)

"Poetry, poetic exposition, eulogy, inscription, and encomium" are exactly what would be collected into an author's *bieji* as the genres proper to literature.

The compilation of *bieji* was closely associated with the rise of literature in the early third century. Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), the founding emperor of the Wei who acquired the apt posthumous title Wendi (Emperor Wen or the Cultured Emperor) (r. 220–226), was at the center of the changes. In a famous letter written in 218, he laments the untimely death of several of his literary friends—Xu Gan, Chen Lin 陳琳 (d. 217), Ying Yang 應瑒 (d. 217), and Liu Zhen 劉楨 (d. 217)—who had all passed away in the great plague of 217 or shortly thereafter:

> Lately, I have edited the writings they left behind into one collection; and yet, as I looked at their names, I realize they are all in the register of ghosts. When I think back to our roaming in days past, it is still so vivid in my mind's eye; and yet these gentlemen have already turned into dirt—I truly cannot bear to say anything about it further. (Yan 1987b: 7.1089)

It is not entirely clear whether Cao Pi had compiled a joined collection of the authors or individual collections. In either case, it was an act of tribute and commemoration, and we have the first explicit reference to the making of a literary collection by none other than the compiler himself. In his well-known "Discourse on Literature" ("Lun wen" 論文) in *Dian lun* 典論 (*Normative Discourses*), Cao Pi famously claims:

> I would say that literary works are the supreme achievement in the business of state, a splendor that does not decay. A time will come when a person's life ends; glory and pleasure go no further than this body. To carry both to eternity, there is nothing to compare with the unending permanence of the literary work. So writers of ancient times entrusted their persons to ink and brush, and let their thoughts be seen in their compositions; depending neither on a good historian nor on the galloping messengers, their reputations were handed down to posterity on their own force. (Yan 1987b: 8.1098; based on Owen's translation with slight modifications, Owen 1992: 68–69)

The pathos of the passage lies in the desire for this limited, fragile "body" (*shen* 身) to last forever, "entrusted" to one's compositions. Nor is it an embalmed corpse, because it is animated by the permanence of the author's thoughts (*yi* 意) as well. A collection, *ji*, of one's compositions is thus the best embodiment of a writer's everlasting presence.

Cao Pi's younger brother Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), one of the greatest early medieval Chinese poets, is likewise a pivotal figure in the early history of *bieji*. Though showing a contrary attitude toward literary writings by calling them a trifling skill (Yan 1987b: 16.1140), Cao Zhi nevertheless cared enough about his writings to edit them into a collection in seventy-eight sections, and we know for certain that these writings included poetic expositions. He also appended a preface to the collection, calling it a "Former Record" ("Qian lu" 前錄), implying a "Latter Record" (Yan 1987b: 16.1143). After his death, his nephew Cao Rui 曹叡 (206–239), then the Wei emperor, ordered that duplicate copies be made of Cao Zhi's writings, including poetic expositions, odes, poems, inscriptions and miscellaneous treatises, and that the copies be stored both in and outside the court (*Sanguo zhi* 19.576). Cao Zhi had apparently made a list of all his writings himself. Years later, based on the author's own list, his son Cao Zhì 曹志 (d. 288) was able to clarify the authorship of an essay composed by a relative, Cao Jiong 曹冏. Cao Jiong had presumably placed his essay into Cao Zhi's collection because he wanted his essay to "pass on to posterity" by ascribing it to a famous writer (*Jin shu* 50.1390).

The only other mention of a collection from the early third century involves a writer from the southern Kingdom of Wu, Xue Zong 薛綜 (d. 243). According to his official biography in dynastic history, he had "composed poetry, poetic expositions, 'challenges,' and discussions in several tens of thousands of words, and named them *Sizai* 私載 (*Carried with Partiality*)" (*Sanguo zhi* 53.1254). The term *sizai* is intriguing. It originates from *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*), in which Confucius says, "Heaven covers without partiality; earth carries without partiality; the sun and moon illuminate without partiality" (*Liji zhushu* 51.861). By saying that his writings are carried *with* partiality, Xue Zong seems to imply that they are regarded with favoritism. Does it mean that he regarded his own compositions with special favor? Or that his writings were produced to carry his favorite ideas? It is difficult to tell with certainty. Some scholars assume that *Sizai* is the title of Xue's collected writings; this, too, is difficult to ascertain. It may be simply his playful reference to the compositions as textual containers that, unlike the impartial earth, "carry" just one individual's words and ideas.

Over 98 percent of early medieval literary collections, *bieji*, are no longer extant (Lu 1995: 2788). Most pre-Tang literary collections have been reconstituted in later times from anthologies, encyclopedias, commentaries, and other sources. Historian Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297) edited the collection of Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234), the Shu-Han kingdom's prime minister, and presented it to the Jin emperor in 274 along with a memorial to the throne. The collection itself is now lost, but Chen's memorial, which preserves the collection's table of contents, has survived. Zhuge Liang was an eminent statesman but no literary author by contemporary standards, for which Chen Shou apologized to the emperor in his memorial. Nevertheless, Chen's memorial affords us a glimpse into the process of compiling a collection. In it, Chen states that he had "eliminated repetitions as well as overlapping titles, grouped the writings under different subject headings, and thus made a collection in twenty-four chapters" (*Sanguo zhi* 35.930). The phrasing suggests that Zhuge Liang's manuscript remains—likely all from the Shu-Han documentary archives, since Zhuge Liang was one of its most distinctive public figures—contains many duplicate versions. The headings of the collection are mixed in nature: the classification does not seem to follow a consistent criterion, as some chapters are organized in terms of genre and content, such as "Military Instructions" or "Letters to Sun Quan," whereas others are ordered by major events, such as "Southern Campaigns" and "Northern Expeditions." Nevertheless, Chen Shou's memorial shows that the compilation of a collection involves more than just gathering an author's writings together; a great deal of editorial work is called for.

The Making of a Collection

In the *bieji* section, *Sui shu*'s "Monograph on Bibliography" records 437 titles in 4,381 scrolls, noting that the lost books number 886 titles in 8,126 scrolls. About 70 percent of the extant titles are from the Southern Dynasties (317–589). The Southern Dynasties, especially the fifth and sixth centuries, saw the first flourishing of literary collections (Tian 2007a: 100–101).

The early fifth century marked a literary renaissance in south China, with a variety of literary and cultural activities encouraged by reigning monarchs and pursued by men of letters. This was the time that saw the institutionalization of literary learning and scholarship. In 439, Emperor Wen of the Song (r. 424–453) established an Academy of Literature (Wenxue 文學) alongside the Academies of Classics (Jingxue 經學), History (Shixue 史學), and Metaphysical Learning (Xuanxue 玄學), presenting an institutional version of the four-part bibliographical system (*Song shu* 93.2293–2294). This also coincides with the creation of a new category in dynastic history, namely group biographies dedicated to literary authors entitled "Biographies of Men of Letters" (*Wenyuan zhuan*

文苑傳) in Fan Ye's *History of the Later Han*, in addition to and in contradistinction to the existing category of "Biographies of Ru Scholars" ("Rulin liezhuan" 儒林列傳). This new category was subsequently adopted in later dynastic histories.

Literary anthologies—*zongji*—abounded. The great aristocratic Xie clan played an important role. Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), a famous landscape poet, compiled a *Shi ji* 詩集 (*Collection of Poetry*) in fifty scrolls. It is now lost, but judging from its spin-offs, it must have exerted a considerable influence. Most notably, his cousin Xie Hun 謝混 (d. 412) compiled a *Ji yuan* 集苑 (*Garden of Collections*) in sixty scrolls, also lost. It seems to have been an anthology made from individual literary collections. It was followed by a *Ji lin* 集林 (*Grove of Collections*) compiled by a Song prince Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444) (*Sui shu* 35.1082).

A striking phenomenon characterizing this period is the boom of *bieji*. We witness a dramatic increase in the frequency of mention of authors compiling their own literary collections (see Tian 2006). Throughout the dynastic histories from the fifth through the early seventh century, there are also numerous references to the compilation of someone's literary collection commissioned by emperors and princes or voluntarily carried out by the author's friends and kin. That the biographical subject's "literary collection in X scrolls is circulating in the world" is often a standard way of ending a biography. This demonstrates social reality as well as the discursive importance of statements regarding a person's "literary collection." It exemplifies the idea espoused by Cao Pi that a person may live on through his literary work.

In the case of the prominent writer Jiang Yan 江淹 (444–505), we see the most striking indication of the contemporary perception of a literary collection as a crucial form of self-representation. According to his biography in *Liang shu* 梁書 (*History of the Liang*), Jiang Yan had compiled a "Former Collection" and a "Latter Collection" of his own writings (*Liang shu* 14.251). The current edition of Jiang Yan's works is believed to represent his "Former Collection." Included in this collection is a "self-account," which was written by Jiang Yan shortly after the founding of the Qi dynasty in 479. The autobiographical "self-account" had been a standard feature of a multichapter treatise—what Ge Hong refers to as "master's work"—since the Han (see also Chapter 24). In it, the author typically narrates his life history and explains the nature and purpose of his book. Jiang Yan's attachment of a "self-account" to a literary collection is a significant act. By using "self-account" in a *bieji* rather than a *zishu*, he evokes Ge Hong negatively by showing a marked difference from the earlier writer:

> I, Yan, once said, "In this life a man should seek happiness by suiting his nature. Why should he exert himself too hard for the sake of a posthumous name?" Therefore, from my youth until maturity, I have never written a book. I only have this collection in ten scrolls, but I consider it more than adequate. (Jiang 1984: 381)

Here Jiang Yan employs the same term used by Cao Pi, *zhushu* 著書 (to write a book), to describe the composition of a multichapter treatise. The tone, though apologetic, has a pride that belies its apparent humility. Jiang Yan's statement and his inclusion of a self-account in his literary collection are emblematic of the larger changes happening in his age.

As the editors of the eighteenth-century *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*) observed, this period saw the emergence of many of the forms and conventions (*tili* 體例) adopted by later editors of literary collections (*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 148.3101). If we discount Xue Zong's ambiguous *Sizai*, then Zhang Rong 張融 (444–497) was the first known writer to give descriptive titles to his literary collections: *Yuhai ji* 玉海 (*Jade Sea*), *Daze* 大澤 (*Great Marsh*), and *Jinbo* 金波 (*Golden Waves*) (*Sui shu* 35.1076). Another innovator was the eminent court poet Wang Yun 王筠 (481–549), who compiled a literary collection for each of the eight successive offices he had held (*Liang shu* 33.487).

The Liang 梁 (502–557), a dynasty that ruled south China peacefully for the first half of the sixth century, represents the pinnacle of literary accomplishment in early medieval China. Consciously modeling themselves on the Cao family of the Wei, the Xiao princes of the Liang played a crucial role in cultural undertakings. After his canonization in the Northern Song (960–1127), the poet Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (Tao Qian 陶潛, 365–427) has often been considered "neglected" in the immediate centuries after his death, yet Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), the Liang crown prince, not only compiled Tao Yuanming's collection but also wrote a preface for it himself. This testifies to the high esteem in which the poet was held in the sixth century. In 522, Xiao Tong entrusted the famous court poet Liu Xiaochuo 劉孝綽 (481–539) with the task of editing a collection of Xiao's own literary writings, which already amounted to ten scrolls. Liu Xiaochuo's preface to the collection has been preserved. After Xiao Tong's untimely death, his younger brother Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551) edited his collection in twenty scrolls and presented it to the throne along with a biography of Xiao Tong. Xiao Gang's preface to the collection is extant, though apparently incomplete. Xiao Gang also edited his sister Princess Lin'an's literary collection and wrote a preface for it. In the preface, he mentioned that he had searched for, and found, many "scattered and lost" compositions by the princess (Yan 1987a: 12.3017). These examples demonstrate that literary collections were compiled during an author's lifetime as well as after an author's death, and that the compilation of a collection was done deliberately and with care.

A collection often includes other people's writings that were written on the same social occasion or formed part of an exchange with the author's own, most notably in the case of poetry. Prominent court poet Jiang Zong 江總 (519–594) once wrote a poem in one hundred lines; many contemporaries, including Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583) and Yao Cha 姚察 (533–606), all composed follow-up poems on the same topic. Xu Ling explicitly told Jiang Zong, "I would like to find a place for my poem in your literary collection." When Jiang was compiling his collection, he found that he did not have Yao Cha's poem, so he asked Yao for a copy "to keep Lord Xu's piece company." Yao Cha declined out of modesty. Jiang then said, "If I don't have your poem, I would discard my own. If I do that, I would fail Lord Xu's request. How could you bear being the cause of two cases of loss?" At this Yao Cha relented (*Liang shu* 27.354). The anecdote gives interesting information about the composition and preservation of social poetry, and about how a collection was put together.

In the age of manuscript culture, any collection or text that was not carefully preserved and did not have multiple copies in multiple places could easily become lost (see Chapter 5). Tao Yuanming famously asked his friend or friends to copy out his poems (Lu 1995: 997). Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) deposited five copies of his own collection in different places to ensure conservation (*Quan Tang wen* 675.6897). The careful compilation and preservation of one's collection became a background against which writers could assert a casual attitude toward their writings, and such a casual attitude acquired a cultural cachet on its own. Lu Guimeng 陸龜蒙 (d. 881) said in "The Biography of Master Fuli" ("Fuli xiansheng zhuan" 甫里先生傳) that he had many draft compositions in baskets and boxes, of which he "could not make a clean copy for years. When I saw them later at someone else's place, I did not believe they had been written by myself" (*Quan Tang wen* 801.8420).

Xiao Gang spoke of seeking and gathering "scattered and lost" compositions by his sister. Many compositions had successfully escaped from their authors and sometimes came back to them in a state beyond recognition after going through manifold hand-copying. The care with which authors prepared their *bieji* is countered by stories about the impossibility of exercising authorial control. Yang Junzhi 陽俊之 (fl. mid-sixth century) once tried to correct errors in his poems that he saw on sale in a bookshop, but the bookseller rudely stopped him, saying, "Who do you think you are that you should try to revise an ancient worthy's writings?!" Yang was so pleased by being regarded as an "ancient worthy" that he apparently gave up his efforts quite happily (*Bei shi* 47.1728–1729).

Few authors would, however, fail to feel dismayed when they saw the altered appearance of their own writings. The Tang monk poet Guanxiu 貫休 (832–912) only "happened to get hold of" a complete copy of his quatrain set more than fifteen years after he first composed it, and was disconcerted to see them riddled with errors, "uncouth and vulgar" (*Quan Tang shi* 837.9425). Guanxiu revised his poems and made a "definitive" version, but this version could not supplant the other versions, "wrong" and "inferior," that were already in circulation. The proliferation of versions and variants presented a serious problem in the Northern Song, when a scholar editor tried to prepare a critical edition for circulation (often for putting into print) and found many different manuscript versions, each different from the others. Textual variants proliferated even as the editor was attempting to eliminate them, a Sisyphean task that was poignantly compared to trying to sweep fallen leaves in autumn or wiping dust from one's writing desk.

A *bieji* goes through other sorts of metamorphoses in the process of transmission in the age of manuscript culture. Readers copy out what they like from an author's collection and thus make a new "selected works," a *xiaoji* 小集 ("little collection") (see Chapter 10). The story about the Tang poet Wang Ji's 王績 (590?–644) collection is instructive. Wang Ji has been hailed as an eremitic, rustic, and ale-loving poet writing in the tradition of Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263) and Tao Yuanming. After his death, his compositions were edited into a collection of five scrolls by his friend Lü Cai 呂才 (600–665), who also wrote a long preface for this collection. Then, in the eighth century, scholar Lu Chun 陸淳 (d. 805) made another collection of Wang Ji's writings, with a preface that states:

> Every time I read his collection, I imagine what he was like and regret I am not his contemporary and close friend. Thereupon I have deleted those pieces expressing worldly ambitions, so as to preserve intact his aims to be a recluse [lit., untie his official's tassel and remove his official's cap]. If he should rise from the dead, I would not be ashamed of being his understanding friend from a different age. (*Quan Tang wen* 618.6239)

Lu Chun's preface shows that he has made an anthology of Wang Ji's writings, a *xiaoji*. The "Monograph on Arts and Writings" of *Song shi* 宋史 (*History of the* [*Zhao*] *Song*) records a Wang Ji collection in two scrolls edited by Lu Chun (*Song shi* 208.5332). This is less than half the size of Wang Ji's original collection. Subsequently, the most popular editions of Wang Ji's collection were all in three scrolls, which many scholars speculate were expanded on the basis of Lu Chun's two-scroll collection. Only in the last quarter of the twentieth century were several Qing dynasty manuscript copies of Wang Ji's collection in five scrolls discovered and authenticated. Compared with the traditionally popular three-scroll edition in print, the five-scroll edition represented by these manuscript copies contains nearly seventy additional poems and about two dozen extra prose pieces. A careful examination of the various editions—Lu Chun's two-scroll anthology represented by a Ming manuscript copy, the popular three-scroll edition in print, and the five-scroll edition—shows that Lu Chun was not only editing and selecting Wang Ji's poems on a moralistic basis but also on an aesthetic basis. He seems to have excised poems written in a "modern" style—quatrains as well as "prototypical Recent Style poems." These "modern" poems were written in the tradition not of the much earlier poets like Ruan Ji or Tao Yuanming but of the most recent court poets, most notably Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581) (see Tian 2007b). Wang Ji's traditional reputation of being a latter-day Ruan Ji or Tao Yuanming was very much built on an incomplete collection of his works; the selection was motivated by ideological concerns that in turn impact stylistic choices.

In the Tang, a reader might also copy down poems in a special subgenre (for instance, quatrains) out of a large literary collection if he or she happened to be interested in this subgenre. The reader would thus make a specialized anthology of an author in a particular subgenre, although in such a case it is less likely that the anthology would be taken to represent the author's whole self in the same way that Wang Ji's "little collection" was.

Inclusions and Exclusions

What sorts of writings does a *bieji* typically include? It is, first of all, supposed to represent all of the author's works in classical literary genres—poetry, poetic expositions, other rhymed writings such as eulogies and encomiums, and essays; but it also customarily includes prose genres serving practical functions. In the case of pre-Tang, we learn about the kinds of writing typically included in a *bieji* from the extant prefaces to some of the collections. For instance, in their prefaces to Xiao Tong's collection, Liu Xiaochuo and Xiao Gang make it clear that the prince's *bieji* contains, among other genres, poetry, poetic exposition, encomium, letter, inscription (*ming* 銘), "seven" (*qi* 七), stele inscription (*bei* 碑), and discursive essay (*yi* 議). Jiang Yan and Tao Yuanming are among the very few early medieval writers whose collections have survived more or less intact. Even though Jiang Yan's extant collection is in fact the "Former Collection" from his mid-career, a cursory look at its table of contents enables us to glimpse a concept of "literature" different from our modern notion. Besides the standard literary genres, we find military proclamation (*xiwen* 檄文), memorial to the throne (subdivided into *zhang* 章 and *biao* 表 according to the occasions of writing), edict drafted on behalf of the emperor (*zhao* 詔), instruction drafted on behalf of princes (*jiao* 教), communiqué (*qi* 啟, also functioning as a thank-you note addressed to a social superior), letter (*shu* 書) and informal letter (*jian* 箋), elegy (*lei* 誄), grave memoir (*muzhi* 墓誌), conduct description (*xingzhuang* 行狀), sacrificial address (*jiwen* 祭文), biography (*zhuan* 傳), and so forth.

Among Tang writers, Bai Juyi is well known for the care he lavished on his literary collection, which consequently is conserved remarkably well (Bai 1988: 13). It includes, besides several thousand poems and a small number of poetic expositions, numerous political writings such as the edicts he drafted on behalf of the emperor. It also features some prose genres not found in Jiang Yan's collection, most notably *ji* 記 (account), namely short essays on sites, artworks, or experiences; *cewen* 策問 (civil examination questions); and *pan* 判 (legal verdicts, written in strict parallel prose). A particularly interesting inclusion is *Ce lin* 策林 (*A Grove of Examination Questions*), which includes seventy-five mock questions and answers on governance and policies.

The question of what authors include and, more important, exclude in their literary collections is directly tied to the question of what is considered "literature," and the answer to the question must be historicized just like the notion of literature itself (see Chapter 1). The letter proves an interesting object for consideration. People have written letters in many cultures from past to present, but when does a written note serving the practical aim of communication become part of "literature"? This question is intimately related to the issue of preservation and survival when textual fragility and destruction were the norm: numerous ordinary letters fulfilling a useful purpose—inquiring after the health of a loved one; conveying news about oneself—must have been written and lost except in serendipitous cases of excavation. We can count on the fact that a vast number of such letters never made their way into an author's literary collection. They may be exemplified by Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303–361) notes, which were casually dashed off on the most mundane and domestic subjects imaginable, and often border on incomprehensibility because of their intimate references known to few beyond the recipients and their colloquial style. Those notes are preserved solely because Wang Xizhi was the most renowned early medieval Chinese calligrapher (see Chapter 6). In other words, any letter or letter fragment we see today has been consciously saved by either the writer or the recipient or both for a reason beyond its immediate objective of communication. More often than not, they were included in an author's "literary collection." A pair of letters in exquisitely crafted parallel prose, written by eminent court writers Wang Bao 王褒 (513–576) and Zhou Hongrang 周弘讓 (fl. mid-sixth century), are preserved in Wang Bao's biography in dynastic history (*Zhou shu* 41.731–733). They are most likely from either Wang's or Zhou's literary collection, or both.

The history of grave memoir illustrates the making of a *literary* genre. Unlike the tomb stele inscription (*beiwen* 碑文), which is above ground, the grave memoir is usually buried underground; its concerns range from offering basic information about the identity of the deceased to presenting more elaborate narration and a eulogy of the life of the deceased. The latter became increasingly common, perhaps partially in response to the repeated bans on the erection of commemorative stelae at the gravesite in the third century as well as in the early fifth century. Many grave memoirs produced prior to the fifth century have been excavated in modern times; however, grave memoirs *with known authors that were preserved as texts* apparently did not begin to appear until the first half of the fifth century. In a ritual discussion held in 480 on whether to place a grave memoir in the mausoleum of the Crown Princess Pei Huizhao 裴惠昭 (d. 480), the officials in charge memorialized the emperor:

> In a precedent established in the Daming Era [457–464], a grave memoir inscribed on stone was placed in the mausoleum of the deceased Crown Princess. According to our deliberations, grave memoirs are not from the ritual canon. During the Yuanjia Era [424–453], Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 [384–456] composed a grave memoir inscribed on stone for Wang Qiu 王球 [393–441]. Members of genteel clans do not have stele inscriptions or lamentations [reserved for the royalty], so a grave memoir is used instead to record the virtue of the deceased; yet, since Yan Yanzhi's time, from princes and dukes on down, all have adopted the practice. (*Nan Qi shu* 10.158)

Yan Yanzhi was the leading court writer of his day, and Wang Qiu was a famous member of one of the top aristocratic clans; the two were fast friends (*Song shu* 73.1893). It is easy to imagine that Yan Yanzhi fashioned an exquisite grave memoir to be buried with his deceased friend while keeping a copy of it to be circulated above ground. Social standing and literary prestige were crucial factors in the rise of the grave memoir from a merely functional genre to a literary genre, which quickly became a form of cultural capital enjoyed by both the author and the family of the deceased. *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (*Classified Extracts from Literature*), the early-seventh-century encyclopedia, includes excerpts from about forty grave memoirs, the earliest of which is the grave memoir composed by Emperor Xiaowu of the Song (r. 454–464) for his beloved brother Liu Hong 劉宏 (434–458). The majority of these grave memoirs were, however, from late fifth and sixth century. Since *Yiwen leiju* was compiled on the basis of, among other sources, individual literary collections available to the compilers, we may assume that writers first began to keep copies of grave memoirs they composed to be included in their *bieji* around the mid-fifth century.

Last but not least, we should mention an author's "specialized collection" outside the author's literary collection, a phenomenon that had become increasingly common from the eighth century on (Owen 1997: 306–309). These subcollections include, among other kinds, exchange collections or special theme collections that sometimes were "explicitly meant to be excluded." Han Wo's 韓偓 (ca. 844–923) *Xianglian ji* 香奩集 (*Collection of the Aromatic Cosmetic Box*) is a fascinating case. This specialized collection, as indicated by its title, contains poems of gentle eroticism, which are all excluded from Han Wo's "regular" literary collection known as *Han Hanlin ji* 韓翰林集 (*Collection of Hanlin Academician Han*). This practice continued and was sometimes taken to an extreme in later times.

The Afterlife of a Literary Collection

Most pre-Tang *bieji* had, as mentioned before, become scattered and lost. While Tang writers took the Six Dynasties literary legacy seriously, Song writers by and large ignored pre-Tang authors except Tao Yuanming (see Chapter 21). This situation changed dramatically in the Ming, which saw a revival of interest in early medieval literature. Most of the pre-Tang literary collections we have today were reconstituted from encyclopedias, commentaries, and anthologies by Ming editors (see Chapter 22). The process of scattering and loss had already started during the sudden collapse of the Liang dynasty around the mid-sixth century. Reportedly, only one copy of Xiao Gang's complete literary collection had survived the chaos and, after the fall of the second Liang capital Jiangling to the Western Wei army, was presumably taken to Chang'an and deposited in the imperial library of the Wei. Xiao Gang's youngest son Xiao Dayuan 蕭大圜 (d. ca. 581 or after) did not see his father's collection until he was appointed an academician in the northern court in the early 560s and immediately set out to make a copy of it (*Zhou shu* 42.757). When the Tang historian Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643) remarked disapprovingly that Xiao Gang's poetry was all about boudoir life (*Sui shu* 35.1090), he most likely had never read Xiao Gang's collection in its entirety. In fact, his knowledge about Xiao Gang's poetry might very likely have come from *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs of the Jade Terrace*), a wildly popular Liang anthology of poetry about women and romantic love that includes many of Xiao Gang's poems on these topics.

In contrast with their disregard for the pre-Tang literary legacy, Song literati spent considerable energy searching for and collating manuscript copies of Tang writings (see Chapter 21). While they recognized that each copy was different, they nevertheless passionately sought the one and only "true" version representing an author's "original intent" (see Chapter 5; also see Tian 2005: 9–55). They rebuilt Tang literary collections from partial versions, from "little collections," and from specialized collections. In the meanwhile, however, the practice of compiling specialized collections continued, and new complications arose. A new kind of poetry, *ci* or song lyrics, fully emerged into view in the world of letters. Although the topics of *ci* did expand to embrace many of the conventional literary subjects, the genre was often associated with romance, wine, and women due to its roots in popular culture and its frequent performance at parties and in the entertainment quarters in its early history. Gradually, from its humble beginning as popular songs, *ci* acquired prestige and importance as a major literary genre after the eleventh century, yet *ci* lyrics were not normally included in an author's literary collection and were circulated separately until the late twelfth century, and even then, only in selected cases.

In late imperial China, the same happened with works of vernacular literature: stories and vernacular songs (*sanqu* 散曲) tended to be excluded from an author's literary collection, and in the latter case, certainly not out of length concerns. Plays, too, often circulated separately, though there were a few exceptions. In the meanwhile, under the pressure of *ci*, classical *shi* poetry became increasingly "serious." In the notable case of Yao Xie 姚燮 (1805–1864), a famous late Qing poet, it has been noted that the Yao Xie in his *shi* collection and the Yao Xie in his *ci* collection seemed to be two different persons even when the *shi* poems and the *ci* lyrics were composed in the same period (Yao 1986: 222). Yao Xie also made a specialized collection celebrating local courtesans at the same time that he was writing poems expressing grave concerns about the British invasion and about the worsening health of his wife (Tian 2015). Only two quatrains from the specialized collection, *Shizhou chunyu* 十洲春語, made their way into Yao's *shi* poetry collection, *Fuzhuang shiwen* 復莊詩問. The chronologically arranged *shi* collection includes poems about national crisis, social sufferings, and personal woes; it was carefully edited and prepared for printing by Yao Xie himself. Segregation of genres coincides with that of experiences; writers would carefully compartmentalize their lives into many partitioned areas that were impossible to reconcile, and they accomplished this by separating these compartmentalized life experiences into different genres and different collections.

One may justifiably say that Yao Xie's model is Han Wo, who also compartmentalizes his experiences into two collections. Nevertheless, the contradiction between Yao Xie's different selves is more radical, dramatic, and troubling because of the immediacy and intensity of the national and family crises he found himself confronting. The clear dating of his writings highlights their incompatibility when we place them side by side. If the early medieval "Masters' works" showcase a consistent voice throughout the book, then a *bieji* has an innate problem because it contains various textual genres that can channel different voices of the author. When an author compiled different collections, these collections could, and often did, function as textual containers that enabled the neat segregation of an author's multiple selves. A modern literary scholar is often tempted to study these distinct textual containers—genres and collections—separately, but in the final analysis, it would behoove us to piece back together the parts and examine them in juxtaposition as a whole.

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II. *Modern Perspectives on Genre*

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION (WAI-YEE LI)

THE past is a foreign country. To navigate such unfamiliar terrains, one can choose either the vantage point of the past or that of the present—to understand a text from the past, one can "restore it to history" and reconstruct its frames of reference, or one can reclaim its "relevance" by bringing modern conceptual categories to bear on it. Of course these two perspectives are often intertwined. The previous section, "Traditional Genre Spectrum," explores views from within traditional notions of genre and textual order. In order to do so, however, Chapters 12–15 also bring in perspectives of comparative culture (e.g., the Greek word *historía* in Chapter 13, Greek philosophy and Hellenistic traditions in Chapter 14) and questions traditional definitions (e.g., "Classics" as the embodiment of immutable values [Chapter 12] and "Collection" as the summation of a person's literary character [Chapter 15]). The next three chapters will explore modern perspectives on genre, but they will test the heuristic value of these categories by mapping them against formulations of relevant genres in the tradition.

Modern discussions of genres in the Chinese tradition sometimes become a hunt for "missing genres." The idea that all traditions should have some sort of epic has led some scholars to identify the poems about early Zhou leaders and the founding of the Zhou dynasty in *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) as "epic" (translated as *shishi* 史詩) in ambition if not in form (Chapter 17). Others (e.g., Li Changzhi 李長之 [1910–1978]) claim the mantle of epic as foundational narrative for early historical writings like *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*). With a focus on metrical qualities, length, and narrative sweep, Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) compares the woman writer Chen Duansheng's 陳端生 (1751–ca. 1796) *tanci* 彈詞 (prosimetric narrative), *Zaisheng yuan* 再生緣 (*Love in Two Lives*), to epic in the Greek and Indian traditions (Chen 1980: 1). Likewise, the relatively late rise of drama in the Chinese context (as compared to the Greek, Roman, and Sanskrit traditions) might have compelled Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) to define pre-tenth-century antecedents when he wrote *Song Yuan xiqu shi* 宋元戲曲史 (*History of Drama During the Song and Yuan Dynasties*, 1915). Wang sought the roots of Chinese drama in ritual and shamanistic performance in *Shijing* and *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*); in the verbal, musical, and acrobatic performance of jesters and entertainers noted in early historical writings and rhapsodies or poetic expositions (*fu* 賦); and in "proto-drama" such as "masked play" (*daimian* 代面), "adjutant play" (*canjun* 參軍), and "head moves" (a literal translation of *botou* 撥頭, a transliterated term sometimes written with different characters) from the Tang dynasty (Wang 1996: 1–13). Sporadic references are thus fashioned into a genealogy. The immense prestige of tragedy in the Western tradition has also inspired many Chinese scholars to look for Yuan, Ming, and Qing plays worthy of the label as they valiantly tailor Aristotelian, Hegelian, or Nietzschean definitions of tragedy.

One may be tempted to dismiss such endeavors as manifestations of a kind of "me-too" cultural inferiority complex. But to do so would be to underestimate the lure of the universalist claims of the poetics and aesthetics rooted in German Idealism. When Aristotle describes how "the poet may imitate by narration—in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged—or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us" (*Poetics* III, Adams 1971: 49), the implied differentiation of epic, lyrical, and dramatic modes still seems empirical. Distinctions come to be essentialized "as an opposition of ontological categories or moments in a dialectical process" in the writings of Schelling (1775–1854) and Hegel (1770–1831). Thus Schelling identifies the lyric with "difference," the epic with "identity," and drama with the dialectical unity of identity and difference. "For Hegel, the epic corresponds to an object in pure being, the lyric to a subject in a mood, the drama to a synthesis of object and subject in an act of volition" (Averintsev 2001: 17). Emil Staiger (1908–1987), the phenomenological heir of German Idealism, treats epic, lyric, and drama as modes of consciousness, with hidden temporal structures pertaining to, respectively, the present (presentation), the past (remembrance), and the future (tension) (Staiger 1991). Since object, subject, the past, the present, and the future are abstract, ontological categories of supposedly universal validity, "application" to the Chinese context may be forgiven as an exercise in logical categorization, even if it now seems hopelessly unfashionable. Furthermore, reflections along these lines can be fruitful. Instead of yielding only epic or drama manqué, they can raise important questions, e.g.: Does a culture need a foundational narrative? What forms may it take? How is direct utterance opposed to playacting? How is the author's voice mediated through rhetorical and representational contexts? What should be the frameworks for addressing narrative or performative elements in poetry and prose?

Universalism has ceded ground to the discourse of cultural difference. In the case of epic and drama, for example, their absence in Chinese literature in the period under consideration simply draws attention to the fallacy of regarding epic, lyric, and drama as necessary components of a logical system rather than as historically related genres from ancient Greece. Genre theory is balanced—or perhaps stranded—between history and theory, and the mapping of historical instantiations is an obvious way to articulate theoretical genres. In the 1920s and 1930s, writers and scholars legitimized the new vernacular literature and reinterpreted tradition through the literary histories of several genres that sometimes sounded familiar but were in fact reinventions; examples include *Zhongguo shi shi* 中國詩史 (*History of Chinese Poetry*, 1931) by Lu Kanru 陸侃如 (1903–1978) and Feng Yuanjun 馮沅君 (1900–1974), *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi lue* 中國小說史略 (*Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, 1923) by Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), *Baihua wenxue shi* 白話文學史 (*A History of Vernacular Literature*, 1928) by Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), and *Zhongguo suwenxue shi* 中國俗文學史 (*A History of Chinese Popular Literature*, 1938) by Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898–1958).

The quotation marks we put around "Chinese poetry" are meant to highlight the maneuvers and reconceptualization implied by that category. "There is no one word that incorporates all of the genres we tend to associate with the 'poetic' " in the Chinese tradition, hence an overview of the verse forms that come under the rubric, each with its own aesthetic vocabulary and evaluative criteria, is necessary (Chapter 16). When Lu Kanru and Feng Yuanjun wrote *Zhongguo shi shi* in the late 1920s, they were self-consciously redefining *shi* 詩, a word that traditionally refers only to the more elevated verse forms (old-style poetry, regulated verse, quatrains, etc.). Although *shi* originally designated the poems that came to be collected in *Shijing*, the latter's status as "Classic" meant that it was usually discussed separately from the belletristic tradition (with the exception of some late imperial *shihua* 詩話 [*Remarks on Poetry*]). *Chuci* with its distinct metrical qualities also stood apart. Lu and Feng broaden the definition of *shi* to include *Shijing, Chuci*, and verse forms such as *yuefu* 樂府 (Music Bureau poems), song lyrics (*ci* 詞), and vernacular songs (*qu* 曲) by appealing to Bai Juyi's 白居易 (772–846) famous definition of poetry as "being rooted in emotions, sprouting shoots as words, flowering as sounds, and bearing fruit as meaning" 根情, 苗言, 華聲, 實義, as well as Alexander Bogdanov's (1873–1928) notion that poetry is the language of living images (Lu and Feng 1996: 1:6). It is perhaps no accident that Bai Juyi's formulation appeared in his letter to Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) justifying the aesthetics of his colloquial "new Music Bureau poems" (*xin yuefu* 新樂府) or that Bogdanov theorized about proletarian poetry. If emotion is the wellspring of poetry and imagery the principal mode of literary expression and communication, and if the goal is to communicate effectively with a broad audience, then the traditional hierarchy of poetic forms can no longer hold sway.

This redefinition of poetry valorizes "naturalness" (*ziran* 自然), excludes the formal and the grand (e.g., rhapsodies), and facilitates a "history" based on a succession of poetic forms that flourish and decline. Vaguely echoing Hegelian dialectics, Lu and Feng divide their history into "poetry's history of freedom" 詩的自由史 (beginnings to the end of Han), "poetry's history of bondage" 詩的束縛史 (Six Dynasties and Tang), and "poetry's history of transformation" 詩的變化史 (Southern Tang, Song, and Yuan). The idea that each era has its own representative literary form, most famously articulated by Wang Guowei in *Renjian Cihua* 人間詞話 (*Remarks on Lyrics in the Human Realm*, 1910) but also already evident in Zang Maoxun's 臧懋循 (1550–1620) preface to his anthology of Yuan plays (1625), justifies the exclusion of a great swath of the extant corpus (Ming and Qing poetic genres) and implicitly affirms vernacular New Poetry (*xinshi* 新詩) as the representative genre of modern times. *Zhongguo shi shi* may seem anachronistic, but some of its ideas, including the focus on poetic imagery; organic, biological metaphors for genres; and an emphasis on "lyrical self-expression, political awareness, and spontaneity" (Chapter 16), still infuse broad conceptions of "Chinese poetry."

Lu and Feng end their book with songs from the Yuan dynasty, implying (through omission and distortion) a trajectory of "vernacularization." This was also the avowed goal of the literary histories by Hu Shi and Zheng Zhenduo, who both posited an opposition between elite and popular literature. In this vision, elite literature is periodically revitalized by the orality, creativity, and transparency of popular literature. This binary division depends, however, on the exclusive identification of "the popular" with the vernacular, with oral transmission, and with performance and entertainment, problematic propositions in all cases. The retrieval of popular literature for our period may be impossible, because such works "could only survive to the extent they were incorporated into elite culture and adapted to its needs" in the age of manuscript culture (Chapter 17).

What is to be gained by the formulation of "elite versus popular literature"? For Hu Shi, whose history of vernacular literature started off as lecture notes in 1921, the idea is instrumental for his advocacy of the "literary revolution." In some ways, his strategy is not very different from those of political reformers who tried to "change the system by appealing to antiquity" (*tuo gu gai zhi* 托古改制). Hu Shi rebranded sections of classical literature from early Han to mid-Tang (the chronological span of his book) as "vernacular" based on his somewhat subjective judgment of their language as "clear and comprehensible" (*mingbai* 明白) or "pure and unadorned" (*qingbai* 清白). In doing so, he forged semantic connections between the vernacular language (*baihua* 白話) and the qualities of "clarity" and "purity." The modern vernacular thus gained a classical pedigree beyond its obvious filiation to late imperial vernacular fiction. In the process, Hu also drew attention to hitherto neglected works, such as translations of Buddhist stories or "vernacular" poets like Wang Fanzhi 王梵志 (seventh century) and Hanshan 寒山 (Cold Mountain, ca. seventh–eighth century). Zheng Zhenduo, a more serious collector and researcher of folk literature, went further in reclaiming major works of classical literature (including *Shijing* and "Nine Songs" in *Chuci*) as "popular." He also expanded the terrain of Tang literature by studying the newly discovered Dunhuang "transformation texts" (*bianwen* 變文) and "vernacular rhapsodies" (*su fu* 俗賦). Perhaps for scholars like Hu and Zheng, such a vision of "recuperating" popular literature from the tradition also reflected their ardent hope that the new vernacular literature could overcome the divide between the "elite" and the "popular" and fulfill its mission of moral and social transformation.

The quest for the "popular" in classical literature directs attention to narrative genres (e.g., narrative poems, Buddhist stories, "transformation texts") because of their supposed ties with folklore and storytelling. The term "narrative genres" applies to a range of disparate materials with a dizzying array of labels for the period covered in this volume (Chapter 18). The idea of narrative plays a necessary part in the "narrative-dramatic-lyrical" spectrum, a tripartite division of literary modes that, thanks to Aristotle and Hegel, continues to hold sway. It also serves to circumvent the shifting and amorphous history-fiction divide in the Chinese tradition. Modern histories of traditional Chinese fiction regularly seek its beginnings in early historical writings. Nor is the Chinese case unique; Walpole (1717–1797) quipped that history was "a species of romance that is believed," while romance was "a species of history that is not believed" (cited in Gossman 1990: 3). By focusing on history and fiction or their disputed respective Chinese equivalents, *shi* 史 and *xiaoshuo* 小說, as "two contrasting focal points that have shaped the perception and interpretation of Chinese narrative over time," we can see how different categorization schemes and descriptive accounts registered commonalities and differences (Chapter 18).

The teleological framework of Lu Xun's immensely influential history of Chinese fiction (*xiaoshuo*) implies a trajectory of increasing length and complexity as well as heightened self-consciousness. The demarcation of "fictional self-consciousness" is, however, irrelevant for the traditional classification of *xiaoshuo* (and related genres) under "Masters" or "Histories," categories that emphasize its function to instruct or entertain and its usefulness as historical information. (For this period, there was discussion of artistry and self-conscious craft, but not of "fictionality.") By contrast, fictional self-consciousness is a necessary signpost in the "evolutionary path" pointing to the masterpieces of Ming-Qing fiction (sometimes translated as "novels") and (beyond the chronological frame of Lu Xun's book) their modern heirs, the short stories and novels produced by Lu Xun and his contemporaries. From its humble beginnings as the least important of the subcategory in "Various Masters" in the "Monograph on Arts and Writings" ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志) in *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*), *xiaoshuo* would rise to become the harbinger of modernity because of its putative, though tenuous, association with the modern novel (also called *xiaoshuo*) and short story (*duanpian xiaoshuo* 短篇小說).

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CHAPTER 16

"CHINESE POETRY"

PAUL ROUZER

DEFINING what constitutes "poetry" in early China is not an easy task. There is no one word that incorporates all of the genres we tend to associate with the "poetic" (in the case of classical Chinese writing, the "poetic" includes set line lengths, the employment of rhyme, and attention to tonal patterns and their euphonic effects). Modern Chinese often employs the word *shi* 詩 as a general, globalized term for "poetry," a word that is rooted in Western post-Romantic conceptions of the poetry genre and is connected as well to the capitalist forces shaping the publication market (this is sometimes recognized through the application of the term *xinshi* 新詩—"New Poetry"—to modern "art" poetry). In premodern times, however, this word had a more limited range generically, though its role in Chinese cultural production was arguably much greater. It might also be pointed out that the composition of traditional *shi* continues as a modern tradition, just as *haikai* and *tanka* composition remains a vital part of the Japanese poetry scene (though it is not taken quite as seriously by the establishment as those genres are in Japan).

From the premodern perspective, *shi* as a formal genre was certainly the most important of the different kinds of "poetry," but it was by no means the only one. In particular, it was often contrasted with the genre of *fu* 賦 or "rhapsody"—a significant form of poetic writing through the imperial era. Yet even here, seeing *shi* and *fu* on the one side as examples of "poetry" as opposed to "prose" on the other is a somewhat modern distinction. Traditional literary taxonomies classified *fu* as an example of *wen* 文 or "ornamented prose" (see Chapter 22), which often included genres that showed none or only a few of the traits associated with the poetic. And to make matters even more confusing, the fifth century saw the rise of *pianti wen* 駢體文 or "parallel prose"—a form of essay that also employed set rhythmic patterns and rhyme.

The following discussion will focus primarily on the evolution of the *shi* genre, with some consideration of the *fu*; it will also touch on the popularity of traditional *shi* forms in genres of writing not considered canonical by the tradition—for example, Buddhist sutras and popular narratives.

EARLY *SHI*

The term *shi* first emerges in the Spring and Autumn era to describe a body of memorized poetry that circulated among the educated classes (see Chapters 1, 12). Citations in *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*) and *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*) indicate that the memorization and employment of these poems in public speech was an essential mark of the educated individual, especially in Confucian circles (Van Zoeren 1991: 17–51; Schaberg 2001: 57–95). The examples of *shi* quoted in early texts tend to show similar metrical qualities: four syllables per line of verse, with the employment of rhymes at the end of even-numbered lines (though there was considerable flexibility to these rules). Since lines of *shi* were *quoted* as an adornment to public speech or as an aid to diplomatic exchanges, it is difficult to form any sense of their original context, or to determine the social origins of their original authors. Twentieth-century commentators have often favored an anthropological folk-reading of the original *shi* and have attempted to associate them with festivals, courtship, and other life-events that would have been typical in pre-imperial China (e.g., Granet 1919); however, such readings are highly speculative and, with a few exceptions, are largely alien to premodern traditions of early *shi* interpretation (Chapter 17).

There are indications that members of the Confucian school organized this body of anonymous *shi* into an anthology by the third century BCE, attributing its compilation to Confucius himself (Allen 1996). This is the work (with some textual variations) that became the canonical *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) during the Han dynasty (Chapter 12). With the codification of the Confucian canon during the Han, the task of determining an orthodox interpretation of the poems became paramount. Gradually, the commentaries associated with the Mao 毛 family of commentators (beginning ca. 150 BCE) won out over their competitors, and defined the later hermeneutics of *Shijing* through the Tang (Chapters 8, 9, 12). To summarize briefly, the Mao commentaries interpreted each *Shijing* poem as the expression of a specific author reacting emotionally and intellectually to historical events in his or her own life; to read the poems with the commentaries was thus to read a history of the Chinese world from its earliest days until the time of Confucius. And since it was piously believed that Confucius was responsible for editing the text, the Mao interpretations elevated the poems as morally paradigmatic responses to social and political events (Van Zoeren 1991: 52–115; Chapter 23). This belief would have profound implications for the history of Chinese poetry, especially in its assumption that a *shi* inscribes the personality and ethical dispositions of its author at a precise moment of history. The Mao family tradition would also contribute some crucial terminology that would influence traditional poetics—for example, the distinction made between *bi* 比 (explicit metaphor) and *xing* 興 (evocative association).

From the time of the compilation of *Shijing*, the poems within the collection were considered canonical, and thus their style signified orthodoxy and archaism. Poets did continue to write in the style of *Shijing*, with its rhyming couplets of four-syllable lines; however, they usually employed it for formal or ceremonial occasions. It may be found in later state temple hymns, for example, or as concluding postscripts to prose genres such as epitaphs, biographies, or memorial inscriptions. Occasionally, poets did write expressive, lyrical four-syllable poetry that has been admired by later readers, but because such usage was divorced for the most part from what came to be seen as the "mainstream" of *shi* development (as will be outlined in the following sections), it has tended to make us forget its continuing widespread presence in medieval Chinese writing, particularly in the pre-Tang era.

FROM HAN TO TANG

In spite of the elevation of pre-imperial poems in the form of the canonical *Shijing*, the term *shi* remained a common appellation for poetry of various sorts, and examples of such *shi* are often quoted in texts dating from the Han. However, it is not until the end of the dynasty that we see the gradual emergence of this newer verse as a more stable genre. Speculation on its origins is rendered difficult by its method of preservation—largely through the compilation of sixth-century anthologies, especially *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*) edited by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), a prince of the Liang dynasty (Chapter 20). Xiao Tong's (and other anthologists') acts of curatorship to a certain extent imposed a canonizing narrative onto the past—one that we cannot entirely escape (Owen 2006b: 23–72).

For example, *Wen xuan* includes a collection of nineteen anonymous poems that are simply labeled *gushi* 古詩 ("old poems"). All of them share the same structure: they range from eight to twenty lines long, each line is composed of five syllables, and every two lines (a couplet) form a complete sentence or thought. Even lines rhyme with each other, and one rhyme tends to hold through the entire poem, though rhyme changes may occur in longer poems. Couplets often employ simple parallel patterns, as can be seen in this famous couplet from the first of the nineteen: "The Tartar horse leans into the north wind, /The Yue bird nests in southern branches" 胡馬依北風, 越鳥巢南枝. The same themes tend to occur repeatedly, and suggest a formulaic style of composition suitable for popular song: celebrations of the pleasures of this life; laments for the inevitability of aging and death; evocation of female beauty; laments over separation from friends or lovers. The flexible couplet-structure tends to allow for condensation or expansion at the improvisatory will of the composer, and nothing suggests a biographically specific authorial consciousness behind the generalized themes. These poems have usually been dated to the second century CE, but there is no proof that they predate other poems attributed to known authors of this style of *shi* (who begin to emerge at the end of the second century; Diény 1963; Diény 1968; Owen 2006b).

Many of the earliest nonanonymous poems come from intellectuals attached to the literary salons associated with the Cao family: the warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220),

who laid the groundwork for the Wei dynasty, and his sons, Cao Pi (曹丕 187–226) and Cao Zhi 曹植 (191–232). The Cao circle poems rely heavily on the formulaic methods seen in the Nineteen Old Poems, though a number may attempt to describe specific events in the poets' lives and seek to express their particularized responses. Later Chinese readers have attempted to read these poems as more intensely autobiographical than they are likely to be (Frankel 1964). In particular, the poems of Cao Zhi were later read as allegorical illustrations of his tragic struggle with his jealous brother, Cao Pi.

For several centuries, it was unclear just how the *shi* genre would develop and what role it would play in Chinese literature as it evolved after the Han. Though the tropes of the Cao circle continued to be elaborated, *shi* also became a medium for philosophical elaboration, connected specifically with the form of metaphysical speculation known as *xuanxue* 玄學 ("metaphysical learning" or "arcane learning"). The surviving examples of poetry in this style give little evidence either of the generalized lyricism of the earlier tradition or of the autobiographical self-expression that would come to dominate the later *shi* tradition. This metaphysical turn largely ends with the work of two poets: first, Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427; also known as Tao Yuanming 陶淵明), who used the *shi* form to combine his own philosophical attitudes with a discussion of his life as a gentleman-farmer and recluse (Ashmore 2010), and second, Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), a wealthy aristocrat who wrote *shi* that combined detailed description of landscape and of the scenic beauties of his mountain estates with his own emotional responses to his life as a courtier (Chang 1986: 47–78; Swartz 2010). Though Tao would prove the more important figure in the Chinese literary tradition overall, Xie was more immediately significant in founding a form of *shi* composition that combined personal expression with the increasingly elegant use of language suitable for the refined literary salons that were forming at the courts of the southern emperors of the fifth and sixth centuries. Specifically, Xie inspired a series of courtier-poets who came to define *shi* composition before the founding of the Tang: Bao Zhao 鮑照 (414?–466), Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499), Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581), and the members of the Liang royal family (Chang 1986; Mather 1988; Mather 2003; Tian 2007). This explosion of *shi* composition elevated the form to one of the most important literary genres of traditional China. Perhaps just as importantly, it made literati self-conscious about the form, and drove them to conceptualize a history for the *shi* form and to preserve (and possibly partially rewrite) surviving examples of it, which they canonized in anthologies (see Chapter 19). This may make the standard interpretation of early *shi* development somewhat problematic (Owen 2006b).

The new court poetry maintained the same basic metrical pattern characteristic of the earlier popular verse: five-syllable lines structured in couplet form, rhyming of even-numbered lines, and an indefinite number of lines for each poem. However, these basic structures were refined and tailored for elite aesthetics. Parallelism became more complex and elaborate; numerous literary and historical allusions were employed; diction became more refined, while vulgar and commonplace vocabulary was eliminated; and poets began paying attention to the tonal nature of the Chinese language and sought to codify ways to make lines of verse more euphonically pleasing. This change is associated particularly with innovations introduced by Shen Yue (Mather 1988), but there is some evidence that writers became conscious of this element in writing through exposure to Sanskrit—this being the age of Buddhist sutra translations—and their awareness of the rules of Sanskrit metrics and its patterning of short and long syllables (Mair and Mei 1991; Chapter 32). Buddhism may also have had an effect on the way that poets described phenomena; its philosophy may have made them more conscious of the shifting and illusory nature of sensual appearance (Tian 2007: 211–259).

The gradual codification of poetic decorum was in keeping with a competitive, prestige-oriented courtier culture; such restrictions tended to discourage idiosyncratic composition and facilitated the witty constructions of poems in the competitive atmosphere of banquets and drinking parties. It is in this environment that we see the emergence of one of the defining dynamics of the Chinese poetic tradition: the tension between stylistic sophistication and elegance on the one hand and the desire for self-expressive lyricism on the other (Chapter 23). While courtiers refined poetic language and created a more versatile tool that greatly surpassed the simplicity of early popular verse, the suspicion arose that its artificiality betrayed the ideal that poetry was a largely spontaneous and sincere response of the poet to social circumstances. The hostility to courtly refinement did not become as strong as it would among later critics, but there was a sense that elegance needed to be tempered with sincerity of expression, lest poetry become merely a frivolous indulgence. Such a view could already be seen in the writings of Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (ca. 468–518) and Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s), and it surfaces again in Tang attacks on ornamentation (Chapter 26).

It is true that the role of poetry as a form of elite performance in courtly salons tended to limit its versatility. Most surviving poems from the era were composed in the context of social exchange, usually at a banquet or on similar occasions; themes were chosen beforehand, and poets were evaluated on their ability to compose elegant and euphonious verse of limited length (eight to twelve lines). Compositional games flourished, including the composition of poems to set rhymes and rhetorical explorations of certain aesthetic objects (a kind of flower, for example, or a painting). Poems written outside of court (of which epistolary poems exchanged between friends were the most common) tend to show a greater balance between elegance and self-expressive lyricism. We also see a persistent strain of earnest and critical engagement, often associated with a set of eighty-two enigmatic poems written by Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263) entitled "Singing My Cares" ("Yong huai" 詠懷), which gave poets a precedent for expressing their feelings in a tone of moral satire and outrage (Holzman 1976). Carried on significantly by the last great poet of the pre-Tang era, Yu Xin (Graham 1983), this form of verse would continue to exist as a mode of expression among Tang poets who wished to employ a voice of high morality and of deliberate archaizing virtue.

"*YUEFU*"?

It should also be mentioned that a separate form of manuscript transmission seems to have coexisted with the *shi* tradition described so far; by the sixth century, it was associated with a form of sung poetry termed *yuefu* 樂府 or "Music Bureau [songs]." The tradition of *yuefu* is particularly murky. The Music Bureau was actually a Han bureaucratic office in charge of composing ritual music for state occasions. Later on, a legend developed that one of its functions was also the collection of popular songs that would serve as a sort of referendum on current imperial policies—based on the belief that the moral health of a state could be found in the music and poetry that state produced. As a result, *yuefu* became a general term applied by the later Chinese tradition to anonymous ballads and songs of popular origins as well as imitations of such verse by members of the educated elite. Eventually, the term was used even more broadly for any form of verse perceived as "musical." The gradual expansion of the term over centuries of Chinese literary history makes the description of what might be called a "*yuefu* poem" particularly complicated—by the Tang dynasty, at any rate, it can be applied to many different forms of verse that may seem radically different from each other. Traditionally, Chinese readers have considered *yuefu* as a subgenre of *shi*, yet also somehow distinct from it.

The *yuefu* poems that are generally held to be earliest are found in sources that already date from the late fifth century; they are characterized by often wildly uneven line lengths, strong tendencies toward narrative, and occasionally incomprehensible passages that may reflect their origins as song lyrics. Traditional Chinese literary historians, who often see elite poetry as growing out of anonymous folk traditions, have tended to locate these poems in the Han dynasty, sometimes even arguing that they predate the anonymous *gushi* collected in *Wen xuan* (Birrell 1988). But there is no way to be sure that these early examples represent early "folk songs," especially granted the unreliability of manuscript transmission (Egan 2000). The importance of these early examples, however, is largely surpassed by educated poets' composition of song-style verse. Many of the poems produced by the Cao salon seem to be named for preexisting titles. Such poems seem largely indistinguishable from the early anonymous "old poems," and are sometimes preserved in early sources as both *yuefu* and *gushi*. As poetic diction became more elegant in the fifth and sixth centuries, a distinct category of *yuefu* emerges, perceived as a genre somewhat distinct from mainstream *shi*. As with *shi*, court poets tended to write *yuefu* of a refined nature, smoothing over the rough edges of earlier verse. Only occasionally did a poet write *yuefu* in plainer style.

The next generation of popular song verse, arising in south China in the fourth century, consisted of simple quatrains. These provide later poets with a number of significant tropes that would underlie erotic verse, and end up elevating the quatrain as a significant literary form—a form that would be perfected in the Tang dynasty and would sometimes continue to be associated with popular song. For later readers, this poetry was considered *yuefu* also (Egan 1993).

THE TANG

Later literary historians have tended to divide *shi* composition during the Tang into four periods: the "Early Tang" (*Chu Tang* 初唐, seventh century); the "High Tang" (*Sheng Tang* 盛唐, the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 [r. 712–756]); the "Mid-Tang" (*Zhong Tang* 中唐, roughly from 756 to 820); and the "Late Tang" (*Wan Tang* 晚唐, 820–907) (Chapters 2, 21, 22). As with any periodization, these categories can (and frequently do) mislead, particularly in the way they have been associated with a moral reading of literature: a gradual rise of the genre culminating in the first half of the eighth century, followed by a decline in creative powers and in moral seriousness. However, these categories have become so prevalent in conceptualizing Tang *shi* that one must inevitably deal with them. It may be best to continue to use them as a conceptual frame while at the same time pointing out their flaws.

The "Early Tang" is in many ways a continuation of the culture of court poetry; most of the surviving verse continued to be produced by a relatively small group of writers who frequented the salons of the first Tang emperors (Owen 1977; Chen 2010). Again, one has to turn to unofficial occasions to find verse that breaks free of courtly restrictions: epistolary verse exchanged between friends, and verse written when disgraced poets were sent for one reason or another into exile. The increasing standardization of court poetry performance did produce one particularly significant phenomenon: the gradual codification of the rules of tonal euphony into what came to be called *lüshi* 律詩 ("regulated verse"). The standard form was an eight-line poem, in which an opening couplet sets the context and situation of the poem's theme; the middle couplets, usually syntactically parallel, elaborate on the theme; and the final couplet provides an emotional or intellectual response. The four tones of medieval Chinese were divided into two categories, "level" (*ping* 平) and "deflected" (*ze* 仄), and poets were required to alternate their uses in prescribed ways, especially in the second, fourth, and fifth syllables of each pentasyllabic line and the second, fourth, sixth, and seventh syllables of each septasyllabic line. The rules of tonal regulation were in turn frequently imposed on the quatrain form (which now became known as a *jueju* 絕句 ["severed lines"]). Poets also began to experiment increasingly with seven-syllable lines (which had initially tended to occur in *yuefu*). The gradual result of this was the differentiation of what came to be called *jinti shi* 近體詩 ("recent-style verse"), with its five- and seven-syllable octets and quatrains, from verse that did not rigidly observe tonal rules—a verse that was simply called "ancient poetry" (*gushi*). Not surprisingly, once the rules of regulation had fully evolved, poets would often choose to write *gushi* as a self-conscious rejection of modern, fashionable tastes and to mark themselves as morally authentic archaists. However, this genre evolution took several decades to happen and was probably not in place until the 740s and 750s.

It is still unclear what caused the great flourishing of *shi* poetry associated with the reign of Emperor Xuanzong, and the ways in which the genre moved beyond the constraints of formal court composition. Some have traced it to the expansion of the civil service examination system under Empress Wu 武 (r. 690–705), who was eager to recruit an administrative class beholden to herself and not to the aristocratic clans opposed to her rule. Since the composition of regulated verse was a requirement for the examinations, this may have expanded the number of literati trained in the fluent composition of verse. Regardless of the possible social reasons for poetry's expansion, one may observe the sudden rise in nonformal poetry, especially after 710 (Owen 1981: 3–10). Almost all *shi* continued to be "occasional" in nature—that is, written to commemorate or to respond to a specific occasion, and usually addressed to a specific person or group; but much of it was written outside of the constraints of court life. Subgenres of composition that had begun in the pre-Tang era now flourished and came to dominate most poets' outputs—the parting poem, the epistle, the informal banquet poem, and poems on traveling (including meditations on famous places). As a result, self-expression came to the fore of composition, even if the forms that self-expression took still tended to be constrained by poetic conventions and tropes. This is nicely illustrated by the rediscovery of Tao Qian's poetry by a new generation of poets, in particular Wang Wei 王維 (699 or 701–761). Though Wang was himself a wealthy aristocrat and much better off than the impecunious Tao, the earlier poet provided the diction and images that allowed Wang to express his own desire for a pastoral life of comfortable retirement.

Poets of the High Tang were also attracted to themes that celebrated the marvelous and unusual. This was manifested in part through the popularity of *yuefu* poems that described the life of soldiers fighting on the frontier. Though originally tied to protest poems that portrayed the suffering of a soldier's life, later frontier *yuefu* romanticized frontier themes, exploiting their exoticism. Li Bo's 李白 (701–762) poetry also came to exemplify the marvelous in verse. As an unconventional outsider untrained in the restrictive rules of regulated verse as formulated in court circles, Li was drawn to old-style and *yuefu* forms; these looser genres allowed him to experiment with metrical irregularities and hyperbolic imagery in order to perpetuate an extravagant persona (Varsano 2003). Again, it should be emphasized that autobiographical self-expression was still filtered very much through accepted conventions, even if these conventions opened up and became more versatile. Wang Wei still projected his own self through the tropes of the Tao Qian farmer-poet, and Li Bo, though intensely original, still borrowed the stock figures of *yuefu* poetry. Occasional verse, almost always written in regulated octet form, mediated autobiographical experience through accepted imagery and the witty play of parallelism.

A new stage of autobiographical expression was attained through the work of Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770). The vagaries of his own life and his experiences during the An Lushan 安祿山 rebellion and subsequent political chaos (755–763) gave Du Fu the material to forge a new form of self-expression unprecedented in poetry up to that point. Though a master of the technical intricacies of regulated verse (and also comfortable with longer "old style" and *yuefu* forms), Du Fu was nonetheless able to convey within them a strong sense of personal identity and style that fully transcended convention (Owen 1981: 183–224). His work eventually redefined the relationship of the poet to his or her corpus: though no poet's collection through the Tang was arranged in order of composition (Du Fu's included), later editors were compelled to rearrange his verse to create a detailed diary of his life. Moreover, Du's work was probably the first collection in the history of Chinese literature (due to its detailed allusions to current events and to the details of his own life) in which such a biographical arrangement was meaningful.

However, it should be stressed that Du Fu's importance as autobiographical master took several centuries to emerge. Though he had a cult following among many serious poets (especially Han Yu 韓愈 [768–824]), there is little evidence that the full impact of his work made itself felt until the Song dynasty (Owen 2007). Probably the most immediately important contribution of the High Tang era to Chinese poetry was the elevation of the regulated verse octet to the level of common practice among educated men (and, it should be added, among a small group of educated women, especially courtesan-poets like Xue Tao 薛濤 [760s–830s] and Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 [844–868]). The vast majority of surviving Tang poems, especially during the last century of the dynasty, are occasional social poems written in regulated octet form. This fluency reflects the degree to which, for most poets, *shi* composition was an ordinary function of social activity. Du Fu was a "great" poet in the conventional modern sense of the term; but for him to be recognized as such, a concept of poetry that allowed for that kind of "greatness" had to evolve.

It is that tension between stylistic distinction and canonical greatness on the one hand and verse as a form of social convention on the other that makes the typical narrative of Tang poetic history problematic. The "Mid-Tang" is dominated by a number of unconventional poets who by no means represent typical style, and they only emerge around the year 800, after several decades of minor regulated-verse masters (Owen 2006a; Shields 2015). Prominent among them are poets surrounding Han Yu, the prominent Confucian intellectual. Han Yu himself largely eschewed regulated verse, claiming that moral authenticity could only come with writing in "old style," whose lack of rules allowed for complex argumentation and narrative. His friends—such as the lugubrious Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814) and the ghost-haunted Li He 李賀 (790?–816?)—were equally suspicious of the form (Owen 1975; Frodsham 1983). Their work provides some of the most original work in Tang dynasty poetry, but they seem very much sui generis within their own literary cultures. Somewhat more conventional (though still idiosyncratic) is the poetic circle consisting of Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842) (Waley 1949; Yang 2003; Owen 2006a). Bai in particular is distinctive for his prolific output, combined with a new consciousness of the need to preserve his own literary work for later generations. Du Fu had occasionally written about how he would be appreciated after his death, but Bai actually did something about it, periodically editing collections of his verse and depositing them in monastery libraries to ensure their preservation (Nugent 2010: 236–84; Chapters 5, 15). As a result, his surviving poetry collection is the largest from the Tang era. Bai, Yuan, and Liu wrote in all of the available genres, and they also espoused a sort of loose, imagistically simple form of regulated verse composition well adapted to the role of casual diary; their work lacks the passionate intensity of Du Fu's, but it would prove highly influential on the work of Song dynasty literati.

The biases of standard literary accounts are reflected further in descriptions of the "Late Tang"; again, significant poets from this era tend to be somewhat unusual, and are crowded into one generation at the beginning: Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852), Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858), and Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (ca. 812–ca. 866) (Liu 1969; Rouzer 1993; Owen 2006a). Li especially has earned a place as one of the paramount poets of the Tang; he writes in a difficult, gnomic style that leaves itself open to multiple interpretations. In later ages, when a moralistic reading was superimposed on Tang poetic history, this obscurity contributed to his fame: his poems could be read as veiled political allegories that engaged with the social world of the time, as opposed to other poets, who were often perceived as decadent and indifferent to the decline of the dynasty in which they lived. How much Li's verse was actually inspired by politics is a matter open to interpretation. The dismissive and moralistic reading of the last decades of Tang poetry has been shaped largely by the absence of many politically passionate voices following the death of Du Mu and Li Shangyin: no Du Fu, no Han Yu, not even a Bai Juyi. However, such a reading misses the fact that poetry was, for most literate people of the time, a form of social practice. Instead, the poetry of 840–1000 is largely defined by hundreds of genial, pleasant, and not terribly challenging occasional poems (usually regulated verses). It was not that such poetry was not self-expressive; but its self-expressive goals were modest.

We now need to return to a discussion of *yuefu* development in the Tang and its relationship to popular song. As I have noted above, many prominent Tang poets wrote in *yuefu* style, which could sound deliberately vernacular and "unpoetic" (as often in Du Fu's and Bai Juyi's efforts) or highly sophisticated and semi-regulated (as in the works of Li He and Wen Tingyun). Equally significant is the rise of the popular song quatrain, a form that had its roots in the amorous Southern Dynasties *yuefu* songs, but which now attained new prominence (Egan 1993). Often associated with the demimonde of courtesans and entertainers, they tended to arise in the place where elite poetry rubbed elbows with the burgeoning urban culture of Chang'an and the other major Tang cities. Quatrains written by specific poets, even ones that may have been inspired by their own experiences, were often adopted by entertainers and separated from their origins, their authorship frequently forgotten. There seems to have been a broad consensus in the Tang about what sort of poetry sounded best when sung (especially by female entertainers), and what sort should be chanted. *Yuefu* themes (especially life on the frontier, and the mildly erotic themes associated with women, such as abandonment) tended to dominate songs. Many of these popular verses have survived in the Dunhuang manuscripts; they give us some examples of the vast amount of folk and popular verse that circulated throughout Tang culture, which was somewhat different from the recondite productions of the literati elite.

We also see in the Dunhuang texts an increasing penchant for popular song lyrics with uneven line lengths, thus breaking with the more common seven-syllable and five-syllable quatrain forms (Wagner 1984). Many of them are identified by melody via the name of the original song, thus suggesting a widespread habit of composing new lyrics to popular melodies that entail distinct metrical properties. Such verse would probably have been called *geci* 歌辭 ("sung verses") or *yuefu* by people of the time, and would not have been seen as a new genre distinct from previous categories of popular song. By the ninth century, such irregular lyrics found their way into the surviving collections of elite poets, especially Wen Tingyun and Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (ca. 836–910) (Chang 1980: 33–62; Rouzer 1993: 27–68). Though the literati vaguely recognized them as a new and stylish form of song composition, it was only in the twelfth century that they saw them as fundamentally different from *shi* and assigned them the generic designation of *ci* 詞 ("song lyric").

In summary, this would be the situation of *shi* as it passed into the Song dynasty: an essential form of social expression and communication among educated men, usually manifested through regulated octets composed for different occasions (see Section III). At the same time, the work of "dissenting" poets—especially Du Fu and Han Yu—would provide a model for more morally serious and ambitious poets of the next dynasty who sought to elevate poetry into something more politically and autobiographically significant. In addition, the example of Bai Juyi suggested to some that a poet could be prolific and detailed in his autobiographical verse, using the genre as a form of diary. Moreover, with the creation of a social elite largely defined by their education rather than by their aristocratic status, poetry became even more important as something that marked membership in that elite. It was only natural that Song literati would look to the Tang for models for their own writing, since the Tang poets were the first to really make *shi* composition an inextricable manifestation of their own identity. This also tended to make Song poets strongly aware of their own "lateness" and inferiority. The Tang (especially as exemplified by Du Fu) would provide the supreme examples of poetic craft, and thus would represent the unsurpassable high point of poetry composition.

CHUCI AND *FU*

In the centuries before the founding of the Qin in 221 BCE, a new form of verse was evolving in the south of the Chinese cultural world, one radically different from the *shi* that would be anthologized in the *Shijing*. This poetry is rhapsodic and descriptive, in a loose meter with line lengths varying from five to nine syllables, and often seems to be sacred in nature, connected with the worship of a distinctive pantheon of gods. The earliest example is probably the "Jiuge" 九歌 ("Nine Songs"), which may have been hymns for temple worshippers, or employed (as modern scholars have suggested) in shamanic rites of spirit possession (Hawkes 1967). All were associated with the southern kingdom of Chu 楚, located in the central Yangzi valley—a state that demonstrated many cultural traditions quite distinctive from the Yellow River valley civilization. The masterpiece of this early genre is a long lament entitled "Li sao" 離騷 ("Encountering Sorrow"); tradition holds that it was composed by Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. fourth to third century BCE), a minister from the state of Chu, and is said to be a protest against his king's policies and his failure to heed the author's advice. Qu Yuan supposedly drowned himself shortly after its composition. Though biographical details concerning his life (and his very existence) are few, the figure of Qu Yuan and the poem attributed to him had an immense impact on the tropes of personal lament and political protest that evolved later in *shi* and in Chinese literature as a whole (Chapters 24, 30). He became the quintessential model for any statesman whose advice was ignored by his ruler, and his fame continues to the present day (Schneider 1980).

Nonetheless, Chu poetry never became as important culturally as the *shi* tradition of the north, and the increasing homogenization of Chinese culture isolated it more and more as a dying regional art form; eventually, much of the distinctive southern dialect in which it was written was forgotten. However, the ruling house of the Han dynasty came from the south, and the first century BCE saw a brief revival of its popularity. The collection that survives as a product of this revival, the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*; Hawkes 1959) guaranteed the preservation of the early texts and provided an interesting contrast to the more sober and politically engaged poetry of *Shijing*. The commentary by Wang Yi 王逸 (fl. 130–140) confirmed its canonical status and also explained its southern regionalisms, although his interpretations are sometimes challenged (Chapter 9).

At the beginning of the Han, another literary form emerged as well, bearing some metrical resemblance to Chu verse. This became known as the *fu* ("rhapsody" or "poetic exposition" in this book, but also called "rhyme-prose" or "prose poem"), a name whose origins is often debated, but may refer to its elaborate descriptive mode (in later *Shijing* poetics, the term *fu* refers to the descriptive and narrative function of verse). As with Chu poetry, the *fu* had long, flexible lines and was densely descriptive (often employing obscure or erudite vocabulary). It soon rose to become the most distinctive form of verse during the Han dynasty (Knechtges 1976: 12–43). One of its earliest examples, the "Rhapsody on the Owl" ("Funiao fu" 鵩鳥賦) by Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BCE), reads as a personal lament, but the form soon became associated with an elaborate celebration of imperial prestige and wealth, mostly due to the works of Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE), who employed erudite rhetoric to describe the majesty of the emperor and his daily occupations. The imperial *fu*'s life was fairly brief, however; the last great imperial *fu* poet, Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), later rejected the form, claiming that it only encouraged the ruler in sybaritic self-indulgence (Knechtges 1976). However, the detailed descriptive nature of imperial *fu* did help to shape one of the future directions of the genre, that of encyclopedic repository. Later writers took up the genre whenever they wished to describe a phenomenon—from a plant or an animal to the sea, a mountain, or the capital city itself—with as much detail as possible. This has remained one of the chief functions of *fu* composition up until the modern period, and one is likely to find a *fu* written on every object and phenomenon of premodern Chinese life. The prestige of the genre remained particularly high through the pre-Tang era; this is demonstrated by Xiao Tong's decision to put *fu* in the beginning section of *Wen xuan*, even though *shi* take up a much larger part of the anthology overall (Chapter 19).

Fu could also be used to express one's own personal responses to the world; in this sense, short, lyrical *fu* could play the same role that was usually assigned to *shi* poetry. In addition, writers could occasionally entitle short, rhapsodic pieces (*ci* 辭), employing the same term used to designate the contents of the *Chuci*; for example, Tao Qian's famous "Verses on Returning Home" ("Guiqulai xi ci" 歸去來兮辭) could easily be labeled a lyrical *fu*. There are no clear formal distinctions between the two forms.

Shi and *fu* (and, occasionally, imitations of the *fu* style) continued to coexist as major poetic forms through the fifth and sixth centuries, and many prominent *shi* poets of the era are also known for their *fu* (Xie Lingyun, Bao Zhao, Shen Yue, Yu Xin). The imagistic detail characteristic of the *fu* form may have influenced the descriptive turn that poetry took in the fifth century. Also, as with *shi, fu* poets became increasingly sensitive to the euphony of the genre, so that one may speak of "regulated *fu*" that follows set tonal patterns, just as regulated *shi* does. This particular form of *fu* came to preeminence in the eighth century (Kroll 2001).

OTHER USES OF VERSE

I have already mentioned above how the archaic four-syllable rhyming couplets of the *Shijing* continued to exert a presence in certain formal genres during the medieval era. This is a good example of the way in which verse forms of various types continue to be present throughout the period without being featured in modern histories of Chinese belles lettres. Here I will mention other places in early texts where various forms of verse may be found.

Popular narrative poetry was considered by intellectual elites as a "low" form, and there is ample evidence that when educated poets imitated narrative *yuefu* poetry, they often suppressed narrative elements in order to foreground lyricism and description (Allen 1989). Nonetheless, a number of narrative poems of a popular nature have survived from the pre-Tang period, most notably the 355-line "Southeast Fly the Peacocks" ("Kongque dongnan fei" 孔雀東南飛), a domestic tragedy involving conflict between a young wife and her tyrannical mother-in-law (Frankel 1974), and the famous "Mulan shi" 木蘭詩 ("Poem of Mulan"), which describes the adventures of a woman who impersonates a man in order to take her father's place in the military. Because elites tended to determine what texts have survived and what have not, we can speculate that there was a substantial body of narrative verse, probably circulated orally, that has not survived. These in turn may have had an influence on the "transformation texts" (*bianwen* 變文) that survive among the Dunhuang manuscripts—accounts in prose, poetry, and a combination of both that relate popular secular and sacred themes in the vernacular language of the day (Mair 1983; Mair 1989; Chapter 17). But only the accidental survival of Dunhuang materials allows us to get a glimpse of this rich tradition. These forms of popular literature would take various forms over the following centuries. Narrative verse would arise again in the *zhugongdiao* 諸宮調 ("all keys and modes," ca. twelfth to thirteenth century), in passages of traditional fiction, and in the popular forms of public storytelling that survived into the modern era. One may note that only rarely were these forms tolerated by the elite and considered legitimate literature, although literati champions of such genres did voice their enthusiastic support through the Ming and Qing dynasties (Chapter 17).

"Nonliterary" poetry also emerged in the religious traditions of Buddhism and Daoism. Buddhist sutras in their original Sanskrit would often alternate between passages of prose and verse, and many translators—notably the famed Kumārajīva (Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什, 344–ca. 409), who helped establish standard sutra-translation style—rendered the poetic passages in forms of recognizable *shi* verse, though often eschewing rhyme in the process (Chapter 32). This in turn encouraged verse composition as a way of conveying Buddhist truths, establishing a *gatha* (*ji* 偈) tradition in the native language. During the Tang, this was chiefly evident in many works that circulated in the Chan (Zen) school—for example, "The Faith in Mind Inscription" ("Xinxin ming" 信心銘), a famous ninety-eight-line poem written in four-syllable couplets that is still considered one of the most important texts of the Tang Chan tradition. Popular *shi* on Buddhist themes was also common in the Tang, as exemplified by the Wang Fanzhi 王梵志 collection that survives in Dunhuang (Demiéville 1982), various poems and songs on sacred sites (Cartelli 2013), and the well-known Hanshan 寒山 (Cold Mountain) collection, which came to have a substantial impact on Chan masters during the following millennium (Rouzer 2015). The developing Daoist movement relied on verse forms as well, particularly in the area of prognostications and spells. A number of elite poets, such as Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778) and Cao Tang 曹唐 (ca. 797–ca. 866), were devout Daoist practitioners who have left us *shi* collections that straddle the border between mainstream poetry and Daoist religious verse (Schafer 1981; Schafer 1985). Though much of this production was considered marginal in later centuries, it was read and treasured by individuals, and often came to influence more conventional genres from the sidelines.

Concluding Remarks

The above has been an attempt to examine the evolution of "poetic" genres up until 1000 CE from the perspective of recent scholarship. It is worthwhile, however, to touch briefly upon the ideological construction of Chinese "poetry" in the modern era, and how it is still viewed by most. As I mentioned at the beginning, part of this ideological construction involves superimposing Western concepts of the category "poetry" on a wide variety of genres that premodern Chinese readers would not necessarily have believed were of the same type.

It might also be added that standard histories of Chinese literature in the modern era have tended to simplify the life-course of the *shi* genre itself, reviewing it in organic terms, with a clear progression, a "flourishing" or "golden age" (the Tang, and even more specifically, the "High Tang"), and a gradual decline in later dynasties. This narrative of organic development and decline had its roots in Song and late imperial criticism. In particular, late imperial critics usually contrasted the emotional intensity and lyricism of the Tang with the chattier, more prosaic and philosophical qualities of Song dynasty verse (usually but not always to the latter's detriment). Perhaps more influential for the modern era, however, was an increasing tendency, especially during the Qing, to create a history of *shi* that privileges the rise of lyrical self-expression, political awareness, and spontaneity, these being most perfectly represented by the works of Du Fu and Li Bo. In this model, later poets would inevitably suffer from their lateness and self-consciousness. Moreover, the explosion of inexpensive commercial printing during the Song and then the Ming dynasties, which increased the number of circulating poems exponentially, makes it highly difficult to obtain a thorough sense of the genre's development in later dynasties.

This critical view of "lateness" had a powerful influence on the creation of a modern canon of premodern *shi*, one that still exerts considerable influence. In an age when classical literature became just one subject in public schools and not something to which educated people were expected to contribute actively, a voluminous and complex tradition became reduced to a series of easily absorbed school anthologies. These include, for example, the eighteenth-century *Tang shi sanbai shou* 唐詩三百首 (*Three Hundred Tang Poems*), which has often become the be-all and end-all for the average educated reader (Chapter 22). In most cases, only academics, enthusiasts, and connoisseurs (as well as those who still write in the traditional forms as a hobby, especially in poetry clubs and associations in "real life" and on the web) read much traditional poetry outside of these limiting selections.

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CHAPTER 17

ELITE VERSUS POPULAR LITERATURE

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UNTIL the end of the Tang dynasty, China for all practical purposes was a manuscript culture (Chapter 4). As with other premodern cultures, no hard data are available on literacy (Chapter 3). Whereas the complicated writing system, which required knowledge of at least a few thousand signs for full literacy, might have worked to keep the numbers down, the cheapness of wooden strips and later the ease of paper as carriers of written communication might have worked to increase the numbers. But achieving even basic literacy likely required several years of schooling, effectively limiting literacy to members of the well-to-do classes. While literacy was an essential skill for those members of the elite who wanted to serve in the national or local administration, literacy was not limited to men. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in the first millennium CE many elite women too were able to acquire a substantial literacy. The written texts that were most widespread during the first millennium would have been textbooks for beginning students, such as *Jijiu pian* 急就篇 (*Rapid Achievement*) and *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*), and later *Baijia xing* 百家姓 (*The One Hundred Surnames*) and *Qianzi wen* 千字文 (*The One Thousand Character Text*). Once the examination system gained strength in the Tang dynasty, texts that in one way or another were useful for examination preparation (such as *Wen xuan* 文選) would have been widely copied by advanced students. Texts for entertainment, being a luxury, were probably less widespread than texts with a direct practical purpose.

Whereas in Mesopotamia the earliest examples of cuneiform documents originate from bookkeeping, the earliest preserved examples of Chinese writing all originate in a religious context. Characters inscribed on animal scapulae from the late Shang dynasty and the early Zhou dynasty record the consultation of the divine ancestors concerning all aspects of the life of the ruling family, and the inscriptions on the inside of bronze vessels used in ancestral sacrifices invited the blessings of the ancestors as the vapors emanating from the cooked food ascended on high (Chapter 4). Written documents remained the preferred means of communication with the highest authorities on earth and in the heavens, and written characters often were seen as holy in and of themselves, as they embodied the truth and could work miracles. Strips made of bamboo or wood strung together may have been in use from an early date, but archaeological finds suggest that they only came into much wider use from the fifth century BCE onwards, when the many small states of the Spring and Autumn Era started to coalesce into ever larger kingdoms with increasingly complex administration. These finds at times provide startling insights into the extent to which these "Warring States" and the succeeding Qin and Han empires micromanaged the lives of their subjects. But as long as wood and bamboo were the most important writing materials, it is likely that most officials could read but did not write, leaving the actual work of writing down texts to the "clerks of knife and brush" (*daobi zhi li* 刀筆之吏). Few texts from the centuries before the Warring States Era were continuously handed down through the ages, but this number started to increase from that period onward, even though the texts that were copied from generation to generation tended to be limited to historical chronicles and treatises on state management as well as ritual codes and other materials related to the moral education of young nobles as future bureaucrats.

This situation changed drastically with the invention of paper and its perfection for use in writing, recorded by Cai Lun's 蔡倫 report to the court on the invention of paper in 105 CE (Chapter 4). While bamboo and wooden strips would continue to be used in the administration for some centuries more, soon men (and women) of the elite would discover the attractions of the new medium for self-expression. Once they took to the habit of writing down their own poems and letters, calligraphy became a prized art. The explosive growth of written documents resulted in a proliferation of literary genres and the emergence of literary criticism. Paper also facilitated the sudden growth of professional literature on medicine and military arts as well as of religious literature (Daoism and Buddhism). But whereas the invention of paper had an immediate and pervasive influence on the development of Chinese literature, the initial impact of the invention of woodblock printing was very slow to register. China would only make the transition to a print culture step by step from the middle of the tenth century to the middle of the eleventh.

Popular Genres and the Writing of Chinese Literary History

Research of the last century has shown that China is home to a rich array of popular and oral literary traditions, and scholars are still frequently surprised by the "discovery" of new genres, forms, and themes. There is no reason to think that premodern society did not boast the same wide variety of songs and stories, epics and proverbs. But as long as China remained a manuscript culture, texts had a chance of survival only if they originated within the elite or were at one stage or another included in the culture of the elite.

Such a statement is not intended to deny the likely existence of rich traditions of both professional and popular traditions of oral literature of stories and songs in many genres throughout society during the period from the late Shang to the early Song, or to deny the possible impact these traditions may have exerted on the written literature that has been preserved, but only to state the obvious: oral traditions could only survive to the extent that they were incorporated into elite culture and adapted to its needs. That also means that the precise characteristics of such oral traditions are hard to identify behind the written texts that have come down to us. It is tempting to think that short songs may have been noted down as performed, but if any such songs were rural in origin their language would have been standardized for performance at court and their texts most likely were edited. Popular stories, whether in prose or in verse and whether categorized as myth, fable, or joke, were summarized and preserved only as bare plots in the collections of anomalies that started to proliferate from the third century CE (Chapter 18). But even when we assume the existence of rich traditions of oral song and narrative, there is no reason to associate those oral traditions exclusively with an illiterate or rural population. Also, even when paper was commonly used, written discourse still tended to limit itself to narrowly circumscribed aspects of public life and hardly touched the many aspects of daily life and religious beliefs of elite and commoners alike. Archaeological finds from the first millennium BCE and the first millennium CE often defy precise interpretation because the textual record remains silent on the images depicted on such materials. The mental world of both elite and commoners must have been much richer than the written record suggests.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, however, scholars felt confident that they could differentiate between texts derived from oral traditions and texts that had been composed in writing. These scholars also were convinced that such oral traditions must have been popular in nature. Under the influence of the Romantic notion that folk literature constitutes the unchanging bedrock of national literature, Chinese reformist intellectuals developed an eager interest both in contemporary folk song and in ancient popular traditions. One native source of inspiration which facilitated the introduction of such Romantic beliefs were Han and pre-Han records claiming that, in the days of the Sage Kings, officials had been dispatched throughout the realm to collect songs and ditties so the supreme ruler might gauge the quality of the administration by his deputies from the emotions expressed in these songs (Chapter 16); another native source of inspiration was the claim made by Chinese literary critics (sixteenth century and later) that true poetry, based on the direct expression of strong emotions, was only found in the simple songs of children, women, and peasants.

However, whereas Western folklorists of the nineteenth century and beyond often embraced the opinion that the popular literature which in their own days only survived as fragments among rural and marginal communities represented remnants of a national culture that once had been shared by a united nation that had not yet split along economic and cultural lines, Chinese scholars of popular literature since the early twentieth century have tended to see popular literature as being opposed to elite (upper class, aristocratic, canonical, divine, classical, orthodox) literature from very early on—but also as the source of its periodic rejuvenations. These Chinese scholars also used a much broader notion of the folk—anyone who had not achieved an old-style examination degree or a modern university education apparently qualified. As a result, the distinction between elite writings and popular literature in pre-1949 writings often reminds one of the distinction between texts reflecting the values of the nobility and texts reflecting the values of the urban bourgeoisie in studies on European medieval literature from the first three-quarters of the twentieth century.

Both the Literary Revolution of 1917 and the May Fourth Movement of 1919 called for a repudiation of the classical written language and the literature that used it; the proponents of a new vernacular literature claimed that the Chinese literature of the last two millennia had been a "dead" literature, and that it was only creative when it allowed itself to be inspired by new genres (*yuefu* 樂府 or Music Bureau songs, *ci* 詞 lyrics, *qu* 曲 [vernacular songs or arias, drama], and storytelling) that had developed among the people. Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) boldly stated:

> The source of all new literature is found in the folk (*minjian* 民間). Among the folk the young boys and girls, the village men and peasant women, the doting lovers and frustrated wives, the singing boys and dancing girls, and the balladeers and storytellers are the creators of new forms and new styles in literature. This is the common law of literary history, its inescapable principle in the past and the present, in China and beyond. (Hu 1986: 31)

This view was forcefully put forward by Hu Shi in various publications, most notably his *Baihua wenxue shi* 白話文學史 (*A History of Vernacular Literature*, 1928), and has since become part of the master narrative of Chinese literary history as it has been written for most of the twentieth century. This narrative was also very attractive to the Marxist ideologues in charge of the writing of Chinese literary history since 1949. Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1972) and Zhou Yang 周揚 (1908–1989) summarized this conviction in 1958 in the following words:

> The history of the development of the literary arts in China teaches us that the subsequent high tides of literary creativity all have a deep source connection to folk literature: the *Verses of Chu* and the "Airs of the States," the Jian'an literature and the *yuefu* of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties, the poetry of the Tang dynasty and the folksongs of the Six Dynasties, the northern drama (*zaju* 雜劇) of the Yuan dynasty and the lyrics and songs of the Five Dynasties and beyond, the novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and the storytelling of the Northern and Southern Song dynasties all exist on the basis of this mutual relation. (Guo Moruo and Zhou Yang, 1959, Preface: 3)

In his writings on literary history, Hu Shi focused primarily on poetry. Skipping *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) and *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*), he starts his historical survey with a discussion of the *yuefu* songs of the Han dynasties, and continues with a discussion of the "southern *yuefu*" of the fourth and fifth centuries. For him the "dead literature" of the elite was characterized by the use of Classical Chinese (*wenyan wen* 文言文) and an emphasis on the use of allusions and parallelism, while popular origins were attested by vernacular language and a direct, simple style. In other words, the popular, oral origins of text could be detected on the basis of stylistic criteria—not least because Hu Shi and his supporters, unimpeded by any detailed knowledge of the oral traditions of their own days (these ideas were formulated before the Folk Literature Movement of the 1920s took off), had very clear preconceived notions of what popular literature should be. But famous writers from the past could also be included in Hu Shi's new canon of "vernacular literature" as long as their writing was considered clear and direct. Hu Shi's *Baihua wenxue shi* barely reached the end of the Tang dynasty, and while he displayed an eager interest in Dunhuang manuscripts and wrote extensively on the vernacular fiction of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911), he was too much of a traditional Chinese gentleman to display much interest in the popular and oral traditions of his own day.

One of the rare advocates of the new vernacular literature who took an active interest in the popular traditions of Chinese literature up to his own day was Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898–1958). His *Zhongguo suwenxue shi* 中國俗文學史 (*A History of Chinese Popular Literature*), published in 1938, brought the story of popular literature up to the end of the Qing dynasty, but for the period up to the end of the Tang it mostly covered the same poetical genres as Hu Shi had done in his *Baihua wenxue shi*, with this difference: Zheng Zhenduo, who had been able to study the Dunhuang manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, also devoted a chapter to the "transformation texts" (*bianwen* 變文) from Dunhuang. Zheng employed a very broad definition of "popular literature" (*suwenxue* 俗文學). He opened his study with the following declaration:

> What is 'popular literature'? 'Popular literature' is the common literature, it is the literature of the folk, and it is also the literature of the masses. In other words, what we call popular literature is everything that is not accepted in the hallowed halls of scholarship (*bu deng daya zhi tang* 不登大雅之堂) and is not valued by those gentlemen and high officials, but circulates among the folk and is loved and enjoyed by the masses. (Zheng 1959: 1)

With perhaps more enthusiasm than academic rigor, he credits traditional popular literature of all ages with the following six characteristics: 1) mass appeal, 2) collective authorship, 3) oral transmission, 4) novelty combined with crudeness, 5) unbounded fantasy, and 6) courage to incorporate new elements. In the eyes of the intellectual leaders of the May Fourth Movement, Chinese literature had been dominated for too long by narrow-minded Confucian moralists, whose individual writings, whether transmitted as manuscript or in print, only appealed to a small group of like-minded conservatives and for all their literary sophistication were utterly lacking in imagination and experimentation.

Marxist critics of the People's Republic of China later would try to objectify the notion of "popular literature" by stressing the notion of "thought" (*sixiang* 思想) alongside that of literary form. In their eyes, only the oral literature that gave expression to the ideology of the oppressed classes could be counted as true popular literature; texts that gave expression to the ideology of the ruling class could not be counted as true popular literature, whatever their actual popularity in society might have been. On the other hand, individual great writers from the past could be saved for literary history if their work exhibited a sufficient degree of "popular character" (*renminxing* 人民性), which could be acquired by intensive contacts with the common people. The notion of *renminxing* is not easy to explain concisely: it refers to a concern for the needs of the common people from a standpoint that may be characterized as progressive in its own day—but not necessarily expressed in a language that was close to that of the common people of those days.

From a contemporary standpoint, it is obvious that any binary division of the Chinese population at any time into elite and common people or ruling class and oppressed classes is simplistic. First of all, notions of the elite and the people need to be problematized and considered in their historical development. It should be clear that a simple dichotomy will not suffice. The political elite included both major and minor families. At its apex, the imperial family was often dominated by eunuchs. Bureaucrats who prided themselves on their mastery of the written traditions had to share power not only with these eunuchs but also with hereditary aristocracies and military officers, while imperial in-laws and religious specialists also competed for patronage and power. While the leading members of the Daoist and Buddhist clergy may not have belonged to the political elite, many of them definitely belonged to the cultural elite and associated as equals with members of the political elite, including the members of the imperial families. But not all members of the political elite belonged to the cultural elite. Many modern scholars may be quite willing to admit that members of the military elite might have enjoyed only a limited education or might have been illiterate, but we should also reckon with the real possibility that many members of the civil elite only had a rudimentary schooling and heavily relied for their administrative duties on the services of clerks and other underlings.

The life of the political elite was of course not limited to government and philosophical speculation. Professional entertainers were part of court culture from early on, and members of the court would have been deeply involved in the entertainments performed. Professional entertainers could have brought their own repertoire with them to court, and many of the anonymous *yuefu* songs of the second century and beyond probably derived from the culture of courtly entertainment. The repertoire of professional entertainers at court and elsewhere was likely enriched by songs composed by their employers and patrons. Once such songs had entered the repertoire of entertainers, their authorship might have been quickly forgotten or would have become a matter of controversy. Poems of the third century and beyond and lyrics of the tenth century and beyond are often ascribed to multiple authors: this should cause no surprise in view of their original function as songs. Through the intermediary of professional entertainers, songs and lyrics composed by members of the elite also might well have found their way to society at large and ended up as folk songs.

At the same time, we cannot assume that the folk constituted a homogenous group; we have to distinguish between men and women, urban and rural populations, and diverse professional groups. While the majority might have had a sedentary lifestyle, others—such as merchants, soldiers, and entertainers—could have spent part of their lives on the road, and while most were likely illiterate, others might have mastered a functional level of literacy. Most importantly, elite and folk did not live in isolation: the households of the high and mighty were thronged with male and female servants, and administrative and managerial duties confronted bureaucrats and landowners on a daily basis with their social inferiors. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, when Communist ideology increasingly came to focus on class struggle, scholars of popular literature could show allegiance to contemporary ideology only by stressing the antagonism between popular literature and elite literature; following the changes in the ideological climate of recent decades, however, scholars of popular literature in the PRC have come to stress the complementarity and mutual influence of folklore (*minjian wenxue* 民間文學, more literally "folk literature") and literature (*zuojia wenxue* 作家文學, more literally "writers' literature"). According to these scholars, if folk literature tends to be anonymous, writers' literature consists of the works of highly educated individual authors, and while elite literature is expected to be experimental, popular literature tends to be formulaic and conventional. Even so, one may wonder whether a binary opposition between folklore and literature is the best way to understand the variety within the preserved written record. Perhaps it makes more sense to focus on the variety of functions of genres and texts as used by a composite cultural elite.

Diversity of Language and Function

In the age of manuscript, texts were rarely composed for the purpose of silent reading: they achieved their social function when they were voiced. An imperial edict was binding only once it had been formally welcomed and recited. In a manuscript culture, far more genres are intended (also) for some kind of oral delivery than in a print culture—letters and poems were recited, as were sutras and other texts. We should also keep in mind that people learned to read by reciting texts. We may well have too eagerly accepted the claim of the May Fourth Movement that texts in Classical Chinese were incomprehensible to the ear. Even if that may have been true in Mandarin by the end of the nineteenth century, that was definitely not yet the case by the end of the Tang. In one well-known anecdote from the ninth century, three eighth-century poets overhear a group of singing-girls in a winehouse performing their poems, and decide on the relative quality of their works on the basis of which ones the singers prefer. Many written texts circulated not only as manuscript but also orally. As the work of Christopher Nugent has shown, even as late as the Tang dynasty few poets carefully collected their drafts in preparation for a collection. Collections of the works of individual authors often were compiled only after their death, on the basis of both written and oral materials (Chapters 4, 15).

We also have to be alert to the function of the various registers of language in relation to genre and topic, as a simple dichotomy between classical and vernacular does not apply for this period. Whereas poetic genres might have been distinguished on the basis of form, prose genres were generally distinguished on the basis of function. Some genres, which were written to function within the administration, might have used a far more specialized register than texts that were intended to reach out in performance to as wide an audience as possible. Poets too adjusted the language of their poems to genre, topic, voice, and addressee, and self-consciously modulated between classical/elegant (*ya* 雅) and popular/simple (*su* 俗) registers. Chinese culture from early on has stressed the gulf between those who govern and those who are governed, between those who work with their mind and those who employ their physical strength. Those who considered themselves members of the ruling elite as a rule looked down on the uneducated masses, who they feared might easily slide back into a brutish state of amorality. From the Tang dynasty onward, a growing awareness of a cultural gulf seems to co-exist with a greater concern for the sufferings of the masses. Writers may try to give the illiterate peasants a voice by having a farmer speak in their poems. Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) were very much aware of the widespread popularity of their poems, including their "new ballads" or "new Music Bureau poems" (*xin yuefu* 新樂府) that criticized a wide array of social problems on behalf of the people. A Song account (eleventh century) even claims that Bai Juyi read his compositions to old women and would keep only the lines they understood or would make revisions to ensure their comprehension. Anecdotes from his own lifetime tell of a police officer who had his whole body tattooed with poems by Bai Juyi and a courtesan who claimed she deserved a higher fee because she could recite by heart the entirety of Bai Juyi's "Song of Eternal Regret" ("Changhen ge" 長恨歌). Banished to the deep south, Bai Juyi's contemporary Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842) wrote "Bamboo Branch Songs" ("Zhuzhi ci" 竹枝詞) to the tune of the songs of local peasant women he couldn't understand.

Whereas the last two imperial dynasties of the Ming and the Qing made concerted efforts to inculcate Confucian values in the population at large, for instance by the regular public recitation and explanation of Sacred Edicts, earlier dynasties hardly if ever took such active roles, and the dissemination of Confucian texts in the first millennium CE was largely a function of the schools, as the primary function of a literate education was to prepare a young man for a career in government (Chapter 7). The spread of Daoism as a religion from the second century CE was accompanied in later centuries by a proliferation of Daoist texts, but it would appear that the preferred method of passing the tradition on was secret transmission between teacher and student. Buddhism, which started to spread in roughly the same period, held a completely opposite view on the value of texts, as it attached great merit to the dissemination of texts through recitation, copying, and (later) printing. In this way Buddhism had a huge impact on Chinese society, especially from the fourth century onward. It confronted Chinese intellectuals with an outside world that in many ways claimed superiority. It enriched the Chinese language with many new concepts, challenged Chinese thought with its logic and imagination, and introduced a completely new visual vocabulary. But it also should be pointed out that the impact of the writings contained in the Buddhist canon on Chinese literature was highly uneven: whereas some sutras quickly became quite popular outside the monastic community as well, many other texts remained the preserve of learned clerics. Only a few of the Jataka tales that were translated in great numbers from early on became popular outside Buddhist circles. One should also note that even lay devotees such as Bai Juyi avoided the use of explicitly Buddhist terms in their general writing.

Buddhism was very much a proselytizing religion and actively engaged in preaching and sermonizing, and good preachers could attract huge crowds. Various genres of preaching developed over the centuries, ranging from line-by-line "sutra explanations" to tales of the pious lives of devout women who are miraculously rewarded for their piety; other stories were adapted for performance at specific rituals, such as the legend of Mulian 目連 (i.e., Buddha's disciple Maudgalyāyana) saving his mother from hell that was associated with the Ghost Festival in the middle of the seventh month. While such texts were not part of the transmitted literature that survived in print from the eleventh century, a large selection of such "transformation texts" from the eighth to the tenth century has been found among the manuscripts that came to light in Dunhuang in the early years of the twentieth century in a bricked-up monastic library (Chapter 5). These "transformation texts" from Dunhuang make clear that the intention to reach a broad audience does not exclude the political and cultural elite—many transformation texts were written or edited for performance at court. The Buddhist tradition of storytelling stimulated, and interacted with, Chinese traditions of balladry and storytelling and in this way greatly contributed to the diversity of Chinese storytelling from the Song dynasty onward in terms of subject and form.

While the use of vernacular elements may suggest suitability for performance in front of a general audience, it cannot be taken as proof of an oral/popular origin. Perhaps the most convincing example of the use of vernacular elements as a sign of a limited command of the classical language may be found in the earliest translations of Buddhist sutras, but even in this case one cannot exclude the possibility that the linguistic register is linked to a proselytizing strategy. The early translators of Buddhist texts must have often struggled to find Chinese terms for Buddhist concepts that were alien to Chinese thought up to that time. Once the translation of Buddhist texts came to be entrusted to government-sponsored translation teams, the language quickly became more standardized.

The Theory of Oral-Formulaic Composition

At one point the theory of oral-formulaic composition, popularized by Alfred Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (1960) and based on some stylistic characteristics of the Homeric epics and the compositional practices of bards in the former Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s, claimed to be able to distinguish by simple statistical means texts that had been written from those that arose within an oral milieu. Inspired by this theory, Wang Ching-hsien (1974) tried to reassert the oral, and therefore popular, origins of the poems in *Shijing* by tracing formulaic expressions. Whereas traditional commentators from the Han dynasty onwards had tried to assign the authorship of individual songs from that collection as much as possible to specific persons, preferably persons known from historical sources (Chapters 8, 9, 24), at least some interpreters from as early as the Song dynasty had noticed the similarity of some poems in *Shijing* to folk songs of their own day, and in the first half of the twentieth century almost all songs (certainly those in the section "Airs of the States" ["Guo feng" 國風]) were believed to originate in folk songs, based on the similarities with folk songs from all over the world. But whatever the oral origin of the songs in *Shijing* may have been before the seventh century BCE, we first encounter the collection when the songs were already well established as part of the educational curriculum of elite gentlemen and when every official and diplomat was expected to be able to appropriately quote from these songs. But while many poems in *Shijing* share identical or similar phrases and lines, the limited length of each individual poem makes them unlikely candidates for oral composition, a technique that is primarily associated with verse compositions of epic length that are too long to be remembered in toto. In this respect, the long narrative poem "Southeast Fly the Peacocks" ("Kongque dongnan fei" 孔雀東南飛) of the third or fifth century CE provides a more suitable case, as it runs to 355 lines. This poem is usually classified as a *yuefu* song, and the anonymous *yuefu* of the second century and beyond have been used by Hu Shi as the prime example of the power of popular literature to bring new life to the tradition of classical poetry. In an epoch-making article from 1969, Hans Frankel suggested that the language of "Southeast Fly the Peacocks" was highly formulaic in nature throughout. But later reformulations of the oral-formulaic theory in the 1980s abandoned a clear-cut division between the oral and the written and suggested that, during a certain transitional period, writers of narrative songs might have used formulaic expressions while composing texts intended for performance. In the wake of this reevaluation of the theory of oral-formulaic composition, Frankel's methodology too has been questioned. Charles Egan (2000) has argued that the characteristics of the anonymous *yuefu* songs that are generally believed to date from the Han dynasty are best understood not through reference to their (ultimately unknowable) origin, but in terms of their nature and functions as performance texts.

During the heyday of the theory of oral-formulaic composition, one also often encountered the assertion that the "transformation texts" found at Dunhuang derived from an oral culture. Indeed, some of the transformation texts offer adaptations of Chinese historical legends that must have passed through centuries of oral transmission and reformulation. Conventional as the language of some of the texts may be, I am not aware of any in-depth systematic study that tries to establish the formulaic nature of the language of these texts. What we are dealing with here are texts composed with oral performance in mind. In this respect, such transformation texts are not different from plays, but play texts are rarely if ever designated as "oral." One finds a close parallel in English literature in the works of Chaucer and other medieval vernacular poets. Many of the transformation texts are Buddhist in terms of content. Medieval verse hagiographies of saints provide a close Western analogue. Many of the authors of these texts might well have been skilled performers themselves, but in terms of writing and delivery they would not have been that much different from clergymen writing sermons or modern academics writing lectures. In their attempts to reach out to a broad audience that included kings and peasants, queens and maids, the well-educated monks of the Tang dynasty who authored transformation texts might well have been different from bureaucrats addressing the emperor in their memorials, but in the Tang dynasty these monks and bureaucrats could have been born in the same kind of families and trained in the same kind of monastic schools.

Whereas scholars such as Walter Ong in the 1960s stressed the epistemological gulf between literate cultures and illiterate cultures, later research has greatly modified his conclusions. Many traditional societies only employ literacy for a limited set of functions, and no basic differences in cognitive abilities between the literate and the illiterate can be established. While those who are illiterate cannot very well take part in the scholarly tradition, it should be stressed that many who belong to the political and cultural elite do not necessarily do so either. But as long as the scholarly tradition combined a rather narrow textual basis with a strong oral character through lectures, debates, and declamations, those who were illiterate might have been less excluded than in later periods when print took over. On the other hand, the literate members of the political and cultural elite were at liberty to participate in all aspects of oral culture that interested them (and in the absence of alternative forms of entertainment would likely have done so often).

It is therefore very important not to impose the model of late imperial print culture on the manuscript culture of the earlier period. Late imperial print culture existed in a society that was highly literate even though male illiteracy might still have been as high as 80 percent. This meant that oral and performative traditions continued to be extremely important, even if by now these traditions appealed primarily to lower-class audiences. In between these oral and performative traditions on the one hand and national scholarly, bureaucratic, and entertainment traditions (fiction and drama) on the other, there existed a wide variety of local traditions of popular literature circulating in manuscript and in print. Even if songs and transformation texts of the era of manuscript culture display a strong formal similarity to later genres, that does not mean that their function would be the same, because society had changed. The tales of filial sons illustrate such changing functions: very much part of the elite culture when they first emerged in the fourth century, these tales became educational primers in the age of print, and were as such immensely popular in late imperial China. In the centuries in between, Buddhist preaching and hymns may well have played an indispensable role in turning filial piety from an elite value into a popular value.

MODERN HISTORIES OF FOLK LITERATURE AND THE AGE OF MANUSCRIPT

The truly oral literature of the period up to the tenth century is irretrievably lost. But that does not mean that nowadays we do not have numerous histories of Chinese folk literature from the first millennium BCE and the first millennium CE. Many general histories of Chinese folk literature of recent years devote more space to the history of folk literature up to the end of the Tang than to the history of folk literature from the second millennium CE. Materials for such histories of early folk literature are selectively culled from the textual record left by the cultural elite of those days. It will come as no surprise in view of the above discussion that large sections from *Shijing* together with the anonymous *yuefu* songs of the second century and beyond are presented as prime examples of folk poetry (and direct reflections of the daily life of the common people). This is done not only by leading Chinese scholars, but also by many Western scholars who have followed their lead (and at times have been even more outspoken in asserting the popular nature of their materials).

Chinese surveys of folk literature through the ages usually also contain discussions of ancient Chinese mythology, Chinese fables, Chinese legends, and jokes and popular sayings. Such materials are often quite interesting, and may occasionally be traceable to a local story or proverb, but there is little to indicate that these materials were the exclusive preserve of (or had originated with) the folk. The fact that such materials were included in historical narratives, moral tracts, and philosophical treatises suggest rather that such materials circulated widely through society as public property. One of the prime sources for the reconstruction of ancient Chinese mythology, for instance, is *Shan hai jing* 山海經 (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*), which provides long lists of the names of the mountains surrounding China and of their inhabitants, together with descriptions of their unusual features. Despite all speculations of modern scholars, we know next to nothing about the origin of this text, but we do know that enough literati of later ages, starting with Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427), were sufficiently fascinated by its contents to ensure its survival.

Ancient China had no folklorists who set out to collect the lore of rural communities in their pristine purity before they would be swept away by the forces of urbanization and industrialization. If the administration at times made an effort to collect the opinion of the people, it did so, as Jean-Pierre Diény argued decades ago, out of interest in signs of unrest and revolt, not in songs of love and separation. The slogans of rebels and oracular predictions of upcoming changes that were included in historical sources tend to be short or very short, and rarely if ever had any impact on later literature. From the early twentieth century onward, however, Chinese scholars, confronted with Western notions of literary history, popular literature, mythology, and the like approached the rich Chinese textual record with preconceived notions of genre (and its elite or popular nature) and collected scraps of text that fitted those notions. In this way they were, for instance, able to reconstruct a rich tradition of early Chinese mythology with distinct Chinese characteristics. The leading authority on China's ancient mythology, Yuan Ke 袁珂 (1916–2001), believed that the ancient myths originated with the working masses: "Created by the common people, mythology originated from their work" (Yuan 1993: ix). According to Yuan Ke, if these ancient Chinese myths do not praise labor, they nevertheless admire the relentless spirit of heroes, glorify the common people's resistance to authoritarian rule, or describe the people's longing for love, freedom of marriage, and a happy family life. Even though elements of that mythology may in later centuries have been ignored in elite culture but preserved in popular traditions, that situation does not mean that those myths were exclusively popular in nature from the very beginning.

The same surveys of China's traditions of folk literature that provide detailed accounts of ancient myths also include discussions of the epic, which is seen as primarily an oral tradition. The same urge to search for equality with the West in terms of literary history that resulted in the reconstruction of ancient mythology has stimulated the hunt for an epic tradition in ancient Chinese literature. While most Chinese scholars have eventually reluctantly concluded that ancient China lacked an epic tradition, others have been less willing to admit defeat. Lu Kanru 陸侃如 (1903–1978) and Feng Yuanjun 馮沅君 (1900–1974) were the first to suggest in the 1930s that *Shijing* contains a number of hymns on the martial exploits and other achievements of the early Zhou rulers that constituted an epic with Chinese characteristics, a thesis that later was espoused by C. H. Wang (Wang 1974). These views, however, have never become common, and as a result the sections devoted to epics in Chinese histories of popular literature are usually mostly devoted to the epics of China's minorities in recent times.

CONCLUSION

Confucius, it is said, did not speak about "anomalies, feats of strength, scandals and miracles" (*Analects* 7.21), but his refusal to do so must have been exceptional enough to be recorded as an anomaly. Since paper came into common use, Chinese literati of all centuries have left us hundreds of collections of records on anomalies. Public administration and self-cultivation may have been the central concerns and avowed goals of most male members of the elite, but as human beings their interests roamed much more widely. Let's not forget that Confucius sided with his disciple Zeng Dian when he asked his students in attendance to tell him their ambitions (*Analects* 11.26). Dian envisioned a spring outing with friends to bathe in the River Yi and come home singing. Much of what twentieth-century scholars have classified as "popular" may well have belonged to a shared culture of entertainment. It should also be clear that we cannot impose the distinctions between elite literature, popular literature, and oral literature—viable in a fully developed print culture—on a manuscript culture, even after the invention of paper. Many Chinese scholars of the twentieth century, starting with the seminal figure of Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), have been inspired by the opposition between the

Latin scholarship of medieval Europe and the literatures in the vernacular languages, but in transposing that dichotomy to China they paid insufficient attention to the characteristics of the Chinese situation. While language change may have been as fast and pervasive in China and elsewhere, the use of characters in writing hid a great deal of regional and historical variation in pronunciation, and even if the spoken language of the courts and the capitals moved away from the language of some forms of prose writing, the language of performance-oriented genres such as poetry, even when written by obvious members of the highest cultural elite, continued to evolve. It is misleading to identify the vernacular with the popular. In the Chinese case, the vernacular was not a different language but at best a different register within a shared literary culture. But while the conclusion must be that we have lost the confidence to discern a popular literature in opposition to an elite literature during the two millennia of China's manuscript culture, we have gained the opportunity to grasp a more diverse, more layered, and more complicated written culture during those centuries.

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CHAPTER 18

NARRATIVE GENRES

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WHEN considering "narrative genres" in classical Chinese literature before the year 900, we are faced with an uneasy mapping of an English-language term onto Chinese materials from an earlier age. Surviving contemporaneous discourse on literature does not include explicit discussion of narrative as a literary mode independent of content, and many common forms of narrative would not have been considered literature, or *wen* 文, at the time (see Plaks 1977: 310; Chapter 1). Yet narrative—the recounting of a sequence of linked events—plays an essential role in a diverse group of works, from legends about heroes of wit or the battlefield and accounts of encounters with ghosts or divinities, to sober histories of court politics, exemplary tales of good behavior, and allegorical stories nested within larger philosophical works. Narrative was used to commemorate past events, to argue and persuade, to educate, and to entertain. Different categorization schemes and descriptive accounts have recognized commonalities among some but never all of the varied types of works employing narrative, with the perceived relationships shifting as the priorities of the category-makers change.

In this essay, I focus on history and fiction as two contrasting focal points that have shaped the perception and interpretation of Chinese narrative over time. The opposition between histories (narratives about events that actually happened) and fictions (narratives about invented events and characters) is fundamental to how we conceive of narrative today, with the latter most often granted pride of place in the hierarchy of Literature. Accordingly modern (post–May Fourth) critical interest in narrative in classical Chinese literature has focused chiefly on identifying elements that contributed to the emergence of fiction, which is often said to have occurred during the Tang dynasty (618–907). The divide between the historical and the fictitious has not always been so absolute, however, and it is doubtful that contemporaneous writers and their audiences would have seen the works now identified as fiction in that light. There is no classical Chinese word for "fiction," and *xiaoshuo* 小說, the modern Chinese word for fiction, had a very different valence in the centuries within the purview of this volume. Instead, during that period the majority of narrative works would have been identified as histories—*shi* 史 in Chinese—albeit histories of varying degrees of credence and reliability.

These two senses of narrative, which also represent two different eras, encompass many of the same works but accord them differing significance; other works appear in one but not the other. Neither yields a comprehensive view of all "narrative" up through the tenth century, but the combination allows us to touch upon a range of works that contribute in different ways to our understanding of classical Chinese narrative.

Modern Approaches

The story of Chinese narrative as it is told in typical twentieth- and twenty-first-century histories of Chinese literature is implicitly the story of the emergence of fiction, and fictional consciousness, from a narrative world initially dominated by the recounting of history. This story plays out over the course of centuries, its climax located well beyond the temporal scope of this volume in the vernacular stories and novels of the late imperial period. The progression of narrative presented is a teleological one, with the works accorded the most (or any) attention being those that represent innovation towards the goal of fictionality.

The earliest narratives discussed in these literary histories are works of history, that is, narratives about historical figures that recount events of public importance—wars, state politics, court debates, transitions in rulership—as historical occurrences. History-writing begins with the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*), a year-by-year annals of political events centered on the state of Lu between 722 and 481 BCE that is itself too sparse to be considered narrative. The events listed there are elaborated upon in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*, fourth century BCE), which in its received version is structured as a commentary on the laconic *Chunqiu* entries. Other stories and legends purporting to recount historical events from the same period or slightly later are preserved in *Guoyu* 國語 (*Discourses of the States*) and *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), both of which are regarded as less reliable as histories than *Zuozhuan* but contain stirring narratives about many known historical figures (Ye 1987: 1:19–24; Zhang and Luo 1996: 1:105–18; Fu and Jiang 2005: 1:98–110). Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*) represents a significant innovation in historical writing in introducing the "annals-biographies" (*jizhuan* 紀傳) format, in which historical narrative was structured in large part around the experiences of individual figures, that is, as biography. The lengthy "arrayed biographies"(*liezhuan* 列傳) section that comprises the latter half of *Shiji* makes biography an integral part of history-writing. Thereafter, annals-biographies became the standard format used in writing the comprehensive history of any dynasty, adopted by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) in his *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*) and later historians working either individually or as committees in a state Bureau of History. Beyond the writing of dynastic history proper, *Shiji*'s influence on later narrative is also seen in the recurring use of the *zhuan* 傳 format—"biography" or "tradition" or simply "account"—for recounting stories about people from all walks of life. History, in these accounts of the development of narrative, is important in establishing models for both the narration and description of events and the delineation of character (Chapter 13).

With the introduction of the annals-biographies structure in *Shiji* and its consolidation with *Han shu*, modern literary history in its consideration of narrative works turns away from history writing to a somewhat amorphous category of material designated as *xiaoshuo. Xiaoshuo* is an old bibliographic category that, translated literally, means "minor discourses" or "minor stories," but in modern Chinese the term is used to denote fiction. This slippage is simultaneously confusing and convenient in bringing heterogeneous material together under one label. Classical-language *xiaoshuo*, as the term is used in post–May Fourth scholarship, refers primarily to brief stories about remarkable behavior and extraordinary occurrences, often including fantastic or occult elements (ghosts, were-beasts, travel to other realms, and the like). Since they cannot be true by twentieth-century standards of plausibility, such accounts are presumed to be invented fictions, though not necessarily invented by the writer whose written version we have. But because the recorders and first audiences of these stories—living by very different notions of credibility—may have believed them to be true in many cases, literary historians allow for a transitional stage in the development of genuine fiction out of history-writing.

The first antecedents to *xiaoshuo* as the term is invoked by Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) and others are seen in early works of history such as those discussed above and in parables and myths preserved in Masters Literature and other early texts (Lu Xun 1998: 6–13; Wu 1994: 25–37; Ye 1987: 1:50). Lu Xun's enormously influential *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi lüe* 中國小說史略 (*Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, 1923), for example, finds the roots of *xiaoshuo* in the human impulse to make up stories to explain the unfathomable, first represented in the Chinese tradition by fragments found in histories such as *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* or Masters works such as *Liezi* 列子 and *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (Lu Xun 1998: 6). Individually circulating works recounting legends or quasi-historical accounts about historical figures whose deeds (though rarely precisely the same deeds) are also recounted in more strictly historical works are part of this lineage as well, discussed under the rubrics of "unofficial history" (*yeshi* 野史) or "miscellaneous accounts or biographies" (*zazhuan* 雜傳) or sometimes simply *xiaoshuo*. Many of these are impossible to date precisely. Discovered in a tomb in the late third century CE, *Mu tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 (*Tradition of King Mu*) takes the historical King Mu of Zhou (r. tenth century BCE) as its protagonist but recounts the fantastic legend of his journey west to the Kunlun mountains, where he has a meeting with the goddess the Queen Mother of the West 西王母 (Lu Xun 1998: 8–9; Ye 1987: 1:44–45). *Yan Danzi* 燕丹子 (*Prince Dan of Yan*), of unknown date but first listed in the *Sui shu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui*) bibliography (*Sui shu* 34.1011), gives an account of the assassin Jing Ke 荊軻 and his attempted assassination of the King of Qin 秦王 at the behest of Prince Dan of Yan. Much of *Yan Danzi* corresponds closely with the information about the same events in Jing Ke's biography in *Shiji*, at times point by point, but it also includes many details not found in the *Shiji* version (Lu Xun 1998: 10; Wu 1994: 42–44; *Shiji* 86.2526–2538). Similarly, the basic annals of Emperor Wu of Han (r. 141–87 BCE) found in *Han shu* concentrates on political and military developments and court maneuverings during his reign (*Han shu* 6.155–212). But other stories about Emperor Wu of Han proliferated during the Six Dynasties period. The *Han Wudi gushi* 漢武帝故事 (or *Han Wu gushi* 漢武故事, *Tales of Emperor Wu of the Han*, in existence by the third century), for example, includes anecdotes about the emperor's personal relationships with family members, his consultations with various shamans and diviners, his quest for immortality, and the visit the Queen Mother of the West makes to him (Smith 1992; Ye 1987: 1:272–274; Wu 1994: 53–56). These myths, parables, and legends display variously imagination, lively writing, and narrative sophistication that foreshadow the emergence of *xiaoshuo* itself (as the category is understood in recent literary histories).

But the bulk of attention given to classical narrative in modern histories of both literature and of *xiaoshuo* specifically is directed at collections of brief accounts of gossip and occult events, beginning with materials from the second century or earlier (Campany 2009: 7). Collections of stories recounting occult or simply "strange" phenomena, termed *zhiguai* 志怪 (strange tales, literally "recording the strange") in these histories, make up the larger share of the surviving material. The work generally held up as most representative of the *zhiguai* form is *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (*In Search of the Supernatural*), compiled in the early fourth century by Gan Bao 干寶 (d. 336), a historian at the Eastern Jin court. *Soushen ji* itself did not survive to the present, but has been reconstructed based on items preserved and cited in later compilations (Chapter 22). The collection includes stories about people who demonstrate uncanny skills (longevity, interpretation of portents, control over spirits, etc.), heavenly responses to human deeds, strange behavior by animals, marriages between humans and spirits, encounters with ghosts, animals in human guise, and other anomalous events. The short anecdotes collected in the fifth-century *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*) by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444) and his coterie are representative of more gossipy material from the same period, labeled *zhiren* 志人 (literally "recording character") in parallel to the occult *zhiguai*. Rather than focus on the occult, these narratives delineate different varieties of human character by recounting the remarks and conversations of aristocratic and elite men (and women) of the second through early fifth centuries to illustrate different facets of human behavior and character. Literary historians categorize all of these collections as *xiaoshuo*, but frequently follow Lu Xun in considering earlier (Six Dynasties) collections of this sort as "unconscious" *xiaoshuo* because the writers who recorded them, and many of their initial audience, likely took their contents to be true stories rather than fabrications (Lu Xun 1998: 24; Wu 1994: 233–34).

Lu Xun, and many subsequent literary historians following in his footsteps, locates the beginnings of "conscious" *xiaoshuo* writing in the Tang dynasty, in works he labels *chuanqi* 傳奇 (classical tales, literally "transmitting the marvelous"; Lu Xun 1998: 44–45; Wu 1994: 233–34; Zhang and Luo 1996: 2:208–11). These works are distinguished from the more primitive earlier stories by their subtlety in narration and skillful wording, as well as their greater length (though they are typically still not more than a few pages in a modern typeset edition). Some evidently circulated as individual texts, some (like *zhiguai*) in collections. Many *chuanqi* concern themes found in earlier *zhiguai*, such as liaisons between human men and women who turn out to be animals or ghosts or divinities (Chapter 30), as in Shen Jiji's 沈既濟 "Miss Ren" 任氏 ("Ren shi"; late eighth century), a story about a beautiful were-fox and two men infatuated with her, or Li Chaowei's 李朝威 "Story of the Miraculous Marriage at Dongting" ("Dongting lingyin zhuan" 洞庭靈姻傳 (ca. late eighth to early ninth century), in which a man rescues and ultimately marries a dragon-woman. Others treat romance—often doomed—between ordinary human men and women, such as Yuan Zhen's (779–831) "Yingying's Story" ("Yingying zhuan" 鶯鶯傳; early ninth century), a possibly autobiographical account of a young man's affair with his cousin, whom he then abandons, or Jiang Fang's 蔣防 "Huo Xiaoyu's Story" ("Huo Xiaoyu zhuan" 霍小玉傳; also early ninth century), which recounts the poet Li Yi's 李益 vows of fidelity to and then desertion of his lover, a woman of the courtesan class whose father was a prince. A number depict other aspects of the professional and social lives of the elite men who were the tales' chief protagonists and first audiences, as in "Inside the Pillow" ("Zhen zhong ji" 枕中記, late eighth century), also by Shen Jiji, which tells of a young man whose vivid dream of a successful political career with all its ups and downs causes him to abandon his ambitions for worldly success when he wakes up. The greater plausibility of the events described in many of these tales, and the emphasis on the human subject rather than on the sheer strangeness of the events described, even in many that do contain occult elements, bring *chuanqi* closer to realistic fiction than was the case in earlier narrative material, whether collections of short tales or longer legends. Perhaps in part because of this, Lu Xun's vision of *xiaoshuo*'s origins and development continues to be highly influential. Later scholars have refined his narrative—debating the precise nature of the distinctions between *zhiguai* and *chuanqi*, and complicating the temporal evolution he proposes from *zhiguai* to *chuanqi* by recognizing that many "*zhiguai*-style" texts postdate the finest *chuanqi*—but the notion that "conscious fiction" emerged in the Tang dominates the discourse on classical narrative.

In this account of the history of Chinese narrative, *xiaoshuo* is used to encompass nonhistorical narrative of all sorts, becoming a category that transcends both its most common modern understanding as "fiction" and (as we see below) older bibliographic designations. The teleology that makes "true *xiaoshuo*" the endpoint of all of this earlier material—and it is clear from Lu Xun's discussion that true *xiaoshuo* is fiction, that is, consciously invented material—reduces a varied body of material to "proto-fiction," notable as points in a progression towards something else rather than an entity to be considered on its own terms, and in so doing obscures the considerable differences in origins and forms among those works, as well as their relationships with other materials not designated as *xiaoshuo*. The label "unconscious *xiaoshuo*" applied to accounts dealing with the occult or anomalous similarly assumes that what cannot be true must therefore be fictional even if the recorders who collected the accounts (and their earliest readers) did not recognize them as such.

But when we examine the works retrospectively labeled *xiaoshuo* and the circumstances in which they were recorded, we must question whether it makes sense to distinguish between the historical and the fictitious in describing works from an age in which no such division was habitually made. The *zhiguai-chuanqi* division within classical language stories of remarkable events, so dominant in contemporary accounts of *xiaoshuo*'s history, is likewise better understood as suggesting two ends of a spectrum of degree of elaboration rather than as delimiting generic distinctions based on different content or formal characteristics. The actual material referenced by both categories is closely related to, even inseparable from, religious narratives on one hand and popular gossip on the other; and the terms themselves are anachronistic, not used as common generic designations until the twentieth century (Allen 2014: 9–11).

At the same time, in identifying these texts as the beginnings of fiction in China, this new focus on *xiaoshuo* created a new significance for medieval classical accounts. The *xiaoshuo* label solved a long-standing categorization problem for works that did not fit neatly into traditional bibliographic categories and that, by twentieth-century standards of possibility, could not be taken seriously except as fiction. This narrative about narrative brought welcome attention to a rich body of material that had not previously received extensive critical treatment, and recognized these works' inherent interest as narratives and the aesthetic and literary qualities of the most sophisticated of them. Equally important for twentieth-century scholars, it also created a genealogy for later vernacular narratives, both short stories and novels, which had no place in the older bibliographic schemes based on classical-language materials.

TRADITIONAL BOOK CATALOGUES

When we turn from modern literary history to more contemporaneous notions of classical Chinese narrative up through the first millennium, we find a vision at once broader in scope in terms of the works it encompasses and more restricted in its understanding of those works' functions. In the period under consideration, the conceptual category that overlaps most closely with "narrative" is *shi*, history. This loose correspondence is seen most clearly in surviving categorized catalogues of the books held in the imperial libraries, which give us a glimpse of how textual lineages were conceived of by at least some educated readers at several discrete points in time. By dividing up the textual record into different sections and categories and ordering those categories in meaningful ways, catalogues make assertions about degrees of kinship and difference among the works listed (Chapter 11). In the four-part bibliographic cataloging scheme that had become standard by the early Tang dynasty, the majority of narrative works were placed in the Histories (*shi* 史) section (Chapter 13). Examining the contents of the Histories section and the various categories into which it is subdivided suggests that the distinction between the factual and the invented, so central to modern literary historical views of narrative, did not carry an equivalent interpretive weight in early and medieval China. Instead, writers and scholars saw those very narratives that Lu Xun would later privilege as (conscious or unconscious) fiction as, fundamentally, types of histories. It was not until the eleventh century that much of this material was formally categorized as *xiaoshuo*, and even then the category was understood as referring to a range of heterogeneous materials rather than to fiction.

The earliest surviving book catalogue, the "Monograph on Arts and Writings" ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志) from *Han shu*, does not have a Histories section labeled as such, but the *Chunqiu* category, under the larger "Six Arts" ("Liuyi" 六藝) section of the catalogue, is effectively a grouping of histories, with *Chunqiu* at the forefront as the progenitor of later historiography. The majority of the titles other than *Chunqiu* appear to be commentaries on *Chunqiu*, but the category also includes other works now considered "historical": e.g., *Guoyu, Zhanguo ce*, and *Shiji* (called *Taishigong* 太史公 in *Han shu*) (*Han shu* 30.1713–14). The titles and their placement suggest that narrative deemed worthy of inclusion in the catalogue was historical in nature (Chapter 13).

Later book catalogues separate out historiography as an enterprise distinct from exegesis of *Chunqiu*, shifting all of these materials (or those still extant) except *Chunqiu* and its commentaries to the new "Histories" section (Chapters 11, 13). The next two extant book catalogues, from *Sui shu* and *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (*Old History of the Tang*), take us to the seventh and eighth centuries. *Jiu Tang shu* was itself compiled in the tenth century, but its book catalogue was based on the contents of the imperial library in 721 (Twitchett 1992: 231; *Jiu Tang shu* 46.1963). In both histories, the catalogues are called "Monograph on Bibliography" ("Jingji zhi" 經籍志). Both catalogues incorporate a wide variety of materials under the rubric of history, with the Histories section of each further divided into several subsidiary categories (thirteen for *Sui shu*, ten for *Jiu Tang shu*). Many of these categories contain all or primarily narrative works, ranging from the "official histories" (*zhengshi* 正史) of different dynasties in the annals-biographies format to "stories" (*jiushi* 舊事 or *gushi* 故事—less formal records of the past, including works such as the legends about Emperor Wu of Han collected in the *Han Wudi gushi* and other anecdotes about Han events), "miscellaneous histories" (*zashi* 雜史—works deemed less dependable as histories, such as the *Zhanguo ce* and, in *Jiu Tang shu*, an informal account of the Sui dynasty's founding), and "miscellaneous accounts" (collections of brief narratives on a specific topic). Like the biographies sections of the official histories, a large proportion of the titles listed are collections of short anecdotes or accounts (*zhuan* 傳) of events centered on individual figures rather than sustained narratives that develop over the course of the entire work.

At the same time, Histories also encompassed much that is not narrative, found in sections on protocol, punishments, geography, and other categories whose entries today might be thought of more as source materials for history-writing than as histories per se (Chapter 13). Nor are all narratives, even historical narratives, found under Histories. *Zuozhuan* is placed in the Classics section under *Chunqiu* (reflecting the exalted status of the Classics rather than a perceived historical deficiency in *Zuozhuan*); the anecdote collection *Shishuo xinyu*, arguably historical in collecting gossip (albeit of varying reliability) about historical figures, is found in the Masters (子) section. Narratives that were preserved in the literary collections of individual writers or in anthologies are not listed separately and thus not categorized in book catalogues. These include some of the most influential narratives in the tradition, such as Tao Qian's 陶潛 (Tao Yuanming 陶淵明,

365–427) "Account of Master Five Willows" ("Wuliu xiansheng zhuan" 五柳先生傳), an idealized self-image of the writer couched as the biography of a simple man defined by his love of reading and wine and his lack of worldly ambitions.

Nonetheless, in aggregate the works listed in the Histories section of these catalogues offer a vision of narrative as an enterprise devoted to recording past events. Histories as a bibliographic division is concerned primarily with content rather than form: narratives appear under the Histories rubric not because they are narrative but because they contain a certain type of information, chiefly information about past human affairs and experiences. But the concentration of narrative within Histories is in itself telling, suggesting that in the eyes of the bibliographers who compiled these catalogues, the chief purpose of recording a narrative was to recount and interpret events that had taken place in the past; narratives were, therefore, mostly histories.

What is noteworthy in the context of post–May Fourth ideas about the history of Chinese narrative is that the Histories section of both the *Sui shu* and *Jiu Tang shu* catalogues includes the overwhelming majority of the works that Lu Xun and others have identified as *xiaoshuo* or its precursors. This includes *Mu Tianzi zhuan*, which is categorized under "notes on the daily activities and repose of the emperor" (*qiju zhu* 起居注) in both, and the legendary material about the Han Emperor Wu, found under "stories" or "miscellaneous accounts." The majority of the works granted the most weight as the "unconscious *xiaoshuo*" that led to the development of conscious *xiaoshuo* are placed in the "miscellaneous accounts" category of both histories: *Soushen ji* and other collections featuring encounters with gods, immortals, or shape-shifting animals and other anomalous events; collections devoted to the feats of Daoist transcendents (*xian* 仙); and collections of stories about miraculous responses to acts of Buddhist devotion. These are juxtaposed within the "miscellaneous" accounts category with collections of accounts of former worthies, lofty recluses, filial sons, and exemplary women, and so forth, as well as individual accounts titled after a single individual (*Sui shu* 33.974–82; *Jiu Tang shu* 46.2000–2006). "Miscellaneous accounts" itself is therefore a catchall category, much as *xiaoshuo* later came to be. But while *xiaoshuo* now is used for narrative works characterized by their presumed fictionality, miscellaneous accounts in these Tang bibliographies are defined as much by their form as by their content. They are narratives or collections of narratives centered around the remarkable actions and experiences of individual people. Some of these accounts are plausible by modern standards, many are not; but the majority were likely compiled in similar ways, through collecting and recording hearsay about local people and events, whether notable for their virtue, their influence, or their sheer anomalousness. That they are all grouped together in these catalogues underscores the affinities these texts share, despite the explicit miscellaneousness of the category.

Though there is a hierarchy implicit in the ordering of bibliographic categories wherein dynastic histories and their commentaries come first and the miscellaneous accounts are found nearer the middle or end of the category, the placing of all this material under the umbrella category of Histories suggests that the differences among them are of degree rather than kind. If miscellaneous accounts were more suspect than other materials, the criticism levied against them closer to their own time was not that they were invented, but rather that they must be used with caution. In the *Sui shu* bibliographic catalogue, the "miscellaneous account" category is dismissively described as "the historian's lesser concerns" 史官之末事 but also simultaneously affirmed: "recorders of history select the essential among them" 載筆之士, 刪採其要焉 (*Sui shu* 33.982). Several decades later, the early Tang historian and historiographer Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) in his *Shitong* 史通 (*A Comprehensive Study of Historical Writings*) similarly declared that such sources (discussed as "miscellaneous narratives" [*zashu* 雜述] rather than "accounts"; he includes works such as Liu Yiqing's *Shishuo xinyu* as well) "can go side by side with official histories" 能與正史參行 even as he is critical of recent historians for relying on them too heavily (*Shitong* 10.247, 5.106–107). Both descriptions recognize the potential unreliability of sources based on gossip and hearsay but assume that they are historical in intent and have value for understanding the past.

A look at the works themselves confirms this impression of intended historicity. The overwhelming tendency within these narratives is to present the events they recount as historical happenings, however improbable they may be by our own standards. We have no reason to doubt that many recorders and readers believed in the historical truth of miracle tales and occult encounters, as well as in occult details in records that otherwise read as more sober histories. Gan Bao, the historian who compiled *Soushen ji*, declared his aim in the latter project to be to "show clearly that the spirit world is no lie" 明神道之不誣 (Gan Bao 2007: 19; Chapter 13). Other writers meticulously note the names of the people from whom they heard the stories they record, in the manner of a historian citing his sources (for example, Tang Lin 唐臨 [600–659] names his informants in many of the Buddhist tales gathered in his *Mingbao ji* 冥報記 [*Records of Netherworld Repayments*]; see also the discussion of sources in Campany 2012: 19–28). Some readers—and perhaps some collectors—just as surely doubted the veracity of such accounts, as Gan Bao himself evidently anticipated in making his assertion. But as a whole, these early collections display an earnestness about the accounts they preserve that indicates that their recorders were motivated by the desire to document a religious truth, whether Buddhist, Daoist, or simply the existence of the occult.

The Tang material Lu Xun identified as the first examples of conscious fiction presents a more complicated case. The early-eighth-century imperial catalogue found in *Jiu Tang shu* predates almost all works now labeled *chuanqi*, and the eleventh-century catalogues that do include eighth- and ninth-century titles represent a major shift in categorization practice for an important subset of miscellaneous accounts (on which more below). On the one hand, the perception of this material as miscellaneous accounts that were part of a larger historical enterprise likely remained the norm into the eighth and ninth centuries, when the majority of these narratives were recorded. Neither readers nor writers at the time appear to have considered them to be fictions, judging from both the frequency with which more than one writer recorded the same events (making it highly unlikely that those events were separately invented by the separate writers) and the continued practice of crediting sources (Allen 2014: 27–36). That such narratives often have titles reminiscent of historical writings also implies an assumed historicity (though it can be difficult to ascertain whether an individual title is original or was assigned by later editors). Among individually circulating works, "account" or "biography" (*zhuan* 傳) is common for narratives focused on a specific figure, and "record" (*ji* 記 or *lu* 錄) for narratives about a specific event (this distinction is not absolute, however); such titles are given to informal narratives preserved in individual literary collections as well as to historical works. "Record" (*ji, lu*, and also *zhi* 志) is also common in titles of collections, as was the case in Six Dynasties works.

On the other hand, many informal narrative accounts from the eighth and especially the ninth centuries display a broader interest in recording events for their intrinsic interest as stories, without regard for any particular religious orientation. Some writers crafted more elaborated and artfully composed versions of stories than was typical in earlier centuries, and in doing so likely strayed further from their sources. A few, such as Yuan Jiao 袁郊 in his collection *Ganze yao* 甘澤謠 (*Ballads of a Seasonable Rain*) and Pei Xing 裴鉶 in his *Chuanqi* 傳奇 (*Transmitting the Marvelous*), both dating to the late ninth century, depart still further from common practice to experiment with plots and to recombine themes. But both writers still drew on received information, and readers appeared to have read them in the same spirit. The slightly earlier *Xuanguai lu* 玄怪錄 (*Accounts of Mysterious Marvels*), compiled by the statesman Niu Sengru 牛僧孺 (780–ca. 848), illustrates the irrelevance of hard-and-fast divisions between invention and fidelity to sources even more starkly by including both witty joke stories whose artificiality marks them as patently invented and accounts whose sources are carefully noted. Instead of a shift towards conscious fiction, we find conscious manipulation and embellishment of existing material, often featuring known historical figures (Allen 2014: 12–14, 48–53, 222–225). As yet, no convention existed for reading invented narratives as fictions instead of as untrustworthy histories.

Placing these narratives instead in the context of their bibliographic categorization as "miscellaneous accounts" reveals their ties with a broader range of earlier material than is brought to bear in the more circumscribed history of *xiaoshuo*. The "miscellaneous accounts" category found in the *Sui shu* and *Jiu Tang shu* catalogues recognizes formal similarity across a range of works that emerged from different, often competing, motivations. Biographies of transcendents and Buddhist hagiographies and miracle tales demonstrate the power respectively of Daoist and Buddhist belief and practice; stories of human encounters with ghosts and gods and other anomalies prove their existence; stories about exceptionally filial or self-sacrificing or resourceful men or devoted wives commemorate a certain type of conduct and encourage analogous behavior in others. The entries gathered in collections of accounts on all of these themes, as well as individually circulating narratives about figures from emperors and generals to monks and women, are structured as sequences of emblematic incidents that occurred in human lives. These accounts echo the form of the biographies (*zhuan* 傳) in annals-biographies histories, just as collections of accounts of a certain type of person (women, monks, recluses, and so on) parallel the many biographies of figures from a given dynasty found in the histories.

Many of the most complex Tang narratives draw on accounts of exemplary women and filial sons as much as on the tales of the occult that are their predecessors in the *xiaoshuo* lineage. The fox romance "Miss Ren" is simultaneously a story of feminine devotion and self-sacrifice; the female in question just happens to be a were-fox. Bai Xingjian's 白行簡 (776–826) "Miss Li's Story" ("Li Wa zhuan" 李娃傳; early ninth century) is a scandalous tale of a young man's profligacy, but the story's real marvel is the prostitute Li Wa's remarkable dedication to reforming her lover after she has ruined him, the full measure of her success seen in the auspicious fungus and birds that appear in response to his filial mourning upon the death of his parents, bringing together elements of stories of exemplary women and filial sons. Li Gongzuo's 李公佐 "Xie Xiao'e's Story" ("Xie Xiao'e zhuan" 謝小娥傳; after 818) also draws on both models in its depiction of a daughter so filial that she endures years of hardship so that she may commit murder to avenge her father's death. These associations give those tales much of their resonance and are key to the very complexity that today earns them accolades as well-crafted, conscious fiction.

What then of the term *xiaoshuo*, which as we saw above is now applied to much of this same narrative material? *Xiaoshuo* also makes its appearance in early book catalogues, but in the early and medieval periods, the term more often designated collections of short, gossipy snippets than the more fully elaborated stories that Lu Xun identified as the earliest fiction. The first known definition of *xiaoshuo* as a category of textual material is found in a fragment, preserved in a commentary to the *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*), from the early first century *Xinlun* 新論 (*New Treatises*) by Huan Tan 桓譚, who writes that "Those in the tradition of *xiaoshuo* collect fragmentary, petty utterances and draw analogous discussions from near at hand to make small books" 小說家合叢殘小語, 近取譬論, 以作短書 (*Wen xuan* 31.439; translation modified from Campany 1996: 131). The *Han shu* book catalogue also includes *xiaoshuo* as the last of the subheadings found under the larger Masters designation; Ban Gu characterizes *xiaoshuo* as "something created by those who chat on streets and alleyways and listen to hearsay along byways and roads" 街談巷語, 道聽塗說者之所造也 (*Han shu* 30.1744–45). Though none of the fifteen works Ban Gu lists are extant, these descriptions, and Ban Gu's placement of *xiaoshuo* in the Masters section, indicates that the dominant characteristic of *xiaoshuo* as the term was understood in the first century was that it recorded information of lesser significance rather than that it was narrative in form, and that it was collected rather than invented.

Xiaoshuo continued to refer primarily to collections of gossipy notes, with individual entries often of just a few lines, into the Tang. The description in the *Sui shu* book catalogue provides a pragmatic rationale for the collection of roadside gossip by linking it to the venerable tradition of governmental information-gathering said to lie behind the poems of *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) (Chapters 16, 17), while the *Jiu Tang shu* catalogue describes the category succinctly as "recording uncouth words and popular discussions" 紀芻辭輿誦 (*Sui shu* 34.1011; *Jiu Tang shu* 46.1963). The actual works listed in each bibliography suggest a slightly different understanding of the category from what the description would imply, however. As with the *Han shu* listings, many of the titles no longer survive, but fragments preserved elsewhere suggest that a number of them collected witticisms and clever speeches rather than comments reflecting the feelings of the common people. The collection *Shishuo xinyu*, with its reports on the interactions among the social and literary elite, is listed under *xiaoshuo* in both bibliographies. Only one sustained narrative is included: *Yan Danzi*, mentioned above as a version of the story of the assassin Jing Ke; it fits the categorical descriptions in recounting the actors' speeches at length, but otherwise seems somewhat out of place among the other works listed (*Sui shu* 34.1011–1012; *Jiu Tang shu* 47.2036. It has been suggested that the catalogue compilers may not have personally seen *Yan Danzi*, or that the *Yan Danzi* they knew was different from the text of that title that survives today, thus explaining its anomalous inclusion under *xiaoshuo*; see, e.g., DeWoskin 1997: 47). Eighth- and ninth-century works contemporaneously described as *xiaoshuo* also recount tidbits of news and rumor, but include entries about notable occurrences as well as entries whose main interest is verbal utterances or exchanges (Allen 2014: 5–6). In aggregate, these mentions point to a somewhat expanded field of reference for *xiaoshuo* from that found in the book catalogues, but one that remained centered on terse anecdotal material.

It is not until the eleventh century that *xiaoshuo* as a bibliographic category comes to refer to a broader range of materials, and more of the works Lu Xun describes as *xiaoshuo* are included. The *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目 (*The Comprehensive Catalogue of the Hall of Venerating Culture* [the Song imperial book collection], 1034–1042, which has survived only in part) eliminates the "miscellaneous accounts" category from the history section and shifts many of the titles listed there into one of several categories in the Masters section. *Soushen ji* and other collections of accounts of anomalous occurrences from the Six Dynasties period are labeled as *xiaoshuo* for the first time, as are Tang collections of similar material and a few accounts that circulated independently rather than in collections (though *Ganze yao*, one of the most imaginative of Tang collections, is placed under Histories in an "accounts and records" 傳記 category). *Shishuo xinyu* remains under *xiaoshuo*, and some Tang dynasty gossipy anecdote collections are placed there as well. The *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang*; 1060) catalogue continues this trend by moving a few more collections of miscellaneous anecdotes that had remained in the "accounts and records" or "miscellaneous histories" 雜史 (*zashi*) category in *Chongwen zongmu*, as well as collections of Buddhist miracle tales, into *xiaoshuo*. This reorganization brings much of the material that is now commonly called *xiaoshuo* under that rubric, paving the way for the contemporary understanding of the word.

However, the relocation of collections of anomalies and occult encounters into the *xiaoshuo* category was not a nascent recognition of their fictionality but a move toward stricter standards for materials included under Histories, whereby material based on hearsay was considered too unreliable (Wang and Bi 2009: 2–4). Perhaps this reevaluation was a reaction to the greater degree of elaboration and freedom with sources found in some Tang works of the sort now called *chuanqi*; ironically enough, the *Xin Tang shu* itself has been criticized for its sloppy historiography, because its compilers drew on dubious sources of precisely the sort that are removed from Histories to *xiaoshuo* in its book catalogue (Allen 2014: 111–113). In receiving these and other new titles, *xiaoshuo* in turn took on some of the heterogeneity that miscellaneous accounts had had in previous book catalogues, a point underscored by other works that are also placed under *xiaoshuo* but would never be considered fiction. This is particularly clear in *Chongwen zongmu*, where Yan Zhitui's 顏之推 (531–ca. 591) advice to his sons in his *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 (*Family Instructions for the Yan Clan*; late sixth century), books on tea and on flowers, and the eighth-century women's conduct manual the *Nüxiao jing* 女孝經 (*Women's Classic of Filial Piety*) are all included (*Chongwen zongmu* 3.148–166; originally scrolls 27–28). In the *Xin Tang shu* catalogue, the addition of nonoccult anecdote collections focused on court and capital gossip (such as Li Zhao's 李肇 ninth-century *Guoshi bu* 國史補 [*Supplement to the History of the Reigning Dynasty*]) brings the *xiaoshuo* category closer to the early bibliographic descriptions that define it as street gossip. That all of this material is shifted to a category within the Master's section of the catalogue suggests that it continued to be seen as useful information.

Some scholars have recently argued that the categorization of these materials (now seen as early or emerging fiction) as a form of history in early book catalogues is due to a "Confucian" disdain for imaginative writing and the centrality of history-writing as the dominant form of narrative in China, which forced early writers of fiction to disguise their works as histories to ensure their acceptance and survival (e.g., Zhao 2006: 69–77; cf. S. Lu 1994: 39–52, 93, 106–128; and Gu 2006: 28–33). This reading of the bibliographic evidence, like the underlying assumption that narratives we cannot accept as true must be intrinsically fictional, projects the judgments of our own time back onto an earlier age. There can be little question that throughout the medieval period, and increasingly in the eighth and ninth centuries, some writers recorded partly or wholly invented literary narratives, and that they were fully conscious that they were inventing, whether the invention is confined to details of description or dialogue or extends to the entire incident recounted. The fact that such narratives might nonetheless be presented and received as accounts of events that had happened speaks less to a need to disguise fictionality than to the habits of reading (and writing) in force at the time, in which a hard-and-fast division between history and invention was not so central to the interpretation of narrative as it is today, seen in the juxtaposition of inherited and fabricated elements in collections such as *Xuanguai lu, Ganze yao*, and *Chuanqi*. That is, the inclusion in a narrative of some or many elements invented by its recorder did not detract from its qualification as a form of history nor warrant its dismissal as a lie. Within some types of histories, a high degree of factual accuracy was expected: the year-by-year accounts of court events found in the basic annals of dynastic histories, for example, were based whenever possible upon court records presumed to derive from notes taken as the events unfolded at court (Twitchett 1992). In other narrative contexts, however—especially in cases where verification depended entirely on the testimony of eyewitnesses, as in most gossip and stories of the occult—an account's implicit claim to represent what the recorder believed to have happened was sufficient authority. When the real aim of a narrative was to entertain or to teach a lesson, the actual historicity of the events recounted mattered less than the need to tell a compelling story. The assumption that the story was *supposed* to be true (whether or not the individual reader believed it) only added to its punch.

These two visions of classical Chinese narrative, one emphasizing the fictional and one the historical, identify different (or even opposite) defining characteristics in the works they cover. Both arguably point to the inadequacy of either perspective. The construction of any narrative is inevitably a process of shaping the story told, whether through decisions about what details to include or through the judicious filling in of narrative gaps, through deliberate embellishment on a fragment of a story or through outright invention. For virtually all of the narratives preserved from this period, readers seeking fiction can find fictional elements in works otherwise regarded as reliable histories (let alone in unverifiable gossip and stories of the occult), and readers who assume a work is historical can recognize the factual points in narratives that to others may seem so incredible that they must be fictions. Whichever standpoint we take, the works that have survived to shape our understanding of the literary practices of centuries past attest to the existence of a rich storytelling tradition in early and medieval China. Narrative was used to remember the deeds and people of the past, to explore human character and human behavior, to demonstrate the truth of religious teachings, to inspire, and to amuse. Different goals and different sources required different degrees of authorial intervention. But whatever the justification for its writing, much that was written down was surely recorded for the sheer pleasure of the narrative.

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III. Collecting, Editing, Transmitting

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION (XIAOFEI TIAN)

LITERARY history is well known to represent a process of unnatural selection, which culminates in the university's undergraduate literature class syllabus and, in the case of classical Chinese literature, also in authors and works found in Chinese school textbooks. Underlying the agenda of the modern school system is the concept of a coherent "Chinese culture of ours" represented by the "best works" produced over the centuries. The following chapters in this section trace developments in literary history by focusing on anthology making and canon formation, and by providing an outline of the transmission of classical literature from the beginnings through the imperial period. The processes of collecting, selecting, editing, and passing judgment on literary works are informed by larger cultural and social changes, and constitute a crucial aspect of literary production and consumption. This is especially true at a time when inclusion in an anthology could not only cement a text's status in the canon but also determine its physical survival, or when the reading of a text in the context of a certain anthology impacts the interpretation and evaluation of the text. The historical contextualization of the textual tradition in the following chapters thus aims to present a nuanced picture of the variegated and changing landscape of literary production behind the illusion of a stable national canon.

Toward the end of antiquity, Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE) organized the messy remains of the pre-Han and earlier Western Han manuscripts, stabilized texts, and created books with authors. Subsequently, there have been several important "moments" in the transmission of classical literature. The first occurred in the fifth and sixth centuries, which witnessed an intense attentiveness to belletristic literature and a revival of interest in earlier poetry. This happened at a time when the Southern Dynasties emperors were actively engaged in the literary representation of kingship and the southern empire, and when literary scholarship was for the first time institutionalized. This period saw the first accounts of literary history as well as an unprecedented boom in literary anthologies, from *zongji* (comprehensive collection) to *bieji* (literary collections of individual authors), from multigenre anthology to single-genre anthology. In many ways, the Southern Dynasties literary men shaped and mediated our knowledge and perception of early classical Chinese literature. Three anthologies surviving from this period are particularly important, because they constitute major sources of pre-Tang literature when well over 95 percent of pre-Tang anthologies and individual collections are no longer extant. These anthologies are *Wen xuan* 文選, a multiple-genre anthology; *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠, a single-genre anthology of poetry; and *Hongming ji* 弘明集 (*Collection of the Propagation of Light*), an anthology of prose from the Eastern Han (25–220) to the Liang (502–557) compiled by the Buddhist monk Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518).

The complicated cultural politics of literary history is most clearly revealed in the cases of the last two anthologies. *Yutai xinyong* is the first anthology of poetry after *Shijing* (*The Classic of Poetry*) and *Chuci* (*Verses of Chu*) that has survived more or less intact. Manifestly compiled for an upper-class female readership, it was an extremely popular anthology read by both men and women. Its popularity was attested by its very survival in a continuous manuscript tradition from a time of overwhelming textual losses, as well as by anthologies inspired by it, such as the *Yutai houji* 玉臺後集 and *Yaochi xinyong* 瑤池新詠 in the Tang (618–907). It was printed as early as the Northern Song (960–1127), and the earliest current printed editions date to the late Ming (1368–1644). It includes many poems overlapping with the *Wen xuan* through the end of the fifth century, demonstrating that the compilers shared similar literary values. Yet, whereas *Wen xuan* allegedly excludes living authors, *Yutai xinyong* contains copious representation of contemporary works, including romantic poems by the *Wen xuan* compiler himself, and enables us to see the rich, variegated literary landscape of the sixth century. It also preserves numerous poems that would otherwise have been lost or transmitted in fragmentary forms, including a rare long narrative poem on a tragic love story. Classical Chinese literature would have been much poorer without *Yutai xinyong*. In modern times, however, *Yutai xinyong* is consistently ignored or denigrated, taken to exemplify the "decadence" of the southern court. While a branch of learning formed around *Wen xuan* and was dubbed "*Xuan* xue" ("*Wen Xuan* studies"), *Yutai xinyong* has only begun to receive serious attention in recent years. The same can be said of the Buddhist anthology *Hongming ji*. This anthology includes defenses of the Buddhist faith and writings by detractors so that the reader can see both sides of the argument. It allows us to glimpse some of the most controversial issues in the early transmission of Buddhism in China and contains some of the best examples of analytical prose written in the Southern Dynasties. It inspired a seventh-century sequel, *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, which is still extant and preserves numerous writings in multiple genres that would have otherwise lost. Yet if some of the writings from the anthologies have been independently studied by scholars of religion and of literature, these anthologies as a whole are not treated as great points of interest in most literary historical accounts, reflecting a later bias against women and religious writings that was, however, *not* characteristic of the period in which these anthologies were made.

The second important moment in the transmission of early and early medieval literature is the early seventh century. The state oversaw a series of large cultural projects, such as the compilation of encyclopedias and anthologies, and the writing of commentary and history. In all areas of cultural and intellectual life, an attempt to consolidate, rearrange, and order the textual tradition was underway. In practice, the early Tang court continued to write poetry and prose in the Southern Dynasties courtly style, but in discourse it condemned that style as weightless, ornamented, and immoral. Such a view prevailed for the next fifteen hundred years to modern times and created an artificial division in conventional literary historical accounts in the use of dynastic rule as a way of conceptualizing periodization—that is to say, seeing the Southern Dynasties as frivolous and decadent, but the Tang as serious and vigorous. The discrepancy between practice and theory has led to many problematic consequences. For instance, the Northern Dynasties belletristic writings, though endorsed in early Tang public discourse as being full of "substance" as opposed to the Southern Dynasties' perceived excessive ornament, are not at all well represented in the early Tang encyclopedias that, together with the three anthologies mentioned above, are the main sources for pre-Tang literature; as a result, Northern Dynasties writings are largely lost.

There is another way in which the Tang is crucial to our understanding of the historical process of canon formation: extant Tang anthologies are all anthologies of poetry, the genre this dynasty is most famous for, yet if the canon of classical prose formed in the Song (960–1279) has remained remarkably stable till this day, in the realm of poetry Tang tastes differed dramatically not just from those of Song readers but also from those of late imperial readers. The canon of Tang poetry as we know it has undergone great transformation.

The third important moment in the transmission of earlier literature is not so much a "moment" as an extended period, with many changes and new developments, marked by the transition from the age of manuscripts to the age of print and by the significant social and cultural changes from the medieval to the late imperial world. The Northern Song literati devoted considerable energy to sorting out the messy remains of the Tang manuscript legacy. Partially because of the increasingly prominent role of printing, which brought the illusion of stabilizing texts and creating an authoritative version, disagreements among manuscript copies of belletristic writings were, for the first time in history, noted with passionate concern. Textual variants were examined before a determination of the "genuine version" of the text was reached, and "inauthentic" variants were edited out from a poet's collection, often motivated by ideological concerns.

If Song men of letters largely ignored pre-Tang literature in favor of Tang poetry and old-style prose (*guwen*), this changed dramatically in the last six hundred years of the imperial period. There was a revival of interest in pre-Tang literature, including Southern Dynasties parallel prose (*pianwen* 駢文 or *pianti wen* 駢體文). This was manifested in the Ming dynasty reconstitution of early medieval individual literary collections from encyclopedia and anthology sources, which in turn became the basis of modern editions, and in the printing of classical literature, often with commentaries.

The late imperial period presents us with a dizzying array of works—from encyclopedias (*leishu*) and collectanea (*congshu*) to anthologies (*zongji*), often compiled with a clear critical agenda in mind, and reconstituted individual collections (*bieji*). There are several salient points to be highlighted regarding the transmission of the classical textual legacy in this period. First there is the complex interaction between printing and manuscript. Printing popularizes the manuscript copy on which the printed version is based but inadvertently "obscures" other manuscript versions, which could still circulate among more local audiences. This is what happened to the version of the early Tang poet Wang Ji's 王績 (590?–644) collection in three scrolls which was printed and became widely known, whereas an earlier, larger Wang Ji collection in five scrolls existed in three manuscript copies in private collections and was only "discovered" as late as the 1980s. Sometimes a printed edition claiming to be based on an old manuscript or an earlier (usually Song) printed edition would go into many reprints and eclipse other versions. In the case of *Yutai xinyong*, its oldest datable printed edition from 1540 was based on a manuscript copy purchased at Jinling (modern Nanjing). It was largely overshadowed by the 1633 edition claiming to be based on a Southern Song edition put together by Chen Yufu 陳玉父 in 1215. The 1540 recension became widely available in a modern typeset edition only in 2011. It contains nearly 200 poems more than the 1633 version, and many of them might indeed have been interpolated from encyclopedias and collections by the editor himself, the unknown producer of the Jinling manuscript, or during the murky transmission process that had led to the Jinling manuscript. This in some ways is typical of a certain practice in the Ming of augmenting an early collection as much as possible, sometimes changing the text unscrupulously, before putting it in print, resulting in much criticism from scholars in the Qing and modern times. Yet, since we do not have the *Yutai xinyong* from the sixth century, it is impossible to determine with certainty its original content or the original ordering of that content. More importantly, the Southern Song edition collated by Chen Yufu was itself based on one manuscript copy and two printed editions, one with a missing page and riddled with errors and the other being only half of the original text. The point is that "Song editions" became mythologized because they came from the early stage of the age of printing and were taken to represent the authentic original, but the very concept of "authentic original" must be called into question.

The final point to be addressed is the blurring of boundaries between traditional generic boundaries in what I call the diffusion of *wen*. This blurring is testified by numerous prose anthologies from the Southern Song on. While Zhen Dexiu's 真德秀 (1178–1235) *Wenzhang zhengzong* 文章正宗 began to include excerpts from Confucian classics and works of history such as *Zuozhuan, Guoyu, Zhanguo ce*, and *Shiji*, Tang Shunzhi's 唐順之 (1507–1560) *Wen bian* 文編 is considered by scholars to be the first anthology to include selections from pre-Qin Masters texts, such as *Xunzi, Zhuangzi*, and even Sunzi's book of war. Subsequently, many anthologies followed suit. By the late seventeenth century, including excerpts from Confucian classics, dynastic histories, and Masters Texts in a prose anthology had become such a norm that we witness it from *The Imperial Selections of Exemplary Classical Prose* (*Yuxuan guwen yuanjian*) to the wildly popular *Best Examples of Classical Prose* (*Guwen guanzhi*). When the famous prose stylist and classics scholar Fang Bao 方苞 (1668–1749) compiled *Condensed Selections of Classical Prose* (*Guwen yuexuan*), a textbook for young Manchu patricians largely based on the aforementioned *Imperial Selections*, he felt the need to explain his decision to exclude *Guoyu, Zhanguo ce*, and most of the *Shiji*, which he emphatically praised as forming "the proper pedigree of classical prose." He was certainly not paying lip service to please his princely patron who believed the same, as Fang had famously and tirelessly advocated the classics, especially the *Chunqiu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) and *Zuozhuan* (the *Zuo Tradition*), as embodying the "principles and methods" (*yifa* 義法) of prose writing in many independently authored works throughout his life. Fang's literary approach toward the classics and histories, influenced by the general trend since the Southern Song and more directly by the early Tongcheng prose stylist Dai Mingshi 戴名世 (1653–1713), can be further seen in the works of the next generation of great Qing scholars such as Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724–1805) and Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801). The gradual collapse of traditional bibliographical categories of *jing* (classics), *shi* (histories), *zi* (masters texts), and *ji* (literary collections), despite the habitual use of these designations, culminated in modern times, when *Shijing* is studied as "belletristic literature" rather than as a Confucian scripture, *Zhuangzi* is analyzed for its literary value, and Sima Qian is considered the ancestor of "narrative literature." With this we have effectively entered a new phase in the formation of a classical Chinese "literary" canon.

CHAPTER 19

PRE-TANG ANTHOLOGIES AND ANTHOLOGIZATION

DAVID R. KNECHTGES

History and Antecedents

In China, the anthology has occupied an important place in literary culture from ancient times. As early as the Zhou 周 dynasty (ca. 1046–256 BCE), scholars undertook to compile literary collections. Several of the most venerated works of the Chinese tradition, the Ruist or Confucian Classics, are basically anthologies. Confucius is traditionally credited with compiling the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*). Although the attribution to Confucius is no longer accepted, the 305 pieces in this collection, which are arranged into four categories, are basically the earliest extant collection of Chinese verse. Another of the Ruist Classics, the *Shujing* 書經 (*Shangshu, Classic of Documents*), also attributed to Confucius, contains some of the earliest examples of Chinese expository and rhetorical prose. During the Han dynasty, the bibliographer Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) condensed a wide variety of old texts in the imperial archives into coherent collections. For example, Liu Xiang reduced 322 fascicles of writings by the Warring States Master writer Xun Qing 荀卿 (ca. 335–238 BCE) to form the work known as *Xunzi* 荀子 (Master Xun) in thirty-two fascicles. He also used six different works containing Warring States stories and speeches to compile a single text of thirty-three fascicles titled *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*). This is an important collection of a genre James Crump has labeled *shui* 說 or “persuasion” (Crump 1964). Another important collection of ancient Chinese poetry is the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*), which represents an important southern tradition of ancient Chinese poetry. The received version of this work was compiled in the early second century CE (Hawkes 1985: 28–41).

These proto-anthologies, however, were confined to a single genre, and one must look to the early medieval period (third to seventh centuries) to find examples of anthologies that contained a variety of genres. During this period, a vast number of anthologies were compiled. Thanks to the “Monograph on Bibliography” (“Jingji zhi” 經籍志) in the *Sui shu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui*), completed in 656, we know the names of most of them. These anthologies are known in Chinese under the rubric *zongji* 總集 (comprehensive collection). The earliest use of this term as a bibliographical category is in the *Qi lu* 七錄 (*Seven Lists*) compiled by Ruan Xiaoxu 阮孝緒 (479–536) between 523 and 536 (Knechtges and Chang 2010–2014: 773–774; see also Chapter 11). According to the "Monograph on Bibliography," 107 works in 2,213 scrolls were still extant in the seventh century. It also mentions another 142 works in 3,011 scrolls that were lost in the conflagrations that occurred at the end of the sixth century and in 622 when some of the imperial collection fell into the Yellow River while being transported by boat from Luoyang to Chang'an. Only a small number of the works listed in this catalogue have survived to the present day.

Types of Anthology

The collections in the *zongji* category of the monograph on bibliography of the *Sui shu* are of two basic types, multigenre and single-genre anthologies. The prototype for the multiple-genre anthology is the *Wenzhang liubie ji* 文章流別集 (*Collection of Literature Arranged by Genre*) by Zhi Yu 摯虞 (d. 311). It circulated in editions of varying sizes, the largest of which was sixty-one scrolls. This anthology was not comprehensive in the sense that it attempted to collect everything that was extant. Zhi Yu reputedly was concerned about the proliferation of writings since the end of the Han, and thus he wished to select only what he deemed model examples of writing in each genre. Virtually all of the multiple-genre anthologies before the Tang 唐 (618–907) are of this type. Several of them were quite large. They include the *Ji lin* 集林 (*Grove of Collections*), compiled under the auspices of the Song prince Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444) in 200 scrolls, and the *Wen yuan* 文苑 (*Garden of Writings*), compiled by Kong Huan 孔逭 (fl. 490s) in 100 scrolls. These collections very likely were arranged by genre, and given their large size may have been a kind of omnium gatherum that collected a vast number of literary pieces of varying literary quality. Evidently these works were considered too large and unwieldly, and later scholars made abridgements of them titled respectively *Ji chao* 集鈔 (*Extracts from the Collections*) and *Wen yuan chao* 文苑鈔 (*Extracts from the Garden of Writings*) (Tian 2007: 101).

The "Monograph on Bibliography" of the *Sui shu* lists a large number of single-genre anthologies. Although all of these collections are lost, from the entries in the bibliography one can extract a few details that provide information about the nature of these works and the process of anthology compilation in the pre-Tang period. First, some of these works were of considerable size and were possibly attempts to collect all extant works of a certain genre. Examples are the *Fu ji* 賦集 (*Collection of Fu*) in ninety-two scrolls and the *Shi ji* 詩集 (*Collection of Poetry*) in fifty scrolls by Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), who must have compiled them while serving as director of the Palace Library in 427. Thus, he would have had access to the literary works preserved in the imperial library collection.

Second, scholars compiled collections for most of the literary genres that were in vogue during the Six Dynasties period. In addition to *fu* and *shi* anthologies, there were collections of *song* 頌 (eulogies), *yuefu* 樂府 and *gequ* 歌曲 (songs and ballads), *huiwen* 回文 (palindromes), *zhen* 箴 (admonitions), *ming* 銘 (inscriptions), *jiexun* 戒訓 (instructions), *zan* 贊 (encomia or judgments), *diaowen* 弔文 (laments), *beiwen* 碑文 (stele inscriptions), *jiwen* 祭文 (sacrificial offerings), *xingzhuang* 行狀 (conduct descriptions), *lun* 論 (disquisitions), *lianzhu*連珠 (literally "strung pearls," epigrams), *zhao* 詔 (imperial edicts), and *shu* 書 (letters). There were even anthologies of writings by or about women, Buddhist writings, and humorous pieces (*feixie wen* 誹諧文). It was during this period that literary scholars and critics began to focus on the issue of genre classification and definition, and the compilation of such a large number of single-genre anthologies is clearly a product of the emerging interest in genre (Hightower 1957).

Wen xuan

The most famous early medieval multiple-genre anthology is the *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*). It was compiled at the court of Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), Crown Prince Zhaoming 昭明 of the Liang 梁 (502–557). The most commonly circulated version of the *Wen xuan* divides the works into thirty-seven genres. Some editions of the *Wen xuan* have thirty-eight categories. The woodblock edition of Chen Balang 陳八郎 of the Southern Song, which is held in the National Library of Taiwan, adds a thirty-ninth category. Most *Wen xuan* specialists now agree that it originally had thirty-nine genres (Fu 2000: 185–192).

The compilation process of the *Wen xuan* is a much-debated subject in Chinese literary scholarship. Although the work is always listed under Xiao Tong's name, there is evidence that several members of his court participated in its compilation. Some recent scholars have even gone so far as to argue that Xiao Tong had little to do with the compilation, and that the chief compiler actually was Liu Xiaochuo 劉孝綽 (481–539), a renowned scholar and poet who served on Xiao Tong's staff in the 520s. The leading proponent of this view is Shimizu Yoshio 清水凱夫, who bases his conclusion primarily on two arguments. The first is that the common practice in the Six Dynasties period was for members of the staff of princes like Xiao Tong to do the actual work of compiling works, and the compilers honored their patron by attributing compilation to the prince. Shimizu thinks this is the case with the *Wen xuan*. Second, Shimizu claims to have found in the *Wen xuan* examples of pieces that Liu Xiaochuo selected for personal reasons, even in at least one case as a way of exacting revenge against a court rival (Shimizu 1999). Shimizu's hypothesis has been vigorously rejected by the Chinese scholars Gu Nong 顧農 and Qu Shouyuan 屈守元 (1913–2001) (Wen xuan *xue xinlun* 1997: 34–60).

The date of the compilation is also a much disputed issue. According to Dou Chang 竇常 (756–825), who lived in the Tang, the compilers of the *Wen xuan* included in the anthology only writings by persons who were no longer living. The most recently deceased writer included in the *Wen xuan* is Lu Chui 陸倕 (470–526). Thus, many scholars believe that the final compilation of the *Wen xuan* could not have been earlier than 526 or 527. Some scholars date it as late as 528. Wang Liqun 王立群 has published a book-length study in which he argues that the *Wen xuan* was compiled somewhat earlier, between 522 and 526 (Wang 2005). Wang Liqun has also proposed that contrary to conventional opinion, the compilers of the *Wen xuan* based their selection of pieces not on the collected works of individual writers but on earlier anthologies such as the *Wenzhang liubie ji*.

The preface to the *Wen xuan*, probably written by Xiao Tong, explains the principles of compilation and the standards of selection. Four kinds of writing were excluded: (1) the works traditionally attributed to the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, that is, works usually included in the *jing* or "Classics" category; (2) the writings of Laozi, Zhuangzi, Guanzi, and Mengzi, meaning the works of the *zi* or Masters group; (3) the speeches of worthy men, loyal officials, political strategists, and sophists, which are found in such works as *Guoyu* 國語 (*Discourses of the States*), *Zhanguo ce*, and historical works; (4) historical narratives and chronicles.

The last two types belong to the *shi* 史or "history" category. The only writings from the history category that were included in the *Wen xuan* are *xu* 序 (postfaces), *shu* 述 (evaluations), *lun* 論 (disquisitions), and *zan* 贊 (encomia or judgments). These are evaluative essays usually attached to the end of chapters of the standard histories. According to Xiao Tong, these genres could be included because of their "verbal coloration intricately arranged" and "literary ornament carefully organized," and because their "matter is the product of profound thought, and principles belong to the realm of literary elegance." Although some scholars have maintained that "profound thought" and "literary elegance" constituted the basic selection criteria for the *Wen xuan* as a whole, in the context of the *Wen xuan* preface this phrase applies only to the postfaces, evaluations, disquisitions, and judgments.

The *Wen xuan* consists of three basic sections: *fu* (variously translated as rhapsody, rhyme-prose, or poetic exposition), lyric poetry, and prose. The *fu* section contains fifteen thematic categories, which can be divided into the following six general groups:

A. Imperial Themes
    1. "Jingdu" 京都 (Metropolises and Capitals)
    2. "Jiao si" 郊祀 (Sacrifices)
    3. "Geng ji" 耕籍 (Plowing the Imperial Field)
    4. "Tianlie" 畋獵 (Hunting)

B. Travel
    5. "Ji xing" 紀行 (Recounting Travel)
    6. "You lan" 遊覽 (Sightseeing)

C. *Yongwu* (Poems on things)
    7. "Gong dian" 宮殿 (Palaces and Halls)
    8. "Jiang hai" 江海 (Rivers and Seas)
    9. "Wuse" 物色 (Natural Phenomena)
    10. "Niao shou" 鳥獸 (Birds and Animals)

D. Expression of Personal Sentiments
  11. "Zhi" 志 (Aspirations and Feelings)
  12. "Ai shang" 哀傷 (Laments)
E. Literature and Music
  13. "Lun wen" 論文 (Literature)
  14. "Yue" 樂 (Music)
F. Passions and Erotic Sentiments
  15. "Qing" 情 (Passions)

Placing the imperial themes first in the *Wen xuan* shows that the compilers of the *Wen xuan* adhered to the Han dynasty view that the ultimate concern of literature was the state. From ancient times, the Chinese viewed the capital as more than a city. It was first of all the center of imperial power. It also was a symbol of the empire and indeed the entire cosmos. Thus, writings that concerned governing the imperial center and ordering the cosmos naturally occupied the first place in the anthology.

The next thematic grouping consists of two closely related subjects, travel and sightseeing. Since they are concerned with travel and movement, they naturally follow from the last of the imperial themes, hunting. Hunting was associated with travel and excursion in ancient China, and thus the progression from the imperial themes to travel subjects is remarkably smooth. However, unlike the *fu* on imperial themes, these pieces are more personal travel accounts.

The next large grouping is *yongwu* 詠物 or "poems on things." This was a major topic of poetry during the Qi-Liang 齊梁 period (479–557). The *yongwu fu* was a well-established form by the Liang period, and the topics treated could include almost everything. Xiao Tong indicated his awareness of the *yongwu* form, at least indirectly, in comments about the various subjects included within the category of *yongwu*. As the Taiwan scholar Liao Kuo-tung 廖國棟 has shown, during the Wei-Jin 魏晉 period (220–420), the golden age of the *yongwu fu, yongwu fu* were composed in seven broad subject areas: celestial phenomena (e.g., moon, sun, wind, rain); land and waterways; plants; animals; human-made objects; buildings; and food and drink (Liao 1990).

Perhaps because the *yongwu fu* expressed moral intent, they are followed by a group of poems placed in the category named *zhi*, one of the meanings of which is "moral intent." These are poems in which the writer pours out his personal feelings to express frustration at failed ambition or to complain about the unfairness of the political system. These *fu* are serious pieces that address important moral questions.

The *fu* in the *zhi* section are followed by poems that are expressions of deeply held feelings, which are placed in the *ai shang* category. They consist of the plaint of a palace lady abandoned by her lord, laments over the death of friends, and a piece in which the writer expresses the sorrows of a widow who mourns her deceased husband. The section concludes with two pieces that portray the manifold sentiments different people feel when confronted with frustration and separation respectively.

The last two categories of the *fu* section do not follow as easily from the preceding themes. The next category is a loose grouping of writings about literature and music.

Music and literature, especially poetry, were strongly linked with the expression of feelings. Perhaps that is why Xiao Tong placed them after the *ai shang* group. The pieces on music mainly consist of a set of *yongwu* pieces on musical instruments, the panpipes, flute, mouth organ, and zither.

The final *fu* category consists of works labeled *qing*, which in this context should be understood in the sense of "passion." *Qing*, of course, is a loaded word that need not be understood as referring to erotic sentiments, especially this early. Three of the pieces do express mild erotic sentiments. Two of them are about a goddess who is able to seduce mortals with her sexual charms. Although her erotic nature is portrayed in one of these pieces ("*Fu* on Gaotang" 高唐賦), most of this piece is devoted to a description of the mountains near the gorges of the Yangzi River, and the piece could just as easily been included in the sightseeing category.

The ordering of the thematic categories of the *fu* section of the *Wen xuan* reveals a hierarchy of values, progressing from the most important themes of the state and empire to the least important, even somewhat trivial, subject, at least from a traditional Ruist point of view, that of erotic feeling. There is a similar kind of ordering apparent in the thematic groups of the lyric poetry section, which is also divided into thematic categories. For example, most of the poems in the first four categories are written in the tetrasyllabic meter of the *Classics of Poetry* and concern the role of Ruist moral virtues in maintaining social order.

The selection of poetry in the *Wen xuan* stands in distinct contrast to the only other pre-Tang literary anthology that survives intact, the *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs of the Jade Terrace*), a collection of mostly pentasyllabic verse whose compilation is usually credited to Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583). Recently, Zhang Peiheng 章培恒 and some of his students have proposed that the actual compiler of the *Yutai xinyong* was not Xu Ling but Zhang Lihua 張麗華 (560–589), the favorite concubine of the last ruler of the Chen 陳 dynasty (557–589), Chen Shubao 陳叔寶 (553–604, r. 582–589) (Tan, Wu, and Zhang 2012). Scholars have recently begun to examine the purpose of the *Yutai xinyong*. The most common view is that it is the principal collection of so-called palace-style verse. Indeed, this anthology does contain many famous examples of palace-style poetry, a form that the compilers of the *Wen xuan* excluded from their collection, probably because they found the erotic sentiments of some of the pieces objectionable. However, Liu Yuejin 劉躍進 has noted that some early catalogues place it in the music category, and that its relationship to *yuefu* and musically oriented poetry should not be ignored (Liu 2000). Based on a close reading of Xu Ling's preface, recent scholars such as Okamura Shigeru 岡村繁, David Knechtges, and Xiaofei Tian have concluded that the *Yutai xinyong* likely was compiled to provide reading material for palace ladies (Okamura 1986, Knechtges 2000, Tian 2007). Thus, this anthology may more properly belong with the collections of writings by and about women.

The prose section of the *Wen xuan* also shows some sense of hierarchy of genres, with a strong emphasis on literary forms that were important in state governance. Such genres as imperial edict, patent of enfeoffment, command, instruction, and examination essays constitute about half of the pieces in the prose section. This hierarchical sequencing shows that the compilers placed a high value on literary works that concerned governing the state and preservation of the imperial order (Knechtges 2000).

Wen xuan's Transmission History and Influences

Although there is no information about the transmission history of the *Wen xuan* after its compilation at the court of Xiao Tong in the 520s to the end of the Southern Dynasties (420–589), we do know that it survived the destruction of the imperial library that occurred during the fall of the Liang; it is listed in the "Monograph on Bibliography" of the *Sui shu*. The earliest known commentary was actually done by a member of the Xiao family, Xiao Gai 蕭該, who was a nephew of Xiao Tong. Qu Shouyuan suggested that Xiao Gai began studying the *Wen xuan* during his youth when he was living in Jiangling 江陵 (in modern Hubei) at the end of the Liang period. Qu notes that Jiangling, which was in Jingzhou 荊州, was an area of literary culture. It is possible that after the *Wen xuan* was compiled, a copy of it was transmitted to the Jingzhou court (Qu 1993). Xiao Gai, who lived through the Sui 隋 (581–618) and into the early Tang, may have played an important role in saving the *Wen xuan* from destruction during the late Southern Dynasties period.

Not too long after its compilation, the *Wen xuan* became the text from which most educated men, and even some women, obtained their literary education. Eventually, it became required reading for candidates for the *jinshi* examinations. According to Li Shan 李善 (d. 689), the renowned Tang commentator to the *Wen xuan*, "all the outstanding talents of the younger generation rely on [the *Wen xuan*] as their model and standard." Why did the *Wen xuan* alone attain its position of privilege? Why was it required reading for examination candidates? One answer often made is that the unified empire in the Tang required large numbers of officials skilled in writing. The *Wen xuan* provided a good selection of model examples of writing in different styles and genres: from *fu* and *shi* to edicts, petitions, disquisitions, prefaces, eulogies, and dirges (Knechtges 2014).

According to the "Monograph on Bibliography" of the *Sui shu*, one of the main reasons for the emergence of so many anthologies in the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties period was to select prime examples of writing in order "to cut and trim the weeds." Xiao Tong writes something similar in his *Wen xuan* preface: "Unless one omits the weeds and collects the purest blossoms, though one doubles his effort, it will be difficult to read more than half." During the Liang period and before, there emerged a concern that there were far too many literary works of varying quality. In order to restore order to the realm of writing, anthologies that contained carefully selected writings of exemplary pieces in different genres had to be compiled. The *Wen xuan* is one of the most carefully ordered anthologies prepared during this period.

One reason it became so widely accepted in the Tang is because its selection was carefully done and well ordered (Knechtges 2000). Thus, readers and writers used the *Wen xuan* to create some order out of the profusion of literary works written in the centuries from the end of the Zhou dynasty to the end of the Southern Dynasties. Even though the *Wen xuan* does not include all writings from this formative period of classical Chinese literature, it eclipsed all other anthologies of the pre-Tang period.

As mentioned above, the *Wen xuan* was the only pre-Tang multigenre anthology that has survived to the present day. In addition to becoming one of the principal sources of literary knowledge, it served as a model for later multigenre anthologies. For example, the *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (*The Flower of the Garden of Letters*) compiled at the Song court in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries follows most of the genre and thematic categories of the *Wen xuan* (see Chapter 21).

THE *WEN XUAN* IN JAPAN AND KOREA

Not only was the *Wen xuan* important in China from an early period, it became a widely read work in other East Asian countries, especially Japan and Korea (see Chapters 33–35). The *Wen xuan* was transmitted to Japan very early. According to the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀, an imperially sponsored history completed in 797 written in *kanbun*, a man from the Tang named Yuan Jinqing 袁晉卿 went to Japan in the seventh year of Tempyō (735). Based on his knowledge of the pronunciation in the early glossary *Erya* 爾雅 and in the *Wen xuan*, in 778 he was appointed a professor at the Japanese court academy (*daigakuryô* 大学寮). Thus, the *Wen xuan* was already known in Japan at this time.

The *Wen xuan* was a well-known text in the Japanese literary tradition. Two famous works, the *Makura no Sōshi*, known in English as *The Pillow Book* 枕草子, by Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 (ca. 966–1017), and *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 (*Essays in Idleness*), a collection of essays written by the monk Yoshida Kenkō 吉田兼好 (ca. 1283–ca. 1350), favorably mention it. Many manuscripts of the *Wen xuan* have been preserved in Japan. The most important of these is the *Wen xuan ji zhu/ Monzen shūchū* 文選集注 (*Collected commentaries to the* Wen xuan). This work originally was in 120 scrolls, but only some twenty-plus scrolls survive. Portions of the manuscript have been preserved in various places in Japan (Knechtges 2015).

The *Wen xuan* was also important in Korea. We know that the *Wen xuan* was transmitted to Korea at least by Tang times. For example, the chapter of the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (*Old History of the Tang*) on Korea mentions that the *Wen xuan* was one of the texts that was kept in nearly every Korean scholar's household. In 788, the Silla court introduced an examination system that consisted of three grades. In the first grade, candidates were tested on the *Chunqiu Zuoshi zhuan* 春秋左氏傳 (*The Zuo Tradition of the Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*), *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*), *Xiao jing* 孝經 (*Classic of Filial Piety*), and *Wen xuan*. The *Wen xuan* continued to be a highly prestigious text in Korea until the Choson dynasty (1392–1910), when Korean scholars began to take a strong interest in Tang and Song period "old-style prose" (*guwen* 古文). However, during this period a Korean version of the *Wen xuan* was compiled. This is the *Tong munsŏn* 東文選 or *Eastern Wen xuan*, a historical anthology of Korean writings in classical Chinese compiled under royal command in 1478 by Sŏ Kŏjŏng 徐居正 (1420–1488). Like the *Wen xuan*, it is arranged by genre (Knechtges 2015).

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CHAPTER 20

ANTHOLOGIES IN THE TANG

PAUL W. KROLL

The Tang 唐 (618–907) was an age of anthologies and encyclopedias, in a more robust fashion than any previous era (though perhaps the same might be said of every age with regard to its forerunners). Tang encyclopedias are discussed in a separate chapter (see Chapter 10). Here the focus is on anthologies, and particularly on anthologies that are clearly literary in nature. We know the names of over a hundred anthologies compiled during the Tang, and we can trace several centuries of the bibliographic presence and general circulation history of dozens of them. Most of them, however, had vanished from sight by the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). In 1628, Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599–1659) brought together nine Tang anthologies of poetry, preserved in his famous Jiguge 汲古閣 library, under the title *Tangren xuan Tangshi* 唐人選唐詩 (*Tang Anthologies of Tang Poetry*). This was the first attempt at collecting such anthologies, to be followed soon after by Wang Shizhen's 王士禎 (1634–1711) *Shizhong Tangshi xuan* 十種唐詩選 (*Ten Anthologies of Tang Poetry*). But even today, after much intensive scholarship, barely fifteen Tang anthologies survive or can be reconstructed in whole or in substantial part.

The hundred-plus anthologies that we know at least something about are of many different kinds. A relatively small number of them contained both prose and verse. The great majority were restricted only to verse, and these varied in content, including those focusing on certain types of verse, those of choice couplets or brief excerpts, those limited to poems by writers from a certain place, those by a certain group, those written on a certain occasion, and those containing works both from pre-Tang and Tang times, or from a specified earlier time up to the time of the compiler, or solely from the compiler's generation. Although the survey that follows will have most to say about the anthologies that are extant to some large degree, reference is often made to now lost anthologies, to emphasize how small a portion of the manuscript legacy of Tang anthologies remains available to us. Given the different types of anthologies, it will be helpful to divide our discussion into several broad categories.

Anthologies of Prose and Verse

Mixed-genre anthologies in Tang times stood in the long shadow of the sixth-century *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*; for discussion, see the preceding chapter). By the mid-seventh century, it had become a special field of study for some scholars, such as Cao Xian 曹憲 (fl. 605–649) and his students Xu Yan 許淹 (fl. 630–670), Li Shan 李善 (d. 689), and Gongsun Luo 公孫羅 (fl. 620–660), and had claimed a position, which it would retain throughout the dynasty, nearly equivalent to that of the Nine Classics (*Shangshu* 尚書, *Shijing* 詩經, *Yijing* 易經, *Li ji* 禮記, *Zhou li* 周禮, *Yili* 儀禮, *Zuozhuan* 左傳, *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳, and *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳) in the education of the literate elite. Explicitly intended *Wen xuan* successors were not lacking in the Tang. For example, during Xuanzong's 玄宗 reign (712–756), we find a *Xu Wen xuan* 續文選 (*Continued Selections of Refined Literature*) in thirty scrolls presented at court in 729; the compiler's name is not recorded, nor has any part of the anthology survived. A few years earlier, a group of court scholars led by Xu Jian 徐堅 (659–729) completed the chapters on *fu* and *shi* poetry of a *Wen xuan* sequel (those being the first two genres represented in the *Wen xuan* itself); this was called the *Wen fu* 文府 (*Treasury of Refined Literature*), but the project did not go on to prose genres, and no excerpts from it have reached us. Another example, from a century later, is the *Tongxuan* 通選 (*Comprehensive Selections*) compiled in 834 by Pei Lin 裴潾, in thirty scrolls, that being the same number of scrolls that comprised the original *Wen xuan*. Pei's desire was to produce a new *Wen xuan* for his time. We are told, however, that his selections were regarded as so eccentric that the book was scorned by his contemporaries.

One of the more perplexing mixed-genre anthologies from the Tang, also relating to the *Wen xuan*, is the *Guwen yuan* 古文苑 (*The Preserve of Olden Literature*, or *Garden of Ancient Literature* in this volume). This collection of works in twenty different genres of verse and prose was first noted in a mid-thirteenth-century bibliography, where it is described as an anonymous compilation placed for safekeeping during the Tang in the scripture alcove of a Buddhist monastery, whence it was discovered by Sun Zhu 孫洙 (1032–1080). Comprising nine scrolls (a later edition is divided into twenty-one scrolls) of selections dating from the Eastern Zhou 周 period (771–256 BCE) to the Qi 齊 (479–502) and Liang 梁 (502–557) dynasties, only a few of which are included in official histories and none in the *Wen xuan*, this anthology came to be highly regarded by later scholars. The chronological spread of its selections suggests that it was likely meant as a complement to the *Wen xuan*, which covers the same span, presenting fine works that had been left out of the latter. The fact that many of the verse compositions included in the anthology are in fragmented forms exactly identical to those that appear in the Tang encyclopedias *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (*Classified Extracts from Literature*, 624) and *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (*A Primer for Beginners*, 725) indicates that the *Guwen yuan* must have been compiled after those works. But whether it was actually compiled in the Tang or sometime in the tenth or early eleventh century remains an open question.

The most important and by far the largest mixed-genre anthologies in the Tang were compiled in the mid-seventh century under the direction of Xu Jingzong 許敬宗 (592–672). These were the *Fanglin yaolan* 芳林要覽 (*Crucial Readings from the Fragrant Grove*) in 300 scrolls and the *Wenguan cilin* 文館詞林 (*Forest of Compositions of the Literary Academy*) in 1,000 scrolls. What seems to be the preface of the former is quoted in *Wenjing mifu lun* 文鏡秘府論 (*Secret Treasury of the Mirror of Letters*; J. *Bunkyō hifuron*), an anthology of Chinese texts on literature and literary theory assembled by the Japanese Buddhist monk Kūkai 空海 (774–835) from works he had acquired during a thirty-month stay in China from 804 to 806 and brought home with him (we shall refer again to Kūkai's important book below). This preface deserves to be better known than it is. Unfortunately, we have no exact information about the contents of the *Fanglin yaolan*.

Regarding the *Wenguan cilin*, we know that it included selections in all genres of literature from the Western Han era to the early Tang, each genre being divided into many topical subsections. It was presented to the throne in 658, but the contents of only twenty-seven scrolls or fragments thereof have come down to us. Perhaps the most famous items included in these surviving chapters are our best examples of *xuanyan* 玄言 ("arcane discourse") verse from the fourth century. From the Tang, we have among the retrieved chapters only some stele inscriptions as well as imperial pronouncements dating to the reigns of Gaozu 高祖 (618–626) and Taizong 太宗 (626–649). The size of this immense compilation bespeaks a heretofore unknown scale for anthologies.

ANTHOLOGIES OF BOTH PRE-TANG AND TANG POETRY

At about the same time that the *Wenguan cilin* was compiled, the Buddhist monk Huijing 慧淨 assembled in twenty scrolls (some sources say ten) the *Xu Gujin shiyuan yinghua* 續古今詩苑英華 (*Finest Flowers of the Preserve of Poetry Ancient and Modern, Continued*). This is said to have included more than 540 poems by 154 poets, dating from the Datong 大同 reign-period (535–546) of the Liang dynasty down to poets of Tang Taizong's reign. It was likely meant as a follow-up to a slightly earlier thirty-scroll anthology called *Gujin leixu shiyuan* 古今類序詩苑 (*The Preserve of Poetry Ancient and Modern, Arranged by Category*), attributed to Liu Xiaosun 劉孝孫 (d. 642), who compiled it for the benefit of the Prince of Wu 吳王 in the 630s. We have no reliable details about Liu Xiaosun's anthology, but Huijing's sequel is mentioned several times in Tang anecdotal and unofficial histories, which suggests it was reasonably well known among scholar-officials.

Also intended as a sequel to an earlier model was the *Yutai houji* 玉臺後集 (*Another Jade Terrace Collection*) in ten scrolls, compiled by Li Kangcheng 李康成 late in the Tianbao 天寶 era (742–756) or shortly thereafter. This anthology was evidently patterned after Xu Ling's 徐陵 (507–583) famous *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs of the Jade Terrace*), also in ten scrolls. Like it, the *Yutai houji* was a selection of *yuefu* 樂府 verse and also included poetry in the so-called "palace style," which made up a good portion of the *Yutai xinyong*. Li Kangcheng's collection is said to have contained 670 works by 209 poets, dating from the mid-sixth century to the mid-eighth. Although the anthology is no longer extant, scholars have identified and collected eighty-nine of the poems that were included in it, by sixty-one poets, as referred to and quoted in various commentaries and other collections from later times.

Less well preserved but also compiled during the mid-eighth century was the *Lize ji* 麗則集 (*Collection of Poems Beautiful and Within Bounds*) in five scrolls. The title alludes to a quotation from Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) describing the *fu* 賦 compositions of master poets. The compiler of this anthology is sometimes said to have been Li Jifu 李吉甫 (758–814), but that attribution has been proven false. An early-twelfth-century bibliography tells us that the anthology contained 320 poems, dating from the 530s down to the Kaiyuan 開元 era (713–742). We know that a preface was added to it in the late eighth century by Zheng Yuqing 鄭餘慶 (748–820), but neither it nor any fragments of included poems have survived.

A multidynasty anthology of a different kind is the *Gujin shiren xiuju* 古今詩人秀句 (*Graceful Lines from Poets Ancient and Modern*), compiled in two scrolls by Yuan Jing 元兢 (fl. 660–684). This was a selection of couplets in pentametric verse that were considered most outstanding by the compiler, comprising examples from nearly four hundred poets dating from the Han dynasty down to Yuan's own contemporaries; the examples may have been supplemented with explanatory comments. Yuan Jing is an important figure in the history of Chinese literary criticism, particularly for his monograph *Shi suinao* 詩髓腦 (*The Nous and Pith of Poetry*), which offers a tighter refinement of the strictures on tonal euphony that Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) and his circle had advocated in the late fifth century. Nevertheless, in the preface to his anthology of couplets, which is preserved in Kūkai's *Wenjing mifu lun*, Yuan Jing states that feeling is what must come first in poetry, technique second.

ANTHOLOGIES OF TANG POEMS

Compilations restricted to poems from the dynasty itself make up the largest category of Tang anthologies as well as providing most of those anthologies that have been preserved in significant measure. It is the anthologies in this grouping that were the focus of Mao Jin's and Wang Shizhen's collections mentioned above, as they were of the 1958 publication of *Tangren xuan Tangshi*, which sparked new interest in these works, and the 1996 revised version, *Tangren xuan Tangshi xinbian* 唐人選唐詩新編 (*Tang Anthologies of Tang Poetry: A New Compilation*). But besides looking at those texts that have best survived the centuries, we shall also remark others in this category that we know something about but that have not come down to us.

The first such anthology (in a chronological listing) is the *Zhengsheng ji* 正聲集 (*Collection of Correct Song*), compiled by Sun Jiliang 孫季良 (fl. 720–735) in three scrolls. In the 720s, Sun was an academician in the prestigious Jixian yuan 集賢院 (Academy of Gathered Worthies), an institute to which the most scholarly officials at Xuanzong's court were given appointments concurrent with whatever other positions they held. Sun Jiliang was one of the group of academy scholars who participated in the compilation of two famous works: the *Chuxue ji*, an encyclopedia originally meant for the emperor's sons and which later came into wide use as a resource for training in literary composition, and the *Liu dian* 六典 (*Six Canons of Government*), a comprehensive survey of the ideal organization and staffing of governmental offices, which was used later by scholars as a guidebook to the Kaiyuan bureaucracy. As to Sun's anthology of poetry, the *Zhengsheng ji* is not extant now, but it seems to have been highly thought of into the tenth century (judging from anecdotes about it, from the ninth and tenth centuries). What little we know about it, based on comments in later works, is this: the poems included in it were only by Tang writers, and the best represented of these poets was Liu Xiyi 劉希夷 (ca. 651–680). The latter is largely forgotten today, but his reputation or at least popularity in Tang times is evident in that several of his works are among the most frequently copied poems found in the Tang manuscripts recovered at Dunhuang. Both of these facts are important. First, that a scholar in Xuanzong's time might regard Tang verse as constituting its own literary field, no longer tying the early decades of Tang literary history to the preceding (and usually castigated) verse of the Qi, Liang, Chen, and Sui dynasties, is a significant development in the conceptualization of Tang poetry. Second, the prominent standing in this anthology of the now little-known Liu Xiyi, and indeed the disappearance of the anthology itself, reminds us of how much our own view of Tang poetry is dependent on the tastes of those who lived between Tang times and today, especially when, as here, Song or Ming scholars with preferences that differed from those of their Tang predecessors have allowed works and writers who were once respected to slide into an oblivion that masks them from us.

Next in chronological order, sometime in the late 730s or early 740s we have the *Souyu xiaoji* 搜玉小集 (*Little Collection of Searching for Jade*), in one scroll by an unnamed compiler. This may be an abridgement of, or modeled on, a ten-scroll *Souyu ji* 搜玉集 whose title is all that remains to us. But the small-scale *Souyu xiaoji* is extant. It contains sixty-one poems by thirty-four poets and is organized topically. Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (ca. 656–712) is most visible in it with five poems, then Cui Shi 崔湜 (671–713), Xu Yanbo 徐彥伯 (d. 714), and Shen Quanqi 沈佺期 (d. ca. 713) with four each, followed by Liu Xiyi, Cui Rong 崔融 (653–706), Zheng Yin 鄭愔 (fl. 705), and Zhang E 張諤 (fl. 713) with three apiece. All the poets whose works are included were active at some time from Empress Wu's reign (690–705) to the first decade of Xuanzong's reign.

The best known and most influential of Tang anthologies of Tang poems is the *Heyue yingling ji* 河嶽英靈集 (*Collection of the Finest Souls of Our Rivers and Alps*). This was compiled late in the Tianbao era by Yin Fan 殷璠 (fl. 727–755), a minor official about whom we have scant information. The anthology is extant in a handful of editions that seem very nearly complete, attesting to its perceived significance through the centuries. Yin Fan tells us in his preface, some of which survives only thanks to Kūkai's *Wenjing mifu lun*, that the anthology was originally in two scrolls, containing 234 poems by twenty-four poets. The poems selected for inclusion are dated by Yin Fan himself from 714 for the earliest piece to 753 for the latest, spanning almost exactly the reign of Xuanzong. All the major names of High Tang poetry (except for Du Fu 杜甫, who in 753 was still a nonentity) are found here, as well as many that we might categorize as "silver" poets and some who are scarcely known now even to Tang specialists. The numerical spread of poems ranges at the high end from sixteen for Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 690–ca. 756), fifteen for Wang Wei 王維 (701–761) and Chang Jian 常建 (ca. 708–ca. 754), fourteen for Li Qi 李頎 (ca. 690–ca. 751), and thirteen each for Li Bo 李白 (701–762?) and Gao Shi 高適 (716–765) to, at the lower end, five each for Li Ni 李嶷 (fl. 727) and Yan Fang 閻防 (fl. 734–755). This suggests a poetic field of widespread worth and excellence rather than one dominated by a few imposing figures. More than half of the twenty-four poets were personally known to at least five of the others, and almost all of them can be connected with all of the others by just a single intermediary link. We may thus see the poets represented here as a dilated network of lower-level officials from the second quarter of the eighth century.

Besides being a rare contemporary selection of High Tang verse, the *Heyue yingling ji* is especially important for the critical comments with which Yin Fan prefaces his selections of each poet. This begins a practice that would be adopted by some other anthologists after Yin Fan. Many of these headnotes, some of which are rather extensive, were later detached from the poems and quoted, as in the twelfth-century *Tangshi jishi* 唐詩記事 (*Recorded Occasions in Tang Poetry*), for their critical acuity, thus entering into what became mainstream literary history. Yin Fan is especially approving of the qualities he calls *qigu* 氣骨, something like an air of vigor in content and structure, and *xingxiang* 興象, the employment of evocative images. His particular selection of each poet's works is also revealing and sometimes in contrast with what we have now come to see as characteristic taste. Thus, of Wang Wei's fifteen included poems only three are the sort of quiet "nature poems" that we now readily identify with him. Likewise, of Li Bo's thirteen poems only four are among the thirty-five poems of his that are so well known by their inclusion in the popular eighteenth-century anthology *Tangshi sanbai shou* 唐詩三百首 (*300 Poems of the Tang*) (see Chapter 22).

Another corrective that may be provided by this anthology to our now standard views pertains to form. Although "recent-style verse" (*jinti shi* 近體詩), with its attention to euphonic and grammatical balance, is often identified as the most characteristic form of High Tang poetry, Yin Fan wants at least equal attention to content as to form. Only a quarter of the 229 poems in the extant editions of his anthology are *jinti* verse, but there is a broad mix of poems with regard to style, topic, and length. Of course, any anthology is partial, in both senses of the word. But the preferences evident in the *Heyue yingling ji* give us a valuable look inside High Tang poetry from the viewpoint of one appreciative and discriminating reader.

An interesting complement to Yin Fan's anthology is furnished by the nearly contemporary *Guoxiu ji* 國秀集 (*Collection of the Nation's Ripened Talents*), which also is extant in nearly complete form. This anthology in three scrolls was compiled in 744 by Rui Tingzhang 芮挺章, who was then a student in one of the capital colleges. However, it was not circulated until about 760, at which time it was provided with a preface by a friend, Lou Ying 樓穎, in whose keeping the manuscript had lain for over a decade. Originally containing 220 poems by ninety poets, according to Lou Ying's preface, now it survives with 218 poems by eighty-eight poets. More than 90 percent of the poems are "recent-style verse," either eight-line "regulated verse" (*lüshi* 律詩) or quatrains. One may assume that such poems would be of most interest for a student who was preparing for the *jinshi* examination, in which he would be required to write verse in this style. The poets included here are mainly from the Kaiyuan era in which Rui Tingzhang grew up, with just a few predecessors such as Liu Xiyi, Song Zhiwen, Shen Quanqi, Du Shenyan 杜審言 (ca. 645–708), and Li Qiao 李嶠 (ca. 645–714). Most poets are represented by only one or two poems. Wang Wei, Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689–740), and Cui Hao 崔顥 (ca. 700–754?) have seven each, more than anyone else except for Lu Zhuan 盧僎 (fl. 741), a now virtually forgotten poet who, surprisingly, has fourteen poems selected for inclusion. Rui Tingzhang even includes two of his own poems in the collection, a rare example of a compiler's self-display.

The smallest of extant Tang anthologies in this category is Yuan Jie's 元結 (719–772) *Qiezhong ji* 篋中集 (*Collection from the Book-bin*). Compiled in 760, it consists of a mere twenty-four poems by seven poets with whom Yuan was on close terms, whose moral temper he admired, and whose lack of suitable official position he lamented. The only one of them who is now remembered at all is Wang Jiyou 王季友, who was also included in Yin Fan's anthology.

From the generation after the An Lushan rebellion of 755–763, we know of several now lost anthologies of Tang verse, including the *Nanxun ji* 南薰集 (*Collection of Southern Fragrance*), compiled in three scrolls by Dou Chang 竇常, apparently of court poetry; *Qi yu ji* 起予集 (*Collection that "Gets My Meaning,"* alluding to *Analects* 3.8), compiled in five scrolls by Cao En 曹恩, purportedly of High Tang verse; and *Liwen ji* 麗文集 (*Collection of Beautiful Writing*), compiled in five scrolls by Liu Mingsu 劉明素 in 785, for which we have no information about its contents. There is also mention in Kūkai's *Wenjing mifu lun* of an anthology he brought back to Japan with him, called *Zhenyuan yingjie liuyan shi* 貞元英傑六言詩 (*The Finest Standouts of Hexametric Verse from the Zhenyuan Era* [785–805]); this was perhaps a selection of Buddhist *gāthā* verse, which often favored the relatively unusual hexametric line, but we cannot know for sure.

The only anthology from this period that remains today in fairly complete form is the *Zhongxing jianqi ji* 中興間氣集 (*Collection of the Ministerial Spirit of an Age of Revival*), compiled around 788 in two scrolls by Gao Zhongwu 高仲武. In his preface, Gao says he has included 134 poems by twenty-six poets. Like Yin Fan in the latter's preface, he tells us the earliest and latest dates of the poems he has chosen, a period from 756 to 779—in other words, poems from the reigns of Suzong 肅宗 (756–762) and Daizong 代宗 (762–779).

Again following the lead of Yin Fan, in the anthology itself Gao Zhongwu supplies a critical headnote before the selections of each poet. The fine poet Qian Qi 錢起 (ca. 720–ca. 783), who was also active during the last decade of Xuanzong's reign, begins the anthology. He and Lang Shiyuan 郎士元 (fl. 756–ca. 775), who begins the second scroll, and with whom Qian Qi was paired in a popular phrasing as the two most eminent poets of Daizong's reign, each are represented by twelve poems, more than any of the other twenty-four poets in the anthology. The forms, topics, and length of the poems selected for inclusion by Gao Zhongwu are various, though slightly more than half of them are eight-line "regulated-verse" poems. Worth remarking is the fact, unusual until then, that Gao Zhongwu has included a woman among his poets, namely Li Jilan 李季蘭 (d. 784; also known as Li Ye 李冶), a sometime Daoist priestess who ended up being executed for treason and is here represented by six poems; her works would appear later in other Tang anthologies.

The *Jixuan ji* 極玄集 (*Collection of the Superlatively Mysterious*), compiled in 837 by the famous poet Yao He 姚合 (781–ca. 859) in one scroll, is extant today. It contains exactly one hundred poems, written by twenty-one different poets. These poets were all active from the Dali 大歷 (766–780) era and later (except for the High Tang poets Wang Wei and Zu Yong 祖詠 [699–746?], who have three and five poems here, respectively, and who appear at the head of the collection). The selection is carefully done to represent what Yao He, a self-conscious craftsman of verse, considered works of extreme perfection. Most of the selections are pentametric "regulated verse," with some quatrains mixed in. Depictions of landscape or field-and-garden poetry make up the majority of topics. This anthology contributed much to the reputations of the Dali era poets in literary history. It was highly regarded in later decades, and in the Southern Song dynasty it had particular influence on the so-called "Rivers and Lakes School" (*jianghu pai* 江湖派) of poets.

If there is one Tang anthology of Tang verse that has not come down to us but which we would most like to have, it is perhaps the *Tangshi leixuan* 唐詩類選 (*Tang Poetry Selected by Category*), compiled by Gu Tao 顧陶 (fl. 830–860?). This anthology has both a preface and a postface by Gu Tao. The former is dated to 856 and specifies that there are 1,232 poems included here, sorted into twenty scrolls. Gu Tao says in the postface that he has been working on the anthology for thirty years. These two documents, which are all that we have now of the anthology, are quite detailed statements of the intentions and methods of someone who seems to have been an exceptionally conscientious compiler. Gu Tao appears to have attempted a large-scale and fair-minded presentation of the dynasty's poetry, down to his own time. In the preface he names Du Fu and Li Bo as the two incomparable talents of Tang verse, an example of the superior status accorded to them both by the mid-ninth century. Although we have no actual fragments of the anthology itself, scholars have been able to reconstruct certain parts of it—for example, that pertaining to Du Fu—by gathering from later collections of individual poets' works those poems identified as quoted from *Tangshi leixuan*.

The *Youxuan ji* 又玄集 (*Collection of the Even More Mysterious*) was claimed by its compiler to be a continuation of Yao He's *Jixuan ji* anthology, hence the title; but it is actually quite a different work, of larger size and much greater temporal scope. It was compiled in 900 by Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (ca. 836–910) in three scrolls. In his preface, Wei says that it contained 300 poems by 150 poets, numbers that might be approximations (the extant anthology has 297 poems by 145 poets). The poets whose works are included here span the last two centuries of the Tang, from Empress Wu's time to Wei Zhuang's day. The ordering of poets suggests certain value judgments. Du Fu, Li Bo, and Wang Wei are placed at the head of the collection (this is the only extant Tang anthology to include Du Fu), the three of them occupying the dominant positions they have enjoyed in the history of Tang poetry ever since. Virtually every Tang poet of note is represented here, though often by just one poem and never by more than a few. Wei Zhuang also includes at the end of the anthology a grouping of eleven Buddhist monks and an even larger grouping of twenty-three women. The imminent demise of the Tang was already a certainty when Wei Zhuang was compiling this collection, and it might be seen as one scholar's attempt to make an epitome of the dynasty's poetry.

Although compiled in the mid-tenth century, after the fall of the Tang, the *Caidiao ji* 才調集 (*Collection of the Gifted and Talented*) is usually counted as a Tang anthology of Tang verse. The compiler, Wei Hu 韋縠, was an official at the court of the Later Shu 後蜀 dynasty (934–965). He assembled the largest of extant Tang anthologies. It contains a thousand poems, divided into ten scrolls of a hundred poems each, representing 178 poets. The arrangement is far from orderly, with some poets having works included in more than one scroll. Poets from the beginning of the eighth century to the end of the ninth are arranged seemingly indiscriminately (though monks and women are mainly shunted toward the back). The view of Tang poetry that the *Caidiao ji* projects is rather different from the one that has become standard, as the four poets who are much the best represented here are Wei Zhuang, Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (ca. 812–ca. 866), Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), and Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858).

ANTHOLOGIES ORGANIZED VARIOUSLY

Among Tang anthologies of Tang verse compiled in ways other than those mentioned above, we can first note those that collect poems from certain occasions. The earliest known of these is the *Hanlin xueshi ji* 翰林學士集 (*Collection of the Hanlin Academicians*). This anthology was preserved at a Buddhist monastery in Nara, Japan, in the eighth century, being moved elsewhere in the fifteenth and again in the seventeenth century, coming to the attention of scholars only within the past fifty years. In one scroll, it contains fifty-one poems from the early Tang period. These are apportioned in thirteen sections associated with particular topics for, or occasions on which, officials at the court of Taizong were supposed to compose poems on command of the emperor or to match a poem that the emperor had written. The poets differ from one occasion to another; sixteen are represented in all, plus sometimes the emperor himself. The only individual to have a poem recorded each time is Xu Jingzong (chief compiler of the

Wenguan cilin, see above), which has led to the supposition that this little collection may have originated as a copy manuscript in his family. The title that the text now bears is an unfortunate misnomer attached to it at a later time, for there were no "Hanlin academicians" until 738.

We know of more than a dozen similar collections made up of poems composed by a group of individuals for a shared occasion, such as seeing off an honored guest or official from the capital. However, these usually do not come down to us in the form of a true anthology.

Two well-known works that are near in time to each other and similar in intention, though not conceived of as anthologies, because there seems to have been little selection in their compiling, are nevertheless usually classed as anthologies. These are the *Zhuying xueshi ji* 珠英學士集 (*Collection of the "Pearl-Blossom" Academicians*) of 702 or 703 and the *Jinglong wenguan ji* 景龍文館集 (*Collection of the Literary Institute of the Jinglong Era* [707–710]). The former, by Cui Rong 崔融 (653–706), assembled in five scrolls the poems written by scholars during the compilation of Empress Wu's large encyclopedia called *Sanjiao zhuying* 三教珠英 (*Pearls and Blossoms of the Three Teachings*; see Chapter 10). Like the encyclopedia, the anthology no longer survives. But some of the poems are extant in two manuscripts recovered from Dunhuang. These present us with fifty-nine poems, twenty-two of which are examples of "recent-style" verse. The second work just mentioned records the literary activities of, and collects the poems written by, scholars associated with the Xiuwen guan 修文館 (Institute for the Cultivation of Literature) during the Jinglong reign-period. This was compiled sometime in the early 710s by Wu Pingyi 武平一. Although the *Jinglong wenguan ji* exists now only in random fragments quoted in later texts, much of it has been reconstructed on the basis of those items and from information contained in other works. Thus, we know of forty-nine occasions on which poems were written by members of the institute and can identify some 350 compositions, 343 of which are *shi* poems, with nearly all of the latter being "recent-style" verse. This is a striking witness to the dominance of this poetic form at court during this period.

What we might consider a subcategory of anthologies made up of poems written by a group for particular occasions is the collection of "song and response" (*changhe* 唱和) verses composed over time by two or more individuals, where person A's poem is replied to with a matching poem—sometimes though not necessarily using the same rhyme—by person B (C, D, etc.). We know the names of several dozen such anthologies that were compiled during the Tang and which circulated independently. However, most of these were lost by late Song times or were eventually sorted out according to author and incorporated into the collected works of individuals. The most famous of such anthologies in the Tang were several consisting of matched poems by the great friends Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and Yuan Zhen, and also in various combinations with other friends of each of them; the largest of these contained over a thousand poems. One of the few anthologies of this kind that has been preserved intact to our day is the *Songling ji* 松陵集 (*A Collection from Songling*), which includes 685 poems in ten scrolls by Lu Guimeng 陸龜蒙 (?–ca. 881) and Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (ca. 834–ca. 883) (along with some by other acquaintances) dating from 869 to 871, when both men were in the Wu River 吳江 region (also known as Songling) around Suzhou 蘇州.

Yin Fan, compiler of the *Heyue yingling ji* (see above), produced two other anthologies before his famous work. The earliest of his anthologies was completed in about 742 and called *Danyang ji* 丹陽集 (*Collection from Danyang*). It included eighteen poets who hailed, as he did, from Danyang and its surrounding areas (in present-day Jiangsu). The anthology is no longer extant, but a small portion of it has been reconstructed from quotations in other works, comprising twenty poems and various unattached lines. Some time after 742 and before 753, when he completed the *Heyue yingling ji*, he also compiled a two-scroll anthology called *Jing Yang tingxiu ji* 荊揚挺秀集 (*Collection of Ripened Talents Drawn Forth from the Lands between Jingzhou and Yangzhou*). Of its contents we know only that Chu Guangxi 儲光羲 (ca. 706–ca. 762), selections from whose poetry Yin Fan included in all of his anthologies, was among the poets represented. These two early anthologies of Yin Fan are the first that we know of to have a specifically geographical focus and set the model for others that would follow this example, such as the tenth-century *Yiyang ji* 宜陽集 which brought together 470 poems dating from the mid-eighth century onward by poets associated with the Yiyang area (in present-day He'nan).

Among unusual anthologies that we dearly wish could be examined in their entirety today is the *Yaochi xinyong* 瑤池新詠 (*New Songs from the Chalcedony Pool*), compiled in two scrolls by Cai Xingfeng 蔡省風. This was an anthology of women's writing, containing 115 poems by twenty-three women from the eighth and ninth centuries, with appended biographical remarks. We do have, among the Dunhuang materials, twenty-three poems or fragments of poems from this anthology, by four of the included poets. Some evidence suggests that much of this anthology was copied into the *Caidiao ji* of Wei Hu (mentioned above), but we cannot be sure. When we consider the vast amount of material that we know has been lost to us, we may begin to doubt our understanding of what Tang literature was in all its complex variety.

In a different sphere of anthologies entirely is the *Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (*Expanded Collection on the Propagation of the Light*). This is a selection of Buddhist or Buddhist-oriented writings, compiled by the monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) as a sequel to the *Hongming ji* 弘明集 of Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518); it is "expanded" not only by furnishing new material and including more genres but also because it is in thirty scrolls compared to the fourteen of Sengyou's anthology. Daoxuan's collection is primarily of pre-Tang writings, though there are some items from the first decades of Tang. It is divided into ten major topical sections and contains texts from lay as well as religious figures. Everything from individual vows and confessions to essays and disputes on doctrinal topics, biographical and historical material, attacks on Daoism, prefaces to sutras, government proclamations, personal correspondence, poems, and much more finds a place here. As a repository of all sorts of material relating to Buddhism, the *Guang Hongming ji* has preserved countless texts that are known nowhere else.

To conclude this survey of anthologies in the Tang, we must mention in its own right a work that has been noted in passing several times. This is Kūkai's *Wenjing mifu lun*, which is the most important contemporary text pertaining to Tang poetics and prosody. Drawing from a variety of works he collected during his 804–806 visit to China, Kūkai presents an extensively organized array of quotations (with only rare comments of his own) to assist in understanding the mechanics of Tang verse and in learning to write poetry competently. Completed in 819, the book is divided into six sections, Heaven, Earth, East, West, South, and North, each section focusing on a different aspect or orientation of the "literary mirror." Quotations from longer pieces are sometimes split up or placed in different sections, depending on their immediate topic. It is thanks to this anthology alone that many important comments about poetry by Tang writers have been preserved today, perhaps the most significant example being the *Shi ge* 詩格 (*Framework of Poetry*, or *Poetic Norms*) of Wang Changling, which was very influential in the High Tang period and for decades afterward. Kūkai's selection of what we might call "secondary" or perhaps "meta-" literature has thus proved much more useful and far-reaching than he could ever have imagined.

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CHAPTER 21

THE SONG RECEPTION OF EARLIER LITERATURE

STEPHEN OWEN

Over the course of the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279), the relation to the literary past changed in fundamental ways, setting the essential pattern for the rest of the imperial period. At the beginning of the Song, writers saw themselves as part of a continuing and continuous tradition, with the ninth century, the "recent" past, being most relevant to their own work. The literary past before the ninth century receded gradually into antiquarianism, with a few great names, which invited admiration rather than emulation. Out of this, the Song gradually forged its own distinctive literary culture, and offered critical comment on their own poetry as much as on the Tang writers.

Despite their independence, a notional "end of cultural history" was often on their minds. Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) famously wrote that the possibilities of all the major cultural forms—poetry, prose, painting, and calligraphy—were "complete" by the Tang 唐 (618–907) (Su Shi 1986: 2210). The poetics of Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105) was based on the transmutation of earlier poems, twisting their phrasing and meaning in new situations. By the twelfth century, the initial formulation of what was to become the "Eight Masters of the Tang and Song [Prose]" (*Tang Song ba dajia* 唐宋八大家) had taken shape; after Su Shi there would never again be a stylist of "old-style" prose who had the stature of the "Eight Masters." By the thirteenth century, closure was imposed on the history of poetry. In Yan Yu's 嚴羽 (fl. thirteenth century) influential *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話 (*Canglang's Remarks on Poetry*) (before 1244), earlier poetry was contextualized as a full history, with the "Han and Wei" 漢魏 as a significant model, followed by decline in the sixth century, and then a gradual recovery leading to the High Tang, the eighth century *before* the An Lushan Rebellion of 755. Most significant, Yan Yu dismissed all poetry, both Tang and Song, after the An Lushan Rebellion (excepting Du Fu 杜甫 [712–770]). Yan Yu's model assumed half a millennium of increasingly bad poetry, with the only hope being a learned return to an earlier age, the virtues of whose poetry transcended learning. While this bears some similarity to Tang "restoration of antiquity" (*fugu* 復古) (see Chapter 26), it was essentially different, presuming a long-displaced ideal that could be recovered only by a literary historical curriculum of reading. Never thereafter would literary value be understood in terms of a continuous lineage of change; past literature became a history in which the contemporary poet made choices—either of earlier models or of an essentially ahistorical immediacy.

The Literary Legacy Received by the Song

We cannot assume that Song writers and scholars had access to their literary heritage at least equal to our own. The availability of pre-Song literature varied immensely over the course of the roughly three centuries of the dynasty, which saw large efforts in gathering manuscripts and editing them, reconstituting collections, and eventually printing them. Song readers may have had access to material we no longer have, but they did not have immediate access to the full range of material that readers increasingly had from the late Ming on.

The end of the Tang and the Five Dynasties (907–960) had been a bibliographical disaster. The great libraries of the capitals were burned; provincial libraries became the libraries of regional states, which were duly packed up and taken to the Song capital at Bianjing 汴京 (in modern He'nan) as those states fell, one after another. Manuscripts were everywhere, but finding them was a matter of good fortune. When a scholar found two manuscripts of the same text, they often differed in content, sometimes substantially. In many cases the impression of an author's work was derived from just a few poems, often in anthologies, and thus radically mediated by the motives and taste of the anthologist (see Owen 2007).

The printing of literary collections began in the tenth century, the earliest known example being the poetry of the poet-monk Guanxiu 貫休 (832–912), done soon after his death. This was in Chengdu (in modern Sichuan), which continued to be a major center of printing into the Song. We know that the early-sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan* 文選 was printed in Chengdu before it fell to the Song. But through the eleventh century, Song scholars were still working primarily with old manuscripts. Widely disseminated printing of literature really began with the printed edition of the Du Fu collection in 1059, with a true commercial print culture taking off only in the Southern Song (1127–1279). Even then, the catalogues of some renowned book collectors like Chao Gongwu 晁公武 (d. after 1171) and Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (ca. 1179–ca. 1262) show striking gaps in pre-Song literature in comparison with what is now available. We know that not a few of these missing works had been printed in the Southern Song, but an individual book collector had to be at the right place at the right time to obtain a copy.

PRE-TANG WORKS IN THE SONG

The one work of pre-Tang literature that was widely available was the *Wen xuan* (see Chapter 19). While it may have retained some residual influence in the first half century of the Song, it was more esteemed than actually influential. Contemptuous remarks by Su Shi helped consolidate the general opinion that it was a monument, but irrelevant for contemporary writing (Su Shi 1986: 2092–2093). *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs of the Jade Terrace*) also survived, though it is hard to know in what form (perhaps circulating together with Li Kangcheng's 李康成 *Yutai houji* 玉臺後集, from roughly the mid-eighth century) (see Chapter 20). There was a printed edition in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Guo Maoqian's 郭茂倩 *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (*Collection of Yuefu Poetry*, first half of twelfth century) suggests the wealth of *yuefu* material surviving, much of it with no extant source before Guo Maoqian. It is hard, however, to see much impact of Guo's work in the Song itself, even though it became highly influential in the revival of interest in pre-Tang literature in the fifteenth century. A comparison of pre-Tang works in the *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目 (*The Comprehensive Catalogue of the Hall of Venerating Culture*), the catalogue of the imperial library completed between 1034 and 1042, and Chen Zhensun's *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題 (*An Annotated Record of the Books in Zhizhai's Collection*) suggests the works that had slipped from general sight as well as the scholarly effort in reconstituting collections that occurred during the roughly two centuries separating the two bibliographies.

The striking Song disregard for pre-Tang poetry can be seen in three of the most prominent anthologies of *shihua* 詩話 ("remarks on poetry") from the Southern Song. These represent a comprehensive cross section of critical comments on poetry available at the time of compilation. Hu Zi's 胡仔 (d. 1170) *Tiaoxi yuyin conghua* 苕溪漁隱叢話 (*Assembled Remarks by the Fisherman Recluse of Tiao Creek*) is in two series from the mid-twelfth century (1148 and 1167). The standard modern typeset edition of both series totals 755 pages, of which only twenty-eight pages concern pre-Tang poetry, with an additional five pages on the poet Tao Qian 陶潛 (Tao Yuanming 陶淵明, 365–427). Apart from an even smaller representation of *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*), and Han rhapsodies (*fu*), the rest is entirely devoted to Tang and Song poetry. Wei Qingzhi's 魏慶之 (fl. 1240s) *Shiren yuxie* 詩人玉屑 (*Jade Chips of the Poets*, preface 1244) is more than half devoted to questions in poetics, where pre-Tang poetry very rarely appears. The last part, anthologizing critical comments by author and period, is 287 pages long in a modern typeset edition, of which thirteen pages are given to pre-Tang poetry, with an additional twelve pages devoted to Tao Qian. Cai Zhengsun's 蔡正孫 (1239–after 1300) *Shilin guangji* 詩林廣記 (*Extensive Accounts from the Grove of Poetry*) from the latter part of the thirteenth century, the end of the Southern Song or early Yuan 元 (1271–1368), is an anthology of poems discussed in *shihua*, with the relevant *shihua* attached; here we see only Tao Qian, with fourteen pages in a modern edition of 430 pages. Yet another anthology, Ruan Yue's 阮閱 (1085 *jinshi*) *Shihua zonggui*

詩話總龜 (*A General Compendium of Remarks on Poetry*), begun in the early twelfth century and expanded in the Southern Song, is arranged by topics, so it is difficult to make a precise comparison; however, examining the topical sections, the representation of pre-Tang poetry seems roughly proportional to the other *shihua* anthologies. The four extant Song works on parallel prose (Wang 2007: 1–130) are devoted exclusively to Tang and Song parallel prose.

While it is easy to find laudatory comments on particular works and authors, the obvious statistical conclusion is that pre-Tang literature did not occupy a prominent place in the Song literary imagination. The exception was, of course, Tao Qian. Su Shi adored Tao Qian, and Song comments on Tao Qian increase dramatically with Su Shi and those after him, so that it is not clear whether the interest is in the pre-Tang poet himself or in his immensely influential Song admirer. Su Shi's companion pieces to all the poems in Tao Qian's collection were widely imitated in the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234) in north China, but this is clearly the Jin's claim to the Northern Song legacy of Su Shi.

As suggested earlier, the intimations of a basic change of attitude toward pre-Tang poetry appear in Yan Yu's *Canglang's Remarks on Poetry*, whose very first passage tells the student of poetry to "take for your teacher the poetry of the Han, Wei, and High Tang." Later in the theoretical opening, he recommends a program of reading the entire history of classical poetry chronologically, from the Han and Wei on, saying that what is valuable will be self-evident to the reader (Yan 1961: 12). Moreover, in his specific comments on poets and poems ("Shiping" 詩評), Yan Yu offers a far larger proportion of pre-Tang poetry than was common earlier in the dynasty.

THE TANG LEGACY

While taste in Tang poetry changed from the Yuan through the modern era, a literary historical canon was already largely in place. Through the course of the Song, that canon was beginning to take shape, but toward the beginning of the dynasty, the Tang literary past looked very different from the shape it would take by the end of the dynasty. For roughly the first sixty years of the Song, most writers were working essentially in the Tang and Five Dynasties tradition. Writing to a friend, Tian Xi 田錫 (940–1003) advises poets to emulate the style of Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) for "fluent maturity," or the poetry of Zheng Gu 鄭谷 (849–911) or Han Wo 韓偓 (ca. 844–923) for "clear novelty" (*QSS* 457). This binary was a variant on the most popular styles of ninth- and tenth-century poetry, opposing an easy fluency, always associated with Bai Juyi, with polished "regulated verse." In more formal venues, the literary courtiers whom the Song had imported in its conquests adorned the new Song court with the rich density of Tang formal court poetry, as they thought befitted the dignity of the new dynasty, and composed their public prose in parallel style, known as "current prose" (*shiwen* 時文). High officials such as Yang Yi 楊億 (974–1021) continued this model, but in private compositions with friends, he introduced the poetic model of the then less famous Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858). Yang Yi's changing understanding of Li Shangyin's poetry as he rebuilt the collection from a small anthology to a significant corpus is testimony to how their understanding of the Tang was a function of what they had available (Owen 2006: 335–337). Among the most famous poets of the era were the "Nine Monks" 九僧, representing "clear novelty," known for their striking couplets in regulated verse. In short, the literary Tang that was foremost in the minds of early Northern Song writers was the ninth century—and a ninth century whose luminaries were rather different from our current account of Tang poetry of that century.

As revolutionaries sometimes do, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) simply declared the Late Tang tradition dead and forgotten: Zheng Gu, praised as a poetic model by Tian Xi, was, according to Ouyang Xiu, fit only for teaching children; the "Nine Monks" were "forgotten," and Ouyang Xiu couldn't remember even their names (Ouyang 1962: 7–8). The Song literary canon was, however, far more confined to elite office-holders than the Tang literary canon, and there is some evidence that farther down the social ladder, fascination with Late Tang regulated verse continued. It was to emerge again in townsman poetry toward the end of the dynasty and was the basis of *Tang santi shi* 唐三體詩 (*Tang Poetry in Three Forms*), a pedagogical anthology of Tang poetry to be discussed below.

GUWEN: OLD-STYLE PROSE

By the fourth decade of the eleventh century, the work of finding and editing manuscripts of Tang literature was well under way. The most intense area of interest was in Tang prose, specifically the old-style prose of Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) and, to a somewhat lesser degree, that of Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819). While it was true that mastering the "current prose" (see above) was necessary for a public career, as it had been in the Tang, Han Yu had had a continuous tradition of passionate admirers since the beginning of the ninth century. Of these admirers, many had the conviction that he alone appreciated Han Yu whereas others neglected him. In the early Song, Liu Kai 柳開 (947–1000) and Mu Xiu 穆修 (979–1032) were vocal in their support. By the eleventh century, the prose model of Han Yu gradually became a movement rather than a private passion. The young Ouyang Xiu was one of Han Yu's admirers, as was Shi Jie 石介 (1005–1045). The *guwen* craze of the mid-eleventh century was inspired by Han Yu in spirit if not by his textual model. While Han Yu firmly believed that his *guwen* came forth "naturally" as a consequence of internalizing the spirit of ancient prose, Shi Jie and his numerous disciples in the Imperial Academy experimented with prose. As a consequence, such experimental *guwen* rose to a prominence equal to that of "current prose."

Ouyang Xiu, by contrast, championed a lucid and terse *guwen*, in which style, however carefully wrought, disappeared into argument. Placed in charge of the examinations in 1057, Ouyang Xiu failed all candidates writing in the "current style" or in the eccentric *guwen* style of the Academy. Ouyang Xiu's was the version of *guwen* that won out (though with resurgent moments of parallel prose). When anthologies of *guwen* prose began to appear in the twelfth century, Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan began a lineage that ended with Su Shi, a lineage that eventually became "the Eight Masters of the Tang and Song." The rest of Tang prose, however, was almost completely ignored.

Tales

A large body of Tang and pre-Tang narratives recounting fabulous and remarkable events (works now inappropriately called "fiction") was preserved into the Song, largely surviving because of their inclusion in the early Song imperial compilation *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*Extensive Records from the Taiping Reign*). *Taiping guangji* consists of five hundred scrolls in which stories are arranged by topics, with the source appended. The project was begun in 977 by a committee headed by Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) and printed in 981. It does not seem to have been broadly circulated in the Song. Epitome versions of many of these stories in Zeng Zao's 曾慥 (d. 1155) *Lei shuo* 類說 (*Classified Stories*) shows significant variants that suggest Tang stories were indeed in circulation, but not necessarily the same versions we see in *Taiping guangji*. The general Song preference for minimalist epitomes of stories further suggests that there was no particular interest in earlier stories as textual artifacts, but rather simply as plots.

Du Fu

As mentioned earlier, the dominant presence of Tang literature in the first part of the Song was the poetry and prose of the ninth century. Bai Juyi remained a prominent figure, and his work was arguably behind the new Song style in classical poetry that took shape toward the mid-eleventh century. Han Yu was the preeminent prose writer, and attention to his poetry rose with his reputation. On one matter Bai Juyi and Han Yu had agreed: Du Fu was the greatest poet of their own Tang past, along with Li Bo 李白 (701–762). From the early ninth century to the early Song, Du Fu retained that reputation, often more a reputation of esteem than a model for contemporary poetic practice. Beginning in the 1030s, we have notices of scholars comparing manuscripts of Du Fu's poetry, with the purpose of making a complete edition (and discovering, as was commonly the case, that each manuscript had a significant number of poems that were not in other manuscripts). The most important edition was that of Wang Zhu 王洙 (997–1057), with a postface dated to 1039. This was based on nine (or eleven) manuscripts and contained 1,405 poems. This edition was printed by his son Wang Qi 王琪 in 1059, and it became the basis of all subsequent editions. A few decades later the first "chronology" (*nianpu* 年譜) was compiled by Lü Dafang 呂大防 (1049–1097), attempting to date all the poems.

The dissemination of Du Fu and the commentaries that began to accrue to his poetry raised Du Fu to a preeminence he had never fully enjoyed before. Song critics invested in him all their highest values: the "poet historian," the "sage of poetry," the poet who never forgot his ruler for even a moment, the learned poet whose every phrase had a source. Whole *shihua* were devoted to him, and no other pre-Song writer came even close to him in the number of editions and commentaries. Once Du Fu's preeminence was newly confirmed in the last half of the eleventh century, he became a conscious model for poets, such as Chen Shidao 陳師道 (1053–1101) or Chen Yuyi 陳與義 (1090–1139). Song intellectuals seem to have sought one figure to represent an entire era: Tao Qian for the pre-Tang, Du Fu for the Tang, Su Shi for the Song.

ANTHOLOGIES

If the Ming and Qing offer a vast array of anthologies of Tang poetry, representing different critical dispositions and changes in period taste, the Song has remarkably few surviving anthologies of Tang poetry. Most of the lost anthologies are from the Southern Song, and many are known only from gazetteer notices and mentions in unlikely sources rather than in official bibliographies or the catalogues of famous book collectors (Sun Qin'an 2005: 32–58). This may suggest that such anthologies were commercial ventures for a vastly expanded reading public and not considered worthy of collecting.

The most prestigious form of anthology was the general anthology, including *fu*, poetry, and prose, modeled on the *Wen xuan*. Imperial projects often took this form. As Tang emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649–683) had commissioned the *Wenguan cilin* 文館詞林 (*Forest of Compositions of the Literary Academy*) in a thousand scrolls, so Song emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) commissioned the *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (*The Flower of the Garden of Letters*) in a thousand scrolls, which was presented to the throne in 987. Not only was *Wenyuan yinghua* modeled on the *Wen xuan*, it began in the early sixth century, where the *Wen xuan* left off. This was not so much a true anthology as an epitome of the *ji* (literary collections) section of the imperial library. *Wenyuan yinghua* remained in manuscript until 1201–1204, when it was edited and blocks were cut. The manuscript version of a work that size would not have circulated widely, and we may wonder how widely even the printed edition circulated. It was soon followed by a smaller anthology on the *Wen xuan* model; this was Yao Xuan's 姚鉉 (967–1020) one-hundred-scroll *Tang wen cui* 唐文粹 (*The Essence of Tang Literature*), with a strong "restoring antiquity" (*fugu*) bias.

The first true anthology of Tang poetry is not what we would expect. This is the *Tang baijia shixuan* 唐百家詩選 (*Anthology of a Hundred Tang Poets*) in twenty scrolls attributed to Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086). The doubts about Wang Anshi's editorship are largely due to the poems and authors included and the authors excluded. The ground of such doubts is easily dispelled by reading Wang Anshi's preface, in which the famous collector and editor of Tang poetry Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019–1079) brought out over a hundred works in his collection and asked Wang Anshi to select the best. The famous poets left out of the anthology were probably those already in wide circulation and not works Song Minqiu would have felt any distinction to possess. Perhaps due to the anthologist's fame, this anthology seems to have circulated widely in the Southern Song, with several editions with critical comments, now lost.

Tang baijia shixuan was arranged by poets in roughly chronological order; while the majority of poets were ninth-century, the High Tang was well represented (the dominance of ninth-century poets may have been because extant manuscripts were predominantly of ninth-century poets). We see the dramatic return of post–High Tang poets in two extant poetry anthologies from the twelfth century. One was *Tang santi shi* by Zhou Bi 周弼 (1194–ca. 1255), a pedagogic anthology; the other was the wildly popular *Tangshi guchui* 唐詩鼓吹 (*Fife and Drum Songs of Tang Poetry*), attributed to the Jin poet Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190–1257) and consisting only of regulated verse in the seven-syllable line. Both of these anthologies do not have the poets arranged in chronological order, as the Tang anthologies had not been chronological. Both are reminders that the historicist order of reading texts chronologically was not yet fully in place.

CANGLANG'S REMARKS ON POETRY BY YAN YU

Much in *Canglang's Remarks on Poetry* had precedent in twelfth- and thirteenth-century criticism, but the genteel authority of Chinese critical discourse was, in *Canglang's Remarks on Poetry*, fused into a polemical, pedagogic voice without immediate secular precedent. It is one thing to say that the High Tang, Tang poetry from 713–755, is the supreme model for poetry; it is something else again to tell the reader to go over all earlier poetry in chronological sequence, and if the reader does not then see the superiority of High Tang poetry, he is a fool who cannot learn anything. This voice of the Chinese schoolmaster had immense popularity and lasting impact. Indeed, the very category and term "High Tang" (*Sheng Tang* 盛唐), applied to literature, seems to have been entirely Yan Yu's invention. Huang Tingjian and Yan Yu shared the conviction that present poetry could be successful only by returning to past poetry. However, Huang Tingjian's poetics of using past poetry for new purposes saw past poetry as a vast, undifferentiated sea of possibilities, while Yan Yu's saw past poetry as organized historically, with each period assigned a putatively self-evident judgment that applies to all the works of that period.

Yan Yu turned the history of poetry upside down: not only was Tang poetry after 755 increasingly bad, all Song poetry was worthless. Even more daunting was the claim that the perfection of High Tang poetry, like that of Han and Wei poetry, left no "traces," no clear model to follow. One understood such perfection by "enlightenment," specifically modeled on Chan/Zen enlightenment. There were moments of poetic perfection before the Song, but there was no way to describe such perfection; it could only be grasped intuitively.

The poetics of the lost past of "true" poetry was accompanied by a more intense interest in continuous literary history than we usually see earlier in the Song. As we noted earlier, Yan Yu assigns the aspiring poet to do a sequential reading of the history of poetry, but the demand for an organizing structure of judgment of the literary historical whole had been unheard of since the critics of the Six Dynasties. The late imperial fusion of literary practice and a scholarship based on literary history was already implicit. Yan Yu looks ahead to a new world and a sea change in Chinese poetry.

Although the poets involved in the drama of the fall of the Southern Song continued to draw readers' interest, the history of Chinese poetry effective stopped around the time of Yan Yu. Well-educated readers may know some Yuan, Ming, and Qing poets; they may know some schools and groups. But the sense of a linear history of poetry was over, and both individual poets and groups were defined by how they positioned themselves in relation to the poetic past.

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CHAPTER 22

TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF EARLIER LITERATURE DURING THE YUAN, MING, AND QING DYNASTIES

WAI-YEE LI

The history of Chinese literature during the Yuan 元 (1271–1368), Ming 明 (1368–1644), and Qing 清 (1644–1911) dynasties has often been told in terms of the ascendancy of vernacular genres—*huaben* 話本 stories, northern and southern drama (*zaju* 雜劇 and *chuanqi* 傳奇), full-length vernacular fiction (*zhanghui xiaoshuo* 章回小說), and prosimetric narratives (*tanci* 彈詞). The corollary of this triumphant narrative is the decline of classical genres, which had allegedly become derivative and imitative. This bias is scarcely surprising, given the May Fourth agenda of establishing the genealogy of modern written Chinese through premodern vernacular genres. Needless to say, a vast amount of interesting classical prose and poetry continued to be written from the late thirteenth century to the early twentieth century, and practitioners of those genres did not think of themselves as creating something obsolete or irrelevant. They did, however, frequently turn to models from earlier periods, and acts of creation were often self-consciously mediated through learning and internalization of precedents. Even advocates of "untrammeled expression" (*bense* 本色) like Tang Shunzhi 唐順之 (1507–1560) or champions of "genuinely expressive poetry" (*zhenshi* 真詩) such as Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (1574–1625) could not but use anthologies of earlier literature to spread their views. Likewise, Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608–1661), a flamboyantly idiosyncratic writer and critic, fashioned his individual voice through commentaries on classical poetry and prose (as well as vernacular fiction and drama). The question of how earlier literature was preserved, classified, anthologized, and distributed is thus vital for understanding how authors defined their creative and interpretive endeavors during the late imperial period. The making of anthologies was a critical practice that shaped taste and articulated the implicit ideology of a "literary school" (*liupai* 流派). Important trends in literary thought can also be discerned through commentaries on classical literature and "remarks on poetry."

As Stephen Owen mentioned in Chapter 21, commercial print culture became important only in the Southern Song (1127-1279). One is tempted to link Yan Yu's 嚴羽 (fl. 13th century) diatribe against those who take "verbal virtuosity for poetry, learning for poetry, and discursive flair for poetry" to the more widespread dissemination of texts, which might have contributed to the notion that learning and textual mastery underlie poetic craft. In other words, precisely because textual knowledge was becoming more accessible and pervasive, Yan Yu felt the need to redefine poetic creation as intuitive enlightenment. Following this logic, we can infer that the increasing availability of texts in the late imperial period motivated debates on the very conception of poetry. More generally, the flourishing print culture contributed to textual reconstruction and production, which in turn fueled discussions on the choice of poetic and prose models as well as the conceptions of literary genealogies.

Printing expanded, with a dramatic increase in numbers and variety in the sixteenth century. For many of the texts discussed in our volume, the earliest extant editions or reconstituted versions date from the Ming dynasty, and many important commentaries and annotations were produced during the late imperial period (for some examples, see Jin and Ge 2012: 205–354). The frequency and geography of reprints became one way to gauge the influence of a work. The production of new editions reflected as well as promoted cultural currents. Extant editions of *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*, compiled ca. mid-fifth century), for example, include one Tang fragment, one Song edition (1138), one Yuan edition (1358), and several Ming and Qing editions. (Two Song editions from 1188 and 1189, no longer extant, became the basis of later editions.) Extant Ming editions (1535, 1580, 1586), including one two-color commentary edition, testified to an abiding interest in transmitting biographical anecdotes, defining character traits, cultivating eccentricity, and discerning the continuity or rupture between surface and essence. Numerous late Ming and early Qing imitations of *Shishuo xinyu*, as well as late Ming literati who seemed to have taken characters from *Shishou xinyu* as models, confirmed the sixteenth-century revival of the text as one index to the sensibility of the era (Qian 2001: 247–282; Song 2004: 255–270).

REPACKAGING TRADITION: ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND COLLECTANEA

Textual order has always contended with loss on the one hand and proliferating materials on the other (Chapter 11). The passage of time exacerbates these problems. Political disorder heightens the sense of urgency in collecting texts. In "A Letter Appealing for the Collection and Printing of Rare Texts from the Tang and Song Dynasties" ("Zheng ke Tang Song miben shu qi" 徵刻唐宋秘本書啟), for example, Huang Yuji 黃虞稷

(1629–1691) and Zhou Zaijun 周在浚 (b. 1640) cited the dispersal and destruction of famous sixteenth- and seventeenth-century book collections—in part as a result of the turmoil during the Ming-Qing transition—as the impetus for seeking out and printing rare editions. In the wake of the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), the Qing official and military leader Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811–1872) emphasized textual collation and criticism as one route to recovery. In the waning years of the Qing dynasty, Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909)—or rather, his ghost writer Miao Quansun 繆荃孫 (1844–1919)—opined that printing old texts in the form of collectanea (*congshu* 叢書) is one way to seek literary immortality (Zhang 2012: 222–223). Textual order is also volatile and constantly reconfigured (Chapter 11). The transmission of classical Chinese literature during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties involved the reproduction or reconstitution of texts (e.g., the collections of individual authors) as well as their assimilation into encyclopedias (*leishu* 類書), collectanea, comprehensive collections (*zongji* 總集), and more selective anthologies (*xuanji* 選集). These endeavors of textual production and reorganization often reflected and inspired contemporary developments.

Encyclopedias repackage tradition even while claiming a microcosmic order (Chapter 10). They purport to classify knowledge or information into categories (*lei* 類), and their very definition can be elusive (Chapter 10). Song compilations like *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*Extensive Records from the Taiping Reign*, 978) and *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (*Imperial Reader for a Time of Supreme Peace*, 984) (Chapters 11, 21) have been categorized as encyclopedias because of their organization by topics (Li 1997: 11; Ning 1996: 160; Zhang 2001: 104; Song 2004: 229–230). The last seven centuries of imperial rule saw the production of massive, state-sponsored encyclopedias, which often functioned to legitimate or glorify the reigning dynasty. Emperor Chengzu 成祖 of Ming (r. 1402–1424) decreed the compilation of *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (*The Great Canon of the Yongle Reign*, 1403–1408). The project involved more than two thousand scholars led by Xie Jin 解縉 (1369–1415), Yao Guangxiao 姚廣孝 (1335–1418), and Liu Jichi 劉季箎 (1346–1423). Encompassing 22,877 scrolls, its organizing principle is phonological: "using rhymes to categorize words, using words to build connections with events" (Emperor Chengzu's preface). Phonetic, semantic, and morphological explanations of words are followed by associated information, events, and texts. For example, under the word *xiao* 笑 (smile, laugh) we have all earlier texts with that word in its title—basically, all pre-Ming collections of jokes. Unfortunately, those texts are lost, along with the vast majority of the collection. The pillage of the Allied Armies during the Boxer Rebellion and the flames of war (1900) dealt a final blow to a collection already diminished through neglect and palace fires. Barely 3 percent of *Yongle dadian* is extant, although 385 titles (in 4,946 scrolls) had been assimilated into the Qing compilation *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*, 1773–1782).

Unlike *Yongle dadian*, encyclopedias compiled under the aegis of the Qing court have survived, and they surpass all precedents in scope and ambition. *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (*Collection of Books Past and Present*), completed in 1706 under the leadership of Chen Menglei 陳夢雷 (1651–1741) and revised by Jiang Tingxi 蔣廷錫

(1669–1732) from 1723 to 1726, encompasses 10,040 scrolls divided into six categories—heavenly manifestations (*lixiang* 曆象), earthly forms (*fangyu* 方輿), normative relationships (*minglun* 明倫), broad knowledge (*bowu* 博物), texts and learning (*lixue* 理學), and officialdom and statecraft (*jingji* 經濟), which are further divided into thirty-two sections, each containing (whenever applicable) canonical and classical references, general discussions, illustrations, biographies, poetic texts, selected poetic lines, historical events, miscellaneous references, and related legends. This remains an extremely useful resource for understanding epistemological organization as well as the genealogies of ideas, arguments, and poetic images. Other court-sponsored projects are more specifically designed as aids for composition. These include *Peiwen yunfu* 佩文韻府 (*Repository of Rhymes from the Studio of Literary Adornment*, 1704–1711), *Pianzi leibian* 駢字類編 (*Parallel Phrases and Lines Classified*, 1719–1726), *Fenlei zijin* 分類字錦 (*Classification of Beautiful Words*, 1722), and *Zishi jinghua* 子史精華 (*Essential Lines from Masters Texts and Historical Writings*, 1727).

There was also great interest in Tang and Song encyclopedias, as evinced by multiple reprints and attempts at amalgamation. A notable example is Yu Anqi's 俞安期 (sixteenth century) *Tang leihan* 唐類函 (*Tang Encyclopedias*) and its expansion as the Qing court-sponsored *Yuanjian leihan* 淵鑑類函 (*Comprehensive Mirror of Encyclopedias*, 1704–1711) compiled by Zhang Ying 張英 (1637–1708) and others. Lost texts are reconstituted with entries in Tang encyclopedias, as Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602) observes regarding Gan Bao's 干寶 (d. 336) *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (*In Search of the Supernatural*), one of the titles (which he probably compiled) in his vast library (cited in Li 2012: 136–137). *Taiping guangji* was especially important for stoking interest in classical tales. The transmission of pre-Tang and Tang narratives about notable or fantastic events and characters demonstrates the formation of new genealogies and trends. *Taiping guangji* was reprinted in 1567, and Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1645) published *Taiping guangji chao* 太平廣記抄 (*Selections from the Extensive Records from the Taiping Reign*) in the 1620s. But the impact of these stories should be gauged not only through reprints but also their assimilation into new compendia and anthologies that sometimes include later and more miscellaneous materials—for example, Gu Yuanqing's 顧元慶 (1487–1565) *Gushi wenfang xiaoshuo* 顧氏文房小說 (*Stories from Mr. Gu's Studio*), Lu Cai's 陸采 (1497–1537) *Yuchu zhi* 虞初志 (*Strange Accounts*), Lu Ji's 陸楫 (1515–1552) *Gujin shuohai* 古今說海 (*Past and Present Seas of Stories*), Shang Jun's 商濬 (active 1591–1602) *Bai hai* 稗海 (*The Sea of Unofficial History*), Hu Yingling's *Baijia yiyuan* 百家異苑 (*Garden of Strange Stories from a Hundred Sources*), Gu Qiyuan's 顧起元 (1565–1628) *Shuo lue* 說略 (*Selected Stories*), and the anonymous *Wuchao xiaoshuo* 五朝小說 (*Stories from Five Dynasties* [here referring to Wei, Jin, Tang, Song, Ming], ca. early seventeenth century). Wang Shizhen's 王世貞 (1526–1590) *Jianxia zhuan* 劍俠傳 (*Accounts of Knights-errant*) includes many Tang tales; it heralded a new interest in the figure of the knight-errant and spawned many imitations. Wang also compiled *Yanyi bian* 豔異編 (*Compendium of Romantic and Strange Stories*), with examples ranging from the third to the sixteenth century. Increasing interest in women's stories is evident in Yang Shen's 楊慎 (1488–1559) *Liqing ji* 麗情集 (*Collection of Beautiful Sentiments*) and Mei Dingzuo's 梅鼎祚 (1549–1615) *Qingni lianhua ji* 青泥蓮花記 (*Accounts of Lotus in Mud*). The late Ming valorization of sentiments bears fruit in anthologies like Feng Menglong's *Qing shi* 情史 (*Love Stories*). The anthologies by Yang, Mei, and Feng all mix Tang and pre-Tang stories with later ones to create genealogies of emotions or of remarkable women. The earlier stories validate contemporary trends, and selective reproduction also in effect canonizes a number of stories. In many cases, narratives from Tang and pre-Tang sources, including historical and what is later classified as "fictional" materials, supply the plots for classical tales, vernacular stories, and drama. (Some examples are listed in Song 2004: 290–291, 293–295; Tan 2012.) In some cases, such as *Wanjin qinglin* 萬錦情林 (*Forest of Many-splendored Love Stories*), compiled by the publisher and entrepreneur Yu Xiangdou 余象斗 (active late sixteenth–early seventeenth century), classical tales from *Taiping guangji* and Song-Yuan sources are printed in the upper part of the page while the lower portion is devoted to Ming vernacular stories liberally laced with verses.

Some of the titles mentioned above, such as *Gujin shuohai, Bai hai*, and *Wuchao xiaoshuo*, have also been classified as collectanea, texts grouped together and reprinted under a new title. Among the earliest and most influential collectanea are Zuo Gui's 左圭 *Baichuan xuehai* 百川學海 (*A Hundred Rivers Converging as a Sea of Learning*, 1273), which includes mostly Tang and Song stories and miscellanies, and Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360s) *Shuo fu* 說郛 (*Walls of Words*), which encompasses texts ranging from canonical to informal and exists only as Ming and Qing recensions. Both spawn many imitations. The rationale for collectanea is to make rare texts available, a point emphasized in titles such as Chen Jiru's 陳繼儒 (1558–1639) *Baoyan tang miji* 寶顏堂祕笈 (*Rare Texts from the Hall of Precious Visage*), Hu Zhenheng's 胡震亨 (1569–1645) *Mice huihan* 秘册匯函 (*Collection of Rare Texts*), and Mao Jin's 毛晉 (1599–1659) *Jindai mishu* 津逮秘書 (*Rare Texts Reached through Waterways*). Ming compilers started the trend of focusing on specific periods—for example, Cheng Rong's 程榮 *Han Wei congshu* 漢魏叢書 (*Collectanea of Texts from the Han and Wei Dynasties*, 1592) was reprinted in ever-expanding versions (1592, 1791).

The Qing dynasty was the great age of collectanea, which were produced by the hundreds. In some ways the monumental *Siku quanshu* decreed by the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (r. 1736–1795) and compiled by academicians under the leadership of Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724–1805), though sui generis in scale (it comprises 3,461 titles and 79,309 scrolls, along with the preserved records of 6,793 titles and 93,551 scrolls) and in its implications for censorship, was conceptually related to collectanea, inasmuch as it represents the collection and organization of texts. Printing collectanea, which was most popular in the Lower Yangzi provinces and in Guangdong, conferred prestige and affirmed family traditions of learning. From the late seventeenth century on, there was greater emphasis on canonical and formal writings, on bibliographic expertise, on textual collation and textual criticism, and on producing exact replicas of prized Song editions (Xie 2004: 148–173). Among the most influential are Bao Tingbo's 鮑廷博 (1728–1814) *Zhi buzu zhai congshu* 知不足齋叢書 (*Collectanea from the Studio of Understanding One's Inadequacy*), Zhang Haipeng's 張海鵬 (1755–1816) *Xuejin taoyuan* 學津討源 (*Seeking *the Sources of the Ford of Learning*, 1805), Qian Xizuo's 錢熙祚 (1800–1844) *Shoushan ge congshu* 守山堂叢書 (*Collectanea from the Hall Guarding the Mountain*, 1843), and Wu Chongyao's 伍崇曜 (1810–1863) *Yueya tang congshu* 粵雅堂叢書 (*Collectanea from the Hall of Yue Elegance*, 1850–1875).

Comprehensive Collections: Pre-Tang Textual Remains

State-sponsored projects that purport to assemble all the textual remains from earlier periods have been discussed in previous sections. Private attempts to collect extant texts of a designated period or genre first flourished in the Ming dynasty. The avowed aim is usually the need to save texts from the ravages of time. Feng Weine 馮惟訥 (1512–1572) compiled *Shi ji* 詩紀 *(Principles of Poetry*, 156 scrolls), more commonly known as *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 (*Principles of Early Poetry*). Ming and Qing emendations, such as Feng Shu's 馮舒 (1593–1649) *Gushi kuangmiu* 古詩匡謬 (*Correcting the Mistakes of* Gushi ji) and Yang Shoujing's 楊守敬 (1839–1915) *Gushi cunmu* 古詩存目 (*Extant Titles of Early Poems*), testify to its continual status as a point of reference. Zhang Zhixiang's 張之象 (1507–1587) *Gushi leiyuan* 古詩類苑 (*Categories of Early Poetry*, 1602) in 130 scrolls is organized thematically and excludes *yuefu* ballads but goes beyond Feng's work in including inscriptions and rhymed eulogies. The modern standard edition of pre-Tang poetry, Lu Qinli's 逯欽立 (1910–1973) *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (*Poetry from the Pre-Qin Period, Han, Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties*), as well as its antecedent by Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874–1952), are based on Feng Weine's compilation.

Collections that include both poetry and prose may follow the categorical distinctions of the sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan* (*Selections of Refined Literature*, see Chapter 19). Indeed, works like Liu Jie's 劉節 (1476–1555) *Guang* Wen xuan 廣文選 (*Beyond* Wen xuan) and Zhou Yingzhi's 周應治 (1680 *jinshi*) *Guang* Guang Wen xuan 廣廣文選 (*Beyond* Guang Wen xuan) are designed as a kind of sequel or supplement to the *Wen xuan*. There are also compilations arranged chronologically by dynasties (Liu 1997: 53–57). Among the most famous is Zhang Pu's 張溥 (1602–1641) *Han Wei liuchao baisan jia ji* 漢魏六朝百三家集 (*Collections of One Hundred and Three Authors from Han, Wei, and the Six Dynasties*, 118 scrolls), which built on Zhang Xie's 張燮 (1574–1640) *Qishi'er jia ji* 七十二家集 (*Collections of Seventy-two Authors*, ca. 1620s), Wang Shixian's 汪士賢 *Han Wei ershiyi mingjia ji* 漢魏二十一名家集 (*Collections of Twenty-one Notable Masters from Han and Wei Dynasties*, 1583), Feng Weine's *Shi ji*, and Mei Dingzuo's *Lidai wenji* 歷代文紀 (*Principles of Prose through the Ages*). Zhang Pu prefaces each collection in his compilation with a critical appraisal, and these short essays are notable for their refreshing insights. A prominent leader of the Revival Society 復社 (a late Ming political group championing reforms), Zhang Pu is famous for the writings marking his historical and political engagement and for his advocacy of the literary "restoration of antiquity" (*fugu* 復古, see Chapters 21, 26). His prefatory essays, however, show his keen appreciation for a wide range of styles and topics. Defending ornate diction, he opines: "[aesthetic attention to] the moon, the dew, the wind, and the clouds does not diminish the strength of sprit."

The most notable collection of pre-Tang prose during the Ming is Mei Dingzuo's *Lidai wenji*, also called *Badai wenji* 八代文紀 (*Principles of Prose through Eight Dynasties*), of which 189 scrolls are still extant. Like the compilations above, the chronological arrangement in effect provides an implicit literary history. Mei's work was eventually superseded by Yan Kejun's 嚴可均 (1762–1843) *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han sanguo liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (*Complete Prose of Antiquity, the Three Eras, Qin, Han, Three Kingdoms, and the Six Dynasties*) in 746 scrolls. Encompassing 3,497 authors, for whom Yan provides individual biographical accounts, this is a carefully collated and exhaustively comprehensive compilation. Yan scours encyclopedias and commentaries for fragments of texts and examines inscriptions and steles in order to augment the extant corpora of authors. Each unit covers a dynasty or an era, within which the conventional hierarchy of authors hold sway (i.e., rulers are placed first, while women, monks and Daoists, and "anonymous" come last). The fact that Yan excludes *shi* poetry while including *Chuci* and *fu* reminds us yet again of the malleable definition of *wen* (Chapter 1). Also excluded are Classics, Histories, and Masters Literature, but many "lost writings" (*yiwen* 逸文) from these categories are included, as well as embedded pieces (e.g., proclamations, remonstrances, inscriptions, discursive expositions) in Classics and Histories. Unlike some of his Ming predecessors, Yan meticulously notes and compares the provenance of his materials, although in the interest of comprehensiveness he has sometimes erred on the side of credulity when it comes to attributions of authorship, and there are inevitable errors (Liu 1997: 61–71). Yan's magnum opus was not finalized at the time of his death, and it was published only in 1894, with the financial and editorial intervention led by Wang Yuzao 王毓藻. With emendations by modern scholars, Yan's work continues to be a standard reference.

COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTIONS: A COMPLETE TANG LEGACY

The earliest comprehensive collection of Tang poetry classified by categories is Zhang Zhixiang's *Tangshi leiyuan* 唐詩類苑 (*Categories of Tang Poetry*, 200 scrolls), printed in 1601. The late Ming scholar Hu Zhenheng collected all extant Tang poems he could find in *Tangyin tong qian* 唐音統籤 (*Comprehensive Classification of Tang Poetry*, completed ca. 1635). Catalogues differ on the number of scrolls for this massive project; the most complete version seems to be the manuscript in 1,033 scrolls found in the Palace Museum. Of its ten sections (corresponding to the ten Heavenly Stems), the final one

(*Tangyin gui qian* 唐音癸籤) containing earlier criticism on Tang poetry, Hu's own comments on composition and research on contexts of poetic production, anecdotes about Tang poets, and bibliography, was the first to be published (1658). The fourth section, on Late Tang poetry (*Tangyin wu qian* 唐音戊籤), was published in 1685 by Hu's descendants and included in *Siqu quanshu*. The text was never published in its entirety.

Hu's work is one of the major source texts of *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (*Complete Tang Poems*), whose compilation in Yangzhou, initiated by the Qing court in 1705, was completed by 1706 (and published in 1707) under the leadership of Cao Yin 曹寅 (1658–1712) and Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645–1719), among others. The other base text, the famous book collector Ji Zhenyi's 季振宜 (1630–1674) *Quan Tang shi* or *Quan Tang shiji* 全唐詩集 (*Complete Tang Poetry Collections*) in 717 scrolls, was not properly acknowledged, probably because Ji Zhenyi built on the work of Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664), whose frankly expressed anti-Qing sentiments were already earning opprobrium, although the full-scale banning of his work did not take place until the reign of the Qianlong emperor. *Quan Tang shi* corrects some of the mistakes in its base texts, but also omits useful information on sources and comparative editions contained therein. When its compilation was almost complete, Xi Qiyu's 席啓遇 (1650–1702) *Tangshi bai mingjia ji* 唐詩百名家集 (*A Hundred Notable Masters of Tang Poetry*) and two other collections came to light, and new poems and poets were added as "Supplementary Materials" (Buyi 補遺). Encompassing around 48,900 poems, 1,555 textual fragments, and more than 2,200 poets, *Quan Tang shi* remains a standard reference. Forgoing the periodization of Early Tang, High Tang, Mid-Tang, and Late Tang, it mostly follows a broadly chronological arrangement—although some categories (e.g., *yuefu* ballads, couplets, fragments, poems in dreams, jokes, and games) are listed in separate chapters, and chronology also yields pride of place to political and social hierarchy. Starting with Zhu Yizun's 朱彝尊 (1629–1709) *Quan Tang shi weibei shumu* 全唐詩未備書目 (*Titles Left Out in* Quan Tang shi) and Ichikawa Kansai's 市河寬齋 (1749–1820) *Quan Tang shi yi* 全唐詩逸 (*Poems Not Collected in* Quan Tang shi), scholars have been assembling the omitted poems (*jiyi* 輯佚), resulting in modern compilations like *Quan Tang shi waibian* 全唐詩外編 (*Work Not Included in* Quan Tang shi) (Wang, Sun, and Tong, 1982) and *Quan Tang shi bubian* 全唐詩補編 (*Supplement to* Quan Tang shi) (Chen 1992).

Quan Tang shi buttressed the Qing claim of "governing by culture" (*wenzhi* 文治), which also resulted in the court-sponsored *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (*Complete Tang Prose*), compiled between 1808 and 1814. Spanning 1,000 scrolls, this work includes 18,488 prose pieces and 3,042 authors. It is also built on an antecedent "palace edition," *Tang wen* (*Tang Prose*), likely compiled by Chen Bangyan 陳邦彥 (1678–1752). Renowned scholars like Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1753–1818), and Fashishan 法式善 (1752–1813) were involved in the project. For all its pedigree, *Quan Tang wen* does not quite live up to what one would expect of scholarship produced during the height of Qianlong-Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1796–1820) "evidential research." There are errors and omissions that Ruan Yuan (1818), Chen Hongchi 陳鴻墀 (1873), Lu Xinyuan 陸心源 (1888, 1895), and modern scholars have tried to amend. Chen Shangjun's *Quan*

Tang wen bubian 全唐文補編 (*Supplement to* Quan Tang wen) (Chen 2005) collects more than 6,700 pieces.

ANTHOLOGIES AND LITERARY TRENDS

Late imperial anthologies of earlier literature are often embodiments of literary thought and sometimes reflect or set literary trends. Fang Hui's 方回 (1227–1307) *Yingkui lüsui* 瀛奎律髓 (*Luminaries of Essential Regulated Verses*, 1282) implicitly tempers the poetics of the "Jiangxi School" spawned by Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105) (see Chapter 21), which favors allusive complexity and discursive tendencies, with Late Tang aesthetics through its selections and comments. It purports to anthologize the best Tang and Song regulated verses and includes 2,992 regulated verses (376 poets), of which 1,249 are Tang examples. Du Fu's 杜甫 (712–770) later poems are honored as the true source for the Song masters. *Yingkui lüsui* was reprinted in 1467, but its influence was most deeply felt from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, when it was reprinted and commentaries on and divergent evaluations of this text became part of the debate of Tang versus Song poetic models (Zhang 2011: 294–309). *Tangshi guchui* 唐詩鼓吹 (*The Celebration of Tang Poetry* or *Fife and Drum Songs of Tang Poetry*, 1308), attributed to Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190–1257), includes 580 heptasyllabic regulated verses by ninety-six poets, most of them from the Mid- and Late Tang. This may reflect an early-fourteenth-century continuation of late Southern Song stylistic trends. The fact that it excludes Du Fu, Yuan Haowen's avowed poetic model, has raised doubt about the attribution (Qian 2008: 62). The attacks it garnered for its supposed biases throughout the Ming may be one sign of its continued currency.

Yan Yu's *Canglang shihua* (Chapter 21) finds reverberations in Yang Shihong's 楊士宏 *Tang yin* 唐音 (*Sounds of Tang*, 1344). Comprising 1,341 poems, its subdivisions—"Beginning Sounds" (*shiyin* 始音), "Proper Sounds" (*zhengyin* 正音), "Lingering Echoes" (*yuxiang* 餘響)—use musical metaphors to indicate that Early Tang poetry comes to fruition in the High Tang, vis-à-vis which Mid- and Late Tang poems are but "lingering echoes." Implicitly mapping poetic trends to dynastic fortunes, Yang avers that the musical properties of poetry yield insights into "the direction of an era" (*shidao* 世道). Frequently reprinted during the Ming, *Tang yin* contributed to the valorization of the High Tang as poetic ideal (Chen 2007: 169–184). Among its admirers was Gao Bing 高棅 (1350–1423), whose *Tangshi pinhui* 唐詩品匯 (*Appraisal and Collection of Tang Poetry*, also translated as *Graded Compendium of Tang Poetry*), completed in 1393, includes ninety scrolls with 5,802 poems from 620 poets. It was amended in 1398, with ten scrolls adding 954 poems (sixty-one poets) appended to its end as *Tang yin shiyi* 唐音拾遺 (*Rectifying Omissions in Sounds of Tang*). Besides honoring *Tang yin* as model, Gao Bing follows Yan Yu's periodization and also frequently quotes him, making clear the genealogy of his preference for High Tang poetry. Within each period, the poems are arranged by poetic forms and by nine evaluative categories: "proper beginnings" (*zhengshi* 正始), "proper pedigree" (*zhengzong* 正宗), "great master" (*dajia* 大家), "notable master" (*mingjia* 名家), "supplementary" (*yuyi* 羽翼), "follower" (*jiewu* 接武), "resonant with the times" (*zhengbian* 正變), "lingering echoes" (*yuxiang*), and "side stream" (*pangliu* 旁流) (Chen 2007: 185–204). Li Bo 李白 (701–762) is listed as "proper pedigree" in all seven poetic forms. Du Fu is ranked "supplementary" in pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic quatrains, but is classed as a "great master" in the other five forms. While extolling Du Fu's depth and originality, Gao Bing seems to imply that he lies outside the "proper pedigree" of High Tang style. The simultaneous elevation of and unease with Du Fu is indeed the tacit paradox in Ming and Qing poetic discourses upholding High Tang style as supreme.

Gao Bing's anthology reflected the taste of his literary circle (the so-called "Ten Masters of Fujian" 閩中十子). Its influence is said to have lasted throughout the Ming (see "Biography of Gao Bing" in *Ming shi* 明史 [*History of the Ming*]), but Gao Bing's anthology might not have garnered much attention until the sixteenth century (Chen 2007: 189–190). Its preference for the High Tang is heightened in Gao's much shorter and more popular anthology, *Tangshi zhengsheng* 唐詩正聲 (*Proper Music of Tang Poetry*, 1442), which includes about 931 poems in twenty-two scrolls. Both of Gao's anthologies influenced the theory and practice of Ming poets of the Revivalist School (*fugu* 復古, "restoring antiquity"), who revered Han-Wei and High Tang poetry as models, the so-called Early and Later Seven Masters.

Gujin shishan 古今詩刪 (*Best of Ancient and Modern Poetry*), compiled by one of the Later Seven Masters, Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514–1570), to set forth the agenda of his coterie, bears obvious imprint of Gao's anthologies. It includes pre-Tang poetry, Tang poetry, and Ming poetry in nine, thirteen, and twelve scrolls respectively, with pointed omission of Song and Yuan poetry. While its Tang selections (740 poems) are almost all found in *Tangshi pinhui*, compared to *Tangshi zhengsheng* it increases the number of early Tang selections, cuts down the number of Mid- and Late Tang poems even more stringently, and also pares down the number of heptasyllabic regulated verses by Du Fu (Chen 2007: 207–216). The Tang section of the *Gujin shishan* was printed separately under the title *Tangshi xuan* 唐詩選 (*Selections of Tang Poetry*) and was popular enough throughout Ming and into Qing to have been reprinted multiple times, with variations added by editors and publishers; it made its way to Japan and was used as a poetry textbook as late as early Meiji (1868–1912).

The rival of Li Panlong's anthologies was *Shi gui* 詩歸 (*Return to Poetry*, completed in 1614, first published ca. 1616), compiled by Zhong Xing and Tan Yuanchun 譚元春 (1586–1637), whose provenance from Jingling 竟陵 (in Hubei) gave their poetry and poetics the label of the "Jingling School" (Chen 207: 232–284). The Jingling School is famous for its emphasis on subjective illumination, but the power of that idea relies on a purportedly new perspective on the poetic tradition. *Shi gui*, which included about 3,300 poems, was also published separately as *Gushi gui* 古詩歸 (*Return to Early Poetry*, fifteen scrolls) and *Tangshi gui* 唐詩歸 (*Return to Tang Poetry*, thirty-six scrolls). Zhong Xing explains in the preface that the title means the selections "regard the ancients as the point of return," "drawing upon the spirit of the ancients to connect it to the minds and eyes of later generations, so that their minds and eyes have a resting place" (Zhong 1992: 235). However, Zhong Xing is very self-conscious about his (sometimes idiosyncratic) interventions, which mean that "even the ancients could not but abide by [his] commands. . . Although this is an anthology of poems by the ancients, it is really like authoring one's own work" ("Letter to Cai Jingfu" [Yu Cai Jingfu 與蔡敬夫], Zhong 1992: 469). Tan Yuanchun also speaks of deliberately going against the familiar or the predictable. Their Tang selections, while still favoring the High Tang, include a considerable number of Mid- and Late Tang examples (about one-third of the total). In this way, they implicitly target the biases of the Revivalist School, which they identify with the trap of conventionality. *Shi gui* advocates a deeper, more tortuous interiority, and its immense popularity accounted for the prevalence of the Jingling style in the final decades of the Ming dynasty and beyond.

Sometimes an anthology can eschew polemics and nevertheless augur new critical perspectives more subtly through selections and commentaries. In the "Prefatory Principles" ("Fanli" 凡例) to his *Caishu tang gushi xuan* 采菽堂古詩選 (*Anthology of Early Poems from the Hall of Picking Beans*, published 1706), Chen Zuoming 陳祚明 (1623–1674) claims to reconcile the views of the Revivalist School (Wang Shizhen and Li Panlong) and those of the Jingling School (Zhong Xing and Tan Yuanchun) and to target their blind spots. The true originality of this anthology with 4,487 pre-Tang poems, however, lies in its perceptive comments and its implicit elevation of fifth- and sixth-century poets, sometimes criticized for their supposedly effete and overly ornate diction. Generous selections of works by poets like Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), Xiao Tiao 謝朓 (464–499), Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551), and Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581) imply their parity with Wei-Jin 魏晉 (220–420) masters. In the perennial debate between the primacy of emotions (*qing* 情) and that of verbal mastery (*ci* 辭), Chen defends the latter. Although *Caishu tang shixuan* was not included in *Siku quanshu*, its influence can be gauged by references to it in major Qing anthologies (Li and Chen 2004: 263–283).

Zhong Xing's *Shi gui* has been criticized for its questionable attributions and editorial errors, but scholarly sloppiness scarcely accounts for the vehement criticism coming from prominent poets and thinkers. The attacks started with Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608–1647) and others championing the revival of the Revivalist School in the final years of the Ming. The opprobrium became more extreme in early Qing, when Qian Qianyi, Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–1671), Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682), Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692), and Zhu Yizun—just to name the most famous—cast *Shi gui* as the emblem of subordinating tradition to individual difference and the harbinger of dynastic decline and fall. It is no small irony, then, that Wang Shizhen 王士禛 (1634–1711), the early Qing poet who attained canonical status as "the voice of a great era" (*shengshi zhi yin* 盛世之音), should define his poetic ideals of ethereal resonance (*shenyun* 神韻) through anthologies that betray some secret affinities with *Shi gui*. For example, Zhong Xing and Wang Shizhen both disdain Mid-Tang masters like Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831). Both favor Du Fu's poems on the lyricism of quotidian life. Both tend to exclude densely allusive poems with themes of historical and political engagement. This may seem paradoxical, as Wang's aura of cultural authority echoes the classicism of the Early and Later Seven Masters, the very target of the Jingling poets. The fact remains, however, that Wang Shizhen and Zhong Xing both represented trends aspiring to a purer interiority (Qian 1986: 102–106), although Wang's preference for a more contemplative style is evident in his anthologies.

Wang Shizhen stated in the preface of his *Tang xian sanmei ji* 唐賢三昧集 (*The True Understanding of Tang Worthies*, 1688) that he based his selections on his understanding of the lyrical ideal of the ineffable as articulated by Yan Yu and Sikong Tu 司空圖 (837–908). Wang's goal is to counter the grandiosity of Ming classicist poets as well as the early Qing interest in historical engagement and a more discursive style (Li 2006: 85–98). *Tang xian sanmei ji* includes about 400 poems by forty-two poets. Wang Wei 王維 (699 or 701–761) is the obvious favorite, with 110 poems chosen; Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689–740), Cen Shen 岑參 (715–770), Li Qi 李頎 (ca. 690–ca. 751), and Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 690–ca. 756) are significantly represented, with over thirty poems each. Li Bo and Du Fu are excluded, ostensibly because their collections are easily available, but the real reason may be Wang Shizhen's elevation of ineffable essence (*kongling* 空靈) and ethereal resonance as poetic ideals. Wang's canonical status and the clearly set forth agenda of the anthology ensured its influence; there are eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions with commentaries as well as extant editions in Japan and Korea. Wang Shizhen also compiled another popular anthology, *Gushi xuan* 古詩選 (*Selections of Ancient-style Poetry*) in thirty-two scrolls. This is in effect a history of the genre of ancient-style poetry (from which Wang excluded most *yuefu* ballads). With pentasyllabic ancient-style poetry, the selection becomes progressively stringent for the period after the fourth century, the exception being the Tang poet Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (ca. 733–ca. 793, eighty poems). The later maturation of heptasyllabic ancient-style poetry prompted Wang to devote only one scroll to pre-Tang examples; the other fourteen cover examples from the Tang, Song, Jin, and Yuan. Although ostensibly focused on historical developments, Wang's interest in "defining poetic forms" (*bianti* 辨體) and in elevating a restrained, contemplative style (as evinced by the prominence of Wei Yingwu) underline his agenda (Jiang 2001).

Reactions against Wang Shizhen's views also came in the form of anthologies. Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673–1769) emphasized a more inclusive vision encompassing "moral purpose" (*zongzhi* 宗旨) and "indomitable spirit" (*fengge* 風格) in *Gushi yuan* 古詩源 (*Early Poetry as Foundation*) and *Tangshi biecai* 唐詩別裁 (*Percipience of Tang Poetry*). *Gushi yuan* in fourteen scrolls (about 700 poems) is an anthology of pre-Tang poetry (excluding *Shijing* and *Chuci* but including *yuefu*) completed in 1719 and published in 1725. It purports to correct the exclusive elevation of the High Tang by looking at its roots in early poetry. The focus on elegance and decorum (*yazheng* 雅正) echoes Shen's criteria for selection in *Tangshi biecai* (first published 1717, revised edition 1763), which seeks to be comprehensive and representative even while sustaining the parameters of "moral suasion through poetry" (*shijiao* 詩教) (Wang and Wu 1995: 439–451). Comprising 1,928 poems in twenty scrolls, its generous selection of poems by Li Bo and Du Fu (about one-fifth of the total) pointedly repudiates Wang Shizhen's bias. Both of Shen's anthologies were popular throughout the Qing (Jiang 2012).

From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, the increasing number of women authors and heightened interest in collecting their works resulted in numerous anthologies seeking to construct a genealogy for women's writings. The aforementioned Zhang Zhixiang compiled *Tongguan xinbian* 彤管新編 (*New Selections of the Red Brush*, 1554). Tian Yiheng's 田藝衡 *Shi nüshi* 詩女史 (*Female Talents in Poetry*, 1557) starts with the earliest examples but focuses mostly on Tang women poets, unlike Zhao Shijie's 趙世傑 more equally distributed selection in *Gujin nüshi* 古今女史 (*Female Talents Past and Present*, ca. 1620s–1640s) in twelve scrolls. Among the most notable of these anthologies is *Mingyuan shigui* 名媛詩歸 (*Return to Poetry by Notable Women*) attributed to Zhong Xing (published ca. 1620s–1640s). Of its thirty-three scrolls, the first seventeen are devoted to pre-Song examples. Perhaps in an attempt to confirm Zhong Xing's alleged role in its compilation, the editor maintains that women's poetry embodies a special genuineness (*zhen* 真), purity (*qing* 清), and restrained hiddenness (*you* 幽), qualities that resonate with the ideals of the Jingling School. *Mingyuan shiwei* 名媛詩緯 (*Complementary Canon of Poetry by Notable Women*, forty-two scrolls, 1667 preface) compiled by the woman poet Wang Duanshu 王端淑 (1621–ca. 1685) contains proportionately fewer pre-Song examples due to the wealth of Ming and early Qing works. The image of weft and warp in her title indicates her ambition to define a body of writings by women that can complement or supplement the canonical classics of poetry by men (what I translate as "complementary canon" is literally the horizontal threads in weaving [*wei* 緯], which complements the vertical threads [*jing* 經]—the word for "classics" [Chapter 12]).

In the arena of prose, competing ways of conceptualizing literature also defined rival anthologies. This was already the case in the Southern Song. Zhen Dexiu's 真德秀 (1178–1235) *Wenzhang zhengzong* 文章正宗 (*True Pedigree of Writing*), which encompasses prose and poetry, privileges moral premises over formal perfection. Lü Zuqian's 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) *Guwen guanjian* 古文關鍵 (*Key to Classical Prose*) and Xie Fangde's 謝枋得 (1226–1289) *Wenzhang guifan* 文章軌範 (*Models of Prose*) emphasize ways of writing. Zhen Dexiu's model was reiterated a few times in the Ming, but the battle was no longer one between neo-Confucian moral reasoning (*li* 理) and the craft of writing (*wen* 文). Instead, the arguments about prose models—Qin-Han versus Tang-Song—were unabashedly about method and form (concerns decried as formalism in mutual critiques), the presumed relationship between writing and the sage's teachings being accepted as a given. The Early Seven Masters, notably Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1473–1530), advocated exclusive attention to Han and pre-Han prose models (Ong 2016). To counter this, Tang Shunzhi compiled *Wen bian* 文編 (*Anthology of Prose*, 1556 preface), which anthologized works from pre-Qin to Song and implicitly questioned arbitrary boundaries between earlier and later works. *Wen bian* inspired a much more influential work, Mao Kun's 茅坤 (1512–1601) *Tang Song ba dajia wenchao* 唐宋八大家文鈔 (*Prose by the Eight Masters of the Tang and Song*, 1579) in 164 scrolls (1,313 pieces), with Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824), Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72), and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) as the most prominently featured authors (for the "Eight Masters," see Chapter 21). Mao's selections and comments on the structure and methods of composition were often echoed in Qing prose anthologies. Advocates of Tang and Song prose models embraced their Han and pre-Han antecedents. Gui Youguang 歸有光 (1506–1571), for example, was famous for his commentary on *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*).

The first Qing prose anthology that articulated a clear agenda was *Guwen yuexuan* 古文約選 (*Condensed Selections of Classical Prose*, 1733), compiled by Fang Bao 方苞 (1668–1749) and commissioned by the Manchu prince Yunli 允禮 (1697–1738). Other early Qing prose anthologies, including *Yuxuan guwen yuanjian* 御選古文淵鑒 (*The Imperial Selections of Exemplary Classical Prose*, 1685 preface) published under the Kangxi 康熙 emperor's (r. 1662–1722) name, covered selections from pre-Qin to Song and included examples of parallel prose (*pianwen* 駢文). Fang Bao chose from the Kangxi anthology only works from Han to Song and pointedly excluded parallel prose. He argued that the requisite total immersion in early historical writings such as *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*), *Guoyu* 國語 (*Discourses of the States*), *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), and *Shiji* (which he praises as "the proper pedigree of classical prose" [*guwen zhengzong* 古文正宗]) does not leave room for their piecemeal inclusion in an anthology (he makes an exception for *Shiji* 130). Masters Literature, "unrestrained like the boundless seas" (*wangyang zizi* 汪洋自恣), cannot be tethered to "principles of composition" (*pianfa* 篇法). In other words, Fang Bao sets out to establish the learnable (and sometimes consciously articulated) "principles and methods" (*yifa* 義法) embodied in prose models.

Fang Bao was later honored as the first master of the influential Tongcheng 桐城 School (Tongcheng was a county in Anhui), whose emphasis on decorum and austere elegance became a full-fledged ideology in the writings of Liu Dakui 劉大櫆 (1698–1779) and Yao Nai 姚鼐 (1731–1815). Through his selections and comments in *Gu wenci leizuan* 古文辭類纂 (*Categories of Classical Prose*, 1779 preface) in seventy-five scrolls (774 pieces), Yao Nai defined the ideals of the Tongcheng School, a fusion of moral principles (*yili* 義理), stylistic excellence (*cizhang* 辭章), and evidential research (*kaozheng* 考證). He broadened Fang Bao's text base by encompassing pre-Han materials (including *Chuci* and Han *fu*) and some Ming-Qing authors, although works from Han (130 pieces) and the eight Tang-Song masters (509 pieces) still constitute more than 80 percent of the selections. By pointedly omitting works from the Six Dynasties, Southern Song, and Yuan, and by choosing very few Ming and Qing examples (chiefly Gui Youguang, Fang Bao, and Liu Dakui), he establishes a genealogy of orthodox prose style (*wen tong* 文統) that culminates in the Tongcheng style, although it is a genealogy that negates a good portion of Chinese literary history (Jin and Ge 2005: 196–200). His categories are subgenres of prose (prefaces, postscripts, memorials, decrees, biographies, elegies, eulogies, etc.), whose properties, premises, and histories he explains in prefatory materials. Within each category, the authors are presented chronologically, with appended comments from Yao Nai and earlier masters. Multiple Qing editions of this anthology with emendations, commentaries, and sequels testified to its influence.

Yao Nai followed Fang Bao in excluding parallel prose, which as a genre enjoyed a revival during the Qing dynasty, perhaps as a corollary of the renewed interest in Six Dynasties literature. Critics of Tongcheng masters, such as Ruan Yuan, were often champions of parallel prose. Steeped in *Wen xuan* learning, Ruan Yuan used the parallel structures in canonical classics to extol parallel prose in his essay, "On Patterned Words" ("Wen yan shuo" 文言說). Li Zhaoluo 李兆洛 (1769–1841), also implicitly targeting the Tongcheng school, adopted a different strategy in *Pianti wenchao* 駢體文鈔 (*Selections of Parallel Prose*, 1821): he included many pieces of Han and pre-Han classical prose in his anthology, striving thereby to show that classical prose and parallel prose share the same roots. In doing so, however, he went against the conventional understanding of parallel prose. Like Yao Nai, Li Zhaoluo classified the thirty-one scrolls (about 700 pieces) of his work according to forms and functions. He left out *fu* or poetic expositions (despite their obvious similarity with parallel prose) on account of his sense of generic categories. Most of his selections are from the Six Dynasties, an interesting contrast with Song anthologies of parallel prose, which feature only Tang and Song examples (see Chapter 21).

TEXTBOOKS AND PRIMERS

Fang Bao compiled *Guwen yuexuan* as a textbook for students in the imperial academy (Guozi jian 國子監). Like Kangxi's anthology and *Yuxuan Tang Song wenchun* 御選唐宋文醇 (*Imperial Selections of the Best of Tang and Song Prose*), published under the Qianlong emperor's name, it was printed by the court. Official promotion must have helped its circulation, but that was not necessarily the deciding factor for popularity. Yao Nai and, to a lesser extent, Li Zhaoluo were famous as masters of scholarly discourse (*jiangxue* 講學) with numerous disciples. Yao's use of *Gu wenci leizuan* as a textbook for aspirants to the Tongcheng style contributed to its currency.

Sometimes the compiler's obscurity was no bar to circulation. Wu Chucai 吳楚材 and his nephew Wu Diaohou 吳調侯 compiled the extremely popular *Guwen guanzhi* 古文觀止 (*Best Examples of Classical Prose*, 1694 preface), which purported to introduce and explain the most famous and important works from pre-Qin to Ming without participating in polemics about style and form, and it became a very successful primer, although its compilers were obscure schoolmasters who did not hold office. *Guwen guanzhi*, like the anthologies by Zhen Dexiu and Tang Shunzhi, traverses traditional distinctions, encompassing selections from "classics" (e.g., *Zuozhuan, Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 [*The Gongyang Tradition*], *Liji* 禮記 [*Records of Rituals*]) and "histories" (e.g., *Zhanguo ce, Shiji*), as well as famous prose pieces from the Qin and Han to the Ming dynasties. It also includes examples of parallel prose and poetic exposition. A relatively small selection (220 pieces) arranged chronologically (instead of by genre, as in *Wen xuan* or *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 [*The Flower of the Garden of Letters*]) and accompanied by concise comments on rules of composition, it is accessible and manageable and eventually eclipsed other anthologies, such as Lin Yunming's 林雲銘 (1628–1697) *Guwen xiyi* 古文析義 (*Principles of Classical Prose*) and its sequel (1682 and 1687, with 199 and 330 pieces respectively). Manageable size is one key to success. Successively pared-down versions of Mao Kun's voluminous anthology of the eight Tang-Song masters—including anthologies dated 1629 (Sun Shenxing 孫慎行 [1565–1636]), 1632 (Zhong Xing), and 1750 (Shen Deqian)—had considerable success as textbooks and primers.

As mentioned above, the poetry anthologies by Li Panlong, Wang Shizhen, and Shen Deqian were also sometimes used as textbooks. One of the most popular primers was *Tangshi sanbai shou* 唐詩三百首 (*300 Poems of the Tang*, 1764 preface), compiled by Sun Mo 孫洙 (1711–1778) and his wife Xu Lanying 徐蘭英 and printed along with their concise comments. More than two-thirds of its selections (222 poems) overlap with Shen Deqian's *Tangshi biecai*. The poems chosen are easy to understand and commit to memory, hence the exclusion of Li He's 李賀 (790?–816?) and Han Yu's more tonally and lexically challenging poems. Sun Mo claims in the preface that the anthology is designed as a "textbook for the clan school" (*jiashu keben* 家塾課本), and its popular nature may explain why Sun published it under his sobriquet Recluse of Hengtang 蘅塘退士 rather than his real name. Multiple editions of this text, many of them with commentaries, suggest that it was widely used. In many ways, *Guwen guanzhi* and *Tangshi sanbai shou* have remained the basic texts introducing modern Chinese readers to classical Chinese literature.

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IV. Literature and Metaliterature

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION (WIEBKE DENECKE)

MODERN scholars of Chinese literature have tended to focus on a small part of "metaliterature": poetics, or "literary thought." The feverish search for systematic theories of literature, inspired by Western foundational texts like Aristotle's *Poetics* and the Aristotelian dream of taming the exuberant license of literary production through a descriptive system, makes us overlook less ostentatious and obvious modes of "metaliterature," literature about literature: scenes in texts where an eager audience evaluates a poem; scenes of instruction, where an authoritative master figure is depicted in conversations with his disciples; texts remembering, recreating, quoting earlier texts; texts added to a main text as preface, epilogue, commentary, self-explanation; or texts worshiping earlier texts while promoting their own novel agenda, to name just a few. Searching for grand statements of literary theory has proven particularly unhelpful in the case of China, where systematic treatises on poetics have been rare and apparently not particularly worth pursuing. It has led to undue attention to grand exceptions like the *Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*), which was relatively neglected before the modern period, when it was suddenly promoted to being the epitome of "Chinese literary theory."

This section of the Handbook treats "metaliterature" in its narrow sense, of poetics and literary thought, but then moves to broader questions of "metaliterature" such as concepts of authorship, the creation of tradition, and canon formation, as well as classicisms and revival movements.

What kinds of concerns have fueled the formulation of reflections on poetry and literature in the Chinese tradition? How have these concerns engendered different forms and formats of literary thought through the ages? What kinds of texts and genres have been most productive in precipitating reflections on literature? How did texts get attached to authors in the fluid world of early and medieval Chinese manuscript culture? And how is authorship connected to broader concerns of cultural creation and authority, of compiling, transmitting, and canonizing texts? What drove the creation of a textual canon and textual traditions in the Han? And how did "antiquity" eventually become a reference point for the imagination of medieval authors in deploying their programs for political, moral, and literary reform?

In the European tradition, poetry needed spirited defense after Plato's attack on it as a purely mimetic, even deceptive, art devoid of metaphysical truth. In China, poetry—and in a broader sense "literature," or "letters" (*wen* 文)—was at the heart of notions of "culture" and "civilization" (the same *wen*). It distinguished a Chinese from a barbarian. As a central piece of cultural (rather than ethnic) identity, it needed no defense but rather explication. Literature's only potential danger was a decline into the "flowery" and superficial with passing time, but that was not a problem of literature per se, as in the case of Plato, but a question of the character and self-control of the writer in his time. From the Zhou Dynasty on, poetry was linked to music, which in turn was the correlative of ritual and social decorum; it had thus a major role in creating harmony and order in Confucian society.

The first chapter, "Defenses of Literature/Literary Thought/Poetics," deals with metaliterature in its narrow sense. During the Han Dynasty, the desire to explicate individual poems in *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) led to the first extended reflections on the nature of poetry and literature. The Mao interpretation of the *Shijing* ascribed to each poem a specific occasion and historical moment, which gave meaning to the poem and historical identity to the (mostly anonymous) voices of the poets, and provided a moral history of the Zhou Dynasty narrated through poems put in the mouth of its historical protagonists. It understood poetry both as a mirror and means of social change, a vector of historical development (often imagined as decline) and a tool for change towards a better future.

In the early medieval period (200–600 CE), occasions and themes for reflection on poetry and literature expanded considerably, as previously flourishing genres such as Masters Literature waned and a new array of genres, most importantly classical *shi* 詩 poetry, emerged as the foremost genre of self-expression, communal practice, and courtly distinction. Questions of individual talent and creativity, of the nature and function of genres, of the critical evaluation of individual poets and the creation of lineages, as well as grand statements on the close connection between literature, the state, and immortal fame, became central to reflections on poetry and literature. Though only rarely systematic, these concerns are recognizable as "poetological" issues, and therefore this period is often mined for statements about "Chinese literary theory."

With the Tang, interests shifted to more technical and anecdotal forms of reflection on literature: new attention to the art of the couplet as the primary unit of poetic skill and appreciation produced a large literature of technical "how-to" manuals instructing aspiring poets how to read and write the perfect couplet. While these manuals came to be despised by Song literati, aphoristic remarks on poetry, poets, and life became in turn a vibrant format for reflecting on the literary world.

In Chinese literary thought, the figure of the poet, as witness and shaper of the historical moment, as "author" of a poetic text that reveals the true contours of the world, had great authority throughout premodern China. The next chapter, "Concepts of Authorship," introduces the vocabulary and scenarios of authorship and reflects on types of relationships between texts and authors, as well as between texts and readers. While authors today are legal entities endowed with the duty of original creation and the benefit of claims to copyright and royalties, "authorship" in premodern cultures is a broad and blurred semantic field that includes questions about the origins, authority, and transmission of texts. Authorship as an act of creation was a fraught notion in traditional China, since true "creation" (*zuo* 作) was reserved for sages. Already Confucius embraced instead "transmission" (*shu* 述) as a weaker form of agency indebted to an imagined higher authority. Authorship came in many shapes: at its most powerful, poet-authors would appear as transcendent geniuses creating verses stirring the cosmos; alternatively, they could be transmitters of oral traditions and feature as commentator-authors; they could be figures of authority, whose voice spoke through texts, even if they did not compose them, as with early philosophical masters like Confucius; multiple authors produced "layered texts" over the span of several generations; or multiple authors, under the sponsorship of a powerful patron, could create a comprehensive, encyclopedic work through collective authorship.

Obviously authors create texts, but in early and medieval China texts quite often created their authors. The attribution of texts to authoritative figures justified the significance of the text in question and helped to control its meaning. The attribution of authorship could be simply apocryphal, but it could also rest on impersonation or imaginative reenactment of the imagined author, as with "Li sao" 離騷 ("Encountering Sorrow"), the miraculous plaint attributed to the tragically unrecognized minister Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 4th–3rd century BCE). The strong authorial presence in the text, through recurring first-person pronouns, outright called for an author figure and the application of a suitable historical scenario. Qu Yuan became a paradigmatic author figure, serving as a political, moral, biographical, literary, and poetic model. So did the historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE), who elaborated Qu Yuan's plaint further into a vision of literary creation driven by suffering and failure. Sima Qian also became a model for the empathetic reader, ever sensitive to others' plights.

Authorship as a form of authority is directly related to the formation of tradition: texts deemed culturally valuable became associated with the names of sages and were eventually canonized. The next chapter, "Tradition Formation: Beginnings to Eastern Han," traces the processes of textual and institutional canonization in early China. Processes of canonization have recently attracted attention because of the realization that traditions are often "invented" at moments of transformation and crisis that require additional legitimation—through an invented past. In contrast to triumphant hagiographic narratives of canon formation, this approach to tradition emphasizes historical coincidences that had certain texts and institutions eventually win out rather than others.

The chapter proposes that tradition formation in China started with a particular flavor of nostalgia, with Confucius's (551–479 BCE) yearning for the golden age of the early Zhou kings. The second great moment of tradition formation, roughly half a millennium later during the early empire, was inspired by a new imperial ideology of "All Under Heaven," when Confucius was canonized in turn and installed next to his early Zhou heroes in the portrait gallery of tradition. During the Han Dynasty, an imperial academy was founded and chairs established for academicians teaching the five textual traditions of the *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Classic of Documents*), *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*), *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*), and *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). The political institutionalization of a canon of Confucian Classics went hand in hand with a new culture of scholarship that resulted in the production of commentaries and exegetical works. Yet another influential venue for the formation of tradition during the Han was the production of a catalogue of the imperial library, included in the *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*), which created basic classifications such as the "Six Arts" (*Liu yi* 六藝, later "Classics") or "Masters Literature" that were to shape people's mental map of textual knowledge and their perception of the world throughout premodern China. In closing, the chapter reminds us of the importance of dissent and invention in the process of canon formation, despite the traditional rhetoric praising "transmission" over "creation."

With the medieval period, the canon of the "Classics" became closed (even if their number increased from five to thirteen between the Han and the Song Dynasties, mostly through canonizing commentaries and adding Masters Texts like the *Analects* and *Mencius*). The final chapter of this section, "Classicisms in Chinese Literary Culture: Six Dynasties through Tang," takes us from the ancient world of the classical to medieval forms of classicism. Writers of the Six Dynasties and Tang engaged ancient texts from multiple perspectives: as poets turning to earlier modes, as literary innovators formulating their program through calls for a "revival of antiquity" (*fu gu* 復古), as critical and sometimes eccentric scholars, or as voices for political and moral reform.

During the Six Dynasties, elite poets began to promote the "imitation" (*ni* 擬) of ancient anonymous *yuefu* poems, harking back to a world of simple life and authentic people. Some poets, such as the hermit-poet Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427), turned away from courtly sophistication, evoking instead scenes and dreams of pristine simplicity, sometimes in the old tetrasyllabic meter. In the fifth century, writers like Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s), and more forcefully his contemporary Pei Ziye 裴子野 (469–530), begin to castigate the excess of literary flourish at the expense of the moral substance of the literary message. But Liu Xie clothes his complaint in such sophisticated and patterned language that there is a clear cognitive dissonance between medium and message.

Only with Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (661–702) in the early Tang do we get more strident critiques of the courtly regulated poetic style and programmatic calls for a "revival of antiquity." They gain full weight during the mid-Tang, when the term becomes a broad umbrella for a colorful spectrum of programs of literary, political, and moral reform. Despite their retrospective gaze, these programs are usually commitments to proactive cultural renewal. Their proponents often promote literary reform by drawing inspiration from older styles or use texts from antiquity as a means to critique contemporary writers on moral grounds.

Throughout the Tang, calls for a "revival of antiquity" came in many flavors: Han Yu's 韓愈 (768–824) eccentric archeology of antiquity, which helped him dig up strange words and worlds; his taste for allegorical fables; his staunch voice of Confucian moral purpose; and his anti-Buddhist stance, provocative to the point of verging on lèse-majesté made him into one of the most complex *fu gu* authors. His friend Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819) had a stronger scholarly vein, while yet another member of his circle, Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814), translated his frustrations and failures into an unusually persistent harsh and bleak poetic style that makes him into an authentic figure of the "poet in adversity." But there were also less idiosyncratic and gentler reform programs of "revival of antiquity," such as Bai Juyi's 白居易 (772–846).

By surveying early and medieval China through the broader scope of "metaliterature" rather than through a narrow focus on poetics and "literary thought," this section should illustrate more generally how literature is produced under its own spell—namely, how literature keeps reproducing and producing itself in metaliterary spirals that we see in reflections on literature, scenarios of authority and authorship, the formation of canons and traditions, and classicisms.

CHAPTER 23

DEFENSES OF LITERATURE/ LITERARY THOUGHT/ POETICS

PAUL ROUZER

CHINESE poetics from early times through the Tang dynasty shows a fair consistency in its overarching concerns, returning to the same themes and problems repeatedly, though often putting a new spin on old questions. These questions bear comparison to similar issues in the Western tradition. There, Greek and Roman thought tended to steer poetics in two directions: first, a defense of the art of poetry as a response to the attacks of Plato represented in *The Republic*, in which he accused the arts of having a deleterious effect on the morality of the state. The responding defense gradually evolved into the theories of autonomous aestheticism found in Kant. Second, there has been an emphasis on the technique of composition itself, a "how-to" tradition that arises from Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*.

The same categories of attention can be found in the Chinese tradition as well, with two notable exceptions. First, texts on the technique of composition, though common, were often dismissed and denigrated by the "mainstream" elite tradition as insignificant. Second, up until the end of the Tang there was never a philosophical perspective that was openly hostile to the arts (with the exception of Mohism in the pre-imperial period); rather, Chinese thinkers tended to see poetry (and its related art, music) as a vital element of human society and an essential tool that might be employed by rulers to insure the harmony of their rule. This tended to bias much of Chinese literary criticism in the direction of the moral: to be a worthy literary text, the work of art had to in some way contribute to the betterment of individuals and society at large. Bad literary texts were ones that contributed to disharmony. Moreover, texts could be seen as significant indices to the moral life of the times: a decadent age would for the most part produce decadent literature; an unhappy age, unhappy literature. Fortunately, critics usually applied these dicta with considerably greater subtlety than this brief summary would suggest, but the tension between sensual attractiveness on the one hand

and moral seriousness on the other remained paramount throughout the history of Chinese literary theory.

EARLY ORIENTATIONS

Early statements on the importance of poetry tend to refer to the type of poetry known as *shi* 詩, which was later anthologized in the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*). There is some evidence to suggest that such poetry was sung, so that early statements about music and about poetry are often interchangeable (DeWoskin 1983). The canonical statement concerning poetry and its importance can be found in the *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Classic of Documents*), in the "Shun dian" 舜典 ("Canons of Shun"), a text attributed to a primordial sage king but which probably dates from the late Warring States: "Poetry articulates the preoccupations [of the self]" (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志). This statement is partly a visual pun, since the character for *shi* consists of the element meaning "to speak" and another element that resembles the character *zhi* 志. *Zhi* is the complex element in this equation: sometimes loosely translated as "ambition," it more precisely refers to the desires and directions of the self—what actions it seeks in order to obtain its goals. Unlike "ambition" or "intention," *zhi* is not always conscious or willed; it is what the mind focuses on, its preoccupations (the character itself may have an etymology that would suggest translating it more literally as "directions of the heart/mind"). This introduced the idea that poetry was, to a certain extent, a spontaneous act—it was the verbal representation of the emotions of the self stirred by the stimuli of the world around it and driven to articulate itself in a coherent manner. Poetry could then be a true representation of the self at a particular moment.

This belief was stated most clearly and in the greatest detail in the "Great Preface" appended to the Mao family commentaries on the *Shijing* (*Maoshi daxu* 毛詩大序), dating from the first century CE; it was likely the work of a Mao scholar named Wei Hong 衛宏 (Owen 1992: 37–56; Saussy 1993: 107–150; Van Zoeren 1991: 80–115). This text has often been seen as the "founding document" of the poetic tradition. In addition to asserting that strong emotion almost naturally results in the composition of poetry, the preface also confirms the poet as a product of his own time and place. Using music and poetry interchangeably (the text in fact overlaps with similar texts on the power of music), it asserts that "the tones of a well-managed age are at rest and happy: its government is balanced. The tones of an age of turmoil are bitter and full of anger: its government is perverse. The tones of a ruined state are filled with lament and brooding: its people are in difficulty" (translation from Owen 1992: 52). This social determinism would seem to deprive the individual poet of autonomy, suggesting that the moral content and significance of his poetry is something beyond his individual power to determine. Elsewhere in the text, however, the preface suggests that virtuous men can be born in times of decline, and that their verse can act as a criticism or refutation of the age's social mores.

The author of the "Great Preface" intends these statements as a part of a hermeneutic guide for interpreting the poems found in the *Shijing*, the early anthology of verse said to have been edited by Confucius himself and an essential component of the Confucian canon (see Chapter 12). For the Mao scholars, the poems had to be interpreted as a moral history of Chinese civilization: the authorship of each poem was assigned to a specific historical personage or categorical figure responding to events of the time (see Chapter 24). Thus, reading the intimate connection between poem and history was essential in giving the classic its moral significance. However, these assumptions about early pre-imperial verse tended to influence the tradition of poetic composition in general until they came to be taken for granted as the central truth underlying poetry composition. Much of poetics lies in how individuals and literary movements interpreted this "truth" and how they saw it operating within the individual poem. And one might add that though this concept was articulated most often in relation to *shi* poetry specifically (especially as it developed into one of the most important genres after 200 CE), writers tended to assume its validity for all kinds of writing.

Concurrently with the principle of the "Great Preface," however, was a sort of "anti-poetics" ideal rooted in texts such as *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Liu 1988). The *Laozi* begins with the famous line, "The Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way"—thus leaving open the doubt that nonrelative Truth can be expressed in language at all. The *Zhuangzi* in turn mounted a complex assault on the existence of unchanging principles, suggesting that our actions are largely determined by relativistic judgments; language could serve as a tool to express momentary insights, but could not serve as a permanent index to reality, which remained evasively beyond language: "The fish trap is the way in which one obtains fish; but once you obtain fish you discard the fish trap. . . . Words are the way in which one obtains meaning. Once you obtain the meaning you discard the words" ("Wai wu" 外物). While this doctrine seems potentially anti-literary, it actually provided a useful counterweight to overconfident Confucian principles that personality and preoccupations could be perfectly and unproblematically inscribed within the text, and also provided the inspiration for a more intuitive, almost mystical conception of authorship. It created the potential for creative aporias and paradoxes; it also suggested that a text might suggest certain meanings and emotions that might linger for the reader once the text was finished—sometimes expressed by the later adage "the words have been exhausted, but not the meaning" (*yan jin yi bu jin* 言盡意不盡).

The "Golden Age" of Poetics

The period from 200 to 600 saw the rise of self-conscious writing about the literary arts in an unprecedented way; as a result, a series of texts were produced that modern scholars tend to see as a sort of "canon of poetics": the *Dian lun* "Lun wen" 典論論文 ("Discourse on Literature" in *Normative Discourses*) of Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), the Wen fu 文賦 ("Rhapsody on Literature") of Lu Ji (261–303), the *Shipin*

詩品 (*Gradations of Poets*) of Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (d. 518), the *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*) of *Liu Xie* 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s), and the preface to Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501–531) *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*). In tracing the development of poetics during this period, the historian is inevitably drawn to summarizing the major ideas expressed in these texts. This is only to be expected, but one must also keep an eye on how the texts also express larger cultural and social tendencies. They are not simply autonomous philosophical statements. The discussion below will attempt to locate them within a series of broader cultural concerns.

Traditional Chinese literary criticism has often seen the fundamental issues of literature as manifested in a series of polarities. These poetics texts elaborated on a number of these: spontaneity versus self-consciousness, inadvertent revelation versus intentionality, sincerity versus craft. While traditionally the first element of each of these polarities has often been thought to be aesthetically and morally superior to the other, the categories have been stretched and reinterpreted to accommodate the development of literature over time. This can be seen, for example, in one of the most important interests in pre-Tang poetics, that of genre theory. By the end of the Han, the evolution of belletristic literature (often dictated by the social purposes of texts) had created a group of discrete literary genres, each said to possess a certain stylistic decorum (e.g., memorials, formal letters, inscriptions, eulogies, rhapsodies, and *shi*). But the increase of genres created a new issue for a poetics preoccupied with personality: if literature is supposed to be the inscription of the self, then what does it mean to write in different kinds of literature? Do genres have their own particular characteristics, and do those characteristics tend to have their equivalences in certain types of human personality? Does this explain why writers are good at writing in certain kinds of genres and not others?

This issue manifests itself compellingly in Cao Pi's *Dian lun* "Lun wen" (Owen 1992: 57–72). As a warlord (and later emperor of the Wei dynasty) and as the central figure in one of China's earliest literary salons, Cao took upon himself the task of judging and evaluating the literary talents of his circle. His essay makes two significant claims: first, he strongly argues for the significance of literature as a form of social practice that is of vital significance to the well-being of the state as well as a way of guaranteeing immortality for the individual talent; second, as emperor he declares himself the ideal person to carry out acts of literary judgment. This has a clear connection with what is perhaps the chief Confucian virtue a ruler can possess: the ability to choose good men for his administration. Cao Pi is thus the ruler as the "ideal critic"—the individual broad-minded and universally talented enough to judge all genres and all writers. The Prince as arbiter of literature would remain a significant idea throughout the medieval period, at least up through the prevalence of literary salon culture until the eighth century.

However, as suggested above, Cao Pi also introduces an interesting tension between the individual predilections of writers and the defining characteristics of genre. This would remain a continuing theme through works on poetics in the following centuries: in Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong*, for instance, which discusses literature in terms of general stylistic qualities as well as in terms of specific generic conventions. When the Liang dynasty crown prince Xiao Tong edited his monumental *Wen xuan*—an anthology that helped define cultural literacy through the Tang—he organized it by genre and wrote an extensive introduction, arguing for the evolution of genres out of basic social needs. His work presages the increasing importance of anthology-making as an act of self-conscious poetics (Yu 1990; Knechtges 2001; see also Chapters 19 and 20).

However, genre development also tended to provoke another response in intellectuals—the anxiety whether the proliferation of genres represented a falling away from an age of simplicity characterized by a self-expression unregulated by stylistic conventions. How could a literary text represent anything remotely authentic if it required an author to follow rules? This was exacerbated further by the greater attention to elaborate rhetoric and euphony beginning in the fifth century—an inevitable development in light of the relegation of literary production to the competitive and courtly atmosphere of literary salons governed by imperial princes. High-minded Confucian moralists would occasionally launch into archaist attacks on these "decadent" tendencies in literature, calling for a return to the less elegant qualities of earlier writing and condemning modern belles lettres as mere "insect carving"—a term coined by the Confucian philosopher and poet Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) and elaborated on by the anti-literature intellectual Pei Ziye 裴子野. Xiao Tong's *Wen xuan* preface demonstrates the ambivalence of a princely writer who wishes to affirm the superiority of the early writing while at the same time granting that evolution and increasing complexity are inevitable: "The crude cart is the prototype of the Grand Carriage, but does the Grand Carriage have the simplicity of the crude cart? Thick ice is formed by accumulated water, but accumulated water lacks the coldness of thick ice. Why is that? Generally it is because continuing the process increases ornament, changing the basic form adds intensity. Since things are like this, literature is appropriately so" (translation from Knechtges 1982; reformatted as prose). Xiao Tong sees not a moral decline in modern ornamentation, but rather simply an inevitable difference that results from natural process. However, this would prove to be one of the last eloquent defenses of literary ornamentation for its own sake.

Increasing preoccupation with genre theory and the development of genre in turn helped to create literary history, particularly of the *shi* genre. Through the establishment of literary salons and the emergence of the *shi* itself as the most representative art form of the educated elite, the need for a retrospective construction of a canon of admired poets of the past became an increasing obsession. The composition of *shi* up until the fifth century had been marked by disjunctions, false directions, and the continuing contributions of anonymous *yuefu* poetry to its storehouse of images and techniques (see Chapter 16). The literary salons, however, wished to rewrite the past as an organic, progressive development of elite male voices, each of them conscious of the "Great Preface's" injunction to be morally self-expressive, and each of them careful to balance that against an increasingly sophisticated poetic style. Stephen Owen has argued that this retrospective project was probably accompanied by textual revisions and "improvements" to early poetry (Owen 2006: 23–72). Since a good bit of our pre-Tang poetry comes from anthologies that came into being at this time—anthologies that often made quite explicit their own ideological projects—we must ourselves be skeptical of the narrative they told of *shi* history, a narrative that still has considerable influence on modern scholarship.

The seminal text for examination of the literary past as well as aesthetic/moral judgment of individual poets is Zhong Rong's *Shipin* (Yeh and Walls 1978; Wixted 1983; Owen 2014). Following an eloquent introduction in which he highlights the self-expressive ideals of the "Great Preface", Zhong Rong goes on to examine the works of dozens of poets whose works had survived since the Han dynasty. Each entry consists of a critical evaluation, usually marked by highly descriptive and affective terminology; a comment on poetic lineage, or what previous poet most influenced the poet's own works; and a classification of the poet into one of three categories, ranging from high to low. It has been pointed out that this last element bears a resemblance to the popularity of creating hierarchical ranks in evaluating the arts (derived originally from the ranking of bureaucratic appointments) that dates back at least to the Cao family and the Wei court. The other two characteristics of Zhong Rong's work would be important in the future as well: the vague, emotive language Zhong used to describe style (often accompanied by quotations of individual lines of verse to provide examples) would continue to be characteristic of critical discourse in the centuries to come, especially in the emergence of the *shihua* 詩話 ("Remarks on Poetry"), the main genre for literary criticism from the Song dynasty onward. Such language, like the critical pronouncements of an aesthete at a royal court in Europe, is meant to appeal to a highly educated elite, whose training in good taste gave them the capacity to appreciate such refinement. This would contribute to the general preference within Chinese poetics to aphoristic and evaluative comments exchanged between experts; manuals of poetic composition or works that tended toward the stylistically specific—though later common, especially among middle-class parvenus—would largely be dismissed as vulgar.

Zhong Rong's creation of poetic lineages would be significant as well, and helped to contribute to a sophisticated sense of poetic influence and traditional continuity. Zhong's own tastes tended to the conservative: for him, as with many later critics, the best literature had been produced in a simpler and morally more coherent past; stylistic elaboration and ornamentation tended to contribute to poetry's frivolity and decadence. In this sense, the descent of literary lineage from antiquity was often a descent in quality and worth; only the most talented poets in later ages could succeed in halting the tendency toward decline. Ideally, the best poets have the fewest lineage stages between themselves and the two great sources of Chinese verse: the *Shijing* and the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*, a first-century BCE anthology of southern poetry). There is some irony in this pose: Zhong Rong's own criticism was very much a product of the literary salons that had turned poetry into a self-conscious craft that could be studied and evaluated. The *Shipin* is constructed to conceal ideologically the degree to which the *shi* "tradition" was an invention of courtly poets, many of whom managed to convince themselves that they were writing in a period in which old literary virtues were falling away.

Genre theory and critical evaluation both firmly grew out of the historicizing (and often moral) principles first established in the "Great Preface"; they continued to locate poetry as a social art that participated in the public world. However, the pre-Tang period produced another important model for composition that is less overtly social and political, and that emerges most often in literary texts themselves and less often in works of poetics. This conceptualizes the act of writing as a sort of "spirit-journey." Such a model probably has its roots in descriptive passages from the shamanic or pseudo-shamanic poems of the *Chuci* (see Chapter 16 for a description of this collection). It was an assumed element of the religious traditions expressed in that anthology that the spirit could become free of its body and travel about the cosmos (an idea that may be found in the *Zhuangzi* as well); a number of its most important poems—the "Jiu ge" 九歌 ("Nine Songs"), "Li sao" 離騷 ("Encountering Sorrow"), and "Yuan you" 遠遊 ("Distant Wandering")—all contain such elaborate passages, using this belief as an opportunity to engage in elaborate imaginative flights of fancy. The idea that such travel could be seen as analogous to the act of imaginative writing emerges most clearly in Lu Ji's "Wen fu". In a particularly famous passage, he describes what happens when a writer picks up his writing brush:

> In the beginning he withdraws sight, suspends hearing,
> Deeply contemplates, seeks broadly,
> Letting his spirit race to the eight limits,
> Letting his mind roam ten thousand spans.
> Then, at the end, his feelings, first glimmering, become ever brighter;
> Things, clear and resplendent, reveal one another.
> (translation from Knechtges 1996: 215; see also Owen 1992: 73–181 for a detailed commentary)

This view emerges again in popular poetological texts from the Tang; it also becomes a motif in poetry itself, particularly in the works of Li Bo 李白 (701–762).

All of these different threads of poetics—genre theory, literary evolution, individual poetic style, and imagination—are woven together in the greatest product of pre-Tang poetics, Liu Xie's magisterial treatise *Wenxin diaolong*; the title ("Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon") is a deliberate refutation of the pejorative description of literature as "insect carving." This comprehensive examination of the literary arts, dating from the late fifth century, was written in a complex style close to the rhetorical balances and antithetical periods of formal parallel prose (*pianti wen* 駢體文). Unfortunately, this often makes it difficult to decipher for readers who struggle to find clear statements that articulate unequivocally the author's position on the nature and purpose of the literary field. In this sense, the text is as challenging as Zhong Rong's aphoristic judgments, but in a radically different way (the text seems to be more a product of a scholastic tradition, as opposed to Zhong Rong's more courtly orientation).

The *Wenxin diaolong* is organized into fifty chapters. First, five chapters address broad theoretical issues concerning the nature of literature. Second, twenty chapters engage the characteristics of individual genres. Here, Liu makes a distinction common at the time between belletristic genres (*wen* 文; covered in chapters 6–15) and more utilitarian, less ornamental genres (*bi* 筆; chapters 16–25). The next twenty-four chapters discuss various literary topics that combine philosophical speculation on the origins of the creative instinct in human beings, practical advice for the writer, and psychological analysis of the writing process itself. Here, he often touches on some of the imaginative, Daoist-influenced visions of creativity already discussed in Lu Ji's "Wen fu"; he is also likely to have been influenced by the new Buddhist theories of consciousness entering Chinese intellectual circles at the time. It is these twenty-four chapters that have most tended to draw the attention of modern scholars. In the last chapter, Liu Xie addresses his own reasons for writing, and suggests why literature itself is worthy of study.

As a systematic treatise on the literary art, *Wenxin diaolong* remains very much an anomaly in the Chinese tradition; later criticism (as I suggested above) turned more to the evocative and aphoristic, and no later writer seemed interested in producing anything so comprehensive. It only began to draw critical attention during the Qing dynasty, when it was rescued from its previous obscurity. Since then, probably more scholarship has been dedicated to it than any other work of traditional literary criticism (this has been due more recently to the Western influence on Chinese scholarship, which has created a desire to find the Chinese "equivalent" to similar comprehensive Western poetological texts). The essays in Cai 2001 provide a particularly sophisticated sample of modern approaches; see also Owen 1992: 183–298 for detailed translation and discussion of individual chapters. It should be emphasized, however, that its influence on the course of Chinese poetics was practically nil. Rather, it serves as a fascinating window into many of the assumptions concerning literature that were common among certain educated groups during the late fifth and sixth centuries.

TANG DYNASTY TRENDS

The explosion of the production of significant anthologies and literary critical texts over a little more than a century makes the late fifth and sixth centuries seem very much like a golden age of literary criticism. In fact, when one turns to the Tang dynasty expecting to see a continuation of this trend, one is sure to be disappointed. Self-conscious analysis of the literary tradition and discussion of literary historical issues are rare during a period that continues to be considered the great age of *shi* poetry production. Later critics who idealize the Tang would see this as symptomatic—Tang poets were too spontaneously great, too focused on writing great poems, to think much about their own position within the literary field. While this is an exaggeration, there may be some truth to it, at least through the first half of the dynasty. Poetry of the High Tang in particular seems to be self-confident and focused on current developments, and less concerned with defending its own literary position within the historical tradition. The Tang poetics texts we do have seem to be focused on issues of praxis—guides to composition for the beginning writer, with little concern for why one should write or the role that one's writing has in the moral and social order.

Moreover, these treatises were likely not considered important by the literati as a whole; as I mentioned above, there developed a prejudice against poetry manuals beginning in the Song dynasty as being only suitable for students and social parvenus. It is telling that the ones that do survive come to us almost exclusively through one source: the Japanese monk Kūkai 空海 (774–835). Kūkai was one of the most important figures in early Japanese history, famed both for his literary and religious accomplishments. Intensely interested in everything Chinese (as demonstrated by his own travels there, as well as his mastery of the contemporary spoken language), he made a compilation of currently available composition guides, adapting them into his own treatise, the *Bunkyō hifuron* 文鏡秘府論 (Ch. *Wenjing mifulun*; the title might be translated as "Discourses from the marvelous storehouse of the mirror of literature"—"mirror of literature" in this case referring to instructional guides on how to write well). Scholars have identified at least fourteen different works of practical Tang poetics that Kūkai excerpted for his own use, eleven of which have been subsequently lost in China. Such works were probably considered unworthy of preservation in Chinese intellectual circles; they have come down to us here only because another East Asian culture was eager to absorb practical lessons in classical Chinese literature. The work is divided into six chapters, five of which are concerned with technical matters of composition, especially poetry: tones and rhymes, couplet construction, and useful phrases and synonyms. Certain passages suggest a down-to-earth approach to poetry-writing, suitable for an audience trying to master the newly indispensable art; they include advice on how to focus one's attention on the subject of the poem, the benefits of getting enough sleep, why one should keep paper and writing brush on hand for sudden inspiration, etc. Probably the most significant of these texts are Jiaoran's 皎然 (ca. 720–ca. 798) *Shi shi* 詩式 (*Poetic Forms*; Williams 2013) and the *Shi ge* 詩格 (*Poetic Norms*), falsely attributed to the poet Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 690–ca. 756).

The tone of these popular manuals may have contributed to an increasing preoccupation in the ninth century with the need for poets to discover the perfect line or the perfect couplet; the act of writing is expressed as a collaborative effort between creative inspiration on the one hand and self-conscious poetic toil on the other. Anecdotes told about the poets Li He 李賀 (791–817) and Jia Dao 賈島 (779–843) suggest that it was not unusual for poets to hit upon striking fragments of verse, which they would then struggle to fit into poems at a later date. Such a model—which suggests the role of self-conscious craft and revision—was later seen to violate the "proper" ideals of verse-writing, with its belief in spontaneous moral self-expression (Owen 1996: 107–29). Not surprisingly, this view of composition seems more a product of a world where poetry was becoming a form of cultural capital, tied to issues of prestige and display. However, it was never articulated in any sort of self-conscious polemic that could serve as a counter-poetics to mainstream "canonical" views; in fact, it may have contributed to late imperial suspicions of the Late Tang era as representing a "decadent" time in poetic composition.

A number of poetry anthologies are preserved from the Tang, some of them in the Dunhuang manuscripts. Again, it is interesting to note that most of them anthologize contemporary poems and demonstrate current popular taste. One of the earliest, the

Heyue yingling ji 河嶽英靈集 (*Collection of the Finest Souls of Our Rivers and Alps*, ca 753; see Chapter 20), is particularly significant in demonstrating the eighth-century fashion for fluent, straightforward diction as well as marvelous and striking imagery. The editor, Yin Fan 殷璠, appends critical judgments on each of the included poets in the vague, modal language characteristic of the *Shipin*. Most of the Tang anthologies tend to collect graceful and euphonious examples of regulated verse, and probably represent what the average Tang reader considered to be standard poetic practice. None of them (save for one, the *Qiezhong ji*—see below) seem to have been edited with the purpose of making an ideological point on what literature should be. Most telling is the almost complete absence of Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770); his own significance in the poetic tradition would not be fully articulated until the Song dynasty.

Perhaps only one significant form of literary discourse continued to exert some presence in Tang poetics, and transcended issues of praxis; that was the persistent argument emerging in some circles that a "revival of antiquity" (*fu gu* 復古) was necessary if poetry was to maintain its significant moral status (see Chapter 26). *Fu gu* rhetoric continues as a major opposition to mainstream poetic developments, usually as a self-consciously moral voice. It is significant that a defense of the "modern" at the expense of the "old" was never reasonably articulated in Chinese poetics; there was no "battle between the ancients and the moderns" similar to the one that emerged in the writings of early modern European critics. At most, one can merely point out that "modern" poetic praxis in medieval China usually takes a theoretical position by deliberately ignoring theory.

In contrast, *fu gu* spokesmen arose throughout the Tang era. A number of intellectuals and statesmen in the course of the seventh century espoused an "authentic" voice of moral self-expression, thus criticizing the poetry produced by the courtly salons. Probably most important was Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (661–702), whose thirty-eight "Ganyu" 感遇 poems ("Moved by Things Encountered") were meant both as exercises in moral lament as well as explicit condemnation of courtly regulated style (Owen 1977: 184–223). A more thoroughly articulated *fu gu* position can be seen in the *Qiezhong ji* 篋中集 (*Collection from the Book- bin*, ca. 760), a short anthology of eighth-century poets who positioned themselves against what they perceived as the lack of moral seriousness in contemporary verse (Owen 1981: 225–46). Their leader, Yuan Jie 元結 (719–772), produced a small if significant body of poetry that self-consciously rejected modernist tendencies. The *Qiezhong ji* is probably most important in the way it anticipates the more substantial and lasting *fu gu* rhetoric of Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) and his literary circle (Owen 1975; Hartman 1986). Han Yu became famous for evolving a prose style (*guwen* 古文, "ancient-style prose") that attempted to imitate pre-imperial works (often in highly eccentric and original ways) and which would eventually in smoother form become the standard prose style for Song dynasty writers and those who came after. In essays such as "Yuan dao" 原道 ("Tracing the Origins of the Way"), he used deliberately harsh and unbalanced rhetoric to advance the cause of a "Confucian revival"—thus implicitly linking fashionable and elegant Tang prose style with contemporary cultural developments that he found decadent and immoral (especially Buddhism). In his poetry as well, Han Yu attempted to embody a *fu gu* aesthetic; he avoided regulated verse forms and wrote a style that bordered on the prosaic. In one of his most famous poems, "Tiao Zhang Ji" 調張籍 ("Teasing Zhang Ji"), Han links (perhaps for the first time) the names of Li Bo and Du Fu as the quintessentially representative examples of great poets; and his description of them emphasizes their capacity for self-expression (especially lament). It is important to note that at the time of writing, Li seems to have been regarded by most Chinese intellectuals as an entertaining but not particularly profound writer, and Du Fu was hardly read at all.

Han Yu's selection of these two also marks the beginning of a decisive shift in the traditional Chinese conception of self-expression and the "articulation of what is intently on the mind." Up until the ninth century, most writers acknowledged that self-expression occurred through carefully prescribed genres, manifesting itself through a language of accepted tropes and images. An individual poet did express himself, but that self-expression could be evaluated in terms of any one of a series of recognized emotive "positions" that had already been expressed by his poetic predecessors. In other words, sharing the poetic images and emotional stances of the past was not a mark of inauthenticity but of recognition and solidarity: individuals going through analogous phenomena over the centuries would express themselves similarly. Writers were aware that depending on the decorum of genre conventions could result in "inauthentic" expression; earlier *fu gu* discourse went out of its way to point this out. But there was no sense yet that poets had to be self-expressive in a completely original, unprecedented way, and that their own life course would produce a poetry that would be completely recognizable entirely as their own.

This began to change—first in comments found in Du Fu's verse, and then more fully and consistently with Han Yu. Self-expression was becoming autobiography, and for Han Yu, the two poets Li Bo and Du Fu were model cases for this paradigmatic shift. Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) carried this tendency further. His verse takes a diaristic turn; its sheer quantity, combined with its mild concerns with recording the events of everyday life, carried the autobiographical compulsion even further. These two tendencies—the desire to see poetic self-expression as representing a completely unique, nongeneric individual, as well as the belief that poetry can record everyday experience, no matter how seemingly trivial—would become guiding principles for Song dynasty poetics. It also tended to place emphasis on the relationship of author to reader, so that the (often subjective) response of the sensitive reader to the text became in itself a privileged form of criticism—thus giving rise to the often random assemblage of comments that constituted the *shihua* genre.

In summary, then, we can see that Chinese poetics never quite returned in a systematic way to some of the larger issues it addressed in the pre-Tang era: the psychological and ontological roots of genre, the metaphysical sources of the human imagination, and a detailed analysis of the relationship between belles lettres and the Chinese polity. Moreover, the triumph of *shi* as the most prestigious form of literary expression among the ruling gentry class by the end of the Tang (a status that it largely maintained until the end of the imperial period) tended to make *shihua* the dominant form of literary criticism for the centuries to come—though important criticism did flourish around the developing genres of song lyric (*ci* 詞), drama and fiction, and *guwen*. The texts that are now often thought to constitute the canon of traditional Chinese literary criticism after the Tang largely belong to just such collections of personal aphorisms: for example, Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 (1007–1072) *Liuyi shihua* 六一詩話 (*Poetry Remarks of Master Six Ones*); Yan Yu's 嚴羽 (fl. thirteenth cent.) Chan-inflected *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話 (*Canglang's Remarks on Poetry*); and Yuan Mei's 袁枚 (1716–1798) *Suiyuan shihua* 隨園詩話 (*Suiyuan's Remarks on Poetry*). Unsystematic they were, in comparison to the *Wenxin diaolong*; but they did bring *shi* criticism to its sophisticated heights, both in their discussion of the aesthetic qualities of individual poems and in their history-conscious analysis of the genre's development.

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CHAPTER 24

CONCEPTS OF AUTHORSHIP

WAI-YEE LI

THE LEXICON OF AUTHORSHIP

THE word most commonly used in early Chinese texts to refer to a person's act of creating an oral or written text is *zuo* 作. Its earlier form *zuo* 乍 in oracle-bone inscription represents an axe cutting down a tree or clearing away grass. In bronze inscriptions, the meanings of the graph encompass the casting of bronze vessels, the building of settlements, and the institution of rules and laws. In Warring States texts, the word that comes to mean "to create" or "to compose" is also used to describe the rise, the coming into being, or the flourishing of sages and tyrants. "Sages arise and the myriad things become visible" (alternatively, "Sages arise and they can be seen by the myriad things") 聖人作而萬物睹: this line from the *Zhou Yi* 周易 or *Yijing* 易經 (*Zhou Changes* or *Classic of Changes*) (1.15) asserts that with the sage's rise everything is illuminated; the significance of all things becomes comprehensible and observable. *Zuo* is thus the revelation or realization of latent meanings. By the Warring States, the creation or restoration of order is linked to textual creation. Thus Mengzi (Mencius 孟子, fourth century BCE): "In an era of decline, when the Way was in abeyance, deviant teachings and violent acts arose (*zuo*). There were instances of subjects murdering their rulers and of sons murdering their fathers. Confucius was fearful and thus created (*zuo*) *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*)" (*Mengzi* 3B.14). The same word *zuo* applies to both Confucius's (551?–479 BCE) creation of *Chunqiu* and the increasing prevalence of "deviant teachings and violent acts"—the former is supposed to counter the latter. At the highest level, then, textual creation is supposed to correct chaos and to bring order to the world. For all its momentousness, however, *zuo* may also rely on preexisting materials. For example, according to Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE), Confucius "followed historical records and thus created *Chunqiu*" 因史記, 作春秋 (*Shiji* 47.1943, 121.3115). Liu Shipei 劉師培 (1884–1919) argues that *zuo* can mean both "to begin" (*shi* 始) and "to fulfill a role or a function" (*wei* 為), both "to create" (*chuang* 創) and "to follow a model" (*yin* 因) (Liu 2006: 302–303).

If *zuo* implies authority and radical transformation, its lesser counterpart, *shu* 述, means reliance on antecedents and derivative power. In bronze inscriptions, one of the basic meanings of the graph (*shu*) is "to follow." In *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*), Confucius says of himself that, being enamored of ancient exemplars (*hao gu* 好古), he "transmits but does not create" (*shu er bu zuo* 述而不作). The Han historian Sima Qian claims in the final chapter of his magnum opus *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*) that his project is to "tell of events past, arranging the traditions that have been handed down. It cannot be called 'creation' " (*Shiji* 130.3299). The hierarchy of *shu* and *zuo* also comes up in "Yueji" 樂記 (*The Record of Music*) in *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*), and in its close variant, "Yueshu" 樂書 ("The Treatise on Music") in *Shiji*: "Hence those who know the essential meanings of ritual and music can create; those who understand the manifestations of ritual and music can transmit their meanings. Those who create are called sages; those who transmit are called the ones who can illuminate meanings." (*Liji* 19.669; *Shiji* 24.1189–1190). Both as subjective, modest protestation and as objective categorization, *shu* seems secondary. Yet once *zuo* is elevated as the prerogative of sages (or an endeavor so momentous that even the sage dares not claim to undertake it), *shu* can be seen as the prime method by which authors can convey their vision.

Both *shu* and *zuo* can endow textual endeavor with potentially moral, even cosmic significance, although ambiguities regarding the author's roles and functions may persist. The verb *fu* 賦 likewise marks utterance as either distinct or borrowed. To recite or chant poems (*song shi* 誦詩, *fu shi* 賦詩) in early texts almost always means performing the odes that came to be collected in *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*, ca. tenth century to sixth century BCE). Recorded instances of aristocrats who recite the odes to convey their political vision, policy recommendation, or political finesse are mostly found in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*, ca. fourth century BCE). *Zuozhuan* covers events spanning two hundred and fifty-five years (722–468 BCE), but most examples of *fu shi* (variously translated as reciting, chanting, or singing the odes) are found in narratives and speeches dated to the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. We will never know for sure whether statesmen actually recited odes in diplomatic gatherings in that period, but what seems certain is that the competence to articulate aspirations, negotiate differences, or struggle for supremacy through common allegiance to a shared tradition was enshrined as a cultural ideal by the time of *Zuozhuan*'s compilation (Li 2014a). On two or three occasions (Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016: 1:26–27 [Yin 3.7], 1:240–241 [Min 2.2], 1:490–491 [Wen 6.3]), *fu shi* is understood to mean "to compose an ode" in *Zuozhuan*, and that meaning came to prevail by the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE). Still, the older meaning of *fu shi*, while dispensing with "original authorial intention," implies that performance in a specific context is noteworthy "production of meaning" (Beecroft 2010: 52–56).

The term *zhu shu* 著書 (to write books) appears a number of times in Sima Qian's *Shiji*, which forges links between texts and authors in its accounts of poets and Masters. Related terms like *zhu* 著, *zhushu* 著述, *zhu wen* 著文, and *zhuan* 撰 begin to be commonly used by the first century. *Zuozhe* 作者, the common Chinese equivalent of the term "author," can also mean one who creates, acts, starts rules, or institutes systems.

Zuozhe and related terms like *zhuzuo zhe* 著作者 or *zhuzuo zhi ren* 著作之人 come to mean "one who creates texts" by the first century CE, notably in Wang Chong's 王充 (27–100) *Lun heng* 論衡 (*Balanced Discourses*) and Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*). It is also around this time that phrases like *zhu wen* 屬文 and *zhui wen* 綴文 gained currency. Usually used in praise of those gifted in composition, they refer to acts of combining what fits well or of stitching together appropriate components to fashion a harmonious whole. As with *shu, zuo*, and *fu* above, these are concepts that merge the old and the new, uses of the past and new models for the future.

SCENARIOS OF AUTHORSHIP

What comes to mind when we speak of the "quintessential author" in the Chinese tradition? Perhaps Du Fu's 杜甫 (712–770) praise of Li Bo's 李白 (701–762) poetic genius: "Your brush descends, rousing wind and rain,/Your poem completed: gods and spirits weep" 筆落驚風雨, 詩成泣鬼神 ("Sent to Li Bo, Twenty Rhymes" ["Ji Li Shi'er Bo ershi yun" 寄李十二白二十韻]). Here cosmic imagery elevates authorship. Perhaps the image of Du Fu mythologizing his poetry as he confronts crisis in the realm: "This many-colored brush once took on cosmic powers,/Now my white head, chanting and gazing, is sunk low in sorrow" 彩筆昔曾干氣象, 白頭吟望苦低垂 ("Autumn Meditations: Eight Poems," eighth poem ["Qiu xing ba shou" qi ba 秋興八首其八]). Such a stark juxtaposition of the numinous power of writing with an ironic sense of futility would fit notions of "genius" or "sincerity." The imagination of power is bracketed by self-questioning, and both expansiveness and negativity vindicate authorial presence and earnest self-revelation. If we associate authorship with self-conscious craft and the quest for originality, we may recall the relentless chants of Jia Dao 賈島 (779–843): "Two lines in three years:/With one chant, twin tears flow" 兩句三年得, 一吟雙淚流 ("Postscript on My Poem" ["Ti shi hou" 題詩後]). Or else the image of the poet Li He 李賀 (790?–816?) astride a sickly donkey, putting exquisitely crafted lines into a brocade sachet. Spitting his "heart's blood," he died early and was said to have been summoned to write for the gods as he lay dying. Such is the price of writing as the supreme act of creation, an idea encapsulated in Li He's line praising Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) and Huangfu Shi 皇甫湜 (777–835): "The brush makes good Creation; for Heaven no merit is due" 筆補造化天無功 ("The Tall Carriage Passes By" ["Gaoxuan guo" 高軒過]). The lore of Li He pits life against art and makes authorship seem dangerous even while endowing it with the aura of transcendence. Our frame of reference with such examples may well be the (unacknowledged) Romantic image of the author, such as that celebrated by Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) in his 1840 lecture, "The Hero as Man of Letters."

Such a Romantic image depends on self-conscious claims for "literature" and its creator, which are found no earlier than the third century CE. There are many other ways to imagine the relationship between texts and persons responsible for their formation. If textual authority ultimately depends on a prior act of creation (the inception of order and civilization), then an author is but the conduit for the revelation of fundamental patterns rather than the voice articulating difference. What types of historical circumstances or activities come under the rubric of authorship? For early Chinese texts that went through a period of oral transmission and circulation (e.g., the poems in *Shijing*, the speeches in *Shangshu* 尚書 [*Classic of Documents*], Music Bureau [*yuefu* 樂府] ballads), do we imagine the speaker (of songs, speeches, exegetical passages, etc.) or the recorder as the author? The inevitable changes and emendations introduced by transmitters obviously warrant the notion of collective authorship. We know little about the process whereby an oral tradition was transformed into written text. Did the skills requisite for writing (which in early China usually meant carving on bamboo strips) turn the scribe into a mere technician or craftsman, or did they confer a special authority on him?

As mentioned above, Confucius is said to have created *Chunqiu*, even though he supposedly describes himself as a transmitter rather than a creator. Sima Qian's formulation that Confucius "followed historical records" in creating *Chunqiu* suggests that here authorship can be understood as a kind of editorial labor. More generally, the unique vision of a transmitter or an editor may result in crucial textual changes, so much so that he can be considered an author. The line between author and editor can thus be nebulous. Very often it is not clear when a text is "closed" and textual boundaries are fixed: when does elaboration or emendation become interpolation? That question determines the line between "collective authorship" and "forgery" (*weizuo* 偽作). If we think of a text as an entity that continues to generate new meanings, then transmitters, editors, compilers, exegetes, and commentators are all participatory "authors." Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) is remembered as the "editor" of texts like *Shuo yuan* 說苑 (*Garden of Anecdotes*), *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (*Biographies of Notable Women*), and *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), but since we do not know the antecedent state of the materials included in these compilations, we cannot know whether his intervention (beyond classification and organization) makes him an author. Commentators as authors seem to be a simpler proposition: commentaries sometimes command enough autonomy and internal coherence to question the "parent text" (e.g., Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 [372–451] commentary on Chen Shou's 陳壽 [233–297] *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 [*History of the Three Kingdoms*]); sometimes the very conjoining of text and commentary may be open to contention (e.g., *Chunqiu* and *Zuozhuan* 左傳 [*Zuo Tradition*]). For many early texts, "commentators-authors" belong to oral traditions and cannot be individualized, despite the naming of specific authors in the "Monograph on Arts and Writings" ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志) in *Han shu*.

There are also social and political relationships that translate into authorship. The Zhou aristocrat whose prayers and invocations are cast in bronze vessels should be considered the force generating the text, even though the words might have been composed by another (Schwermann 2014: 30–57). Texts that claim a comprehensive inclusiveness often require the backing of political power. According to Sima Qian, after Lord Xinling 信陵君 (d. 243 BCE) achieved impressive victories over Qin, retainers of the various lords presented to him their military writings, to which he lent his name (*Shiji* 77.2384).

Wei Gongzi bingfa 魏公子兵法 (*The Wei noble son's [Lord Xinling] Art of War*), now lost, must have included a wide range of writings on warfare. When Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (ca. 291–235 BCE) was prime minister in Qin, he presided over his retainers' compilation of *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*). The creation of *Lüshi chunqiu* was a public drama made possible by Lü Buwei's power and position. The work purports "to encompass the myriad things of heaven and earth, events past and present" 備天下萬物古今之事. As told in Lü Buwei's biography in *Shiji, Lüshi chunqiu* was set forth at the city gate of Xianyang. A thousand pieces of gold, placed above it, were promised as reward to anyone who could add or remove one word (*Shiji* 85.2510). Theoretically, the challenge also implies that any competent reader who corrects the text can participate in its formation. At the same time, its presumably unchallengeable perfection renders it an emblem of Lü Buwei's power as well as his ultimate control over the text.

Does presiding over collective projects as commissioner or patron confer the mantle of authorship? We do not know how *Lüshi chunqiu* tallies with Lü's personal views, but the text Liu An 劉安 (ca. 179–122 BCE), King of Huainan, submitted to Emperor Wu in 139 BCE—what comes to be known as *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (*Master Huainan*)—is supposed to have borne Liu An's intellectual imprint, although it was compiled by his retainers. Both Lü Buwei and Liu An ended up falling afoul of their respective rulers. The political clout that facilitated their projects also ended up incurring suspicion. But textual endeavor can also deflect political pressure. Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444), cousin of Emperor Wen of Song 宋文帝 (Liu Yilong 劉義隆, r. 423–453), presided over the creation of *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*, ca. 430). According to Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), Liu Yiqing turned to literary patronage because of "difficulties and perils in the ways of the world" 世路艱難 (*Song shu* 51.1477). Liu Yiqing as overseer of the compilation also shares authorial responsibility for its "aesthetic ideology," inasmuch as its emphasis on beauty, wit, and perception is an implicit response to the dangers of political life (Li 2004).

TEXTS AND AUTHORS

The scenarios of authorship enumerated above show how different types of texts and textual histories define our notions of the author. Oral transmission and circulation, composite texts, layered texts (i.e., texts with different layers and sources formed over a long period of accretion), and large-scale compilations reflecting the endeavor of a group all problematize the idea of the individual author. Yet names of individual authors get attached to texts, no matter how complex their history of formation. In that sense, texts generate authors, and images of authors (as distinct from historical actors) can produce texts. Authors get attached to texts by conferring authority and coherence on them. Commentators can identify an author for a text by way of constructing a specific historical context for its production. Stories about lives (especially those of well-known historical personages) encourage the production of texts composed in their voices. The contours of a life can be built on a corpus of writings, and that life story is then used to explain the writings in a kind of hermeneutic circle.

On the simplest level, attribution to or invention of an author is one way to define or control the meaning of a text. Thus legendary sage kings or Confucius are said to have composed the Classics, which require such an association if they are to be upheld as the repository of the greatest wisdom on moral, ritual, political, and cosmological matters. By the early Han, Confucius's authority is increasingly heightened and he comes to be associated with the Classics as author, editor, or transmitter. For example, in addition to composing or editing *Chunqiu*, he is said to have pared down 3,000 odes to the 305 in the received text of *Shijing* (*Shiji* 47.1936). Confucius is also credited with creating *Xiaojing* 孝經 (*Classic of Filial Piety*) (*Han shu* 30.1719) and part of *Yijing* (*Han shu* 30.1704, 1706) (see also Chapter 12). By a similar logic, Zuo Qiuming as putative author of *Zuozhuan* grants an aura of orthodoxy to the text, because Zuo, as the like-minded associate of Confucius, is said to share "the same inclinations and aversions as the sage," in the words of Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE), a champion of *Zuozhuan* and architect of its filiation to *Chunqiu* (*Han shu* 36.1967). The attempts of Han scholars like Liu Xiang, Liu Xin, and Ban Gu to preserve, collate, classify, and explain received texts often involve naming authors, who thus serve to impose textual order by facilitating the mapping of genealogies and connections.

In some cases, attribution to or invention of authors is a function of exegesis, as interpretation hinges on specific contexts of composition. *Lienü zhuan, Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (*Han Tradition of the Classic of Poetry: A Supplement*), and many of the prefaces in *Maoshi* 毛詩 (*Mao Tradition of the Classic of Poetry*) fall into this category. In *Maoshi*, these hypothetical authors are often categorical (e.g., a consort hoping for worthy advisors for the king, a soldier longing for home, an official mourning political disorder, people of the domain [*guoren* 國人] expressing political judgments, etc.). Some are specific—for example, the wife of Lord Mu of Xu 許穆夫人 is said to have composed "Gallop" ("Zaichi" 載馳, *Maoshi* 54) in 660 BCE to lament the devastation of her natal domain, Wei, by Di invaders. The poem yields details that become the narrative of her story—galloping horses are taking her in her carriage to offer condolence to the new Wei ruler (her brother). Xu officials blame her for the trip, and a couple of stanzas describe her defiance of men who disapprove of her. She is to "seek redress at a great domain" 控于大邦—i.e., urge Qi to intervene on Wei's behalf (which is what transpires, according to *Zuozhuan*). There are enough details in the poem to suggest her story, and *Zuozhuan, Maoshi, Lienü zhuan*, as well as many modern commentaries agree on her authorship, although the poem may be about her instead of by her and the details of her story might have been elaborated on the basis of the poem. There are more controversial examples: for example, "Sun and Moon" ("Ri yue" 日月, *Maoshi* 29) describes the rancor and sorrow of a female speaker, which *Maoshi* identifies as Zhuang Jiang of Wei 衛莊姜 (wife of Lord Zhuang of Wei, r. 757–735 BCE). This merges the piteous image of an abandoned woman with political lamentation, but there is little internal evidence.

Famous historical personages invite impersonation and works written in their names. Traditionally this is classified as "forgery," although the issue may be less the intent to deceive than imaginative reenactment. The Han general Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BCE), whose severely outnumbered army was stranded in Xiongnu territories, was defeated and surrendered to the Xiongnu. Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) ordered Li Ling's entire family executed, and Li Ling became a turncoat and stayed on among the Xiongnu. Su Wu 蘇武 (140–60 BCE) was a Han envoy who refused to defect despite years of detainment in Xiongnu territories and returned to Han China in his old age. Ban Gu depicts three meetings between Li Ling and Su Wu wherein they justify their respective choices (*Han shu* 54.2465–2466). This is not a simple story of loss of integrity versus staunch loyalty; Li Ling had legitimate grudges against the emperor. The complex issues surrounding loyalty and friendship inspired "The Letter in Response to Su Wu" ("Da Su Wu shu" 答蘇武書), supposedly by Li Ling but now widely accepted as literary impersonation. The poems attributed to Li and Su in *Wen xuan* (30.1352–1355) represent a different kind of marriage—here poems about friendship (or love) and separation are almost arbitrarily (inasmuch as the details do not correspond to accounts of Li and Su) pegged to the stirring parting of the two famous men.

One of most interesting examples of the mutual generation of text and author is Qu Yuan (ca. 340–278 BCE) and many of the pieces in *Chuci* (*Verses of Chu*). Sima Qian's account of Qu Yuan (*Shiji* 84) is constructed from poems bearing his name; at the same time, the account becomes a kind of prose preface to the quoted poems: the boundary between life and literature is effaced as these poems debate crucial choices and define fateful moments. Thus "The Fisherman" ("Yufu" 漁父) argues about engagement versus detachment, while "Embracing Sand" ("Huai sha" 懷沙) restates Qu Yuan's anguish and decision to die rather than accept compromise. The central discursive passage in *Shiji* 84 evaluates Qu Yuan through "Encountering Sorrow" ("Li sao" 離騷), while "The Fisherman" and "Embracing Sand" are quoted as explanations for his decision to refuse compromise and to choose suicide. Qu Yuan's encounter with the fisherman who urges Daoist detachment and reconciliation in "The Fisherman" is told as a historical event motivating Qu Yuan's final testament. The received text of "The Fisherman" concludes with the fisherman's final words on equanimity. Sima Qian omits this final Daoist message, linking Qu Yuan's refusal to compromise with what is believed to be his last poem: "He thereupon (*nai* 乃) composed 'Embracing Sand' " (*Shiji* 84.2486). In its turn, "Embracing Sand" becomes the preamble to his suicide (*Shiji* 84.2490). Wang Yi (fl. 130–140) further elaborates this reasoning in his exegesis of *Chuci* (see also Chapter 9). He recognizes the "Jiuge" 九歌 ("Nine Songs") (probably the oldest layer of *Chuci*) as ritual communication between the poetic speaker and a host of gods and spirits. By inventing a scenario whereby the exiled Qu Yuan comes upon these songs and transforms them into his own lamentations, Wang Yi fashions the analogy between political frustrations and the failed quest for union with a deity that becomes the key for the allegorical interpretation of the entire *Chuci* corpus.

Authorial Presence

The first-person pronoun recurs in the *Chuci* corpus. By Harbsmeier's count, varieties of the first-person pronoun (*wo* 我, *wu* 吾, *yu* 余, *zhen* 朕, *yu* 予) appear seventy-four times through the 374 lines of "Encountering Sorrow" (Harbsmeier 1999: 220). The lyrical "I" tells us his birth and names, yearnings and sorrows. We may be unsure how to interpret his far-flung journeys or his quest for the goddess, we may question whether this "I" should be identified as the putative author Qu Yuan, but we have little doubt that the voice lamenting political frustrations or the range of emotions expressed are to be understood as the experience and imagination of an individual author. However, this sense of individuation is not an inevitable corollary of the pronoun. The first-person pronoun can be understood as plural or impersonal, as arguably in the case of *Laozi* (Harbsmeier 1999: 222–32). It may also evoke a persona or an ideal type. The use of the first-person pronoun in *Shijing* or early *yuefu* poetry sometimes does not diminish our impression of a "generic" situation (e.g., parting from friends or family, longing for an absent beloved, celebrating a wedding, lamenting the hardships of battles) yielding categorical, though often intense, emotions. Is it because these works are now usually listed as "anonymous"? Anonymity, besides being a marker of antiquity (Owen 2006: 216), can also confer the aura of universality or "folk origins." Perhaps "collective authorship" can be imagined as general situations and sentiments being continually particularized and modified with acts of utterance.

If the first-person pronoun can be a promising but elusive pointer to authorial presence, the represented author in a text likewise encompasses a range of possibilities. In *Shijing*, the occasion and motive for composition is sometimes explicitly stated, and in a few cases (*Maoshi* 191, 200, 259, 260) this involves naming the person who "composed" (*zuo*) the ode. But questions remain. For example, *zuo* may mean "to sing" or "to perform." Even if it means "to compose," the lines "Jifu composed an ode/harmonious as clear breeze" 吉甫作誦, 穆如清風 in "Myriad People" ("Zhengmin" 烝民, *Maoshi* 260) may not be self-referential (i.e., Jifu's composition can be an event described in the poem rather than a statement of authorship). In *Chuci*, the naming of Qu Yuan invokes the persona rather than the represented author (e.g., "Divining an Abode" ["Bu ju" 卜居], "The Fisherman"). In Masters Literature, the implied or explicit presence of the Master in what Denecke terms "scenes of instruction" or "scenes of persuasion" (Denecke 2010: 90–127, 195–205) shapes the notion of philosophical coherence and also defines the idea of authorship. In the *Analects*, for example, the represented speech acts of Confucius in pedagogical exchanges create the image of Confucius as the implied "author." Analogous though longer passages in *Mencius* that show Mencius engaging in disputation and persuasion likewise establish his agency and authority, and Sima Qian readily confers authorship on him (*Shiji* 74.2343), although his role as implied author calls for greater interpretive skills to overcome opacity or indirectness. By contrast, Mozi as a represented speaker in the text that comes to bear his name operates as a generator of discourse whose context is set forth simply rather than dramatized. Zhuangzi is not just the speaker or the interlocutor but also the focus of stories and parables in *Zhuangzi*, and fictionalization imbues authorship with a distinct sense of playful distance and deliberate paradox. If ironic self-negation renders the implied author both more compelling and more elusive, the sense of direct address in first-person treatises in *Xunzi* links authority to impersonality despite intermittent representation of Xunzi as persuader in the text (Denecke 2010: 180–206). For *Han Feizi*, even though "scribal intention" (Harbsmeier 1999: 242) is clearly marked, in part because of Han Fei's implied self-designation as the "new sage" (*xinsheng* 新聖, *Han Feizi* 49.1040), we are offered only glimpses of an author so keenly interested in psychological manipulation that he escapes easy definition.

Our sense of authorial presence is determined by generic and cultural expectations. Thus, with the examples of Masters Literature mentioned above, the Masters' teachings are bound up with rhetorical choices that determine ways of imagining the implied author. The degree and nature of their filiation to or rejection of ancient exemplars define their representation as transmitters or instigators of new beginnings. In longer works that involve editing and compiling sources, the author sometimes marks his presence by articulating judgment on his materials. Such is the tradition established by Sima Qian with the "Grand Scribe's comments" 太史公曰 that conclude most chapters in *Shiji*, a pattern followed in later dynastic histories and some informal narratives. Sima Qian also devotes his "Self-Account" ("Zixu" 自序), the final chapter (130) of *Shiji*, to a programmatic statement of "why I write." This harks back to accounts of intellectual compass in Masters Literature from about the third century BCE, such as the last chapter (21) in *Huainanzi*, "Summary of Main Points" ("Yaolüe" 要略) or chapter 61, "Account of Intent" ("Xu yi" 序意) in *Lüshi chunqiu*. Sima Qian's account in *Shiji* differs from these antecedents in being more personal. His model of explaining authorial intention is followed (with varying degree of self-revelation) by, among others, Ban Gu in *Han shu*, Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) in *Fayan* 法言 (*Model Sayings*), Wang Chong 王充 (27–100) in *Lun heng* 論衡 (*Balanced Discourses*), Wang Fu 王符 (second century) in *Qianfu lun* 潛夫論 (*Discourses of a Hidden Man*), Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) in *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (*Master Embracing Simplicity*), Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 460–520s) in *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*), Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–ca. 591) in *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 (*Family Instructions for the Yan Clan*), and Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) in *Shitong* 史通 (*A Comprehensive Study of Historical Writings*).

If this kind of magnum opus calls for a deliberate authorial statement, the more ubiquitous references to the contexts of composition are often embedded in titles and prefaces for poetry and prose. One may regard such contexts as markers of authorship. On a more probing level, autobiographical ruminations, especially in poetry, often imply an author's reflections on the circumstances and emotions that shape his writing—for example, Xi Kang's 嵇康 (or Ji Kang, ca. 223–ca. 262) "Poem of Hidden Rancor" ("Youfen shi" 幽憤詩) suggests that grievance motivates his writing, Zuo Si's 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305) "Eight Poems on History" ("Yongshi bashou" 詠史八首) merges authorial ambition with historical judgments, Luo Binwang's 駱賓王 (ca. 619–684?) "Bygone

Days" ("Chouxi pian" 疇昔篇) looks back on how literary talent sustains him through frustrations and disappointments, Du Fu's 杜甫 "Journey in My Prime" ("Zhuangyou" 壯遊) retraces youthful aspirations that have shaped the mature poet, and Li Shangyin's 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858) "Lord Anping" ("Anping gong shi" 安平公詩) gives us glimpses of authorial self-consciousness as he praises his patron for nurturing his talent.

More generally, is the idea of the author genre-bound? A collection (*ji* 集) may represent only one aspect of an author's sensibility (see also Chapter 15); its chronological arrangement would emphasize the link between corpus and biography (see also Chapter 16). How does the author's "voice" appear differently in divination text, prayers, anecdotes, philosophical treatises, historical writings, poetry, prose, or fantastic tales? Across many genres, the valorization of indirectness (*yinyue* 隱約) and subtle words (*weiyan* 微言) draws attention to hidden authorial intention. Various generic prescriptions and historical circumstances call for the author to affect impersonality, assume authority, hide behind masks, emphasize reticence, or speak directly. With poetry there is sometimes an illusion of transparency; even "speaking in the voice of another" (*dai yan* 代言) may seem to invite ready decoding.

What we now call fiction or anecdotes bear close formal connections with historical narrative; both imply a kind of impersonal authority. If the author puts himself into the account, it is often by way of explaining his role in its transmission. In Li Gongzuo's 李公佐 (ninth century) "Xie Xiao'e's Story" ("Xie Xiao'e zhuan" 謝小娥傳), for example, Li's decipherment of dream riddles allows Xie Xiao'e to identify the murderers of her father and husband, but Li is more intent on presenting himself as the transmitter and interpreter of the story of Xie's remarkable vengeance. Even in a story with autobiographical echoes, the author may choose to insert himself as an onlooker with a merely tangential connection to the events depicted, as is the case of Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779–831) "Yingying's Story" ("Yingying zhuan" 鶯鶯傳), in which "Yuan Zhen" in the story writes a poem on the love affair between Yingying and Zhang, widely recognized as Yuan's alter ego.

Mengzi describes how the ideal interpreter of the *Odes* "uses his mind to meet the intent of the author" 以意逆志. How does the author encode the reader or appeal to the ideal communication of authorial intent to the perceptive reader? An actual or imaginary historical audience shapes some genres, such as the proclamations included in *Shangshu*. The "scenes of instruction" or "scenes of persuasion" mentioned above depict the disciple or the ruler as audience. Poetic expositions, such as Mei Sheng's 枚乘 (d. 140 BCE) "Seven Stimuli" ("Qi fa" 七發) or Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE) "Rhapsody on the Shanglin Park" ("Shanglin fu"上林賦), use the instruction (via seduction) of the represented audience to realize their supposed remonstrative intention. The represented interlocutor also allows an author to reflect on the perils of misunderstanding, as in Dongfang Shuo's 東方朔 (161–193 BCE) "Response to the Guest's Critique" ("Da ke nan" 答客難), Yang Xiong's "Staving off Mockery" ("Jie chao" 解嘲), and Ban Gu's "Answer to the Guest's Teasing" ("Da bin xi" 答賓戲). All three authorial responses ponder the limits of (direct) expression imposed by state power in the age of unified empire.

Impersonal pronouncement or treatises purport to address a more general public. Occasional poetry and prose often name the addressee and allude to the networks of friendship and patronage involved, reminding us of the social and political functions they may fulfill. In contrast to such engagement with the historical moment of creation, the pose of speaking to posterity elevates the author as one who rises above petty calculations and thinks in terms of perennially pertinent values. We see this reasoning in Sima Qian's letter to Ren An, Yang Xiong's equanimity in response to Liu Xin's observation that Yang's contemporaries would only use his writings "to cover pots of bean paste" (*Han shu* 87B.3585), or Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303–361) ruminations on how posterity's judgment of his present composition compares to his own lamentations of bygone glory ("Preface to *Orchid Pavilion Collection*" [*Lanting ji* xu 蘭亭集序]) (see also Chapter 27).

Authorial Functions

Why do we need authors? If we think of this question not so much in terms of the historical agents who produce texts as of the process whereby we ascribe or discuss authorship, then we can see authorship as "the property of a text" (Owen 2006: 216). Schwermann and Steineck (2014: 4) sum up authorial functions as "a three-dimensional matrix of origination, responsibility (including authority), and interpretation." These three are obviously intertwined. The question of origination pits authorship against other acts of creation. Debates on the origins of culture as autochthonous manifestation or deliberate artifice (Puett 2001) impinge on textual creation. It seems that the paradigm of the sage as creator of culture extends to his role as creator of texts; but the latter scenario is invoked to emphasize textual authority rather than to debate textual origination. The passages implying correspondences among "the pattern of Heaven" (*tianwen* 天文), "the pattern of earth" (*dili* 地理), and "the pattern of humans" (*renwen* 人文) observed by the sage in *Zhou Yi* (7.147) suggests the author's role as decipherer and mediator of cosmic principles. There is no inspirational tradition that presents the poet as the mouthpiece or messenger of the Muse, even though there are examples of the poetic speaker taking up the voice of a god or a spirit (e.g., the "Nine Songs" in *Chuci*). If anything, such a setup, possibly embedded in a context of ritual performance, is linked to the later poetic convention of "speaking on behalf of another." Author as origination valorizes genius and subjective construction, although more often than not authors emphasize their role as inheritors and transmitters of tradition through adept mastery of its lessons. The expressive-affective dimension of poetic creation, first articulated in the Mao Preface and later linked to nature and experience in Zhong Rong's 鍾嶸 (ca. 468–518) *Shipin* 詩品 (*Gradations of Poets*), emphasizes the author as responder to external stimuli; origination as affective response situates the author in a generative process.

To postulate an author is to define the premises of interpretation. Earlier, we mentioned Mengzi's dictum on how the ideal interpreter of *Shijing* "uses his mind to meet the intent [of the author]." The fact that the context of that remark is Mengzi's critique of his interlocutor's wrong interpretation exemplifies how "authorial intention" is used to uphold one valid interpretation and to exclude other readings. The purported retrieval of the author's state of mind as the goal of interpretation represses other possible readings, hence Foucault's argument that the author is a "principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning" (Foucault 2000: 221). But exclusion is also an enabling act; literary works become richer and more culturally significant once the actual or imaginary details of a life can be attached to them. "Without the contextualizing cultural narrative, replete with authors, many poetic texts become unreadable" (Owen 2006: 219).

The ascription of authorship facilitates readability in various ways. Conversely, uncertain authorship or multiple attributions can open up different interpretive possibilities. In cases of (likely) literary impersonation, as with the "Poem of Grief and Rancor" ("Beifen shi" 悲憤詩) and "Eighteen Beats of the Barbarian Fife" ("Hujia shiba pai" 胡笳十八拍) attributed to Cai Yan 蔡琰 (ca. 170–ca. 215), imagining and identifying with the experience of a historical character becomes the impetus of poetic creation. The historical Cai Yan was abducted and detained by the Xiongnu and was forced to leave her half-Xiongnu children behind when she was ransomed. The poets who choose to speak in her voice find this story of exile, displacement, and separation from one's kin stirring and dramatic enough to warrant impersonation. (In that sense, impersonation is an act of creation based on the primacy of biographically determined interpretation.) Interpreting impersonation, once the historical authenticity of authorship is disproved, is about evaluating how a life story functions to give shape to ideas and sentiments. If the identity of the impersonator is known, interpretation sometimes becomes a question of mapping the life and views of the impersonator against those of the impersonated. In other situations, the author functions to particularize what may otherwise seem generic. In the "Song of White Hair" ("Baitou yin" 白頭吟), a woman laments her mate's fickleness; once attached to the name of Zhuo Wenjun (second century BCE), it becomes part of a dramatic story of seduction and abandonment, and she emerges as the female counterpart of the male poet (her husband Sima Xiangru) who is said to have moved the emperor to renew his regard for a neglected consort through a rhapsody.

There are also examples whereby an author's circumstances render a text much more compelling. "Brown Sparrow in Wild Fields: A Ballad" ("Yetian huangque xing" 野田黃雀行) by Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) tells how a youth frees a sparrow ensnared in a net. Lines three and four of the ballad refer to the importance of having friends with the wherewithal to help ("a sharp sword in hand"). Literary historians read in this poem the pathos of Cao Zhi's helplessness when faced with his friend Ding Yi's 丁儀 (d. 220) persecution and execution. That biographical frame "becomes virtually part of the text" (Owen 2006: 259). The meticulous textual scholar may question the attribution of the ballad to Cao Zhi, but that particular author-centered reading takes on a life of its own as part of cultural and literary history, coloring our understanding of notions of friendship, Cao Zhi's mental state, or the use of the ensnared yellow bird as literary allusion. Likewise, Zhuo Wenjun and Cai Yan might not have been the historical agents producing the texts bearing their names, but their presumed authorship becomes part of a larger historical narrative of women's writings. Zhuo becomes the voice of a woman protesting abandonment, while Cai Yan is remembered as the prototype of a woman poet whose account of personal suffering also chronicles her tumultuous times. Later poets appeal to these examples to argue how misfortunes and political disorder authenticate or legitimize women's writings (Li 2014b: 18–19, 158–159).

Historical Trajectory

We imagine authorship as something increasingly individualistic and self-conscious. How valid is this historical trajectory? What are the decisive moments in this arc? How is it connected to other developments in cultural and intellectual history? As mentioned above, some of the earliest instances of "marked authors" are found in *Shijing*. The eunuch Meng Zi explains that he composed (or performed) his song to excoriate slanderers and urges "all noble men" to listen to his plaint (*Maoshi* 200). The Zhou dignitary Yin Jifu addresses his poems of praise and exhortation to two other Zhou nobles, Shen Bo and Zhong Shanfu (*Maoshi* 259, 260). Beecroft suggests that the comparative richness of historical records in Yin Jifu's period (the reign of King Xuan of Zhou [r. 827–782 BCE]) implies that self-identification as author may be rooted in a more general self-consciousness about the necessity of keeping records or marking one's place in the memory of future generations (Beecroft 2014: 95). Another possible explanation is that the sense of conscious exaggeration of Zhou greatness in the poems linked to King Xuan's reign might also have resulted in a new focus on their creators.

Earlier, we discussed how the Master, as represented teacher or persuader, direct speaker of arguments, or character in stories and fictional exchanges, defines a range of possibilities for authorial presence in Masters Literature. Authorship in this case is perhaps best imagined as a kind of placeholder, a name that serves as a magnet for clusters of ideas. The fact that some works of Masters Literature are divided into "Inner Chapters" (*neipian* 內篇), "Outer Chapters" (*waipian* 外篇), and "Miscellaneous Chapters" (*zapian* 雜篇) indicates awareness that materials of divergent provenance define ideas at various remove from the presumed source of inspiration. The Master as author lends clarity to the contours of thriving intellectual debates from the mid to the late Warring States period (ca. fifth to third century BCE). Human agency in making texts and making culture is a natural key concern of Masters Literature, inasmuch as it explores the social, political, intellectual, and psychological aspects of being human. It is therefore not surprising that *Mengzi*, which delves into mental processes with metaphors of depth and complexity, should tackle authorial intention while discussing the interpretation of odes from *Shijing*, in contradistinction to the preoccupation with the uses and functions of the *Shijing* poems in other Warring States writings.

The most iconic author figure from early China is Qu Yuan. His story of calumny, exile, and suicide, in tandem with the intense emotions and subjective projection in the works attributed to him, give authorship pathos and the force of necessity. As mentioned above, the earliest extant account of Qu Yuan's life and authorship is found in

Sima Qian's *Shiji*. Indeed, our sense of the Masters as authors also owes much to *Shiji*, whose biographical format in many chapters often links lives to writings through specific perspectives (Kern 2015). *Shiji* represents a decisive moment for conceptualizing authorship in other ways. It offers a vision of the author as the amalgam of tradition and individual talent. Much of *Shiji* can be traced to antecedent sources, yet the arrangement and sometimes transformation of these materials define a distinctive vision. In the final chapter of *Shiji*, Sima Qian claims to be merely arranging received traditions by way of disclaiming any ambition to imitate Confucius's creation of *Chunqiu*, yet the same chapter yields plenty of clues that Sima Qian does aspire to the moral and cultural authority of *Chunqiu*. His ambiguous disclaimer may be no more than an attempt to forestall suspicion of subversion (*Chunqiu* is allegedly critical of those wielding power) or to distance himself from the rigid early Han application of rules derived from *Chunqiu* (Li 1994). More generally, Sima Qian seems to be upholding a model of authorship that combines compilation with creation. He tells us in his comments that he "put aside the writings and sighed" (*Shiji* 14.509. 74.2343, 121.3115) and that by reading the writings of Confucius and Qu Yuan he could imagine the kind of men they were (*Shiji* 47.1947, 84.2503). His role as perceptive and empathetic reader is instrumental for constructing a framework that comprehensively includes different sources even while he establishes "a tradition of his own" 一家之言 (*Shiji* 1330.3119; *Han shu* 62.2735).

In a key passage in the final chapter of *Shiji*, Sima Qian presents himself as the latest example in a "genealogy of suffering authors" (Durrant 2016: 42–43). The list includes King Wen of Zhou, Confucius, Qu Yuan, Zuo Qiuming, Lü Buwei, Han Feizi, and the authors of poems in *Shijing*. He concludes: "In all cases these men were filled with pent-up emotions because their way was blocked. Consequently, they narrated past events while thinking of the ones to come" (*Shiji* 130.3300). According to this logic, there is a vital, almost inevitable connection between failure and writing, and suffering confirms the moral, intellectual, and aesthetic authority of the author. "Venting frustration" (*fa fen* 發憤) in this context involves inevitable mediation and self-reflexivity. The author puts himself in time, thinking of the burden of the past and the meaning of his creation for future generations. The same passage on suffering authors appears (with minor variations) in Sima Qian's letter to Ren An, which is included in *Han shu* and *Wen xuan*. In both cases, the list is positioned as the conclusion of extended ruminations and arguments on the reasons for writing, yet the varying contexts imbue the respective passages with different implications.

In the final chapter of *Shiji*, the idea that creativity is rooted in rancor and discontent is balanced with the notion of authorship as assimilation into a great tradition and systems of authority—these include intertwining factors such as the dignity of the office of "Grand Scribe," filial piety, the cogency of an all-encompassing worldview, and the model of Confucius and *Chunqiu*. As noted above, the summary of authorial intent and overall structure in this ultimate chapter sets up the model imitated in many later works of ambitious scope. Authorship is more personalized in the letter to Ren An. Here the genealogy of suffering authors is the culmination of different strands of argument about words and recognition—the choice of speaking or not speaking, the conditions of utterance and silence, and how both can be recognized or misunderstood. Compared to the final chapter of *Shiji*, its tone is much more emotional as it provides details regarding Sima Qian's earnest desire to serve the emperor and his ill-fated attempt to defend the general Li Ling, which resulted in the punishment of castration. In the letter, authorship is about self-definition and self-revelation. The markers of negativity (*kongwen* 空文 [futile words], *wuneng zhi ci* 無能之辭 [powerless phrases], *kuanghuo* 狂惑 [wild and delusional opinions]) paradoxically signify plenitude, legitimation, and elevation. It is precisely frustration and powerlessness that facilitate the clarity and integrity of judgment and define authorship as the substitute for successful service and active participation in the polity, as well as the completion of an unfulfilled life or a mutilated body (Li 2016).

Some scholars have questioned the authenticity of the letter to Ren An (Durrant et al. 2016). Irrespective of our take on authorship or literary impersonation, the fact remains that the articulation of authorship in Chinese literary thought echoes the letter in countless iterations. This is especially true if we go beyond "venting frustration" to include other modes of expressing strong emotions or asserting individual difference and articulating criticism of society and polity. The partially overlapping but ultimately very different agenda in *Shiji* 130 sometimes provides a necessary foil. The urgency of emotional expression is linked, sometimes uneasily, to the avowal of moral judgment and grand claims of continuing the great tradition. In the Mao Preface to *Shijing*, for example, poetry is said to be the product of affective response and inevitable expression. Images of involuntary song and dance suggest compulsion and intensity; at the same time, the Mao Preface reiterates the sociopolitical functions of poetry as an instrument of governance and moral transformation. Whether one may construe possible influence or derivation when it comes to the Mao preface and *Shiji* 130 or the letter to Ren An is a moot point. They should perhaps be regarded as comparable attempts to elevate the role of emotions in authorship even while embedding the latter in grand schemes of political relevance and cultural significance.

Authors who protest their difference and originality, such as Yang Xiong and Wang Chong, are just as eager to claim their rightful place in the great tradition. In the systematic elevation of literature that developed from the third century on, the celebration of the author's thoughts, sentiments, and imagination is similarly conjoined with grand claims for his filiation to other categories of significance (such as the canonical classics, the authority of sages, or the promise of truth in Daoism and Buddhism). In the "Rhapsody on Literature" ("Wen fu" 文賦) by Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303), for example, the author is rooted in cosmic principles and canonical learning; at the same time, he takes flights of fancy, follows the contours of his feelings (*yuan qing* 緣情), and revels in the enjoyment of things (*ti wu* 體物). Likewise, in *Wenxin diaolong*, Liu Xie emphasizes "origins in the Way" (*yuan dao* 原道) and "filiation to the canonical classics" (*zong jing* 宗經) as the fundamental justification of literature even as he extols the imagination (Chapter 26, "Shensi" 神思) and the compelling expression of emotions (Chapter 31, "Qingcai" 情采) (Li 2001).

In sum, while one can certainly argue for an arc of heightening individuation in authorship marked by the intellectual ambition and the emphasis on originality in the works of Han writers like Sima Qian, Yang Xiong, and Wang Chong and by the celebration of the creative process in the literary thought of the Six Dynasties, there has always been a concomitant emphasis on the author's textual creation as the manifestation of cosmic and sociopolitical order. Han Yu's 韓愈 (769–824) "Preface to 'Sending Off Meng Dongye [Meng Jiao]'" ("Song Meng Dongye xu" 送孟東野序, 802) exemplifies the tension between the praise of individual difference and the affirmation of authoritative systems. Meng Jiao's rugged, austere poetic diction, his recurrent concern with his poverty and privations as poetic subject, and his checkered official career seem to justify Han Yu's opening line, "In all cases, when things fail to obtain their equilibrium, they cry out" 大凡物不得其平則鳴. Through a series of rhetorical maneuvers that broaden the uses and implications of the word *ming* 鳴 (to cry out), Han Yu finds analogies for Meng Jiao's poetic talent in the sounds of nature, the voices of the sages, and the articulations of diverse thinkers. "To excel at crying out" is to be chosen by heaven to fulfill a mission, which suggests both instrumentalization and special agency. To become an author is to both affirm individual difference (sometimes translated into a critical edge or the opposition of life and art) and also to take the sage as model. This duality continues in reverberate in Chinese literary thought throughout the ages.

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CHAPTER 25

TRADITION FORMATION

Beginnings to Eastern Han

STEPHEN DURRANT

TRADITION AS NOSTALGIA

THE subject of this essay evokes Eric Hobsbawm's provocative book, *The Invention of Tradition.* In his introduction, Hobsbawm explains that his title refers to "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms . . . They normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past." Such traditions are typically invented, he goes on to argue, "when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed" (Hobsbawm 2012: 1, 4).

The tradition we are considering here fits Hobsbawm's definition in two important respects: it does strive to connect to a "suitable historic past," primarily the first century of the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046–256 BCE), and it is very much a product of a time when social patterns were undergoing rapid transformation. "Invention," however, might be too strong a word in the Chinese case. Surely elements of the tradition explored here were inventions, although it is by no means clear that their most ardent advocates perceived them as such. We might think instead of this tradition arising in a "dynamic tension" between "invention" (*zuo* 作) and "transmission" (*shu* 述), terms we shall encounter again below (see also Chapters 24 and 26).

Discussion of a tradition within a Chinese context immediately and inevitably conjures the name of Confucius (551–479 BCE). His words and his life, however much themselves a creation of both his followers and his critics, stand at the center of the tradition and point both back to the past and also forward to the future. We turn, then, to two passages attributed to the Master Confucius:

> *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*) 3.14: "The Master said, 'The Zhou looked back upon the two preceding dynasties. How splendid was their culture! I am a follower of Zhou.' "
> 7.1: "The Master said, 'I transmit and do not invent. I trust and love the past.' "

Confucius is portrayed in these passages as fervently devoted to the past. He only transmits: an inauspicious fashion, it would seem, in which to begin a philosophical movement. The past to which Confucius adheres is a particular past: the splendid civilization of the Zhou, splendid because it too, somewhat like the Master himself, results from transmission: "the Zhou looked back upon the two preceding dynasties."

The words cited above, whether actually deriving from Confucius or simply the invention of his followers, represent the first period in the formation of the early Chinese tradition, which we might designate as "the period of nostalgia," a manifestation of that all-too-human longing for a better time supposedly found in the past. Such nostalgia was a product of the incessant, harsh conflict that characterized several centuries of disunity. For a tradition to endure, however, it requires more than nostalgia. The second critical period, unlike the first, originated from a unified empire that institutionalized the tradition, provided a grand narrative, and granted the stamp of imperial authority.

While the Zhou dynasty technically lasted for eight hundred years, making it the longest dynasty in Chinese history, its rulers only exercised significant power for no more than perhaps the first two hundred years, and then only in the region of northern China (Shaughnessy 1999: 319). The Zhou world eventually disintegrated into largely independent domains and later fully autonomous states, which engaged in political competition and increasingly deadly warfare for the 550 years known as the Spring and Autumn (770–481 BCE) and Warring States (481–221 BCE) periods. The miracle is not that the realm, like Humpty Dumpty, fell apart but that it actually came together again. "The potential transformation of the Warring States into full-fledged separate entities," Yuri Pines notes, "never materialized. Instead, these polities were submerged by the unified empire in 221 BCE, becoming thereafter a locus of ethnographic curiosity rather than of political separatism" (Pines 2009: 16).

This return to unity occurred in part because of an ideology, a product of the nostalgia mentioned above, that located strong models in a past that was partially real and partially imagined. For the followers of Confucius, as we have already noted, that past was the early Zhou, a time that in their eyes became more and more utopian. But there were other "pasts," other targets of nostalgia. For example, the Mohists, who arose in opposition to the early Confucians and to some extent defined the latter in that process (Denecke 2010: 35–36), looked beyond what they considered as the ritual excess of the Zhou to a presumably simpler time, that of the still earlier Shang dynasty, while some Daoists, the real malcontents, sought precedent in an even earlier imagined time when civilization had not yet carved up the "grand primal unity." So powerful was this nostalgia in the discourse of many major thinkers of the late Zhou world that in their writings one of the adverbs *gu* 古 "anciently" or *xi* 昔 "formerly" almost always precedes a description of the admirable, while what follows *jin* 今 "currently" typically precedes a description of the disagreeable.

Despite the strength of this nostalgia, some voices can be found in the Warring States period who reject the constant valorization of the past. Certain logicians and rhetoricians, for example, sought guidance in careful or clever argument itself.

The Confucian Xunzi's 荀子 (fl. ca. 280s–230s BCE) condemnation of such voices is telling: "They do not take the former kings as models and do not affirm ritual and duty but are fond of formulating bizarre explanations and playing with curious expressions" 不法先王, 不是禮義, 而好治怪說, 玩琦辭 (*Xunzi* 6.93). More aggressive in rejecting the past than such rhetoricians was Han Feizi 韓非子 (ca. 280–ca. 233 BCE) who stood at the cusp between the Warring States and the Qin unification. He condemned as "noxious" (*du* 蠹) those voices that "desired to use the government of former kings to regulate the people of the present age" 欲以先王之政 治當世之民 (*Han Feizi* 49.1040). Political wisdom was not to be found in blindly adhering to the past, he argued, but in evaluating the current situation and adjusting accordingly.

After the state of Qin unified "all under Heaven" (*tianxia* 天下) in 221 BCE, Han Feizi's onetime associate Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 BCE), who was chief minister at the time, presented a memorial to the First Qin emperor 秦始皇 (r. 221–210 BCE) that in a strange fashion followed Han Feizi's posture in rejecting what he considered the tyranny of the past while simultaneously demonstrating the power precedent had acquired. Li Si first argues, "The Five Emperors did not repeat one another, and the Three Dynasties did not just follow one another, but each ruled in its own way" 五帝不相復, 三代不相襲各以治, and then draws the following harsh conclusion: "Those who use the past to criticize the present should be executed along with their entire family" 以古非今者族 (*Shiji* 6.254). This recommendation pertained to the political world, in which the new dynasty wanted to silence its critics, and thus had a far more violent outcome than similar concerns in the literary world, but the critical point, valid in both of these interwoven worlds, is that even rejecting precedent requires precedent. So Li Si cites the past to justify ignoring the past.

The essential political content of the tradition that looked back to the early Zhou was a unity of "all under Heaven," presided over by a "Son of Heaven" (*tianzi* 天子), who ruled by reason of the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命), which demanded a proper patriarchal supervision of the people. The tradition we are speaking of here, however, was more than just a political framework, it included a growing world of written texts produced in an emergent cosmopolitan language. "These texts," notes Mark Lewis, "couched in an artificial language above the local world of spoken dialects, created a model of society against which actual institutions were measured" (Lewis 1999: 4). Beginning in the late Zhou age of disunity, certain of these texts acquired special authority and were quoted repeatedly in the philosophical and historical writings of the time. The authoritative texts included most importantly *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Classic of Documents*), *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), and *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*) (on these texts, see Chapter 12). In addition, and perhaps most importantly of all, ritual behavior (*li* 禮) becomes a standard, sometimes a rather malleable standard, against which all behavior is judged. While ritual may not yet have taken shape in written form, thereby sacrificing its adaptability, it soon would be. What gave such texts currency when quoted in other works was that they offered the reader an imagined access to the practices and beliefs of the early Zhou.

As the tradition developed, it began to center more and more attention not just upon the early Zhou, which Confucius had promoted, but upon Confucius himself.

While there is no reason to believe that his teachings had immediate impact, by the end of the Zhou dynasty, the pendulum clearly had begun to swing his way, a process that would not be entirely complete for perhaps two hundred more years. This ascendance of Confucius is linked to the growing prominence of a small annalistic record from the state of Lu entitled *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). The philosopher Mencius 孟子 (fourth century BCE) is the first to suggest a connection between this record and Confucius. He asserts that Confucius produced *Chunqiu* as a corrective to the perversity and violence of the age in which he lived, and furthermore quotes the Master saying: "Those who would know me will only do so through *Chunqiu*! And those who would find fault with me will only do so through *Chunqiu*!" 知我者其惟春秋乎. 罪我者其惟春秋乎. (6.9). This ostensibly simple and straightforward historical source thereby joins what later came to be called *Shijing* and *Shujing* as a focus of intense study, the first text to do so that can claim no direct connection to the early Zhou. So it is that Confucius takes a place of honor alongside his early Zhou heroes.

Institutionalizing the Tradition

A strong tradition must go beyond nostalgia; it requires formalization, institutionalization, and the stamp of political authority. This process had already begun in the philosophical work of Xunzi, whose "preoccupations with notions of orthodoxy and heresies" (Denecke 2010: 206) pointed towards what would become a major task of the first centuries of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). The realm had been unified under the iron-fisted Qin rulers, but traditional Chinese historiography does not typically link this unity with the unity of the early Zhou. Indeed, the brief Qin period is sometimes portrayed, rightly or wrongly, as the anti-Zhou, a time when rulers rejected the authority of precedent and the scholars and texts that promoted it. To some extent, this is a propagandistic distortion promoted by the Han, who took power from the Qin after the latter ruled for only fifteen years. Unity needed to be asserted, especially since regional forces were resurgent in the wake of the fall of Qin and threatened central control, but at the same time the rapid collapse of the Qin and the sudden rise of the Han demanded justification.

It would require a full history of the early Han to portray adequately the role that tradition formation played in Han policy and self-definition. Moreover, not all of the process of tradition formation during the early Han resulted from government sponsorship. Individual scholars, some at times critical of the government, also played a role in the new synthesis. We turn to three of many important projects that exemplify the sometimes complicated process by which tradition gained traction during this period: first, the elevation of a set of texts to the status of "Classics" (*jing* 經), literally the vertical threads of a weaving loom through which all other threads must be woven; second, the authorship of a comprehensive history of the Chinese past that was in an important sense the textual correspondent to political empire; and, third, the creation of a bibliography that gave an official order to the burgeoning realm of textual authorship.

While a modern liberal scholar would surely condemn the violent conflict of the Warring States period, he or she might be inclined to praise the relative intellectual freedom that characterized a time when a "hundred schools contended" (*baijia zhengming* 百家爭鳴). It is not clear, however, that thinkers of that time always saw this intellectual foment positively. When Mencius, for example, said that stability would only come through unity, he may have had more than just political unity in mind. Certainly, the late Zhou Masters Texts *Xunzi* and *Zhuangzi* show discomfort with the contemporary intellectual conflict and propose their own solutions. The first would "excise rivals," while the latter would "integrate them into a catholic vision of the cosmos" (Denecke 2010: 47). Whether one chooses suppression or integration, the same goal of unity is achieved.

What took place during the Han, however, was much more subtle and ultimately successful than *Xunzi* or *Zhuangzi* could have envisaged. Critical and contentious scholars are controlled not so effectively by efforts to intimidate or integrate as by rewarding them for what and how they read. Thus, during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), an early Han dynasty flirtation with the rather authoritarian Huang-Lao 黃老 Taoism was replaced by the advocacy of certain texts and the scholars who promoted them. For the first time, we can speak of a "Confucian" canon, five texts, or perhaps we should say more accurately "textual traditions," that gain enormous importance: *Shujing, Shijing, Yijing, Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*) and *Chunqiu.* These texts, now best called "Classics," "by definition, contained the ancients' blueprint for civilization" (Nylan 2001: 16). To be educated, henceforth, meant to have fully mastered one or more of these texts. This new textual authority arose under imperial patronage and was fully institutionalized when chairs for "doctors" (*boshi* 博士), literally "masters of broad learning," were established for the Classics in 136 BCE and when an Imperial Academy was founded in 124 BCE "where were formed entire generations destined to nourish the ranks of the administration" (Kalinowski 2011: xxi; see also Chapter 7).

A strong canon is the product not just of imperial authority but also of the intellectual act of finding meaning, a fullness of meaning, within the classics themselves and then weaving them together into a single ideological edifice. This is essentially the role of commentary, of which two deserve mention here (see also Chapters 8 and 9). The first of these is the commentarial tradition concerning *Chunqiu*, which goes back at least to the last century or so of the Zhou dynasty and is connected to the idea that this small text passed through Confucius's hands and must therefore carry hidden significance. Through a set of commentaries, most importantly in this context the early Han *Gongyang* 公羊 and *Guliang* 穀梁 commentaries, *Chunqiu* is carefully and quite imaginatively mined for its "great principles conveyed in subtle words" 微言大義. While no disinterested reader of this text would ever discern such principles and many modern scholars even doubt their very existence, the power of discovering significance when the presence of significance is presumed can sometimes be most impressive, as it surely is in this case.

Another example of commentary solidifying the status of classics is provided by the Mao commentary to *Shijing*, probably a product of the early Western Han. What this commentary achieves is to weave together the mostly anonymous poems of the *Shijing* anthology with particular historical moments, many depicted in the *Shujing* and *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*), a text that also achieved classical status by the late Western Han (see Durrant, Li, and Schaberg 2016: lv–lvi). As a consequence of the sometimes highly imaginative Mao readings, two canonical traditions, one of poetry and the other of history, are woven together. Moreover, *Shi* is thus given a specific political context, one which relates its individual pieces directly to the ruling class, the "sole legitimate subject of history" (Nylan 2001: 15). This Western Han construction of a canon is so successful that the great scholar Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), who lived toward the end of this process, could confidently proclaim, "One has never put aside a boat and crossed over to the other shore; one has never put aside the Five Classics and crossed over to the Way" 舍舟航而濟乎瀆者, 未矣. 舍五經而濟乎道者, 未矣 (*Fayan* 2.9).

A second critical project toward the institutionalization of tradition results from *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*), the first comprehensive history of the Chinese past, a work probably initiated by Sima Tan (d. 110 BCE) and completed by his son Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) as a private undertaking (see Chapter 12). Whatever problems *Shiji* might pose as an authentic and reliable account of the past, its impact upon later understanding of Chinese history can hardly be exaggerated. While many features of this text could be discussed as relevant to tradition formation, at least three deserve particular emphasis here. First, *Shiji* formalizes Confucius's relationship to the Classics by a biography of the Master, chapter 47, which depicts him as being intimately involved in the teaching, editing, and transmission of these texts. Never again can one even think about the classics without the name and supposed efforts of Confucius coming to mind. Second, *Shiji* is structured around a succession of royal lineages extending back over two millennia to the Yellow Emperor. These lineages might belong to different dynasties or in some cases different peoples—the Xia, the Shang, the Zhou, or the Han, even the Xiongnu, but they all can trace ancestry to the Yellow Emperor and are thereby legitimized by that common descent (Wang Mingke 2006: 51–54). History begins in this case not with a mythical first human couple from whom all humans descend but from a mythical first ruler from whom all genuine rulers descend. The Chinese system of rule is thereby given a hoary antiquity and a continuity that minimizes the very real phenomenon of dynastic change.

Third and perhaps most subtle, the Simas create room for the individual, even the dissenting individual, in their vast historical project. The largest and most innovative section of *Shiji* consists of what we might somewhat loosely call "biographies." This form is rooted in the historians' "emphasis on the human, the personal, and the unique" and may have been created in part to counter the totalizing tendency of centralized power (Li 1994: 379). Men of political, military, or intellectual prowess dominate the biographies, but room is given to others too: assassins, merchants, diviners, and recluses, among others. Even the portrayal of many of those who loyally served the government is hardly one that erases mistreatment, frustration or even unjust death. The best men, *Shiji*, seems to say, usually come to an unhappy fate: Confucius wanders from state to state seeking employment and is repeatedly rejected; Qu Yuan (ca. 4th–3rd century BCE), the great poet, gives his ruler advice that time will prove wise, and yet he is exiled and eventually in total dejection commits suicide; General Li Guang fights against the Xiongnu with courage and success, but when he fails, he heroically slits his own throat rather than allow young government officials to question him. Such cases could be multiplied at considerable length. *Shiji,* it appears, teeters on the edge of sedition—at least, it opens a window on facts Han rulers might prefer to ignore. But *Shiji* itself becomes part of the tradition, for a tradition becomes stronger when it allows some space for dissent and eccentricity. Rulers might be unjust, *Shiji* seems to say, and the proper response to such injustice is to vent frustration in poetry or some other form of writing, to commit suicide, or simply to withdraw to a life of reclusion. Such are in a very real sense tradition-sanctioned responses to injustice. That being said, Sima Qian may have gone too far in his stress upon the individual and hence is chastened by such classical voices as Yang Xiong, who describes him as "fond of the strange" (*hao qi* 好奇) (*Fayan* 12.9) and Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), who criticizes him for, among other things, giving space to such unsavory types as merchants and assassins (*Han shu* 62.2738).

The third project that contributed significantly to tradition formation was an attempt to gain control over what must have seemed to be an ever-expanding realm of writing. When the historian Ban Gu continued the tradition of historiography the Simas had established nearly two hundred years earlier and produced his huge history of the Western Han, he included a bibliographic essay, "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志 ("Monograph on Arts and Writings"), which was essentially a catalogue of books held in the imperial library. Ban Gu's essay was based upon bibliographies, now mostly lost, compiled earlier by the great father and son scholars Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE), who had spent a good portion of their lives editing and cataloging the imperial library (see Qian Mu 1983 and Chapter 11). The Lius had played a major role in shaping and formalizing the classical tradition, and by the time of Ban Gu, we might even speak of an "orthodoxy" that enabled him, for example, to denigrate his forerunner Sima Qian for not giving sufficient respect to the Five Classics.

Ban Gu begins his bibliographic essay with a short summary of what we might consider to be an orthodox and largely invented history of the writings of the past, a history that continues to have influence down to the present day. This history is bracketed by two heroic efforts and includes two calamities. The first heroic effort, given as a backdrop, is Confucius's endeavor to explicate and transmit the classical corpus to his disciples, a story detailed in the *Shiji* biography noted above as well as in the preface to one of Sima Qian's "Tables" (*Shiji* 14.509–510). The textual tradition of the past, according to Ban Gu's account, had been properly unified and funneled through the Master and passed along to his followers. But soon the first calamity occurs: "The seventy disciples passed away and the great principles were perverted" 七十子喪而大義乖. The result was that teaching of the Classics was no longer unified—different schools of interpretation arose for each of the classical texts, and, moreover, "the words of the masters fell into confusion and disorder" 諸子之言紛然殽亂. The cacophony of different voices reflected in proliferating texts is portrayed negatively, a sure sign of decline. Ironically, though, the next calamity is not an act of continued textual profligacy but just the opposite. The Qin dynasty arose and worried about intellectual disunity. Consequently, "they burned literary writings to keep the common people stupid" 乃燔滅文章, 以愚黔首. The second heroic act takes place under the succeeding Han rulers, who "change the Qin policy of destruction, collect written materials on a large scale, and open up a path for books to be offered [to the imperial library] in a generous fashion" 改秦之敗, 大收篇籍, 廣開獻書之路. Both emperors Cheng 成帝 (33–7 BCE) and Ai 哀帝 (r. 7–1 BCE) are praised for their efforts in sponsoring this collection and cataloguing of the texts of the past, a reference to the two Lius noted above (*Han shu* 30.1701).

What follows this introductory summary is a scheme that lists a total of 596 texts under seven subcategories. The first of those subcategories, and one that is to remain in all later traditional schemes of textual classification in traditional China, is that of the Classics. These works, whether comprised of poetry, history, or philosophy, as some of them are, receive a special designation as a sort of supercategory that removes them from other works of the same genre. When the catalogue passes from the classics to the diverse voices of the Masters, texts classified into different "lineages" or "schools" (*jia* 家), all are uniformly declared to derive from ancient government offices—the Ruists from the office of the supervisor of education, the Daoists from the office of the diviner-scribes, and so forth. The implication is clear: the intellectual world, even when most diverse, is born in state bureaucracy.

SPACES FOR DISSENT

At the same time that Ban Gu was striving to contain the textual tradition of the past and provide it with a coherent narrative of state-centered origin, others were pulling in a quite different direction. We saw earlier that Confucius described himself as someone who only transmits, establishing thereby a notion of tradition as a stable continuity. Several hundred years later, Sima Qian, even as he concluded a massive history of the past in a form unlike any history that had preceded him, also claimed that he too only transmitted and did not invent. The denial of originality had become almost an obligatory gesture, even in the face of what seemed to be considerable inventiveness. But as we have noted earlier, dissenting voices too are given an appropriate space. Perhaps the Han dynasty's most original thinker, Wang Chong 王充 (27–100 CE), depicted Sima Qian as precisely what the Han historian somewhat disingenuously said he was—a transmitter. Sima Qian, Wang Chong says, only "piled up chapters" 累積篇第 by following earlier records and "did not create from within himself" 無胸中之造 (39.608). Here, then, is an interesting twist. Suddenly the stance of being only a transmitter is accepted at face value and depicted as something of a weakness. Wang Chong pushes this idea yet further when he praises the originality of the frequently maligned Masters, those troubling voices of intellectual disunity, and goes on to contrast “literary scholars” (*wen Ru*文儒), who write their own books, with “mundane scholars” (*shi Ru* 世儒), who only explain the Classics (*Lun heng* 82.1149; Denecke: 78–88).

The attempt to find a path between transmitting and creating becomes itself a part of the tradition. Scholars who were most proud of their originality, like Wang Chong or Yang Xiong, continued to acclaim and follow models from the past. When Yang Xiong, for example, was once challenged for writing a book that deviated too far from Confucius’s model of transmission, he replied, “The matters it deals with are transmitted, but the writing is created” 其事則述, 其書則作. Old wine in a very new bottle! Much later, the historian Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489–537) advances a similar line of argument concerning literary works in general: “If [a piece of writing] does not manifest some new transformation, it cannot possibly replace the older writings to become the champion of its age” 若無新 變,不能代雄 (*Nan Qi shu* 52.908).

The latitude allowed invention and even dissent within a tradition that political authority continued to shepherd would become an issue of ongoing discussion and was by no means resolved when the great literary critic Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 460s–520s), author of the highly inventive *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*), provided us with the following definition, quoting himself from the earlier *Liji*: “The one who invents is called a sage. The one who transmits is called a person of discernment” 夫作者曰聖, 述者曰明 (*Wenxin diaolong* 2.33; cf. *Liji* 19.699; see also Chapter 24). We have now come full circle: Confucius, undoubtedly a sage, must have invented, his denial notwithstanding. The precise categories of tradition are flexible and permit disagreement and dissent as long as the general structure stays in place, which indeed it does for many centuries yet to come.

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CHAPTER 26

CLASSICISMS IN CHINESE LITERARY CULTURE

Six Dynasties through Tang

ANNA M. SHIELDS

In the great expansion of Chinese literary culture during the Six Dynasties (220–589) and Tang (618–907), writers not only created new styles and forms of poetry and prose but also began to shape newly self-conscious and critical perspectives on literary composition. In medieval China, summoning the values of an idealized Zhou dynasty past to attack the perceived ills of contemporary culture was already a well-established critical move, a strategy at least as venerable as Confucius himself. But over the course of the Tang dynasty, certain writers' interest in a restoration or a "revival of antiquity" (*fu gu* 復古) became more than mere criticism—it came to represent a commitment to literary reform and cultural renewal in a positive sense. The precise content of the ancient tradition that medieval writers hearkened back to varied over time, and though the Classics and the *Analects* were always uncontroversially central to the concept of "antiquity," other figures, such as Mencius and Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 C), rose and fell in prominence in different conceptualizations of "the ancients." The study of the classical tradition remained central to elite education, politics, and society throughout the Six Dynasties, but its impact on the most prominent types of writing (*wenzhang* 文章) varied greatly from writer to writer and over the course of early medieval history. It was a handful of early and High Tang writers who stridently issued a call to "restore antiquity" in order to reform literary style; then, by the early ninth century, the scope of that restoration project broadened to encompass a new, individual approach to the Way. Classicism in medieval literature, for the purposes of this essay, does not point to the practice of commentary or the composition of philosophical or religious texts in the "Masters" tradition, but rather indicates the efforts of medieval writers to infuse their literary works with values they attributed to antiquity.

What fueled medieval writers' interest in "returning to antiquity"? And what was the substance of the antiquity they looked to revive? The answers to these questions—and the understanding of which authors and texts constituted "antiquity" and how that was to be integrated into literary composition—evolved from the Six Dynasties through the end of the Tang. The two most common motives for renewed interest in classicism throughout these eras, however, were: first, the search for topics and styles from antiquity to reinvigorate literary composition; and second, the use of classical, especially Confucian, texts as a means by which to critique contemporary writing, often on moral grounds. But Six Dynasties and Tang authors felt the attraction of these motives quite differently at different historical moments. Given the political and social changes of the period after the fall of the Western Jin and the concomitant rise of Buddhism and religious Daoism during the Southern Dynasties, the continued prominence of the Classics and the Confucian Masters Texts such as *Mencius* 孟子 and *Xunzi* 荀子 as objects of study and commentary was not in fact guaranteed. Where the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) had created a "suitable historic past" out of antiquity that served both ideological and institutional needs, the fragmented states of the Wei (220–265), Jin (265–420), and Southern Dynasties (420–589) appeared at least superficially to have less interest in those Confucian underpinnings. Certainly the texts and authors of antiquity continued to shape political culture and social behavior in the Six Dynasties era, and mastery of that tradition remained essential to elite identity in both Northern and Southern great families. However, beyond the genres of classical commentary and historiography, Six Dynasties writers did not seek to reinterpret the ancients in a systematic way, nor did most writers of *shi* 詩 poetry, one of the most culturally prestigious literary genres of the early medieval period, often engage the classical tradition critically—with the Eastern Jin writer Tao Qian 陶潛 (Tao Yuanming 陶淵明, 365–427) being an important exception (Ashmore 2010).

In the context of Tang bureaucratic culture, however, in which literary talent could be converted to office and status, certain Tang writers came to see classicism as a useful tactic to distinguish themselves from others and win fame in an increasingly combative arena. Furthermore, in the decentralized literary environment of the second half of the Tang dynasty, where "antiquity" became a byword among writers such as Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), writers could adopt such oppositional stances more easily and circulate their views more widely by sharing texts through informal social networks. The crisis of the An Lushan Rebellion and the literati reexamination of culture that followed gave even greater room for these critical perspectives. But we are also able to see a coherent history of this spirit of classical revival in part because its Tang participants actively wrote and rewrote that history, identifying and praising their most valued writers and texts often over the course of the dynasty. In this manner, they created genealogies for their outsider, reformist perspectives. Beyond these motives, we should also note that both the central place of the Classics in medieval culture and the ancient rhetorical force of "antiquity" in social and political discourse were essential to the legitimacy of *fu gu* movements. Without the ongoing relevance of the classical tradition to Six Dynasties and Tang institutions, rituals, and literary writing, writers would have had far less leverage in defending the need for a "return" or "revival" of that tradition. Over time, the most vehement defenses of "antiquity" became powerful arguments for innovation and change—and the impact of those arguments stretched well beyond the Tang, going on to shape the views of Song and later writers.

Classicism in the Southern Dynasties

It was not merely the survival of classical scholarship through the Six Dynasties period that sustained the admiration of the ancient past as a model. In the Southern Dynasties (420–581), we also see the emergence of a new perspective on the less distant past that was recast as "antique." For example, in the Liu-Song dynasty, poets such as Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (384–456), Bao Zhao 鮑照 (414?–466), and others experimented with imitations of older texts from the Han Wei, and Western Jin, especially *yuefu*—not primarily as social critique but as explorations of alternative voices. The antiquity they invoked, however, was not the pre-Qin or the exclusively Confucian past, but rather topics and style registers that sought to invoke an ancient historical moment with its aesthetic and moral values of directness, simplicity, and earnestness, a creative reimagining of "antiquity" that was by no means imitative of earlier works. Their efforts surely stood as models for Tang poets who also perceived a poetic "antiquity" in the topics and styles of Han and Wei *yuefu* that could be copied. In early medieval poetry that claimed to "imitate" (*ni* 擬) the ancients, we see an important forerunner of authors who adopted an "ancient" style in order to invigorate—though not yet critique—the literary tastes of the day.

But a few early medieval writers used the classical tradition as a platform for critique, such as Pei Ziye's 裴子野 (469–530) "On Carving Insects" ("Diaochong lun" 雕蟲論), a discussion of literary theory and history that criticizes excessive ornament and superficiality in the writing of recent ages. Pei's rhetoric reunited the questions of literary topic and style and moreover reaffirmed the morally transformative power of literature that was praised in the "Great Preface" to the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) (Chen 2010: 118–124). Though Pei's view of the flaws of his contemporaries would be elaborated in Sui and Tang attacks on Six Dynasties writing (Chen 2010), it cannot be said that medieval elites lost sight of the classical heritage at any time. The active engagement of Northern and Southern elites in classical studies ensured the survival of a robust body of works into Sui and the Tang reunification. Emperor Wu of the Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) is perhaps the most influential example of the patronage of classical scholarship in the Southern Dynasties, though his was by no means a patronage that excluded other traditions, both Buddhist and Daoist (Tian 2007: 43–48). We see the evidence of this Six Dynasties classical scholarship most powerfully during the reunification of the empire under the Sui and early Tang, when northern and southern scholars such as Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) brought their rich traditions together in order to establish definitive editions of the Classics, identify standard commentaries of the Classics, and compose technical subcommentaries (Van Zoeren 1991: 118–130).

Classicist Interests in the Early and High Tang

Under the sponsorship and model of Emperor Taizong of Tang 唐太宗 (r. 626–649), classical studies flourished, legitimating and consolidating the Tang imperial state. For the first half of the dynasty, this newly refurbished, recentered canonical tradition was useful ideologically as an affirmation of the Li clan's commitment to a shared Confucian past and practically in that it provided models for Tang institutions with a coherent curriculum for elite study (McMullen 1988: 3–5). Though divergent threads of classical studies developed over the dynasty, and literary composition on a wide range of topics became essential to the examination system for entry into office, canonical scholarship remained central to elite culture, and knowledge of the Classics was expected of all prospective Tang officials. The canonical texts of antiquity served as the cornerstone of the state curriculum and as guides to contemporary ritual and political action.

The approaches to reviving antiquity that emerged in Early and High Tang literature, however, were explicitly critical, set squarely in opposition to mainstream courtly literature. The first and most influential Tang writer in this tradition was Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (661–702), who left a sizable body of poetry and prose. An official who served in the court of Empress Wu and was punished with imprisonment at different moments in his career, Chen became best known to later readers for a series of poems titled "Moved by Things Encountered" ("Gan yu" 感遇), a group of highly diverse "old-style," unregulated pentasyllabic poems, some of which criticize his era in a language and style reminiscent of Jian'an era poetry, particularly that of Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263) (Chan 2001: 14–42). In poems that lament the passing of the sages, praise Confucius and other figures of remoter antiquity, and express a wish to seclude himself from the world, Chen presented a poetic model that was strikingly different from the polished and highly ornamental style of Early Tang court poetry. In his preface to a poem on tall bamboos, Chen expressed his admiration for "wind and bone" (*fenggu* 風骨), the hearty plain style of the Han and Wei eras, and dismissed the ornately profuse style of the Southern Dynasties, a view that would become commonplace later in the dynasty (Owen 1977). More significantly, perhaps, for those who promoted him in later eras, Chen's adoption of a Ruan Ji–like voice of veiled criticism during the Wu reign meant that readers saw him—correctly or incorrectly—as a dissenting voice in a time of perverted governance.

Continuing a pattern we find in the Six Dynasties, during the Tang, prefaces became a prominent site for articulating theoretical views, particularly for those writers who advocated a "revival of antiquity." Whether they introduced individual poems, poem series, or anthologies of prose or poetry, prefaces allowed writers to defend what might be seen as unusual styles or topics and also to provide a literary historical narrative in which they could locate new work. In the case of the mid-eighth-century writer Yuan Jie 元結 (719–772), even a preface to a very small body of poems such as his *Collection from the Book- bin* (*Qiezhong ji* 篋中集), which contained twenty-four poems by seven poets, provided a platform for defending the "airs and elegant propriety" (*feng ya* 風雅) of antiquity. Yuan Jie praised the literary and moral seriousness of the poems he collected and also added another layer to the rhetoric of antiquity as it was developing in the Tang: the argument that the most talented poets were precisely the ones most often ignored and in hardship (Owen 1981: 225–238). Yuan's preface, as well as statements he offered in other pieces of prose and poetry, suggested two things: first, that only a select few were wise enough to perceive the need to return to ancient styles and texts as models; and second, that the rejection and hardship this select few experienced were perhaps inevitable, given the dominance of the vulgar contemporary style. Yuan also argued that writers should use their work to express the plight of the people, and both his poems and prose works reveal this commitment, often in his *yuefu* poems, a position we find echoed in the work of Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) and other High Tang writers (McMullen 1988: 233–234; Owen 1981: 230). But Yuan's shifting of value from the tradition to the writer's individual exploration of that tradition was significant: it opened up the possibility that writing modeled on "antiquity" could be fundamentally original through the internalization not only of classical models but also of normative moral responses that the classics preserved. In other words, it was more than merely imitative of past styles.

A Reinvigorated Classical Revival in the Post-Rebellion Era

Yuan Jie composed the preface to the *Collection from the Book- bin* in the wake of the devastating An Lushan rebellion, and to post-rebellion elites, it was clear that the cultural excesses of the High Tang era required scrutiny and reform. A revival of the moral standards of antiquity was one obvious strategy. Literati who survived the rebellion took this responsibility seriously, and more importantly, they fostered a spirit of independent critique in a younger generation through their patronage. The mid-eighth-century literati Xiao Yingshi 蕭穎士 (717–769) and Li Hua 李華 (?–ca. 766) both attempted to advocate for reforms of literary style during Xuanzong's reign before the rebellion, and both also criticized the emphasis on literary composition in the examinations (Bol 1992: 110–114). These two were also skilled prose writers, and it is in their prose that we find more expansive outlines of how "the ancients" could serve as both inspiration and model for their age. Li Hua in particular promoted the didactic use of literary writing through his parables, short "encomia" (*zan* 讚) that praised worthy figures, prefaces and inscriptions for writers such as Yuan Jie and Xiao, and discussions of meritorious literary writing. In his "Discussion of Making Literary Writing Substantial" ("Zhi wen lun" 質文論), for example, Li argued that literature must be strengthened as a tool for political and social reform by being made more "substantial" in the mode of the Classics (referring to the Confucian injunction to strike a balance between "substance" [*zhi*] and "refinement" [*wen*]). In his preface to Xiao Yingshi's collected works, Li also praised Xiao for taking the challenge of reforming literary writing as "his own charge" (*ji ren* 己任). Here too a Tang writer linked the power of antiquity to the power of the individual to change culture, and this was a view Li Hua handed on to other literati in his circle, men such as the late eighth century writers Dugu Ji 獨孤及 (725–777) and his student Liang Su 梁肅 (753–793). More explicitly than any *fu gu* writer before him, Dugu Ji attempted to map out a genealogy for the revival of antiquity, praising Chen Zi'ang, Xiao Yingshi, and Li Hua specifically as writers who "promoted the style of antiquity in order to broaden the literary writing and virtue [of the Tang]" (Bol 1992: 117). By the end of the eighth century, the "revival of antiquity" movement not only had a clear didactic goal and a canonical foundation, but it also had at least one lineage.

In addition to the reformist spirit of the post-rebellion era, the formation of new scholarly circles outside the imperial capital of Chang'an, particularly in the southeast, helps us understand how writers such as Li Hua and Dugu Ji were able to promote this independent critical spirit and advocacy of ancient models. The largest and ultimately most influential wave of classical revival in the Tang, that of the mid-Tang writers Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan, Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), and others, also began in social networks that they sustained inside and outside the capital. The independence of these social networks, moreover, gave writers within them liberty to develop new ideas, styles, and literary forms in which to explore antiquity (Shields 2015: 82–132). The writer and official Han Yu, who would be identified as the most influential member of the mid-Tang classicist revival in later centuries, sought to reinvest literary writing with moral purpose and also to free it from the clichés and stale conventions of his day. Han Yu's efforts to reform literature were aimed at both poetry and prose, and he wrote widely across every literary form in existence in the mid-Tang, even inventing new forms. In one important text, his "Preface for Seeing off Meng Jiao" ("Song Meng Dongye xu" 送孟東野序), Han Yu reached back to the Classics and to Confucius as his models of "antiquity" and expanded the lineage to include Mencius (who had been less well studied in the Tang), the Han historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE), the Han philosopher Yang Xiong, and the Tang poets Chen Zi'ang, Yuan Jie, Li Bo 李白 (701–762), and Du Fu (Hartman 1986: 230–233). More important than a lineage, however, was the idea that lay behind it: Han Yu argued that antiquity provided a model for "sounding forth" (*ming* 鳴) about the evils of their eras. This was a model that anyone—including contemporary writers, such as his friend and fellow poet Meng Jiao, for whom he wrote the preface—could follow and sustain. Here we see the further conflation of the classical texts as models for literary writing with the figures of antiquity as models for moral responsiveness.

Many of Han Yu's other works, such as his "Letter in Reply to Li Yi" ("Da Li Yi shu" 答李翊書) explore this same theme, considering how individual writers could revive the "Way of Antiquity" and reinvigorate it in their own writing. Through his own practice and explanations to others, Han Yu argued that this entailed certain stylistic and topical choices, such as avoiding weak and clichéd language and striving to be "unusual" (*qi* 奇) and unlike others (Bol 1992: 133–134). In his own work, Han Yu carried this out by experimenting with "ancient-style" verse, importing unusual and difficult vocabulary into his poetry, and dabbling with allegorical tales, such as the "Biography of Furpoint" (*Mao ying zhuan* 毛穎傳), among other efforts (Owen 1975: 8–33; Hartman

1986: 211–273). In these and many other innovative compositions, Han Yu expanded the conception of "antiquity" beyond any that had previously been formulated, proposing a definition that could include key classical authors and specific Confucian values, as well as new literary topics and styles.

But for some readers of the Song and later dynasties, Han Yu's turn to antiquity for a defense of the native Chinese Confucian tradition against the incursion of Buddhism was perhaps his most persuasive and powerful contribution. In pieces such as "Seeking the Origin of the Way" ("Yuan Dao" 原道), an essay in a new style, Han Yu argued that the Confucian sages of antiquity were to be revered because they ordered the world precisely as humans needed it, and the perversions introduced by both Daoism and Buddhism had led humankind astray (Bol 1992: 128–131). Han Yu's advocacy of this position appears across a wide range of his writing, from letters to disciples and essays on many topics to perhaps his most famous and disastrous attempt to affect state policy, his "Memorial Discussing the Bone of the Buddha" ("Lun fo gu biao" 論佛骨表). This memorial, which argued that the emperor Xianzong was misguided to venerate a Buddhist relic, nearly cost Han Yu his life, an act that to later readers symbolized the depth of Han Yu's Confucian commitments (Hartman 1986: 84–86). Han Yu's "revival of antiquity" marked the high point in the Tang history of classicist revivals precisely because it was neither imitative nor confined to a single prose or poetic genre, but entirely original and energetically written across every kind of medieval text. Han Yu served as an inspiring model to the young men he attracted, writers who also explored new ways of reviving antiquity.

Two of Han Yu's disciples, Li Ao 李翺 (774–836) and Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814), exemplify two very different paths that writers could explore using Han's version of a revitalized antiquity. Li Ao took the philosophical and discursive path. Han Yu had claimed individuals could make new literary writing if they apprehended the "Way of Antiquity" within themselves; Li Ao explored the broader philosophical implications of that claim about the Way in essays such as "Essay on Returning to the Nature" ("Fu xing shu" 復性書) and letters to literati outside their circle (Barrett 1992: 88–131). Meng Jiao, in contrast, was purely a poet, and a challenging, unsettling one at that. Meng Jiao's approach to *fu gu* included the imitative strategy seen earlier, writing *yuefu* in the plain style and on topics of the Han and Wei era, and an embittered personal poetry of hardship. To Han Yu, Meng Jiao represented the spirit of antiquity to such a degree that "one may say that for him antiquity is like today." The ancient figure of the talented man of virtue ignored by others was one of Meng Jiao's favorite themes, as it was for Yuan Jie and others before him. But Meng's bitter, uncompromising style, found in poems on the topics of his examination failures, the death of his sons, and autumnal reflections, created an image of the poet under assault, isolated and despised by both humans and Heaven (Owen 1975: 137–185). The sages of antiquity, in other words, were models that Meng could not fully replicate, but his struggles to do so led to a strikingly new kind of poetry. The sages of antiquity persevered calmly through hardship, but Meng Jiao—with their models in mind—explored how humans fall away from this perfect response to suffering; in doing so, he created a strikingly new kind of poetry.

The theme of seeking a morally correct response to hardship in the works of antiquity also runs through work of Liu Zongyuan, another mid-Tang writer whose exploration of ancient texts and topics led to innovative writing, especially in prose forms. Though Han Yu suffered political setbacks over the course of his career due to his strong views and occasionally intemperate nature, Liu Zongyuan's fate was far worse. He made a fateful political decision to support a group of reformers in the brief reign of the emperor Shunzong, and after the emperor's death, the leaders of the group were executed and the remaining members severely demoted. Liu, like several others, was never reinstated to a capital office and died in a distant prefectural post. A sense of exile imparts moral indignation to Liu's writing, and it also clearly gave him literary freedom to explore topics and styles he might otherwise not have tested. Liu's famous formulation about writing in his "Letter in Reply to Wei Zhongli" ("Da Wei Zhongli shu" 答韋中立書), "literature is the means by which one illuminates [and makes manifest] the Way" (*wen yi ming dao* 文以明道), reveals his belief in literary writing as a viable form of political and social engagement. Despite his years away from the center of power, Liu maintained epistolary contact with people in the capital and elsewhere, and the consistency of his dedication to literature appears throughout his letters, inscriptions, and casual essays (Nienhauser et al. 1973: 45–65). Liu Zongyuan certainly perceived antiquity to be embodied in the Confucian heritage, in the Classics and the works by Confucius and Mencius, but he was less drawn to the canonical texts as stylistic or topical models and saw them more as objects of study and critical inquiry. Liu's discussions of the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*), the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), and the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) in particular were shaped by his interest in using the texts as guides for achieving public good (Chen 1992: 134–144). In this area, however, Liu was also influenced by late-eighth-century canonical scholarship on the *Chunqiu*. This scholarship strongly rejected the early Tang preference for the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*) as the orthodox commentary to the *Chunqiu* and saw in the *Chunqiu* a powerful tool for curing contemporary political problems (McMullen 1988: 101–105). Liu Zongyuan's exploration of early texts, including his commentary "Against the *Discourses of the States*" ("Fei *Guoyu*" 非國語) are critical works in this vein, reexamining its ideas in the light of his own understanding of the tradition (Chen 1992: 138–141). But because Liu died in the far south in 819 without being reinstated to capital office, the impact of his views remained fairly limited during his lifetime; it would not be until the early Northern Song that his works would be examined more thoroughly and their influence felt by others.

The impact of the *fu gu* position during the early ninth century was perhaps broadest in the popular compositions of two poets, Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), from their years as young men in Chang'an. The poetry and prose of Bai and Yuan also provide an excellent example of a "return" to antiquity in the Tang that did not require bizarre language or polemical stances to defend. In the early ninth century, while they were both junior officials, Bai and Yuan experimented with poetry of social criticism that they called "new *yuefu*" (*xin yuefu* 新樂府). In his preface to his series entitled "*Yuefu* to Ancient Topics" ("Yuefu guti xu" 樂府古題序), Yuan Zhen filiated their new poems to the *Shijing* and the *yuefu* poetry of the Han dynasty, which, he argued, was aimed at criticizing social mores. In his preface to a poem series entitled "Songs from Qin" ("Qin zhong yin" 秦中吟) and his "Preface to New *yuefu*" ("Xin yuefu xu" 新樂府序), Bai Juyi echoed this call, presenting poems that attacked corruption, extravagance, false friendship, heavy taxes, and other evils. For Bai and Yuan, it was not the style or language of antiquity that should be imitated, but the reformist attitude of the "ancients" who composed and collected the *Shijing* and the *yuefu* of the Han and Wei. Beyond their youthful experiments, both writers extended this idea more widely in later years, composing allegorical poems that they categorized as "ancient criticism" (*gufeng* 古風) and "critical allegories" (*fengyu* 諷喻) (Shields 2002: 67–69). In one venture that more closely paralleled Han Yu's experiments, Yuan Zhen even attempted to reform the prevailing parallel prose style with a plainer, unembellished style, though this effort does not seem to have met with much success (Palandri 1977). In contrast to a poet like Meng Jiao, neither Bai nor Yuan saw these efforts as their sole literary interest, and their large corpora are filled with hundreds of poems and prose texts in regulated verse and parallel prose, on topics and in styles that were perfectly conventional and even mainstream for their day (DeBlasi 2002). In their work that drew on antiquity, however, we find an alternate path to *fu gu*—for them, original writing based on the model of the ancients meant reinvesting an old poetic practice with new moral outrage.

After the high point of classical revival in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, only a few late Tang writers found "antiquity" a meaningful source of literary inspiration or cultural reform. It may be that the political atmosphere of the last decades of the dynasty, as corrupt and dangerous as it became, crushed the hope of meaningful reform through literary writing alone. The few who tried to explore the topic, such as the prose writer Sun Qiao 孫樵 (d. 884) and the poets Lu Guimeng 陸龜蒙 (d. 881) and Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (ca. 834–ca. 883), explicitly invoked Han Yu and his disciples as models for their work. Their late-ninth-century praise would resonate a century later, as new Northern Song writers took up Han Yu's banner in their own revival. There, a new classical movement would include not only deploying the rhetoric of antiquity against contemporary style and tastes but also a more radical examination of the classical tradition itself. As we have seen, the history of *fu gu* experiments in the Tang was linked in some ways to political and social change, though certainly the Tang versions were, at heart, more profoundly literary than the Song revivals that succeeded them. It was also true that successive generations of writers from the Six Dynasties through the Tang reinvented the "antiquity" they needed for new purposes. Writers of the Six Dynasties and Tang created multiple versions of this revival of antiquity, including the scholastic, the literary, and the philosophical or ethical. Whether this revival meant new attention to the classical texts, a return to topics and styles of the ancient past (or a reimagined version of that past), or laying claim to the moral integrity of the ancients, medieval writers who wished to revive the spirit and language of antiquity were deeply convinced of the power of literary writing to alter their culture, in the traditional project of *jiaohua* 教化, moral education and transformation. The fact that their efforts were of limited influence in their own day does not diminish the extraordinary creativity and diversity of their work.

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SECTION FOUR

MOMENTS, SITES, FIGURES

Editor's Introduction (Wai-yee Li)

A standard literary history offers a litany of great writers and great works, accompanied by enumeration of their ideas, plots, and craft. Here, we propose to ask the "what" and "why" of literature differently. Our categories are "moments," "sites," and "figures." What are the recurrent and evolving concerns of writings during the period under consideration? What are the dimensions of human experience they address? These are deliberately naive questions; while other sections in this volume deal with theoretical frameworks and historical reconstructions, the following chapters purport to introduce readers to basic tropes and themes in classical Chinese literature.

How do significant moments—for example, lamenting mutability in a feast, ascending heights and reflecting on time past, summing up one's life in a final song—emerge and become conventionalized? The question of timeliness is a persistent thread; it leads us to ponder potential and fulfillment, subjective perception and objective evaluation, forward projection and backward retrospection. The temporal consciousness guiding one's sense of correspondence (or dissonance) with larger processes of change determines the representation of different phases in the natural arc of a human life (Chapter 27). Emblematic scenes from the childhood of biographical subjects seem to point to symbolic stasis rather than the process of becoming. Timely recognition in adult life fashions friendship, love, marriage; it is also the precondition for public service and political engagement. In that sense, encounters and separation, union and estrangement, participation and withdrawal are all based on modes of temporal experience. Writings on death take us not only to funerary genres or ruminations on mortality in poetry and prose but also to religious and philosophical texts offering versions of spiritual transcendence or immortality. Considering human existence in time draws attention to special modes of self-reflexivity that emerge in, for example, autobiographical writings, family histories, poetic reflections on the past, and self-conscious deliberations on bearing witness to or remembering historical turmoil.

The temporal axis has an inevitable spatial counterpart. A poetics of space exploring the formal, narrative, and imaginative possibilities of different kinds of space brings forth topoi that serve as "cognitive shortcuts" (Chapter 28). Taking our cue from ancient Chinese diagrams of concentric squares supposedly ordering the relationship between civilization and barbarity, we discuss a series of sites sequenced in terms of their identity with or relative distance from the center of political power. How does the polarity of center and margins chart our understanding of cultural and political boundaries? The imagination of political power and sovereignty takes different spatial forms: it can evoke scenes featuring the court and the city or take a territorial turn by depicting frontiers (Chapter 28), and it may be symbolized by the splendor of imperial parks or retain its insidious hold even in vistas of bucolic escape (Chapter 29).

Sites can be places for cultural production as well as imagined spaces with their own repertoires of images, arguments, or plot lines. The court, for example, can seem both specific and amorphous, being the setting for political debates, philosophical arguments, and ritual deliberation as well as the space associated with the writing of court poetry celebrating the refinement and decorum of court life. Court poets often write about the boudoir, despite the apparent polarity of public versus private spheres. The boudoir in turn offers a unique venue for thinking through gender and boundaries, with examples of male poets writing about the perceptions and emotions of women and sometimes adopting the voice of women. The preface to the important sixth-century anthology *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs of the Jade Terrace*) imagines women as readers in the boudoir, which thus becomes the object of representation, "the structure of subjectivity" (Chapter 28), as well as the site of the imagined production and consumption of romantic poetry.

Royal parks and aristocratic estates, fields and gardens, mountains and waters all raise questions about the relationship between culture and nature, pleasure and restraint. They seem to be related to each other in terms of variation and gradation, and yet some of these spaces are oppositional: royal parks are symbols of power, while fields and gardens signify retreat from political life. Temples are linked to spirituality and religious contemplation, yet they can also confirm dynastic origins and political legitimation. Ultimately, all spaces are perhaps best considered in relational and oppositional terms—in that sense, the road is highly suggestive, being always defined in relation to the place that it is not: the point of departure and the destination (Chapter 29).

These temporal and spatial categories shape a wide range of human actors (Chapter 30). Timely recognition or a court setting bring to mind discourses on kingship, official service, and good or bad government. One recurrent figure is the official, courtier, or outsider who offers advice and remonstrance to the ruler. This mode of presenting political and philosophical arguments, which inverts the actual balance of power between ruler and subject, is common in Masters Texts, historical writings, and rhapsodies or poetic expositions (*fu* 賦). Closely related to this is the figure of the frustrated and misunderstood scholar or official who may suffer calumny and exile. The sense of disjunction with one's times and the representation of nature as the space for retreat bring to mind the figure of the recluse, who becomes the venue to critique worldly passions and embodies the alternative of disengagement. His oppositional potential is refracted and developed in other figures (e.g., the knight-errant, the eccentric, the rebel) who question or challenge the status quo.

Likewise, the timely encounter and moments of rupture, like the boudoir and the city, define the vagaries and contradictions of desire, evoking a host of female figures: the ambivalent goddesses, the alluring courtesan, the pining wife, the abandoned woman, and so on. They often determine the delineation of their male counterparts in romantic, sexual, and marital relationships. The figure of the femme fatale, who as object of desire undermines political and moral order, like the unattainable divine woman or the unpredictable secular charmer, points to anxieties about desire as excess and disequilibrium. Temporal and spatial boundaries defining the limits of life and of civilization summon visions of gods, ghosts, immortals, spirits, and the humans who communicate with them, as well as barbarians and monsters in distant or unknown realms. The interconnected nature of the following four chapters means that the same texts and authors often recur, albeit considered from different perspectives.

CHAPTER 27

MOMENTS

PAULA VARSANO

How do the moments of a human life appear through the kaleidoscopic lens of China's changing modes of literary expression? The literary works we have in our possession, associated as they are with life events, convey particular experiences of time's passage. Among these is one that might best be characterized as "timeliness": an intense awareness of how the things that happen in life correspond (or fail to correspond) with the larger, and more impersonal, processes of change. Was the child prodigy, the starting point of many a historical biography, presented with opportunities to fulfill his (or, in rarer cases, her) promise? Was the talented and devoted subject of the state lucky enough to live in a time when his gifts could be recognized and put to use? Were lovers whom fate brought together wrested from each other's arms by forces beyond their control, destined to age in solitude? What can we do in the face of an unknowable future, and beneath the weight of an unchangeable past, besides raise a cup of wine and give ourselves over to the pleasures of the present fleeting moment?

Inevitably, for the writers of the biographies, essays, poems, and stories we will discuss in this chapter, the weightiness of a given moment or event is measured with regard to the ineluctable forces of physiological change, political flux, moral obligation, seasonal transformation, and, sometimes, natural disaster. In addition, the literary stance a writer assumes in the moment bespeaks another layer of temporal awareness, reflecting the legacy of the writings of the "ancients." If the natural arc of a human life provides the structural framework of this presentation, the historical arc and its profusion of genres give it its depth and specificity.

Beginnings and Timeliness in Early Philosophical Writings

Early Chinese literary and philosophical writings conceive of infancy and childhood less as the starting point of one's life course than as the instantiation of the essential nature of the individual. There are no extended textual accounts of particular childhoods, no attempts to capture the world through a child's eyes. Instead, we find reflections on the emergent adult, which, whether in the broad philosophizing of Masters Texts or in the specific anecdotes of historical biographies, impose a very real obligation on all who hope to become an ethically whole person. Most simply put, man's first—and most daunting—task in this life is to bring to fruition and put into practice his inborn but educable nature.

As espoused in the foundational texts of the Warring States period that we associate with Confucius and his followers, the task of self-cultivation demands unceasing study, reflection, and self-scrutiny, guided always by the teachings of the sages, ritual propriety, and, according to some, institutionalized incentives and disincentives. The ultimate benefit redounds not just to the individual, of course; the goal of self-cultivation is to contribute to the proper functioning of the state, a goal that will be either facilitated or blocked by the myriad contingencies of social existence—including good or bad timing. For Confucius and his later followers, especially Mengzi 孟子 (Latinized as Mencius, fourth century BCE) and Xunzi 荀子 (fl. ca. 280s–230s BCE), the state of infancy constitutes the starting point of a trajectory that is, in its essence, developmental, future-oriented, and profoundly ethical.

In contrast, the early Daoist writings (ca. fourth–third century BCE), *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi* 莊子, set forth an apparent paradox: progress toward realizing one's inborn nature is a matter of return to the infant's state of purity. In these texts, the life of the would-be sage, the "perfected one," is dedicated to the process of what we might call "unlearning": that is, sloughing off the (at best) extraneous and (at worst) corrupting effects of knowledge. Self-cultivation thus conceived is the process of finding and adhering to that part of oneself that existed prior to what was learned. The state of infancy is, by definition, one with the Dao, innocent of all arbitrary distinctions and externally imposed expectations, including both language and ritual propriety, which are at the very core of Confucian ethical behavior.

There is, then, a temporal component inherent in each of these two notions of infancy (the progressive and, for want of a better word, regressive) that might seem to place them at odds with one another. Confucian thinkers recognize infancy as the starting point from which one moves forward toward a state of mature sagehood (even if it is never quite reached); Daoist philosophers posit it, instead, as a point toward which the would-be sage strives to return. Yet, as early as late Warring States or early Han (ca. third to second century BCE), when, some argue, key writings such as the "Appended Commentary to the *Changes*" or "Appended Words" ("Xici" 繫辭), the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), and even the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸) appear, this tension is subsumed under the larger, shared goal of establishing a natural, even metaphysical, basis for the perfectibility of the human.

To begin with the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語, ca. third –second century BCE), it bears stating at the outset that nowhere does it suggest that conscientious study, in and of itself, inevitably leads from infancy to sagehood. However, *Analects* 2.4 does delineate a simple, apparently inexorable movement from a youthful declaration of intent to the mature attainment of perfection:

> The Master said: "At fifteen, I set my mind upon learning; at thirty, I took my place in society; at forty I became free of doubts; at fifty I understood Heaven's Mandate; at sixty, my ear was attuned; and at seventy, I could follow my heart's desires without overstepping the bounds of propriety." (trans. Slingerland 2003: 9)

Lacking context, it would be easy to overlook the difficulty of the challenge undertaken by the studious fifteen-year-old (who has already, presumably, a few years of study under his belt), and just as easy to miss the profundity of the achievement of a seventy-year-old for whom there is no longer any distinction between what he wants to do and what he must do, between desire and ethical obligation. The precise benchmarks suggest not just gradual, steady progression but also the importance of reaching those benchmarks at the right moment of one's life. Not surprisingly, this is not as easy as it sounds, and so the *Analects* is replete with examples of men who miss the mark. The Master's disappointment is such that, at one point, he recognizes that "there are some sprouts that fail to flower, just as surely as there are some flowers that fail to bear fruit" (*Analects* 9.22; trans. Slingerland 2003: 22). Even nature, it would seem, does not always fulfill its promise.

Mencius, who, incidentally, dubbed Confucius "the sage of timeliness" 聖之時者 (*Mencius* 5B.1), further developed Confucius's belief in man's innate capacity for good and recognized that the practice of remaining true to one's "innately good heart" or *liangxin* 良心 is fraught with difficulty, so much so that this achievement becomes a defining characteristic of the sage: "The Great Man is he who does not lose his child's heart" (*Mencius* 4B.40). This statement and others like it might suggest that Mencius is a Daoist in disguise. But his "child's heart" is to be understood strictly in terms of Confucian ethics, and the study and self-scrutiny on which this achievement depends—indeed, the rhetoric of growth and attainment that permeates his writings—emphasizes cumulative understanding over time. This is a perspective shared by Xunzi, who nevertheless takes the position that man's nature is inherently bad; for him, education and self-examination are cradle-to-grave undertakings whose goal is to overcome that nature. Either way, the life trajectory advocated by these thinkers contrasts with the process of unlearning that is necessary for embracing *Laozi*'s many counterintuitive assertions and paradoxical exhortations, and for adopting the perspective encapsulated in *Zhuangzi*'s mind-bending parables.

Laozi's perfected person is explicitly likened to a child—or, more precisely, an infant—in terms that are both much broader and (predictably) more provocative than we find in *Mencius*: "I alone am inert, showing no sign [of desire],/like an infant who has not yet smiled" (*Laozi* 20; Chan 1963:150). Keeping to the state of the newborn, protecting oneself from the invasive and ultimately mortal effects of accumulated experience and knowledge, is the essence of life itself. Elsewhere, as in *Laozi* 76, we learn that in order to firmly resist the effects of time one must maintain the perfect suppleness one had as a newborn. Not only does the perfected man thereby realize the full interdependence of stasis and changeability, but he also embodies the seemingly impossible coexistence of both absolute and linear time, for, as we see elsewhere, the perfected person "will never depart from eternal virtue, but returns to the state of infancy" (*Laozi* 28; Chan 1963: 154).

Zhuangzi will follow suit with a mode of writing that, rather than asserting unthinkable truths in the language of unadorned paradox, aims to provoke the reader into experiencing some measure of perfect, childlike openness in the face of the moment—whether trying to connect with the strange words of one Nanguo Ziqi who has "lost himself" in the opening story of the "Discourse on Making All Things Equal" ("Qiwu lun" 齊物論), contemplating the unimagined virtues of the "uselessness" of particular trees, or recognizing the absurdity of seemingly natural mourning rituals in the face of the truly natural inevitability—not to mention the timeliness—of death. Passage after passage brings to awareness the blinkered thinking that comes with the gradual internalization of prescribed categories of language and thought, implicitly teaching that one can only advance by "forgetting."

In the context of a human life, Daoist simultaneity and Confucian sequentiality converge in the notion of timeliness. Perhaps no ancient text encapsulates the practical necessity of understanding timeliness better than *Yi* 易 (*Changes*), the very conception of which is premised on the need to harmonize one's every action with the fluctuations of the universe (Chapter 12). This temporal framework will help shape the experience and the expression of life's key moments up through the Tang and beyond.

THE CHILD IN HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY

The challenge of harmonizing human life and society with the contingencies of time was not the unique province of the philosophers. On the most public and practical level, this responsibility fell to the early *shi* 史, the first "historians" (Chapter 13). It is no coincidence that the first historians were also astronomers or astrologers. They recorded both the activities of the court and the movements of the stars, keeping track of their correlations so that they could advise the ruler effectively and appropriately. Doing the right thing at the right time, with the help of his *shi*, was the overriding responsibility of the ruler and, by extension, of all who would lead their lives in an ethical and effective way. Sima Qian is recognized not only as the first of the *shi* to transform this practice into a full accounting of the history of China from its legendary beginnings up to his lifetime, but also as the first to conceive of that history not merely as a sequence of events but as a function of the actions and decisions taken by its most important actors (Chapter 13).

The longest and by far the most influential section of Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*) is called the *liezhuan* 列傳, the "arrayed traditions," or what we conventionally, if somewhat misleadingly, translate as "biographies" (Chapters 13, 18). Sima Qian's *liezhuan*, numbering seventy separate pieces, are highly readable and vivid accounts of the lives of the individuals concerned, but not in the way one might expect. The people selected for inclusion in *Shiji* all exhibit some combination of uniqueness and typicality; Sima Qian favors individuals who were not merely influential, but whose life trajectories realized, and thereby complicated, particular principles of ethics and behavior. This may explain why Sima Qian favors the telling anecdote over the comprehensive narrative arc. And it may also explain his tendency (perhaps determined in part by his sources) to omit or abbreviate information about the childhood years of his subjects.

Whatever the reasons, it is clear that Sima Qian is much less interested in how or why people became who they were than in how they fared when finally faced with the complexities of real-world human endeavor and achievement. In the rare event that he mentions infancy or childhood, he usually frames it as a pithy observation or anecdote that marks the subject as a prodigy of some kind, beginning with the first chapter that presents the Yellow Emperor: "as an infant, his knowledge was profound, and as he grew, he was honest and agile" (*Shiji* 1.1). Furthermore, precocity takes many forms, not always positive, and the child's early manifestations of character traits can be as complex as those of the adult. Zhang Tang 張湯 (d. 116 BCE), included in "Biographies of Harsh Officials" ("Kuli liezhuan" 酷吏列傳), is a case in point. As a young boy, in response to his father's anger (at him) when some rats devoured a piece of meat from the storehouse, he revealed himself as being capable of both formulating the harshest of punishments on the basis of the Classics and executing them (*Shiji* 122.3137). Readers will understand that this mode of exercising "justice," tinged as it is with self-righteousness and cruelty, would be repeated in his life as an adult.

Kenneth Dewoskin has argued that, as tempting as it is to understand such childhood anecdotes as predictive of, or as causes for, later life events, this would be a mistake. Such events are presented to demonstrate life patterns rather than to offer sufficient cause; biographical time should be viewed, then, in terms of simultaneity rather than sequentiality (Dewoskin 1995: 72). This thesis suggests that the historians' approach to childhood supports (if only inadvertently) the Daoist and Mencian essentialization of that stage of life, if not its status as an ideal goal.

The enduring stories depicting children who outsmart Confucius himself offer a skeptical take on classical education. In *Liezi* 列子 (ca. third century), one reads of two unnamed children asking the Master to resolve their debate concerning whether the sun is closest to the earth at noon or at dawn and dusk, and stump him in the process; and among the "transformation texts" (*bianwen* 變文) found in the caves of Dunhuang (Chapters 5, 17), a seven-year-old named Xiang Tuo 項託, first mentioned as Confucius's teacher in *Huainanzi* (ca. third century BCE, 19.654), brilliantly (and humorously) answers a long series of questions posed by Confucius, ultimately so infuriating the Master that he wants to murder the boy—and in at least one version of this story, he does just that.

If we consider the prodigy in light of the Confucian emphasis on long-term education, it is not just the Confucian ideal of gradual self-cultivation that is thrown into question; certain political implications also arise from such complications of process and timeliness. Situating prodigy tales in the sociopolitical realities of the Han Dynasty, Kinney argues that they might be read within the context of the court's early justifications of its attempts to establish a meritocracy; if great talent is inborn, then it is incumbent on the state to recruit from beyond the narrow confines of the aristocracy (Kinney 1995: 13–14). Things change radically after the fall of the Han, when the marvel of precocity dovetails with the challenge to authority and convention posed by inborn nature, as we find in the anecdotes included in the chapter "Precocious Intelligence" ("Suhui" 夙慧) in *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*) compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444) and his coterie.

The abbreviated passages and anecdotes mentioned above might be juxtaposed with the more complex and developed essays of the Tang. Liu Zongyuan's 柳宗元 (773–819) "Biography of the Child Ou Ji" 童區寄傳 ("Tong Ou Ji zhuan") and Pi Rixiu's 皮日休 (ca. 834–ca. 883) "Biography of a Girl Surnamed Zhao" (Zhao nü zhuan" 趙女傳) portray remarkable young people of humble origins whose fierce resourcefulness or moral rectitude (corresponding to Daoist and Confucian ideas, respectively) relate in interesting ways to the political turmoil of the late Tang. They might, for example, suggest either the superfluity of formal education, on one hand, or the abundance of worthy individuals throughout the empire who, with solid training, could be brought to serve the court, on the other.

Unlike these brief narrative texts, in which children appear as exemplary individuals, the poetic tradition tends to invoke children as a kind of composite signifier. In "Giving Birth to the People" ("Sheng min" 生民, *Maoshi* 245) and in the "Hymns" ("Song" 頌) in *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), they signify dynastic origins, as well as the promise of dynastic continuity—a biological imperative in human form. When ritual practice gives way to an interest in depicting archetypes of the human condition, as it does in Han dynasty *yuefu* (Music Bureau) poems, the orphan is summoned as a powerful indictment of untimely existence: "To live so unhappily does not compare to dying young, following [my parents] down to the Yellow Springs." 居生不樂, 不如早去, 下從地下黃泉 ("Ballad of an Orphan Boy" ["Gu'er xing" 孤兒行] trans. Birrell 2000: 386). Around the same time, in the budding *shi* 詩 poetry tradition, children appear as objects of adults' affection and attachment, signifying the parents' depth of feeling and sense of duty. Two of the earliest examples happen to be attributed to a woman: Cai Yan's 蔡琰 (Cai Wenji 蔡文姬, ca. 170–ca. 215) "Poem of Grief and Rancor" (*Beifen shi* 悲憤詩) and her "Eighteen Beats of the Barbarian Fife" ("Hujia shiba pai" 胡笳十八拍) (Chapter 30). It is not until the proliferation of individual voices and themes during the Six Dynasties that we begin to see men invoking children in their poetic works (although it hardly seems common even then). Whereas Zuo Si's 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305) "On a Beloved Daughter" (Jiaonü shi 嬌女詩) transmits one father's untrammeled pleasure in his young daughter's enchanting ways, Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427) portrays his own children in a variety of intriguingly contradictory roles: as sources and models of unfeigned pleasure, (obliquely) as spurs to paroxysms of self-doubt, as objects of resentment, and as cause for disappointment. Tropes from his poem, "Blaming My Sons" ("Ze zi" 責子), would later resurface in a pastiche by Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858) in his "My Beloved Son" ("Jiao'er shi" 驕兒詩). Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), in "Moonlit Night" ("Yueye" 月夜), touchingly traced the lineaments of his separation from his family in a couplet about missing his children while knowing that they “didn’t yet know enough” to miss him; in “Thinking of My Little Boy” (“Yi youzi” 憶幼子), he contemplates another season of missing his child growing up. Here, and in other poems, Du Fu’s feelings for his children lend depth and poignancy to the politico-historical panorama set forth in so many poems in his corpus.

ADULTS IN THEIR MOMENTS

For those fortunate enough to make it to adulthood, the problem of realizing their innate nature—whether through a life of service to the state or by experiencing (if not sustaining) moments of satisfaction and pleasure—becomes paramount. Circumstances are recognized as having a large role to play, to be sure, but being (or failing to be) in the right place at the right time is only part of the story. As a person matures into his assumed role as a member of society, he must also have the wherewithal to read his circumstances accurately. This sage-like ability entails sensing the inherent dynamics of the moment (not just how it is, but also where it will lead), as well as discerning the character of the people with whom one is bound to engage. Ideally, all of one’s actions will then be rightly guided; one will know when and how to serve and when to retreat, when and how to voice an opinion and when to hold back. In reality, however, as countless poems, biographies, and tales demonstrate, this is rarely the case. Figures historical and fictional routinely misread their circumstances, misunderstand each other’s intents and character, and misapprehend their own abilities, with fateful consequences.

It is precisely this tragic tendency to miss the moment that lends pathos to an anecdote, gives teeth to the pithy morality tale, or creates the essential bond of compassion between the reader and writer of a poem. In what follows, we will look at two inextricably entwined, archetypal moments in an adult’s life, moments in which the play of timeliness and recognition proves to be fateful: the life-changing encounter (with a friend, a patron, or a lover) and the wrenching experience of forced separation. The unpredictability of these moments, time and again, is offset by the cultivation of certain ideal character traits, especially inner constancy, loyalty, and authenticity.

Fateful Encounters and Timeless Affinities

Perhaps no text better exemplifies the complex link between gaining someone’s true understanding and fulfilling the exigencies of one’s better nature than the very first biography in *Shiji*, “The Biography of Boyi” (“Boyi liezhuan” 伯夷列傳). In this account, Sima Qian explores—motivated not least by his own experience—one of the most troubling realities of human life: not merely that bad things happen to good people, but more importantly that the vindication of such injustice is strictly a matter of the chance encounter. Taking the opportunity to challenge directly Confucius’s confidence in the Way of Heaven, Sima Qian bemoans the upright, talented, incorruptible individuals whose lives were spent in ignominy and suffering, and then concludes this lament with the bitter assertion that few such righteous people ever have the good fortune to meet someone who not only recognizes their true nature and worthy deeds, but can also transmit the knowledge of their worthiness to future generations.

Sima Qian's oblique tribute to the discerning observer (and skillful narrator) of men's lives may well be read as his affirmation of the value of his own role as a historian, but it in no way compromises the wisdom of his observation. Even the "Letter to Ren An" ("Bao Ren An shu" 報任安書) and the autobiographical final chapter, "Self-Account" ("Zixu" 自序) (*Shiji* 130), which forthrightly express Sima Qian's anguish at the absence of a clear-eyed friend or patron in his own life (Chapter 24), only confirm his humanity and, by extension, his fitness to record men's lives. The eloquence with which he gives voice to the common fear of ignominy and oblivion resonates with the expression of those same fears by others in a variety of literary modes: poems, letters, funerary inscriptions, and more.

Poetry's relative conciseness, combined with its natural recourse to figural language, make it especially apt for capturing the otherwise ineffable intensity of an individual's responses to life's fateful encounters, whether realized or missed. Among the several types of encounter that shape a life during the crucial time of young adulthood, two will hold our attention here: meeting a well-placed individual who recognizes one's true value, and the discovery of a worthy mate, whether for marriage or for love. Distinct as these encounters may be, both need to happen at the right time if they are to facilitate one's accession to a happy and successful adulthood. In addition, through literary practice, they come to be linked in another, much more intimate way: from the Han dynasty on, expressions of erotic desire would be read as manifestations of political ambitions and ideals. From Wang Yi's 王逸 (fl. 130–140) characterization of "Encountering Sorrow" ("Li sao" 離騷) onward, poets could, and did, enlist the trope of unrequited love to communicate their sufferings as unrecognized loyal servants of the court, often writing in the voice of the abandoned woman (Chapters 9, 30). Such authorial intentions are notoriously difficult to confirm or deny, of course, and so allegorical interpretations would continue to be applied to poems that may simply have been intended as expressions of erotic desire. The "Untitled" ("Wuti" 無題) poems of Li Shangyin are a case in point.

Love, of course, was not always unrequited, nor was talent inevitably unrecognized; on occasion, the fortuitous meeting of like minds and sympathetic hearts took place as well. The good fortune of marrying in a timely way is sensually rendered in a woman's voice in Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139), "Song of Shared Voices" ("Tongsheng ge" 同聲歌) (Chapter 28). But it is the Southern Dynasties *yuefu* known as the "Midnight Songs" ("Ziye ge" 子夜歌), as well as many others collected in the sixth-century anthology *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs of the Jade Terrace*), that are best known for their literary impressions of joyful couplings, both anticipated and recalled. Composed by men, but often couched in the voices of women, these poems often portray the wonder of this good fortune through the inverted lens of dreaded separation and anticipated loss. For each poem celebrating desire fulfilled, there is at least one that heightens the pleasure by invoking the dread of imminent sunrise or the stunning ephemerality of spring.

Likewise, the friend discovered is best appreciated as a friend bound to be lost. On this subject, historical anecdotes provide us with powerful, archetypal examples that portray the profound joys of fortuitous friendship under the looming specter of ultimate separation. The bond of friendship is such that loss of the friend may entail the loss of one's own role in the world, if not one's very life. The fateful chance meeting of Nie Zheng 聶政 and Yan Zhongzi 嚴仲子 in Sima Qian's "Biographies of the Assassins" 刺客列傳 (*Shiji* 86) comes readily to mind as an example of friendship-as-loyalty between a patron and a retainer, while the archetypal tale of the friendship between Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期 and the lute-player Bo Ya 伯牙, preserved in *Lüshi chunqiu* (*Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* 呂氏春秋, third century BCE), stands as the quintessential example of unforced affinity between two equals. This latter story, thanks to Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187–226) "Letter to Wu Zhi" 與吳質書, contributed the expression, *zhiyin* 知音—"one who understands the tone"—to the basic lexicon of ideal human relationships.

Tao Yuanming's poems added a new and important twist to the satisfactions of unforced, felicitous communion in the prime of life. If the *Shijing* poets, Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 century BCE), and Sima Qian all felt chance to be weighted heavily against meeting up with an understanding friend or patron, Tao Yuanming, who had withdrawn from the pressures of official life, saw things differently (Chapters 29, 30). In his new, chosen life, such happy encounters occurred daily, and their rewards were to be savored right when they occurred; their value was not premised on loss but on continuity, as suggested by the open-endedness of the final couplets. No longer needing to be "understood" by well-connected contemporaries, he depicts the unsurpassed pleasures of an unplanned evening of camaraderie. His nameless companions are just that, and they gain his trust because, coming and going as they please, they indulge, simply and without question, his love of wine (and of the untrammeled spontaneity that wine both inspires and represents). We may, as some scholars have done, doubt his absolute sincerity, but in his conscious portrayal of himself as "knowing" and accepting both himself and those around him, Tao reveals that he is a man of his times, not so unlike those wilder (and wildly independent) characters who populate the anecdotes of the *Shishuo xinyu*.

Around the same time, happy affinities with specific friends also began to be expressed explicitly. Although Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) frequently laments having no one to share in his feelings, he celebrates a wonderful communion with his cousin Xie Huilian 謝惠連 (407–433) in "Replying to a Poem from My Cousin Huilian" ("Chou congdi Huilian" 酬從弟惠連), part of an extended exchange between the cousins (Williams 2008). Nor was this pair unique in their forthright expression of admiration and affection through poetic dialogue, as evinced by a similar exchange between He Xun 何遜 (451–503) and Fan Yun 范雲 (ca. 470–519) just a generation later (Mather 2008).

In the Tang, as poetry writing constituted more than ever an important way to further one's career, its role in navigating the nexus of friendship and political alliance gained in complexity. At the same time, close friends also continued to celebrate their bond simply, in ways that often included the joys of poetry itself. The joint composition of *Wangchuan ji* 輞川集 (*Wang River Collection*) by Wang Wei 王維 (699 or 701–761) and Pei Di 裴迪 (b. 716) can be read as poetic communion in action (Warner 2005), and the famously lopsided roster of poems written by Du Fu and Li Bo 李白 (701–762) about and for each other has long been interpreted as evidence of Du Fu's unrequited admiration of Li Bo. In the mid-Tang, friendship emerges as a topic in poetry, letters, prefaces, and memorials, represented as something complex, warranting explicit exploration. Letters written by Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) to Li Ao 李翱 (774–836) and Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814), for example, contemplate in language that is at once penetrating and emotional the complications involved in navigating friendship in a time of political upheaval (Shields 2004).

The most celebrated of poetic friendships, though, may well be that between Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846). Many are the extant poems and letters they lovingly wrote to one another, but it is Meng Qi's (*jinshi* 875) 孟棨 *Benshi shi* 本事詩 (*Poems in Their Contexts*) that most compellingly captures the depth of their connection. In this collection, he recounts how the two poets, separated by a great distance, miraculously composed poems to each other at the same moment. As Meng Qi's brief story ends, "Their spirits communicated over a thousand *li*, joining just as two pieces of a tally fit together. Is this not the way of friendship: coinciding without planning to?" (Sanders 1996: 251). What this anecdote captures is not just the bond between two persons, but also the recognition that spontaneity lies at the very heart of continuity.

To respond aptly and effortlessly to the moment, to experience enjoyment without forethought, is a value that takes us back, once again, to Tao Yuanming. Throughout his body of work, well beyond the specific realm of friendship, Tao's insistent embrace of spontaneity emerges as nothing less than the expression of a life ideal, treasured but not always attained. This perspective, formed in the prime of his life (after having been frustrated and disappointed), resonates with the ideal of returning to infancy by resting firm in one's responsiveness to the moment in *Laozi*—an ideal that is also captured in the anecdotes in the chapter entitled "Free and Unrestrained" ("Rendan" 任誕) in *Shishuo xinyu*. At times ironically self-mocking, many of Tao's works explore spontaneity explicitly, including his poem "Begging for Food" ("Qishi" 乞食) and his quasi-autobiographical vignette "Account of Master Five Willows" ("Wuliu xiansheng zhuan" 五柳先生傳). His "Record of Peach Blossom Spring" ("Taohua yuan ji" 桃花源記) is especially remarkable, thematizing as it does the surprise discovery and the unplanned (and thus unrepeatable) encounter.

Later, the Buddhist-inflected poems of Wang Wei, Hanshan 寒山 (ca. seventh–eighth century), Jiaoran 皎然 (ca. 720–ca. 798), and Wang Fanzhi 王梵志 (seventh century) would occasion the full exploration of the pleasures of being in the moment, but in a more vividly spiritual mode. We might think of Wang Wei's famous "Villa on Zhongnan

Mountain" 終南別業 as a pertinent example of Wang's picking up where Tao Yuanming had left off, while utilizing the poetic palette of his own era:

> In my middle years I came to much love the Way
> and late made my home by South Mountain's edge.
> When the mood comes upon me, I go off alone,
> and have glorious moments all to myself.
> I walk to the point where a stream ends,
> and sitting, watch when the clouds rise.
> By chance I meet old men in the woods;
> we laugh and chat, no fixed time to turn home. (trans. Owen 1996: 390)

In this poem, and especially in the third couplet, Wang Wei deploys the prosodic features of the Tang dynasty *lüshi* 律詩 or "regulated verse" to capture his experience of what we might call the eternal present: the moment when space and time converge, when plans and aspirations have no bearing (Chapter 29).

As compelling as this independent stance may be, in the context of the reunification of the empire during the Sui and Tang dynasties, such poems were not the norm. The growing need for a large pool of talented men created pressure on the state to minimize the element of chance in the crucial task of bringing together talents and their (hopefully) discerning patrons. The regularized regime of the all-important civil service examination became central in the lives of ambitious young men and those close to them. Still, the importance of the timely (or, depending on your perspective, untimely) encounter hardly disappeared; it just took a different form. Linda Rui Feng's study of Tang miscellanies (*biji* 筆記) and tales (*xiaoshuo* 小說), found in collections such as *Beilizhi* 北里志 (*Record of the Northern Ward*, ninth century), shows how the neat schedule of the examination system set in motion a chain of unforeseen events in the lives of the young examinees, whose annual migration to the capital occasioned encounters (most often of the erotic variety) that would alternately trip up or spur on the most promising talents (Feng 2015: 24–43).

Two of the best known Tang tales, Shen Jiji's 沈既濟 (late eighth century) "Miss Ren" ("Renshi" 任氏) and Yuan Zhen's "Yingying's Story," ("Yingying zhuan" 鶯鶯傳) spin a timely, unplanned encounter into an occasion to delve into the complexities of establishing relationships based on the recognition (or ignorance) of hidden value. "Miss Ren," fully dramatizing the consequences of chance encounters and misrecognition, deploys a scholar's liaison with a fox spirit to explore the meaning, not just of the "human," but of human authenticity; while "Yingying" recounts, through the layering of embedded and inferred poems and letters, the complexities of intentional and unintentional acts of self-revelation.

Somewhere between the purposeful life of political service and the apparently purposeless life of withdrawal, there lies a third path. This is the life of ambivalence, the life led by one who treads the path of service but has never quite been able to turn his back on the lure of spontaneous action—or nonaction. Some, like Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) in his poem to Tao Hongjing 陶弘景, "Returning to My Garden Home: In Respectful

Response to the Master of Huayang" ("Huan yuanzhai fengchou Huayang xiansheng" 還園宅奉酬華陽先生), somewhat sheepishly discover that, when the right opportunity comes his way, court employment is what he really always wanted (trans. Mair 1994: 186). Others, however, continue to feel torn. Such poets have been known to write compellingly in praise of the *missed* encounter. The idea that apparently bad timing might open up more possibilities than does good timing is memorably represented in the Tang by poems written on the theme of seeking the recluse but not finding him in (Varsano 1999).

Continuity and Rupture

It stands to reason that the rare and perfect confluence of circumstances that prevails at the time of life when one seeks to establish oneself, often reflected in poems and stories about a fortuitous encounter, only bears fruit (and thus becomes meaningful) over time. The normative wish of the young man is to be recognized so that he might be effectively employed in the service of the court for the remainder of his active life; the desire of the young woman is that her lamentably short-lived charms will be appreciated by a man in a timely way, and that he will then stay by her side for the rest of her days; and the expectation friends have of one another is that they will be able to enjoy each other's company, remaining in proximity until they die.

The emotional intensity and ethical force that underlie the literary expression of the desire for continuity belie the well-founded knowledge that good timing and continuity are the last things that anyone really expects. Attributed to Qin Jia 秦嘉 (fl. 147), the poem "To His Wife: First of Three" ("Zeng fu shi san shou qi yi" 贈婦詩三首其一) sums up this sentiment: "Grief and trouble always come too soon, / joyous meetings are always terribly late" 憂恨長早至, 歡會長苦晚 (trans. Owen 2006: 251). War, exile, abandonment, and death may naturally be experienced as untimely disruptions in the imagined well-ordered life; but when human attachments are involved (as they almost always are), even the happier projects and obligations of civil service examinations and postings at court will lead to the parting of lovers and friends, separating husbands from wives, parents from children, or people at any stage of life from their homes.

It stands to reason, then, that in a world characterized by dynastic cycles and cosmic change, the only constancy a person can hope to achieve is within. Surprisingly, perhaps, the valorization of fidelity of all kinds arises as much because of cosmic and political flux as despite them. Filial piety in particular functions as the original cultural bedrock of constancy in the face of change. As early as the reign of Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), filial piety was acknowledged as a criterion of selection for official duty. The reasoning is that the natural extension of loyalty to one's parents is loyalty to one's sovereign. As a model for adult behavior, this virtue is never more affecting than when adhered to by men at the threshold of opportunity, men who have attained recognition only to find themselves obliged to decline the chance to take advantage of it (although some may be using filial obligations as a pretext to avoid accepting an uncomfortable political position). We find an interesting example in "Memorial Setting Forth My Feelings" ("Chen qingshi biao" 陳情事表) by Li Mi 李密 (ca. 225 – ca. 290), who refuses a high-level appointment offered to him by Emperor Wu of Jin 晉武帝 (r. 265–290), describing in meticulous detail his unfailing loyalty to the grandmother who raised him.

For expressing ideals of loyalty to the state, no genre is more heartrending than poems written about the experience of war. Whether we consider Cao Zhi's 曹植 (192–232) "White Horse" (Baima pian 白馬篇), the *yuefu* of Bao Zhao 鮑照 (414?–466), or the rich tradition of the Tang Dynasty frontier poem (of which such poets as Du Fu, Wang Changling 王昌齡 [ca. 690–ca. 756], Gao Shi 高適 [716–765], and Cen Shen 岑參 [ca. 715–770] remain the acknowledged masters), oblique expressions of loyalty and vivid descriptions of physical suffering are inextricable.

The loyalty of lovers, or perhaps of husband and wife, demonstrates another way in which adults in society built "forever" into their everyday, precarious lives. The first of the "Nineteen Old Poems" ("Gushi shijiu shou" 古詩十九首) preserves what has become a canonical expression of the loyalty and love of a couple torn asunder by unnamed events beyond their control. The indeterminacy of the speaker in the poem—is it the woman left behind or the man forced to leave home?—and the reticent expression of emotion convey not just their unbreakable bond but also the universality of their plight (Tian 2009). But more often, the pain of involuntary separation just at the time of life when one expects, and most needs, to be together threads through poems written by, or more likely in the voice of, the women who have been left behind. The "Song of White Hair" ("Baitou yin" 白頭吟), traditionally (if dubiously) attributed to Sima Xiangru's (ca. 179–117 BCE) wife, Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 (second century BCE), and the "Song of Regret" ("Yuange xing" 怨歌行) attributed to the Han Emperor Cheng's 漢成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE) concubine, Lady Ban 班婕妤 (d. ca. 6 BCE), weave together, in a way that would never be sundered, the trope of time's passage and the persona of the abandoned woman (Chapters 28, 30).

In contrast with the relative uniformity of poetry inspired by parted lovers, the writings that celebrate constancy in friendship are richer in their variety. As Michael Nylan has recently argued, and contrary to what has long been assumed, friendship among equals (as opposed to hierarchical bonds of kinship) stands as a primary relationship in the classical period, and its tenets remain constant: many friendships originate in a chance encounter and become a source of personal stability; the ties thus formed are rooted in the confidence that a true friend can be trusted to act in one's own interests; and—most significant for the history of literature—the affinities that draw and keep friends together cancel the necessity for, and exceed the capacity of, verbal declarations (Nylan 2014). Seen in this light, the explicit declarations of the poems that are traditionally, if spuriously, attributed to the disgraced Han general Li Ling 李陵 and the envoy Su Wu 蘇武 (Chapter 24), stand out as the exception that proves the rule:

> We two were trees linked limb to limb,
> you and I were like one body;
> we were once those ducks that mate for life,
> now split like the stars Shen and Shang. (trans. Owen 1996: 251)

Despite a loyal friend's most avid hopes, however, relationships of all kinds can and do peter out, just as they can, and sometimes must, be deliberately ended. Xi Kang's 嵇康 (or Ji Kang, ca. 223– ca. 262) "Letter to Shan Juyuan [Tao] Breaking Off Our Friendship" ("Yu Shan Juyuan juejiao shu" 與山巨源絕交書) expounds not only on the reasons for terminating a friendship, but also on how to do so, grappling with the tension between the ideal of continuity and the sociopolitical complications it can entail (Nylan 2014; Jansen 2006). But such disappointments are rarely the focus; rather, historical accounts tend to emphasize examples of loyalty against all odds. One thinks of the story of the heroic Wu Baoan 吳保安 found in *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang*, eleventh century) as a fine example. Here, as elsewhere in historical records, the goal is to establish a didactic model rather than to express the intense feelings of those involved. In other genres—for example, literary prefaces or funerary writings—the writers may aspire to preserve for posterity their special, perhaps even exclusive, "knowledge" of their friend's unique attributes, confirming at the same time their own status as the one who "understands the tone."

Another favored expression of constancy in change, of friendship that persists through unfavorable circumstances, is found in the subgenres about parting from (*bie* 別) and sending off (*song* 送) friends. By the time of the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the composition of such poems—and their close cousins in prose, the "sending-off 'preface' " (*songxu* 送序)—had become a social ritual (Chapter 29). Still, their conventionality does not necessarily dull the anguish behind one of their most reliable features: the predictable and unanswerable question, when will we meet again?

Tang poets are especially adept at taking full advantage of the concluding lines to capture that elusive moment between a frightened "before" and a disbelieving "after," between a completed, known past and an open-ended, unknown future. Wang Wei's "Sending Off Yuan the Second on His Mission to Anxi" ("Song Yuan Er shi Anxi" 送元二使安西) concludes with these lines: "I urge you now to finish just one last cup of wine,/once you go west out Yang Pass there will be no old friends." 勸君更進一杯酒, 西出陽關無故人。(trans. Owen 1996: 375); and "Sending Off Zu the Third at Qizhou" ("Qizhou song Zu San" 齊州送祖三) closes with this couplet: "The boat's ropes are untied—you are already far away;/Upright, unmoving, I gaze after you still." 解纜君已遙, 望君猶佇立。Li Bo, too, is a master at conjuring the spatial and temporal void that the traveler leaves behind in poems such as "At Yellow Crane Pavilion, Sending Meng Haoran Off to Guangling" ("Huanghe lou song Meng Haoran zhi Guangling" 黃鶴樓送孟浩然之廣陵) and "Sending Off a Friend" ("Song youren" 送友人), which vividly concludes, "With a wave of the hand, you are gone—/ the whinny of your piebald horse." 揮手自茲去, 蕭蕭班馬鳴。

The untimely leave-taking of a close friend is often marked by a sending-off banquet. With a cup of wine at the ready, the celebrants will transpose their encounter with uncertainty into the strenuous embrace of the carpe diem theme, doing their best to "seize the day." Two poets, known in their respective times for their wild independence of spirit, left us works that convey a gusto that verges on bravado: Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210–263) "Singing My Cares" ("Yong huai" 詠懷, poem no. 71) and Li Bo's "Bring in the Ale" ("Qiang jin jiu"

將進酒). The preponderance of this same theme in poems that contemplate the brevity of life testifies to the emotional and historical link between separation and death.

Not everyone, however, could adjust—or even pretend to adjust—to the upheavals of historic moment with a jauntily resolute cup lifted to the bright moon. Du Fu lives on as the historical embodiment of a more pained stance, as the most eloquent poetic witness to the heart-wrenching events, large and small, associated with the mid-eighth-century cataclysm known as the An Lushan rebellion. Indeed, this cataclysmic event would be felt no less acutely than the crumbling of the Han Dynasty half a millennium earlier. No anonymous voice his, the great poet's pithy characterization of such ruptures is memorized by schoolchildren even today: "The nation is broken; yet mountains and rivers remain" 國破山河在 ("Spring Prospect" ["Chunwang" 春望]). Personal, and even national, rupture wounds most deeply when it is conceived as a mere blip, barely registered in the continuous, unconcerned flow of nature's seasons and geologic time.

Still, even this tragic realization did not stand in the way of Du Fu's occasional bouts of hopeful daydreaming. His beautiful regulated verse "Moonlit Night," written during the years of the rebellion when he was trapped in Kuizhou and far from his family, accomplishes what perhaps no previous poem of separation had ever done before. Rather than expanding time and space to infinite proportions, it effectively collapses them; and rather than presenting a vista emptied by a loved one's absence, it posits presence in that very absence, bringing his wife's image before his virtual eyes—if only for the time it takes to read the eight-line poem.

OLD AGE AND DEATH

There comes a time in life when the past appears to outweigh the future: a moment when what is done is done, and when the ideal of continuity takes different forms: posthumous (as in the transmission of one's good name to posterity, or in the practice of funerary rites), or transcendent (achieved in the attempted mystical ascent to something approaching immortality). It is the moment of this shift in perspective, rather than strict biological age, that marks the onset of old age. Indeed, one hardly needs to have lived particularly long before being confronted with the imminence of death and the realization of one's own mortality. Pain at the untimely death of others, especially that of children and spouses lost to war or illness, or the devastating death of friends and peers caught up in the throes of political upheaval, occupies a broad swathe of literary writing, especially poetry.

Wartime loss is movingly represented in many of the anonymous Han *yuefu* poems. Among these, the most bitter may well be those composed in the voices of soldiers who are engaged in war, who have returned from war (e.g., "At Fifteen I Joined the Army" ["Shiwu congjun zheng" 十五從軍征]), or who have, most affectingly, already joined the legions of the dead. The *yuefu* titled "We Fought South of the Walls" ("Zhan cheng nan" 戰城南) stands out through its ironic representation of the voices of the dead soldiers: "Unburied in the wilderness—food for crows" 野死不葬烏可食. Early lyric poems written around the same time, such as Cao Cao's 曹操 (155–220) "Graveyard Song" ("Haoli xing" 蒿里行) and Wang Can's 王粲 (177–217) "Poem of Seven Sorrows" ("Qi ai shi" 七哀詩), all borrow heavily from that tradition, even as the stamp of individual attribution sets them apart. During the Late Tang, Li He 李賀 (790?–816?) attempts to engage with the ghosts of the war dead in his "Song of an Arrowhead from Changping" ("Changping jiantou ge" 長平箭頭歌). Taking full advantage of the potential built into the Tang "ancient style" poem (*guti shi* 古體詩 or *gushi* 古詩) for blending personal lyricism and long-view narration, he (almost) communes with the ghosts of dead soldiers. Li He underlines the utter loneliness of that experience in a concluding encounter with a young boy who hopes to exchange a wicker ceremonial votive basket for the "metal" arrowhead. In that meeting, and in the utter incommensurability of the two objects, is embedded the very picture of a "missed" encounter.

While the mass experience of wartime death easily crossed the permeable boundary between *yuefu* poetry and early lyric poetry, individual responses to other instances of untimely death primarily come down to us in the latter form, always in the plainest of language and always as an outburst of incomprehension. In one of his "Miscellaneous Poems" ("Zashi" 雜詩), Kong Rong 孔融 (153–208) unflinchingly recounts how cosmic and personal untimeliness converge when he discovers that he has arrived home too late to see his firstborn son alive. A mere generation later, Cao Zhi in his "Lament for Jinhu" ("Jinhu ai ci" 金瓠哀辭) rails at the injustice of his daughter's untimely death and, like Kong Rong, almost perversely attempts in the end to find some bitter comfort in the brevity of human life. And in the mid-Tang, Bai Juyi's loss of a son prompts the writing of "A-Cui Dies Young" ("A-Cui zao yao" 阿崔早夭), in which he can only ask why a child of three should be taken, leaving behind an empty-armed man in his sixties. In Meng Jiao's nine-poem cycle lamenting the loss of his child, "Apricots Untimely Dead" ("Xing shang" 杏殤), the stark cruelty of the experience is compounded by his adoption of an archaic style. Reviving a use of nature imagery that reaches back to the "Nineteen Old Poems," Meng's poem aligns the unbearable pain of his own grief with the chorus of bereaved, anonymous ancients long dead, but in such a tangled way as to exemplify what Stephen Owen has termed "the language of madness" of Mid-Tang poetry (Owen 1996: 70–75).

The best-known poems mourning spouses, in contrast, deal less with the anguish of Heaven's injustice and the absence of progeny than with the uncanny power of a loved one's traces to keep the past alive in the present, sometimes against one's will. Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247–300) poem "Lament for Her Death" ("Daowang shi" 悼亡詩) set the standard by plainly and intimately enumerating the things that his deceased wife left behind, averring that her material traces make forgetting impossible. Later, Shen Yue will likewise echo death's power to transform the physical surroundings of the mourner in his own "Lament for Her Death." But when Yuan Zhen's wife died at the age of twenty-six, he takes a different approach. In a set of three poems mourning his wife, "Attempting to Assuage a Grieving Heart" ("Qian beihuai" 遣悲懷), he impatiently bemoans the futility not only of writing a mourning poem like Pan Yue's, but also of the ritual activities of mourning.

The trial of enduring the loss of others is but one of the experiences that oblige writers to begin to come to terms with their own senescence and, eventually, mortality. *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Classic of Documents*) may well list "long life" as first among the five components of good fortune, but growing old is experienced as a mixed blessing at best. The transformations of the body trigger literary reactions that range from defiance to pathos to embittered humor. During the early periods of Chinese literary history, many explicit responses to physical aging seem to be relegated to poetry either written about women or composed in a woman's voice. From the marriageable but unmarried women of *Shijing* to Lady Li of the Han, and on through the Tang heroine Yingying of Yuan Zhen's eponymous tale, many are the women depicted as fretting over being seen by men once their youthful allure has diminished. In the palace poetry of the Six Dynasties, male poets like Jiang Zong 江總 (519–594) and Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583) would give eloquent voice to (and perhaps thereby help to propagate) women's anxieties about aging. In one memorable poem, Xu Ling goes so far as to depict an abandoned woman comforting herself by imagining her rival's joining her in her state of inevitable decrepitude.

Men, of course, worry too. Consistent with the traditional analogy likening disappointed officials to abandoned women (Chapter 30), men have understood from the earliest times the consequences of being perceived as less than able, or less able than they were. Sometimes, the reaction is one of defiance, as in the *Han shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (*Han Tradition of the Classic of Poetry: a Supplement,* ca. second century BCE) anecdote about the old man of Chuqiu who pointedly tells the condescending Lord Mengchang 孟嘗君 that whatever his apparent weaknesses might be in comparison to men in their prime, his intuition for fathoming the character of others is just beginning to develop. In "Though the Divine Tortoise Is Long-lived" ("Gui sui shou" 龜雖壽), Cao Cao proclaims with élan that while no being can live forever, a man of valor (like himself) can reach an advanced age without losing his "valiant heart" (*zhuangxin* 壯心).

But just as often during the Wei-Jin era, it would seem, aging inspires a sense of dread. Ruan Yu 阮瑀 (d. 212), in an untitled poem, poignantly takes note of his graying hair and the increasing weakness in his limbs, only to end by saying, "Often I fear that my time will run out,/and that my spirit will suddenly take flight./I myself know that after man's hundred years,/mallows spring up among the halls" (常恐時歲盡。魂魄忽高飛。自知百年後。堂上生旅葵。). His contemporary, Ying Qu 應璩 (190–252), in the face of people's revulsion at the sight of the aged, even fantasizes, in the third of his "Miscellaneous Poems" ("Zashi" 雜詩), about plucking out his white hairs and somehow washing the coarse patina of age off his face.

For Du Fu, his aging body stands in figural relation to his life as a whole; put another way, he consistently constructs a synecdochic link between his physical situation and spiritual state. The depiction of his thinning hair, "too sparse to hold an official hairpin" 渾欲不勝簪, is inextricably tied to his regrets over his unsuccessful career; the wind's destruction of his home's thatched roof manifests his own fragility. For other poets, it is the reflected image of themselves in the eyes of others that reminds them of their senescence. He Zhizhang 賀知章 (659–744), in his simple quatrain "Scribbled Upon

Returning Home" ("Huixiang oushu" 回鄉偶書), picks up on the old theme of the shocking discovery that after a long absence he has aged to the point of no longer being recognizable. And the Mid-Tang poets Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) ("On Losing My Teeth" ["Luochi" 落齒]) and Bai Juyi ("Sighing Upon Losing My Hair" ["Tan fa luo" 嘆髮落]), in that no-nonsense, wry way typical of the era, laugh at the absurdity of it all. This is not to say that they were spared the emotional pain of aging; the pathos of Bai's "A Dream of Ascending a Mountain" ("Meng shangshan" 夢上山), for example, demands to be read against the type of mourning poetry in which the bereaved dreams that the departed is still alive. In this poem, rather than waking up to the painful realization that the beloved is gone for good, the dreamer awakens to re-experience the irretrievable loss of his own youth, even as he touts the compensatory consolation of dreams.

All of these works are animated by the struggle to accept, at a certain point of one's life, that the only promise of continuity is the continuity of aging, and that the next timely event in life is death. A stylistic and intellectual forerunner of Han Yu and Bai Juyi, Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (ca. 661–702), wove his starkly expressed philosophical ruminations about life into thirty-eight old-style poems called "Moved by Things Encountered" ("Ganyu" 感遇). In the thirteenth of these, he displays his impatience with figural niceties in the drive to express this most nagging of reflections (trans. Mair 1994: 192):

I dwell in the forest nursing a long illness,
The water and trees accentuate the solitude and stillness;
I lie here idly observing the changes in nature,
And meditate absentmindedly on ending rebirth.
In spring, buds are just beginning to show,
Then summer's red sun arrives in all its fullness;
But death and decline begin from that moment—
Oh, when will my sorrowful sighs come to rest?

Nature's role in compelling us to reflect on our endings takes us back to beginnings, to Han funeral songs such as this one:

On onion grass the dew
dries quickly in the sun,
dries in the sun but tomorrow
    it will settle again at dawn;
when a person dies he is gone,
    never to return. (Owen 1996: 278)

Venerable as the response of aching resignation may be, however, it is not the only one. In some rare instances we find expressions of true equanimity, as in the Buddhist poetry of Hanshan. But it is the seemingly unreasonable drive for continuity beyond life's abrupt and inevitable ending that is expressed in almost as many ways as there are literary genres. It is not enough that the sheer act of writing constitutes a bid for the immortality of both one's subject and oneself; specific modes and subgenres proliferate over time in the effort to conquer the specter of death. From poetry's very beginnings, one might engage in the futile performative ritual of "Calling Back the Soul" ("Zhaohun" 招魂); defiantly feast, and so "seize the day" (to blunt the pain of the ultimate leave-taking); or wistfully envision—and come near to succeeding in—cavorting with the immortals, as in the poems of Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) and, much later (striking a more ambiguous stance), Li Bo (Chapter 30). Ongoing skepticism regarding immortality, vociferously expressed by writers as varied as Wang Chong 王充 (27–100), Tao Yuanming, and Wang Ji 王績 (590?–644), did nothing to stanch the flow. As early as the Han Dynasty, the genre of "biography" (*zhuan* 傳) would be extended to include the lives of immortals—e.g., *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 (*Biographies of Transcendents*, ca. first to second century BCE) and Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283–343) *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (*Biographies of Divine Transcendents*).

Anomaly tales, or *zhiguai* 志怪 ("recording the strange"), sometimes present a cosmos in which union after death is possible, as in the tale of Han Ping and his wife in Gan Bao's 干寶 (d. 336) *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (*In Search of the Supernatural*). As early as the Eastern Jin, writings in a wide range of old and new funerary genres proliferated. Stele inscriptions (*beiwen* 碑文), dirges or elegies (*lei* 誄), grave memoirs (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘), and sacrificial addresses (*jiwen* 祭文) came to blend stylized ceremonial writing with expressions of personal grief. Conveying a welter of indeterminate emotions, Tao Yuanming crosses the boundary between life and death when speaking poetry from the grave in his three "Pallbearer's Songs" ("Wan'ge" 挽歌) and "A Sacrificial Address to Myself" ("Zi ji wen" 自祭文), a text which may have been written as early as twenty years before he died (Tian 2010: 1:207). During the mid-Tang, when the "private sphere" encroached more and more upon realms of ritual and social norms, friends parted by death flouted the seeming permanence of their separation by composing sacrificial addresses in which they directly communicated their appreciation and their grief to the departed (Shields, 2007: 112). In the world of fiction, tales like Shen Jiji's "Inside the Pillow" ("Zhen zhong ji" 枕中記) and Li Gongzuo's 李公佐 "The Governor of Nanke" ("Nanke taishou zhuan" 南柯太守傳, also called "Chunyu Kun" 淳于髡) aim to preach detachment from the successes and failures of life—and by implication from death. In these stories, the conciseness of the genre serves as a perfect vehicle for reducing life's strivings and vicissitudes to an easily summarized dream of enumerated events, in which—it must be said—the timeliness or untimeliness of particular actions and incidents is revealed as having little meaning (Chapter 30).

In closing this necessarily partial and particular survey of some of the ways in which the writings that have come down to us from early and medieval China emerge from, live in, shape, conceptualize, and resist the workings of time upon human life, one is struck by the simple reality that their authors, by virtue of being such, have attained a measure of their hoped-for immortality. To appreciate the bittersweet essence of this observation, we turn to Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361), the great calligrapher and author of what may well be the most famous of all Chinese literary prefaces, "Preface to *The Orchid Pavilion Collection*" ("*Lanting ji* xu" 蘭亭集序). Though short, the piece gradually and seamlessly moves from a celebration of the pleasures afforded by a gathering in exquisite surroundings to a reflection on how such moments blind us to the inexorable passage of time, and finally to the acknowledgment of his own inevitable demise; in a sense, the preface thus moves from sequentiality to simultaneity. As it comes to a close and Wang reflects on his own reflection, he faces the interchangeability of the dead and the living: "Those of future generations will look upon us today just as we today look upon those of the past. How sad this is! This is why I present in an orderly fashion the people here now and record what they recounted. Though generations shift and circumstances change, the things that most stir our hearts are unchanging. Among those of the future who will contemplate these writings, surely some will be moved by them."

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CHAPTER 28

SITES I

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Mapping the Spaces of Chinese Literature

The thematization of place has long served to structure literary composition, helping to determine how a literary text produces meaning. Within Chinese literary history, certain locations or general categories of place accumulate meaning and represent intertextual histories formed by previous texts set in the same sites. These conventional sites constrain the development of argument within the text for the author and provide a set of hermeneutical expectations for the reader. We may read such literary sites through the concept of *topos* (plural *topoi*), literally "place," from the Greek. As introduced by Aristotle and later developed by the German philologist Ernst Robert Curtius (1886–1956), topoi are "commonplaces," familiar phrases and figures that not only inform literary texts, but function as cognitive shortcuts for the culture in which the topoi are found (Curtius 1953: 70–71, 79–105). A topos such as "the world is a stage" or "the abandoned wife" sets the theme of the text, provides a familiar resource of images and phrases for how the text is elaborated, and evokes intertextual memories of past treatments of the same theme. Yet the spatial metaphor that underlies the notion of topos is worth keeping in mind, since where the text takes place is often inseparable from how the text means (Wang 2003).

Indeed, one of the most influential topoi for the Chinese cultural imagination is that of the civilized center and the barbaric periphery, exemplified by the "Nine Regions" (*jiuzhou* 九州) theory of the Warring States thinker Zou Yan 鄒衍 (third century BCE). This territorialization of the sovereign imaginary provides a larger fictive structure of concentric zones through which the complex negotiations of cultural ideology might be figured. In this way, too, the conventional spaces of Chinese literature may be understood, which is to say, as a series of intermediary sites that extend from the center (the imperial and princely courts) to the periphery (the wilderness and the frontier). Although these sites are informed by the gravitational pull of the center-periphery divide, they also possess signifying attributes of their own. This section of the *Handbook* examines sites within the territorial imagination of early and medieval Chinese literature.

We will begin with the imperial court, the site most closely identified with the notion of the center, examining its representations within Masters Literature, rhapsody, and panegyric poetry. Questions that arise include the use of the court as scene of persuasion, the formation of court literature in the Han, and the imagination of empire through courtly representation. Following this, we will address the space of the boudoir, which is constituted as a private, enclosed feminine space, but is also subject to the voyeuristic gaze of men from outside. That is, the boudoir is at once open and shut, a restricted physical site that is nonetheless available to the literary imagination, particularly in poems that thematize the loneliness of palace women and abandoned wives. We will then turn to the city as a site of literary interest. While the imperial city is most frequently described within medieval literature, one finds a growing interest in nonimperial cities in later periods. The city is both a microcosm for the empire (a bounded zone of civilization) and a space in which civilization and wilderness might uncannily coexist. Here, we will discuss the early representations of the city in rhapsody and poetry, then turn to the increasingly hybridized depictions in Tang tales (*chuanqi* 傳奇) and notebook jottings or miscellanies (*biji* 筆記). We will then turn to an examination of the frontier as it has been imagined within literary writings, with particular reference to poetry, where the subgenre of "frontier poetry" (*biansai shi* 邊塞詩) has helped to construct the imagination of spaces at the margins of Chinese civilizational influence.

The question of space in classical China has long been closely bound to questions of sovereign power and the imperial imagination. Even when the particular site evoked in a literary representation is a private one, the assertion of privacy is often intelligible only in contradistinction to the pervasive claims of empire and the political cum literary constitutions of subjectivity. Yet within the literary imagination, the representation of sites in space takes on meanings that subvert and transform empire's gravitational force. What the following sections will elaborate is the cultural instantiation of space within early and medieval Chinese literary history. Following the philosopher Edward S. Casey, who understands the experience of place as the very ground of being, this essay will trace the histories of particular sites in the construction of early and medieval literary history (Casey 1996).

Court

The court (*chaoting* 朝廷) was both a physical and an imaginary site, one that was simultaneously located within the palace complex and constituted through the discursive representation of the imperium. Architecturally speaking, the court comprised the spaces at the front of the palace complex where the emperor held audience before his ministers and officials, and the term *gongting* 宮廷 was sometimes used to denote the combined site of palace and court. However, within the literary imagination, the court occupied a much less specific site and may be understood as a spatial figuration of the various relationships among the sovereign (emperor, king, or prince), ministers, officials, and other court personnel. As such, the court was both a site in physical space and a synecdoche for the composite nature of the body politic. There have been, of course, contending courts throughout history, and while the body of the emperor was singular, princes with their own courts and palaces and domains complicated the notion of an imperial center. Moreover, the difference between the court and the salon was not always clear, at least in terms of literary production and cultural significance. Indeed, the court may be said to have existed wherever the ruler and his officials were, whether in the capital, en route from one palace to another, or on the frontiers.

The beginnings of court literature, and thus the first representations of the court as a site of literary production, may be traced back to the beginnings of Chinese writing itself, since the bone and bronze inscriptions were composed for Shang and Zhou court occasions. Also worth mentioning are poems in "Greater Elegantiae" ("Da ya" 大雅) of *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), which were connected to musical performance traditions in the Zhou court. However, the treatment of the court as occasional context emerged only later, with the rise of historical works such as *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*, ca. fourth century BCE) and what has been termed "Masters Literature" (*zishu* 子書) during the Warring States Period. While the aims of historiography and thought may have been different, there were striking similarities in the way in which the court served as the site of the narrative event. Just as *Zuozhuan* presented persuasions and remonstrances by emissaries and diplomats in the courts of various lords, the slightly later *Mengzi* 孟子 (Latinized as *Mencius*) presented its hero, Meng Ke 孟軻 (Mencius, fourth century BCE), as attempting to convince the rulers of Wei 魏 (Liang 梁) and Qi 齊 that there was a moral basis to government (Chapters 14, 30).

The depiction of court persuasions can also be seen in early anecdotal collections, such as *Guoyu* 國語 (*Discourses of the States*), *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (*Master Yan's Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), and *Shuo yuan* 說苑 (*Garden of Anecdotes*), not to mention the annals and biographies of the dynastic histories. It should be noted that the spatial representation of the court was minimal in these anecdotes, with descriptions of court space mostly occurring in ritual texts such as the "Mingtang wei" 明堂位 ("Positions in the Hall of Light") chapter of *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*). Nevertheless, as the central site of sovereign desire, the court embodied the pivotal point of tension for the scene of persuasion, which was the slippery boundary between the political reality and the multifarious fantasies of power.

Related to court persuasion was rhapsody (*fu* 賦) and various associated poetic forms that emerged between the late Zhou and the Western Han, including imitations of *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*). One might take the opening stanzas of "Encountering Sorrow" ("Li sao" 離騷), attributed to the highborn Chu minister Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BCE), as representing an unsuccessful court remonstrance, which then takes the speaker on a questing, exilic journey from the earth to the heavens (Chapter 30). The early

Western Han writer Jia Yi's 賈誼 (200–168 BCE) "Rhapsody Lamenting Qu Yuan" ("Diao Qu Yuan fu" 弔屈原賦) was an elegy for Qu Yuan, though one that began and ended by bemoaning Jia Yi's own situation: that of a loyal official exiled to Changsha (as Qu Yuan had been before him). Jia Yi's concluding intention to live the pure life of a recluse presented an early image of anti-court self-representation. Out of such writings would develop the subgenre of rhapsodies on "worthies who fail in their aims" (*xianren shi zhi* 賢人失志), which expressed the poet's frustration at being ignored by the ruler and thus unable to participate at court (Wilhelm 1957).

For other early rhapsodic texts, court persuasion was presented as efficacious, and indeed transformative. In such poems from the early imperial period, we find a marriage of poetic argument to sensuous details of palatial and court space, grounding the scene of persuasion in imperial claims of luxury. Mei Sheng's 枚乘 (d. 140 BCE) "Seven Stimuli" ("Qi fa" 七發) depicts a sick prince of Chu who is cured by an unnamed Wu rhetor's skillful verbal performance. The "Seven Stimuli" of the title consist of six scenes of royal pleasure (music, banquet, hunt, etc.), plus the seventh, which promises to relate the discourses of experts comparable to late Zhou philosophical masters, with the likes of Confucius, Laozi, and Mencius presiding as judges. Mei Sheng's poem thematizes the scene of courtly persuasion even as it transforms the act of persuasion into a literary form that ambiguously claims the power to regulate the ruler's desires even while pandering to them (Chapter 30).

An interest in governing imperial desire can also be seen in the rhapsodies of Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE), though this interest is suppressed by extravagant praise in works such as "Rhapsody on the Shanglin Park" ("Shanglin fu" 上林賦) and "Rhapsody on the Great Man" ("Daren fu" 大人賦). It was the panegyric function of literature with which Sima Xiangru, the first true imperial court poet, was most clearly concerned, and his poems constructed fantasies for Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) on a cosmological scale (Knechtges 2002). In the ending to "Rhapsody on the Shanglin Park," Sima Xiangru articulates what might be considered a vision opposed to the eremitic ending of Jia Yi's "Rhapsody Lamenting Qu Yuan," one that represents the sovereign as having exhausted his appetite for sensuous pleasures, thus abolishing the hunt in order to devote himself to administration within the court (Chapters 28, 30).

Criticisms of court corruption, expressions of frustration, and declarations of reclusion were common themes, particularly during periods of political and social uncertainty. One well-known anti-court polemic in early medieval China was the "Letter to Shan Juyuan [Tao] Breaking Off Our Friendship" ("Yu Shan Juyuan juejiao shu" 與山巨源絕交書). Here, the noted writer Xi Kang 嵇康 (or Ji Kang, ca. 223–ca. 262) outlined in mocking detail all his objections to political service, thereby ending his friendship with Shan Tao 山濤 (205–283). Other writers celebrated the life of reclusion, both in biographical accounts such as Huangfu Mi's 皇甫謐 (215–282) *Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳 (*Biographies of Lofty Gentlemen*) and in "Poems on Summoning the Recluse" ("Zhao yin shi" 招隱詩) by Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300), Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303), and Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305), among others (Berkowitz 2000). Of course, many of the poets who wrote on reclusion were actively involved in the court; their poetic treatments did not stake out anti-court positions in the way that Xi Kang had, but served to imagine an idealized life outside of the court's duties (Chapters 27, 29, 30).

Rejection of the court was in many ways the discursive inversion to court panegyrics and other literary celebrations of court life. This is wittily thematized by Lu Ji in his "Poem on Summoning the Recluse," in which the natural landscape is transformed by the poetic vision into a counter-palace, complete with furnishings and musical performances. Even as themes of reclusion flourished in the early medieval period, the same age also witnessed the rise of literary coteries and salons, which were centered at the royal courts. One of the earliest literary court salons might be the Western Han Prince of Liang's Rabbit Garden (*Tuyuan* 兔園) coterie. However, this early salon image is largely a later invention in works such as Xie Huilian's 謝惠連 (407–433) "Rhapsody on Snow" ("Xue fu" 雪賦). The history of court salons during the early medieval period might be said to have begun with those at the courts of Liu Biao 劉表 (d. 208) and Cao Cao during the Jian'an 建安 reign (196–220); they flourished in the ages of the Southern Qi prince Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (460–494) and Liang princes such as Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551, Emperor Jianwen 梁簡文帝, r. 549–551), and became institutionalized with the creation of the Institute of Literature (*Wenxue guan* 文學館) in 621 under Li Shimin 李世民 (599–649), the future Emperor Taizong of the Tang 唐太宗 (r. 626–649).

Poems composed at royal salons were often governed by rules such as assigned topics and rhymes, or made to match previous poems, or simply created at the behest of the prince or the emperor. These were often playful pieces in subgenres such as "poems on things" (*yongwu shi* 詠物詩), which praise their royal hosts through displays of wit, skill, and, not infrequently, blatant sycophancy. Court poetry would continue to be composed throughout the Tang, even as the court would no longer dominate literary production following Emperor Xuanzong's 玄宗 reign (712–756). Indeed, in the generation of writers led by Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824), there was a distinct moral value in asserting a distance from the petty concerns of courtiers, if not from the court itself. The failures of Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814) to pass the imperial examinations and to secure official appointment were held up as a symbolic victory of sorts, since his purity separated him from the mediocre careerists at court.

Still, an interest in the court and the court's secrets would inform the historical miscellanies, romances, anecdote collections, and records of gossip that were composed over the course of the Tang. Mention should first be made of Wu Jing 吳兢 (670–749) and his *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要 (*Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign*), an anecdote collection which idealized the court of Emperor Taizong as one in which remonstrances were welcomed and heeded by a fair-minded sovereign. Other anecdote collections were less ideologically motivated, though equally interested in court affairs; these include Liu Su's 劉餗 (fl. 742–755) *Sui Tang jiahua* 隋唐嘉話 (*Fine Tales from the Sui and Tang*), Li Zhao's 李肇 (fl. 806–820) *Guoshi bu* 國史補 (*Supplement to the History of the Reigning Dynasty*), and Liu Su's 劉肅 (fl. 807) *Da Tang xinyu* 大唐新語 (*Recent Talk from the Great Tang*). Through the ninth century, there was a marked fascination with the court of Emperor Xuanzong and his romance with Prized Consort Yang

Yuhuan 楊玉環 (Yang *guifei* 楊貴妃, d. 756), which was depicted in poems as well as in anecdote collections and pseudohistorical narratives (Chapter 30).

THE BOUDOIR

The theme of romance was one that emerged most fully during the Tang, though there was an earlier tradition of poems on the boudoir or woman's bedroom (*gui* 閨 and compounds such as *guige* 閨閣) that anticipated and informed later representations. The boudoir was never simply a domestic space; it was an affective space, a site that was encoded with particular sentiments. As such, the boudoir could be a site of longing and unrequited love, a scene of eroticism, or a space in which societal norms were subverted—or, indeed, all three of these. By convention, the boudoir was a woman's space, often used as a synecdoche for the inner quarters and private spaces of a household or palace. However, we might note other kinds of bedchambers as well, from men's lonely bedchambers, usually associated with insomnia and seclusion, to the semipublic bedrooms of the brothel and inn. These will be discussed briefly at the end of this section.

The literary history of the boudoir develops directly from the tradition of the neglected palace lady's plaint (*gongyuan* 宮怨). The "Rhapsody on the Tall Gates Palace" ("Changmen fu" 長門賦), attributed to Sima Xiangru, is perhaps the earliest to depict the palace lady in her lonely bedchamber, hoping for the favor of the emperor. The rhapsody has a preface (now thought spurious, as the rhapsody itself may also be) that identifies the lonely palace woman as Empress Chen 陳皇后 (fl. second century BCE), who was set aside by Emperor Wu of Han (Knechtges 1981). An imperial consort, Lady Ban (Ban *jieyu* 班婕妤) (d. ca. 6 BCE) is the earliest female poet to express her frustration at being neglected in the "Rhapsody of Self-Lament" ("Zidao fu" 自悼賦). This work, preserved with the help of her grand-nephew Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), presents what would become standard imagery: the bedchamber's silence, barred gates, moss-covered stairs, and darkened curtains (Knechtges 1993).

This theme of the abandoned or neglected woman in her boudoir (Chapters 27, 30) would be also found in anonymous *yuefu* 樂府 ("Music Bureau poems") and taken up during the Jian'an and Wei-Jin periods by poets such as Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), Xu Gan 徐幹 (171–218), and Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300) (Roy 1959). Unlike Consort Ban's rhapsody, these later poems were typological in nature, speaking not from personal experience but as exercises in a literary commonplace. However, it is against this conventional imagery that poems such as Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247–300) piece on his deceased wife, with his painful memories of their former shared bedchamber, gain emotive power and resonance (Lai 1994, Chapter 27). Pan Yue also composed the "Rhapsody on the Widow" ("Guafu fu" 寡婦賦) for his sister-in-law, in which much of the same melancholy boudoir imagery can be found. Although palace lady plaints were usually set within the claustrophobic space defined by the lover's absence, other treatments of the boudoir were more suggestive in nature. A key counterexample is Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139) "Song of Shared Voices" ("Tongsheng ge" 同聲歌), in which a newlywed bride addresses her husband and describes her boudoir preparations for ensuring that they will enjoy one another to the fullest on their first night together (Chapter 27). This remarkable poem includes mention of the use of erotic pictures as a sexual stimulus and/or instruction manual.

Less frankly erotic are poems that involve a passerby gazing upon the imagined private space from without or crossing into the bedchamber from an outer, public space. In the second of the anonymous "Nineteen Old Poems" ("Gushi shijiu shou" 古詩十九首), the reader's eye is guided from the riverbank to the garden, to the tower, and finally to the sight of a lovely woman in the window who puts out her slender fair hand. A similar scene is encountered in the fifth of the set, though here it is the sorrowful music of an unseen woman that the passerby hears. These *gushi* 古詩 ("old poems," a term later used for verses that did not rigidly observe tonal rules), along with the anonymous *yuefu* poems that shared the same discursive material, inspired poetic imitations (*ni* 擬 or *dai* 代) by writers like Lu Ji and later Bao Zhao 鮑照 (414?–466) and Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), all of whom composed poems about abandoned or neglected women drawing on the same boudoir themes and imagery. Yet, with the rise of salon culture, poems set in the boudoir—even those that were imitations of earlier poems—became increasingly infused with playful voyeurism and the courtier's wit (Rouzer 2001: 117–156). We find this trend in many of the compositions from poets active during the Yongming era (483–493). In the second of his "In Imitation of 'Hard Travels': Eighteen Poems" ("Ni xinglu nan shiba shou" 擬行路難十八首), Bao Zhao uses an incense burner to convey the lady's feelings, focusing attention upon a single object within the boudoir and speaking from the object's perspective. Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499) uses a similar conceit in "On a Lamp" ("Yong deng" 詠燈), though he pulls back from the lamp to reveal the melancholy woman who is contemplating the object. In a more erotic vein, Shen Yue in "The Charm of the Three Wives" ("Sanfu yan" 三婦艷) takes an older *yuefu* theme of three brothers and their wives and hints at the illicit, private pleasures of the youngest wife, who seemingly has no household duties.

As the topos evolved within Liang court poetry, particularly in the hands of poets associated with the Palace Style (*gongti* 宮體), the conventional affect of the woman's melancholy was displaced by a fascination with aesthetic contemplation. For Xiao Gang and other poets of the period, the boudoir provided a space for exploring the uncertain nature of perception, which was foregrounded by how the boudoir was only ever half-lit, whether because of uneven lamplight or because of the moon's shadowy glow (Tian 2007). As with the poets of the Yongming era, poetic attention could be focused on individual objects rather than on the boudoir itself, creating a sense of fragmentation that complemented the scene's flickering half-light.

For the Late Tang poets, who often looked back to the Liang poetic legacy, there was a similar attention to fragmentation and to illusory perception, as can be seen in the *ci* 詞 (song lyrics) of Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (ca. 821–ca. 866), whose "Pusa man" 菩薩蠻

evokes an incense-laden and ornamented dreamspace. Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858), the greatest of the Late Tang poets, constructed opaquely private spaces of dreamlike encounter, divine allusion, and yearning absence. Li Shangyin was often suspected of illicit romantic attachments, given his propensity for either pointedly titling his poems "Untitled" ("Wuti" 無題) or giving them metaphorical titles that lacked an interpretative key. The kinds of romantic contexts that might have informed these poems were made explicit in Tang tales (*xiaoshuo* 小說) from the late eighth and ninth centuries (Chapter 18). Here, the boudoirs often belonged to demimondaines or nonhuman beauties (were-foxes and dragon ladies), allowing the play of romance to be consummated in a way that parodied wedding night rituals.

Finally, something should be said about the male bedroom space, which was infused with a different affective vocabulary. In poems such as the famous first poem of Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263)'s series "Singing My Cares" ("Yong huai shi" 詠懷詩), the speaker is unable to sleep and rises to play his zither. This scenario may result in the speaker leaving the bedroom to pace restlessly outside, as we see in the last of the "Nineteen Old Poems," or to pace within the domestic space, but the poem invariably concludes with the speaker's tears. While the imagery of the female bedroom would come to focus on particular synecdochic objects such as the mirror, the screen, and the bedcover, the male bedchamber was generally more spare, with signifying objects limited to the zither and the moonlight. Both spaces, however, were permeated with a sense of loneliness and sorrow, a desire for companionship and acknowledgment.

Cities

The city is already present, to a certain degree, in both court poems that might make reference to the capital and boudoir poems where the passing stranger might notice the lonely woman in her tower. In particular, it is worth noting that a number of anonymous *yuefu* poems and "old poems" at the end of the Han portray or name an urban space (often either Chang'an or Luoyang) as background to the topos of the stranger or traveler away from home. However, the representation of the city as a literary theme and occasional site, and not simply an incidental setting, preceded this in the grand rhapsodies of the Western Han dynasty. Sima Xiangru created the model for large-scale literary topics with his rhapsodies on the imperial park, but the earliest poem on a city may have been a work of provincial literature: the "Rhapsody on the Shu Metropolis" ("Shudu fu" 蜀都賦), attributed with some uncertainty to Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), which celebrated Chengdu 成都 (Knechtges 1976).

In terms of the imperial capital, one of the earliest surviving works was the "Rhapsody Discussing the Metropolis" ("Lundu fu" 論都賦) by Du Du 杜篤 (d. after 78), which argued for Chang'an over Luoyang as the proper site of the capital. Ban Gu's better-known "Rhapsody on the Two Metropolises" ("Liangdu fu" 兩都賦), divided into sections on the "Western Metropolis" and "Eastern Metropolis," made the argument for Luoyang, capping the rhapsody with five poems on ritual sites within the eastern capital (Knechtges 1990). Zhang Heng would revisit this topic in his "Rhapsody on the Two Capitals" ("Erjing fu" 二京賦), which also treated Chang'an and Luoyang, though with much more urban detail than Ban Gu's polemic. Both Ban Gu and Zhang Heng represented the Western Han capital of Chang'an as an extravagant space, dominated by the overwhelming magnitude of the palatial architecture and hunting preserves, whereas the Eastern Han capital of Luoyang was represented as embodying elegant restraint and ritual propriety. Zhang Heng would also celebrate his home place of Nanyang 南陽 in his "Rhapsody on the Southern Metropolis" ("Nandu fu" 南都賦), which devoted significant attention to catalogues of the local waterways and flora differentiating the space of this southern metropolis from the northern capitals. In the Western Jin, Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305) would seek to outdo both Ban Gu and Zhang Heng by composing the "Rhapsody on the Three Metropolises" ("Sandu fu" 三都賦) on the capitals of the Three Kingdoms of Wei, Shu, and Wu. In Zuo Si's preface, he makes note of how much research has gone into the composition of the rhapsodies, with the result that all the animals, plants, popular traditions, and historical figures of the urban sites are accurately portrayed, unlike the rhapsodies by Ban Gu and Zhang Heng. Lastly, mention should be made of Bao Zhao's "Rhapsody on the Ruined City" ("Wucheng fu" 蕪城賦), which described how moss and weeds have overgrown the ruins of what was once a bustling metropolis, Guangling 廣陵 (modern-day Yangzhou).

The rhapsodic representation of the capital was inherited by the early Tang, with long poems by three of the so-called "Four Talents of Early Tang" (*Chu Tang sijie* 初唐四傑). Lu Zhaolin's 盧照鄰 (ca. 630–ca. 685) "Chang'an: Ancient Mood" ("Chang'an guyi" 長安古意) describes the splendor of Han dynasty Chang'an as a way of examining the present-day capital. His contemporary Luo Binwang 駱賓王 (ca. 619–684?) composed "The Imperial Capital" ("Dijing pian" 帝京篇), which shares the same title as the Tang emperor Taizong's earlier poem-cycle (which was on the imperial residence rather than the capital itself). Of the two poems, Luo Binwang's set is much closer, stylistically, to the grand rhapsodic treatments of the capital. Finally, Wang Bo 王勃 (650–676) also composed on this topic with his shorter, more lyrical "Looking Out from the High Terrace" ("Lin gaotai" 臨高臺), which focuses on the pleasures of the city and peers into the boudoir spaces of bright young things (Owen 1977).

Over the course of the early and medieval period, there were various historical gazetteers and prose accounts of urban spaces that often contained anecdotes and sometimes preserved short poems or other literary texts. One early medieval text on a city was the *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (*Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*, ca. 547) by Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 (fl. sixth century) from the Northern Dynasties. This was a retrospective account of Buddhist monasteries in Luoyang, composed following the destruction of the city at the end of the Northern Wei dynasty (Chapter 29). *Luoyang qielan ji* preserves poems, letters, and anecdotes, and should be considered a literary work in its own right (Jenner 1981; Yang 1984). Similarly, in the latter part of the Tang dynasty, Duan Chengshi 段成式 (d. 863) would compile the *Sita ji* 寺塔記 (*Record of Temples and Pagodas*) to commemorate the Buddhist sites of Chang'an in the aftermath of the Huichang 會昌 suppression (ca. 841–846), the widespread persecution of Buddhism and other foreign religions under Tang Emperor Wuzong 唐武宗 (r. 840–846), while preserving poems and anecdotes about these sites (Ditter 2011).

Of more direct literary significance, however, were the Tang tales that engaged with the urban spaces of Chang'an. Famous tales, such as "Miss Ren" ("Renshi" 任氏) by Shen Jiji 沈既濟 (late eighth century) and "Huo Xiaoyu's Story" ("Huo Xiaoyu zhuan" 霍小玉傳) by Jiang Fang 蔣防 (early ninth century), are set in Chang'an and describe various aspects of ordinary life in the city's wards. However, the tale most closely identified with Chang'an may be Bai Xingjian's 白行簡 (776–826) "Miss Li's Story" ("Li Wa zhuan" 李娃傳), which tells of a Chang'an courtesan and her ruinous affair with a young scholar; the plot moves through various wards and sites in Chang'an (Tsai 2004; see also Chapter 18). Tang tales and other anecdotal collections were an urban literature that thematized the urban space, bringing to life the markets, temples, gardens, and other social spaces of the city. Finally, mention should be made of *Beili zhi* 北里志 (*Record of the Northern Ward*), a late Tang anecdote collection attributed to Sun Qi 孫棨 (fl. 884) that records stories about literati and courtesans in Pingkang Ward 平康里, where the red-light district of Chang'an was located (Des Rotours 1968; Rouzer 2001).

The Frontier

If the city stood as a symbol of imperial power, representing the civilizing process in all of its cultural formations and modalities, the frontier represented the site at which civilization and wilderness stood in military balance, marking the very limits of imperial influence. The frontier was often identified as the northern or northwestern region of the Han empire, even though there were multiple frontiers throughout early and medieval Chinese history and despite the fact that the frontier zone was never a permanent location but subject to the reach of the imperial court. Indeed, much like the court, the frontier was both real and imaginary, simultaneously located in historical experience and constructed within cultural ideology.

While dynastic histories contained accounts of military campaigns against the peoples of the northern frontiers, it was the literary representation of the frontier, in particular "frontier poetry" (*biansai shi* 邊塞詩), that helped shaped its image, sometimes even coloring the experiences of those who were stationed there. It did not matter that many of the poets who wrote about the frontier did not actually visit it in person—this was particularly notable during the Southern Dynasties, though a number of Tang poets who wrote on the frontier may also not have ever been there. As part of the cultural imagination, the frontier defined the spatial limits of Chinese identity through particular vocabularies, images, and affects: the harsh, militant, desolate north versus the soft, cultured, homelike south. Indeed, the frontier as a poetic site was intertwined with the boudoir poem, since the campaigning soldier served as the object of longing of the lonely, neglected woman.

The frontier poem tradition emerged most fully after the founding of empire, though there are early antecedents in *Shijing*, which contains a handful of poems on the historical military campaigns of the Zhou polity against hostile neighbors. The poem "Send Forth the Chariots" ("Chu ju" 出車, *Maoshi* 168) makes mention of wall-building on the northern frontier, erecting defensive fortifications and marking the territorial boundaries between the Zhou kingdom and the Xianyun 獫狁 (probable ancestors of the Xiongnu). The poem "The Changjiang and Han Rivers" ("Jiang Han" 江漢, *Maoshi* 262) recounts Zhou supremacy over the Huai 淮 people to the south, couching the military victory in terms of the Zhou civilizing process, which results in peace throughout the lands.

However, the true beginnings of the frontier poetry tradition may be traced back to *yuefu* poem traditions that take the perspective of the soldier on campaign. One prominent example is "Ballad of Watering Horses in a Ditch by the Great Wall" ("Yin ma changcheng ku xing" 飲馬長城窟行), a family of poems that thematizes wartime experiences on the northern borderlands (Allen 1992: 69–102). Of the two earliest components of this set of poems, one is either of anonymous authorship or attributed to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192), and the other is traditionally attributed to Chen Lin 陳琳 (d. 217). The first poem is not clearly about the frontier, but rather describes the separation of husband and wife, much like other early anonymous poems. The second poem, however, clearly speaks of the hardships of a recruit's life at the frontier while taking up the theme of separation between husband and wife. In later poetic treatments of the theme, we find an accumulation of the language and imagery that would become standard evocations of the frontier space: the Jin poet Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217–278) notes the failure of spring to bring new vegetation and the sorrowful wind that matches the longing heart; the Northern Zhou poet Wang Bao 王褒 (ca. 513–576) describes the thick snow and the frozen waters that would not form waves; versions by Emperor Yang of Sui 隋煬帝 (r. 604–618) and Emperor Taizong of Tang both begin with the sounds of the wind's keening. It is against this harsh landscape that we see the stationed troops, the earthworks and fortifications, the banners, and the beacon fires—representations of the empire as it attempted to colonize and control the frontier.

A number of other *yuefu* titles were associated with the frontier, including some based on melodies attributed to the Western Han musician Li Yannian 李延年 (d. 82 BCE)—a figure who was active during the height of the Han empire's expansion into Central Asia. These were "Mount Long" ("Longtou" 隴頭) and its associated titles, "Waters of Mount Long" ("Longtou shui" 隴頭水) and "Song of Mount Long" ("Longtou yin" 隴頭吟), "Going Out the Passes" (Chu guan" 出關), "Entering the Passes" ("Ru guan" 入關), "Going Out to the Frontier" ("Chu sai" 出塞), and "Snapping the Willow Branch" ("Zhe yangliu" 折楊柳). Although Han compositions so named do not survive, a number of poets from the Southern dynasties composed poems under these titles. "Mount Long" (situated on the modern Gansu border) was especially popular with Liang and Chen dynasty poets, with versions by Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583), Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508–555; Emperor Yuan of Liang 梁元帝, r. 552–555), Jiang Zong 江總 (519–594), Zhang Zhengjian 張正見 (527–575), and Chen Shubao 陳叔寶 (553–604, better known as Chen Houzhu or the

Last Ruler of Chen 陳後主, r. 582–589). Lastly, mention should be made of the anonymous "Poem of Mulan" from the Northern Dynasties ("Mulan shi" 木蘭詩, ca. fourth to sixth century), which fascinatingly transforms a boudoir plaint into a frontier poem, as the (non-Han Chinese) girl heroine, rather than longing for a man, laments that her aged father might be conscripted by the khan and thus chooses to fight in his place.

Frontier poetry reached its height of popularity after the reunification of empire under the Sui and Tang. To a large extent, the frontier remained a product of the literary imagination, drawing upon both older Music Bureau frontier titles and new ones invented during the Tang. Moreover, Tang frontier poems commonly used Han place names and alluded to Han historical figures, which emphasized the textually mediated nature of the frontier representation. We find this reliance on allusion and intertextuality in the frontier poems of Luo Binwang, Lu Zhaolin, Wang Bo, and Yang Jiong 楊炯 (650–after 693)—the aforementioned "Four Talents of the Early Tang." Of these four, only Luo Binwang ever visited the frontier, yet Luo Binwang's frontier poetry is still dominated by inherited frontier typologies (T. Chan 2014).

It was the High Tang that was most often associated with frontier poetry—an association that has much to do with Emperor Xuanzong's expansionist policies, the spread of Central Asian musical traditions into the Tang, and the An Lushan rebellion, which in many ways brought the frontier experience home to the Tang. Many High Tang poets composed frontier poetry, often through the typologies of Music Bureau poetry, but the two poets most closely identified with this tradition were Gao Shi 高適 (716–765) and Cen Shen 岑參 (715–770). Both had served on the frontier: Gao Shi traveled to the northeastern frontier and served under the command of the Tang general Geshu Han 哥舒翰 (d. 757) in Central Asia, and Cen Shen served with the Tang armies campaigning in Central Asia (M. Chan 1978a and 1978b). The language, imagery, and sensibility of the two poets differ considerably, however, with Gao Shi speaking in a forthright, starkly heroic style (as in his "Song of Yan" ["Yange xing" 燕歌行]) and Cen Shen in a stranger, more inventive and idiosyncratic manner (see his "Song of White Snow: Seeing Off Judge Wu Who Was Returning to the Capital" ["Baixue ge: Song Wu panguan gui jing" 白雪歌：送武判官歸京]) (Owen 1981: 151–153, 175–176).

Even as the Tang withdrew from Central Asia in the aftermath of the An Lushan rebellion, interest in frontier poetry remained strong. The familiar tropes of the frontier landscape—the suffering of garrison troops; the desolate space of mountains, rivers, and desert; the bitter wind and unforgiving cold—were elaborated by Mid-Tang and Late Tang poets. The most famous frontier poets of the latter part of the dynasty were Lu Lun 盧綸 (ca. 737–ca. 788) and Li Yi 李益 (748–829), both of whom created vivid representations of the frontier, though the eerie, at times fragmentary, imagery in the frontier poems of Li He 李賀 (790?–816?) and Guanxiu 貫休 (832–912) speak more to the sense of belatedness that pervaded this period and the impossibility of the place that was the frontier.

The sites addressed here not only provide a mapping of literary space as understood through the broader claims of empire and its various hegemonic claims, but mark the places through which subjective identities of literature are fashioned. The court, the boudoir, the city, and the frontier articulate the various ideological dichotomies of the politico-cultural sphere—between public and private, or inside and outside, or male and female—and in this way, define the identities of the emperor, the courtier, the recluse, the wife, the lover, the stranger, the soldier, the barbarian. These sites are not always distinct, as the court may reveal the palace lady's boudoir, the boudoir may be noticed by the stranger in the city, the city may be endangered by the encroaching frontier, and the frontier may be civilized by the court.

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CHAPTER 29

SITES II

WENDY SWARTZ

This chapter surveys sites that were by and large associated with nature and defined in part by their distance from the capital court (urban sanctuaries such as private gardens or temples, roads that led away from the cultural or political center, gentry estates, and mountains and rivers). Writings about these sites are thus often associated with the themes of retreat from court life, personal cultivation, the beauty and mystery of nature, or exile from the capital. The seat of political power and sites in nature, however, converged at times in such a way that these sites were used to reinforce or enhance the authority of imperial power (as with the imperial park or the temples of previous dynastic founders).

Parks and Gardens

Circumscribed, cultivated, or engineered forms of nature came in different sizes, bearing different purposes and significances in early and medieval China. Among the earliest, and certainly the grandest, kind that figured centrally in Chinese literature was the imperial park. The Shanglin Park 上林苑, an estimated 167-kilometer-long hunting preserve used by the Former Han emperors, was the subject or setting of the most famous examples of the epideictic rhapsody (*fu* 賦). Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE) "Rhapsody on the Shanglin Park" ("Shanglin fu" 上林賦) showcases the magnificent pomp and splendor of the emperor's miniaturized domain through a seemingly interminable description of mountains and rivers, flora and fauna, rocks and minerals, terraces and palaces: the imperial park, which seems to have everything, is a synecdoche for the larger empire, which does have everything (on the remonstrance function of the epideictic rhapsody, see also Chapters 28, 30). The comprehensive cataloguing of things and resources characteristic of such Han rhapsodies also had political and economic implications: the ruler's legitimacy is demonstrated by the identification, classification, and taking stock of all things in his empire, which the imperial park represents in microcosm. When read alongside its antecedent and companion piece, "Rhapsody of Sir Vacuous" ("Zixu fu" 子虛賦), which describes what will turn out to be by comparison lesser royal parks in the states of Chu 楚 and Qi 齊, this work also performs the symbolic subjugation of regional cultures under the single authority of the Han imperial center, which ultimately is shown to be sanctioned by the emperor's greater possession: a command of the classics and rituals. In a later work set in the Han imperial park, "Barricade Hunt Rhapsody" 校獵賦 (or "Plume Hunt Rhapsody" ["Yulie fu" 羽獵賦]), Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) describes a militarized hunt that took place in 10 BCE intended to awe envoys from Central Asia through lengthy lists of game animals from land and sea, and his tribute culminates in a glorification of the sage-like emperor, whose civilizing influence spreads to neighboring tribes (Knechtges 1976: 63–80).

Large gentry estates in early medieval China conveyed a significant agricultural and economic utility: the largest were self-sufficient and equipped to carry out a complete set of enterprises ranging from farming and clothes-making to paper manufacturing. In addition, they at times functioned as pleasure parks for the estate owners and their associates, making them a fertile site of literary production. For instance, Shi Chong's 石崇 (249–300) "Golden Valley Garden" 金谷園 served as the setting for a lavish party in 296, during which his guests toured the grounds, climbing hills or sitting by the stream, listening to music or composing poems (Knechtges 2014: 530–34). In the only poem remaining from this occasion, Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300) describes a scene of winding hills and a meandering stream, a limpid pond and hanging willows, roaring rapids and sounds of musical instruments, and concludes with a meditation characteristic of excursion poetry on the impermanence of things.

In another example, the Shining 始寧 Estate of the great landscape poet Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) became a significant site and source of his poetic meditations on withdrawal from court life and communion with nature. His monumental work about his estate, "Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains" ("Shanju fu" 山居賦), describes touring the various mountains and waters on his property and lists the animal, vegetal, and herbal varieties found therein, thereby appropriating the trope (developed by Han court rhapsodists on behalf of the ruler) of cataloguing and proclaiming the emperor's sovereignty over all things in his land. In Xie Lingyun's estate, there were even parks and gardens designed to replicate the actual sites of Buddha's sermons, such as Deer Park and the mango grove of Amrapāli, in order to create the right environment for the voice of Buddha to be carried on by Xie's monk guests in their sermons, all of which presumably help channel a complete, organic experience of Buddhist learning, perhaps even a facsimile of the original lessons (Swartz 2015).

Some of the recurring themes associated with literati parks and gardens can be seen in a famous Tang example, *Wangchuan ji* 輞川集 (*Wang River Collection*) by Wang Wei 王維 (699 or 701–761) and Pei Di 裴迪 (b. 716): the leisure and freedom gained in a retreat from court life, an aesthetic appraisal of natural scenes and things, and a religious or otherwise spiritual awakening (Yu 1980: 165–69, 201–205; Warner 2005: 57–72). In a country villa previously owned by the Early Tang court poet Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (ca. 656–712), the new owner Wang Wei composed quatrains to mark each of the twenty notable sites on his estate. In the best-known quatrain, "Deer Fence" ("Luzhai" 鹿柴), *kong* 空, a term saturated with Buddhist significations, describes a mountain in terms of an emptiness of a physical kind (being devoid of human appearance) as well as of a spiritual order (being devoid of human concerns). Poetic attention, then, is directed to the play between the dark moss in the deep woods and the back cast light that illuminates the green moss again at dusk, bringing to the foreground Wang Wei's trademark interests in the repetition of natural cycles or events, a second gaze or observation, a nature that is in constant flux, and the limitations of perception (Chapter 27).

Gardens were frequently the focal point in medieval writings on reclusion as a source of sustenance or a sanctuary from worldly concerns. The first major poet to write extensively about his rustic garden in these contexts was the recluse-farmer Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427), giving rise to the classification of his style as "fields and gardens poetry" (*tianyuan shi* 田園詩) (Chapters 27, 30). Throughout his writings, the garden from which he plucks greens and in which he strolls daily for pleasure symbolized a claim of independence from office, both economically and emotionally. Conversely, the lack of harvest described in some of his works illustrated the material hardships of reclusion (Swartz 2008).

In the Tang, the literati garden became a private space in which the owner could control and shape a miniaturized version of nature to his will and taste (Owen 1996: 83–106). Private urban gardens came to represent for their owners a compromise between the attraction of eremitism and the demands of social responsibility. For instance, Bai Juyi's 白居易 (772–846) private garden provided the grounds for him to develop his concept of "middle-of-the-road reclusion" (*zhong yin* 中隱) in a number of poems. The contents of such gardens were the subject of many poems and essays. The most interesting was the large rock, which inspired collection and connoisseurship (the uglier and weirder the better). The aesthetic obsession with a material object such as the rock, which happened to be an expensive habit to maintain (enormous rocks transported from the south to the north required the toil of many laborers), gave rise to discourses in the Tang and Song on the fetishism of rocks and its moral implications. Bai Juyi's "Account of the Lake Tai Rock" ("Taihu shi ji" 太湖石記) defends the minister Niu Sengru's 牛僧儒 (780–ca. 848) addiction to rock collecting by likening the recognition of a good rock to the discernment of human talent. In contrast, the Song scholar Wen Tong 文同 (1018–1079) condemned Niu's political rival Li Deyu 李德裕 (787–850) for his obsession with rocks, which was judged to be the root cause of his self-centeredness and broader official corruption (Yang 2003:11–50; 91–148).

TEMPLES

The earliest literature associated with temples had ritual and religious significance. Odes from the oldest layer of *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) were composed within the context of the ancestral temple. The Zhou Hymns 周頌 (*Maoshi* 266–296) were addressed to the Zhou ancestors in dynastic rituals and were sung as liturgies that both described and enacted the sacrificial rites. The main tropes (some of which are interconnected) are glorification of the Zhou ancestors (e.g., *Maoshi* 268, 285), supplication for the continuity of rule and injunction to descendants to keep in line (e.g., *Maoshi* 267, 270), and preparation for or performance of sacrifices (e.g., *Maoshi* 266, 272, 278, 290). Some hymns were performed in the temple during the inauguration of a new king (*Maoshi* 286, 287, 288), whereas others with a strong martial theme seem to enact ritually the Zhou conquest of the Shang (*Maoshi* 271, 285, 293, 294, 295, 296) (Shaughnessy 1997: 165–195; Kern 2010: 22–28).

The worship of deities in suburban temples also occasioned the composition of ritual songs. In an early case, Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) commissioned "Songs for the Suburban Sacrifices" ("Jiaosi ge" 郊祀歌) around the same time he instituted sacrificial rites to Sovereign Earth 后土 and Grand Unity 太乙. In the nineteen pieces preserved in *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*), invocations are made to deities such as the Five Emperors 五帝 (each associated with one of the Five Phases and a direction) to partake of the sacrificial offerings and to confer their blessings; contemporary auspicious occurrences, such as the discovery of a holy tripod (113 BCE) and the capture of a white unicorn (122 BCE), are commemorated (Birrell 1988: 29–44).

Temples dedicated to dynastic founders or famous historical personages inspired pilgrimages and commemorative writings. An especially good example is "Making Offerings at the Temple of the Han Exalted Emperor" ("Han Gao miao sai shen" 漢高廟賽神) by the Liang 梁 prince Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551, later Emperor Jianwen 梁簡文帝, r. 549–551) and the five matching poems by his principal courtiers, including Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583) and Yu Jianwu 庾肩吾 (ca. 487–551), which memorialized a visit to a temple dedicated to Liu Bang. More than simply paying tribute to the founder of the Han Dynasty in a long-established autumn rite, this ritual performance and its literary commemoration represented a symbolic act of tapping into the political capital of the great former dynasty to bolster the legitimacy of the new Liang dynasty (Tian 2014: 256–266). Claims of legitimate inheritance of a certain tradition were made on a smaller scale than dynastic rule. Visiting shrines erected for important historical figures and documenting the event allowed one to identify with a particular figure of the past and to write oneself into the cultural memory surrounding that figure. For instance, with the poem "The Minister of Shu" ("Shu xiang" 蜀相), which was composed upon a visit to the Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234) shrine in Chengdu 成都, the failed official Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) celebrated the famous minister and positioned himself as an heir to the former's brand of loyalty, if not his heroism.

Poems commemorating visits to Buddhist temples, a burgeoning literary subgenre in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, quickly multiplied over the course of the medieval period. Following the introduction of Buddhism to China in the second century, there was a steady growth in the number of temples erected, with periods of rapid increases under certain imperial patrons during the medieval period. For instance, during the reign of Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502–549), over five hundred Buddhist temples and monasteries were built or renovated from residences in the capital region. Before the large-scale persecution of Buddhism by Emperor Wuzong of Tang 唐武宗 (r. 840–846), a fervent Daoist, in 845, the number of temples in just the two capital cities of Chang'an and Luoyang had reached many thousands. The search for a religious experience, spiritual elevation, serenity, beautiful scenery, or plain amusement on temple grounds prompted numerous occasional poems, resulting in a large body of literature on temple visits. The tenth-century anthology of medieval literature *Wenyuan yinghua*文苑英華 (*The Flower of the Garden of Letters*) includes seven chapters (233–239) of poems on Buddhist temples and hermitages. Some of the most famous examples come from the brush of Wang Wei, a lay Buddhist whose pilgrimages to mountain temples, from quest to arrival at a serene setting to meditation or insight, are recorded in oft-anthologized poems such as "Visiting the Temple of Gathered Fragrance" ("Guo Xiangji si" 過香積寺) and "Ascending to the Temple of Awakening" ("Deng Bianjue si" 登辨覺寺). Wang's contemporary Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689–740) also marked his visits to mountain temples or the dwellings of his monk friends with poems that blend descriptions of the natural scene with Buddhist images, symbols, or concepts, thereby infusing the landscape with religious hues characteristic of High Tang poems of this subgenre (Kroll 1981: 117–130).

Temples functioned not only as religious sanctuaries but also as cultural centers, concrete embodiments of a society's cultural memory. When the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–534) official Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 (fl. sixth century) set out to compile a memoir commemorating the former capital city of Luoyang, once in full splendor but in ruins by the time he was writing, he anchored his account of the city life (architecture, history and legends, political events, social figures, and economic conditions) with descriptions of its major Buddhist temples. His *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (*Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang,* ca. 547) is the earliest extant account of a Chinese city, providing valuable information about this critical place and transitional time in early medieval Chinese history (Chapter 28).

Temples, whether Buddhist or Daoist, became over the course of the medieval period contested sites where political, economic, or ideological battles were waged. The rise and fall of the fortunes of temples of one orientation or another often depended on the religious beliefs or financial needs of the emperor or other important patrons. Among the likely motivations for Emperor Wuzong's persecution of the Buddhist establishment, chief was a shortfall in state revenues: secularizing and reclaiming the extensive landholdings of Buddhist temples was an obvious solution, since the strategy had worked a number of times in the fifth and sixth centuries. A well-known narrative poem by Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824), "The Girl of Mount Hua" ("Huashan nü" 華山女), sardonically recounts the competing strategies by Buddhist and Daoist temples to attract patrons. The poem is set during a period when Buddhism was ascendant, a phenomenon that Han Yu attributes in no small measure to their sermons that scared people with notions of karma and retribution. Daoist temples had very little business until a pretty girl from Mount Hua came along, dolled up in heavy makeup and Daoist garb, to steal from Buddhist temples all their patrons, who now shed their gold and jade ornaments for her.

Urban temples provided a study in contrast between the serenity of the temple grounds and the clamor of the surrounding city life. A notable example is "On the Temple of Chan Wisdom in Yangzhou" ("Ti Yangzhou Chanzhi si" 題揚州禪智寺) by the Late Tang poet Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852). The poet depicts a twilight scene in which the only audible sounds come from nature (a cicada's buzzing, the wind's whistle), a tranquility displacing the sounds of musical entertainment, familiar to the poet, that can be heard down the street in a city known for its many pleasures.

Not all poems set in temples convey a mood of serenity. Temples were a site of disappointment for some. The medieval tradition for recent examination graduates to throw a party at a Buddhist or Daoist temple in the capital leaves traces that embitter those who did not or could never qualify. In a remarkable example by the best-known poetess from the Tang, "Visiting the Southern Tower of the Exalted Truth Temple, Seeing Where Recent Graduates of the Examination Signed Their Names" ("You Chongzhen guan nanlou du xin jidi timing chu" 游崇真觀南樓睹新及第題名處), Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 (844–868) describes her envy of the successful candidates who left inscriptions of their names at the temple and her frustration over the fact that her sex was excluded from taking the examination ("I regret that my silk dress conceals my poetic lines" 自恨羅衣掩詩句; Chapter 7).

Mountains and Rivers

Throughout Chinese history, mountains were viewed as sites of numinous power and gateways to the divine. Emperors ascended sacred mountains to perform sacrifices; for instance, the processions of the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 (r. 221–210 BCE) and Emperor Wu of Han to Mount Tai 泰山 and the nearby Mount Liangfu 梁父 to perform the Feng 封 and Shan 禪 sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, respectively, were a common reference in Chinese texts. Great rivers, considered to be powerful forces of nature and cradles of civilization in an agrarian society, were also designated for sacrificial offerings, a cultic practice standardized by the First Emperor. Both mountains and rivers were regarded as the residences, even incarnations, of deities, and supernatural encounters at such sites between a human and a deity, often female and sometimes sexual, were common scenes in literature (Chapter 30).

Specific mountains and rivers have figured extensively in literature and lore and are thus imbued with specific cultural or historical meanings. For example, the "Five Marchmounts" (*Wuyue* 五嶽), associated with the imperial cult, was a collective term for the most sacred mountains in China, the most exalted being the aforementioned Mount Tai in the east, where things originated. Mount Kunlun 崑崙山, home to the Queen Mother of the West 西王母, was associated with immortality and transcendence, since its location in the far west is where the sun sets and where the earth connects to the heavens (Lewis 2006: 258–259). An allusion to the Xiang River 湘江, where the two wives of the sage-king Shun 舜 were said to have died from grief after the death of their husband, could signify pain and devotion.

Early textual models of the world used mountains and rivers (or seas) as basic structuring elements. The "Tribute of Yu" ("Yu gong" 禹貢) chapter of *Shangshu* 尚書(*Classic of Documents*) describes the journey of the sage-king Yu 禹 to tame the great flood that inundated China and to assess the soil of each region to determine appropriate tribute. It begins with how he divided the land into regions, tracked through mountains, and marked the courses of rivers. In the earliest cosmography of China, *Shan hai jing* 山海經 (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*, ca. third century BCE), these two geographic features demarcate space—as chains of mountains or as land in between seas that is filled by flora and fauna, demigods, strange creatures, and foreign peoples—in a scheme of concentric zones that correlate with a gradual decline as one moves away from the center of civilization. In its earliest reception, this text was regarded as a geographical work by some and dismissed as absurdity by others (hybrid beasts such as a fish with a snake's tail resembling an ox, and the omens they supposedly signal or diseases they are said to cure, fill the world of *Shan hai jing*). Still others saw it as a source of political or cultural power: proper knowledge of the esoteric could well position a courtier to aid the emperor in governing the empire (Campany 1996: 133–137). And many others viewed it as a fascinating book (with both text and images) of all things strange. For example, Tao Yuanming wrote thirteen poems for the series "On Reading the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*" ("Du *Shan hai jing*" 讀山海經), a testament to the poet's imaginary journey through the world mapped by this classic.

Mountains and rivers have various distinct meanings and applications as a compound idea. In early medieval discourse, *shanchuan* 山川 (mountains and streams) had geopolitical implications: the phrase not only named geographical features of the land, but was also a marker of political sovereignty, denoting territorial space that can be divided and occupied. In contrast, *shanshui* 山水 (mountains and waters) came to signify a site for roaming in the natural landscape, for pleasure or as an expression of eremitic values, and in many cases became a shorthand for untamed nature (Cheng 2007: 193–203). There is a large body of texts that are considered to be *shanshui* literature: they range from rhapsodies and poems that depict the landscape to travelogues and geographic texts that describe features of various mountains and waters.

The early development of *shanshui* poetry is associated with reclusion or quietist ideals (Chapter 30). Radical changes had taken place in the conception of nature by early medieval times: in the world of *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*), nature was portrayed as inhospitable and dangerous for the prince in "Summoning the Recluse" ("Zhao yinshi" 招隱士), but it would be embraced as a safe haven from the world of human affairs in a poem of the same title by the Western Jin poet Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305). *Shanshui* not only represented a physical space situated apart and far from the court, but also a conceptual space defined by freedom from the restrictions and tedium of official life as well as safety from the vicissitudes of politics, if only temporarily. Xie Lingyun, generally considered to be the patriarch of *shanshui* poetry and a most enthusiastic sightseer, wrote extensively about his tours of mountains and waters on his estate and beyond during his periods of exile or withdrawal from court and developed an influential poetic habit of seeing both philosophical and personal significance in nature's workings. His *shanshui* works include over forty poems (nearly half of his extant poetic collection), a rhapsody of approximately ten thousand characters (the aforementioned "Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains"), and a travelogue detailing the locations and features of various mountains he had visited in the south, "A Record of My Tours of Famous Mountains" ("You mingshan zhi" 遊名山志). Later developments of *shanshui* poetry in the Tang merged with a farmstead style that can be traced back to Tao Yuanming, creating a rich repertoire of images, themes, and rhetorical strategies for the discourse on nature and reclusion. The best-known writers of this type of nature poetry, such as Meng Haoran, Wang Wei, and Chu Guangxi 儲光羲 (ca. 706–ca. 762), represented nature as affording the frustrated or tired courtier a sense of simplicity, leisure, and detachment (Owen 1981: 27–51, 63–70, 71–88).

Mountains and rivers were as much a sanctuary for withdrawn men as they were a staging area for ambitious ones. During the medieval period, recluses "hiding" in nature became sought-after commodities, some gladly trading their lofty position for an official post. In such cases, mountains and rivers served as the best place from which one could enter, rather than escape, the political sphere. This practice first took shape during the Wei and Jin eras and gained popularity in the Tang, earning the label of "Zhongnan shortcut" (*Zhongnan jiejing* 終南捷徑): the quickest path to the court is through Mount Zhongnan, home to many recluses. A famous example is the Tang poet Li Bo 李白 (701–762), who was known as one of the Six Recluses of Zhuxi during his youth but sought patronage for office throughout his life. He eventually gained an audience with the emperor and was appointed to the Hanlin Academy, thereby circumventing normal bureaucratic channels (Swartz 2008: 70–71).

During the early medieval period, *shanshui* also became the objects of the aesthetic gaze and philosophical meditation. Poets such as those on the famous Lanting 蘭亭 outing in 353 wrote in awe of nature's many wonders: mountains and waters and all that dwell in and around the "two marvels" (*er qi* 二奇), as one poet called them. A growing obsession with nature took hold of early medieval writers; it was expressed physically by frequent excursions (group or solitary), and literarily by poetic observations of details in the natural world and contemplation of their significance. Xi Kang 嵇康 (or Ji Kang, ca. 223–ca. 262) was one of the earliest poets to treat nature and its working as the embodiment of the Dao in a set of tetrasyllabic poems 四言詩. Nature yields revelation of the patterns and laws that govern all living things, and therein lie the workings of the Mysterious Dao. *Shanshui* provided material access to this Mystery. For Xi Kang and poets who wrote in this tradition, such as the Lanting poets—including Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314–371), Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361), and Xie An 謝安 (320–385)—and Xie Lingyun, reading the landscape, decoding nature's workings, and understanding their significance involved using interpretive keys, most notably concepts from arcane learning or metaphysical learning (*xuanxue* 玄學), an admixture of early medieval Lao-Zhuang and Buddhist thought.

THE ROAD

In classical Chinese literature, the road disproportionally functioned as a marker that established distance, rather than bridged it; that divided people, rather than connected them. The road figured most prominently in poems on parting, official missions or military campaigns, and exile. Through such usages, this site became imbued with the sentiments of sadness, weariness, and frustration. Yet the road was not only a physical passageway, commonly designated by the terms *lu* 路 or *tu* 途, but also a trope for the path to enlightenment: the term *dao* 道 signified a physical way as well as a spiritual one. The Dao, or Way, represented the ultimate attainment of the ethical or spiritual journeys as prescribed by texts of various persuasions, including those from the Confucian, Daoist, and Chinese Buddhist traditions (Graham 1989).

In parting poems, the road signaled a trajectory that led one away from another, pointing from here (the site of parting) to there (destination of the traveler, often away from the capital). One of the most interesting examples comes from the Early Tang poet Wang Bo 王勃 (649–676). In "To Defender Du, On His Way to Assume a Post in Shuzhou" ("Du shaofu zhi ren Shuzhou" 杜少府之任蜀州), Wang tries to rally his friend's spirit by bidding them both not to cry like children at the crossroad, from which each will go in different directions. In Wang Wei's famous parting poem "Sending Off Yuan the Second on His Mission to Anxi" ("Song Yuan er shi Anxi" 送元二使安西), Yang Pass 陽關 in the far northwest is represented as leading his friend from the security of a social network in the Chinese sphere to aloneness in alien territory (Chapter 27). The road is often described as long and difficult in a subgenre related to parting poetry, poems written while separated. In an early example, the first of the "Nineteen Old Poems" ("Gushi shijiu shou" 古詩十九首), the one who is left behind laments the great distance (symbolically and hyperbolically set at 10,000 leagues) paved by prohibitive roads that separate her and her loved one. In other examples of separation poetry, the road is depicted as impossible for man to traverse. Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) wishes he could send a message to a loved one in the south along with a migrating goose in the first of his "Miscellaneous Poems" ("Zashi" 雜詩). Xie Tiao 謝脁 (464–499) longs for the patron and friends he recently left behind in Jingzhou and laments that he sees only paths for birds between him and his friends in "Traveling Down to the Capital on a Temporary Assignment, Starting Out at Night from Xinlin and Reaching the Capital City: Presented to Colleagues at the Western Garrison" ("Zan shi xia du ye fa Xinlin zhi jingyi zeng xifu tongliao" 暫使下都夜發新林至京邑贈西府同僚).

In poems by civil officials sent on government missions, the road traveled or to be traveled often evoked comment. In an example from one of the most famous envoys in early medieval China, "In Imitation of 'Singing My Cares', Tenth Poem" ("Ni 'Yong huai' qi shi" 擬詠懷其十), Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581), who was sent to the Western Wei 西魏 capital of Chang'an by the Liang court in the south, likens himself to the Han general Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BCE), who left through the Yang Pass to fight the Xiongnu in Central Asia and never again returned to China (Chapters 27, 30). Long stretches of roads or passes were a common feature in frontier or war poetry, symbolizing incessant traveling or continuous campaign. A High Tang poet known for frontier verse (Chapter 28), Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 690–ca. 756), wrote poignantly about the hardships of war, especially when the present military lacked talent as great as the Han generals, in "Going Out to the Frontier" ("Chu sai" 出塞): soldiers who marched 10,000 leagues through the frontier passes have not returned. In an earlier example, "Joining the Army" ("Cong jun shi" 從軍詩), Wang Can 王粲 (177–217) describes trudging along seemingly endless roads covered with weeds and witnessing the ravages of war while following the warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) on a military campaign against the state of Wu 吳. In contrast to Wang Changling's critique, Wang Can's poem celebrates the military efforts of Cao Cao to unify China and create a "happy land" for all.

The road that leads away from the capital was often described as long and arduous in exile poetry. One of the earliest examples is Cao Zhi's "Presented to Cao Biao, The Prince of Baima" ("Zeng Baima wang Biao" 贈白馬王彪). As Cao Zhi leaves the capital, he grieves over the recent assassination of one brother and the forced separation from another, implicitly holding his eldest brother Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) (Emperor Wen of Wei 魏文帝, r. 220–226) responsible in both cases. Cao Zhi tarries and wavers in a desolate landscape, reluctant to leave his former home, yet he must bitterly look ahead to the long road to his fief. In a variation on the theme of exile poetry, a former official of the vanquished state of Wu, Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303), describes his journey to the Jin 晉 capital in "Poems Written on the Road to Luoyang" ("Fu Luo dao zhong zuo shi" 赴洛道中作詩), emphasizing the anguish and pain he felt over leaving his native south. In these poems the road is depicted as long, barren, and unpopulated by other travelers, which sets into relief the sentiments of desolation and alienation the poet expresses in the poems.

Long journeys on the road for officials often found expression in travel writings in longer form, such as the rhapsody and the diary. In the three examples of travel rhapsodies included in the *Wen xuan* 文選, the influential sixth-century anthology of refined literature, the writers Ban Biao 班彪 (3–54), his daughter Ban Zhao 班昭 (fl. 90s–110s; also known as Cao Dagu 曹大家), and Pan Yue describe in detail the historical sites each encountered, as well as the resultant meditations on the past and their relevance to the present. The earliest extant travel journal, "Diary of My Coming to the South" 來南錄 (809) by Li Ao 李翺 (774–836), maps the various geographical sites the sojourning official and his family traversed, even documenting in certain entries the distance in leagues traveled. Although Li recounts his travails (e.g., his illness, his wife's illness, the birth of their daughter en route), his travel diary does not offer much description of scene or observation of people, events, and things, features that would become commonplace in examples of the genre from the Southern Song onwards (Strassberg 1994: 127–131).

The road figured as a crucial narrative element in medieval tales, a prose genre that had by the eighth and ninth centuries acquired a distinct set of narrative formulas and themes that allowed writers to adapt, vary, and play with their conventions. One common formula consisted of four parts (encounter, interaction, separation, and discovery) and two main characters (traveler, stranger). A typical story collected in a late-tenth-century anthology of 500 scrolls, *Taiping guang ji* 太平廣記 (*Extensive Records from the Taiping Reign*), might recount how a young scholar, who has recently failed his examinations, is journeying home. He strays from the road and meets a stranger that is more than meets the eye: he might discover after their parting that the beautiful woman he had spent the night with was in fact a ghost, an animal, or a fabulous creature. The would-be scholar-official made good protagonists for such tales, since they constituted liminal figures, being between commoner and official, and situated between home and capital. And the road became an apt vehicle for the medieval writer to stage this liminality, for it could be believably represented to connect this world to the other (Allen 2014: 119–198).

Metaphoric renderings of the way appear throughout classical Chinese literature. One of the earliest instances blends the physical meaning with the symbolic one: in *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*), the second Yang (unbroken) line statement of Hexagram 10, "Treading" 履, describes the even and level way of the recluse, signifying both a path free from dangerous obstacles and the Dao. Writers could indicate disorientation or error in one's way, so to speak, with language describing the state of being lost on a road, meant to be taken figuratively. Significant examples include the fifth poem in the sequence "Singing of My Cares" 詠懷 by Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263), who cryptically wrote about losing one's way and feeling bewilderment during the power struggles between the reigning Cao family and the insurgent Sima 司馬 clan during the Wei-Jin transition, and Tao Yuanming's "Verses on Returning Home" ("Guiqulai xi ci" 歸去來兮辭), a work that celebrates returning to rustic reclusion after previously traveling down the wrong road (of officialdom).

The medieval period represented one of the most remarkable growth spurts in Chinese literary history. It witnessed the formation and development of new genres (e.g., rhapsody, travel diary, short tale), new topics (e.g., visiting a Buddhist or Daoist temple, the culture surrounding the civil service examinations, various forms of reclusion and detachment), and new repertoires (e.g., discourses on nature, the strange or otherworldly). These developments were often tied to particular sites, which over time became infused with certain themes, images, and sentiments. If place has no meaning until it is populated, then meanings become intelligible once they are read within the context of specific sites. The four sites treated in this chapter served as setting, source, or subject for a wealth of literary writings that meditated on the various facets of nature vis-à-vis the capital and what it represented. Themes of center and periphery, power and authority, withdrawal and quietism, the orthodox and the strange were richly explored in works set or represented in these four sites.

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CHAPTER 30

FIGURES

WAI-YEE LI

THE temporal and spatial categories in the last three chapters cannot be conceptualized without reference to the range of human actors involved. We will survey the gallery of figures that come up most frequently, exploring when, where, how, and to what ends certain figures appear, recur, change, or achieve typicality, which often in turn breeds reversals and transformations. Historical changes, generic differences, and contexts of composition and communication determine the distinctions within the broad categories presented here. The same image may function quite differently depending on whether it is generated by philosophical disputation, historical narration, fictional elaboration, or lyrical self-expression. Our goal is to explore the recurrent and evolving concerns of early and medieval Chinese literature. What are the dimensions of human experience addressed? To ameliorate the inherent risk of generalization, we will keep historical specificity within view as we focus on three partially overlapping axes: political power, desire, and transcendence or otherness.

POLITICAL POWER

The prototype of the ideal ruler first appears in ritual poetry and proclamations. *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*, ca. tenth or eleventh century to sixth century BCE) contains many works eulogizing the great destiny of Zhou (ca. 1046–256 BCE) and praising its virtuous ancestors. "Giving Birth to the People" ("Sheng min" 生民, *Maoshi* 245), for example, establishes Lord Millet as some sort of agricultural deity who initiates the sacrifice for the bounty of the land. Early Zhou leaders are celebrated as settlers and builders rather than conquerors. Often linked to verbs of observation and deliberation, they seem to exercise authority by "being" rather than "acting" (*Maoshi* 237, 250). The idealized King Wen of Zhou 周文王 (twelfth century BCE), for example, does not actively intervene, acting almost like a conduit for the will of heaven or "the god on high" (*shangdi* 上帝) in "Glorious" ("Huangyi" 皇矣, *Maoshi* 241). When he does act, he is "assiduous" 亹亹 (*Maoshi* 235) and "vigilant and careful" 小心翼翼 (*Maoshi* 236). Ideal kingship in *Shijing* is not tied to heroism but to moral exemplarity radiating from perfected relations within the family and the lineage. Military victories, including the Zhou conquest of Yin Shang (ca. 1300–1046 BCE), are celebrated through the grand preparation for war and the postwar celebration; the battle itself is treated cursorily or passed over in silence (*Maoshi* 236, 241)—this "ellipsis of battle" may indicate that collective destiny is deemed more important than individual heroism (Wang 1975; Keightley 2014: 253–281).

Idealized images of early Zhou leaders establish the memory of Zhou greatness and facilitate critique of present failures. "August" ("Dang" 蕩, *Maoshi* 255), for example, is presented as King Wen's harangue of the last Shang king, although most commentators believe that it is directed against the troubled reign of King Li of Zhou 周厲王 (r. ca. 877–841 BCE). The analogy is confirmed in the concluding image of the mirror: "The mirror for Yin [Shang] is not far off:/It is to be found in the age of the last Xia ruler" 殷鑒不遠, 在夏后之世. If the last Shang king should heed the dire example of the last Xia king (d. ca. 1600 BCE), so too should the reigning Zhou ruler see his own failures mirrored in the fall of Shang. While the glory of Zhou ancestors and early Zhou kings is imagined across temporal distance as affirmation of Zhou's heavenly mandate and historical destiny, the praise of a contemporary ruler sometimes betrays a sense of conscious exaggeration. Such is the case with poems extolling the achievements of King Xuan's 宣王 (r. 827–782 BCE) reign. As the son and the father of two disastrous rulers (King Li and King You 幽王 [r. 782–771 BCE]), King Xuan is supposed to have led an interregnum of dynastic revival. The poems praising his reign (*Maoshi* 168, 177, 178, 262, 263), however, contain details that suggest a more precarious and embattled situation for Zhou. Political legitimation can thus encompass a range of rhetorical positions.

The idealization of King Wen goes beyond Zhou propaganda. He becomes a cultural ideal invoked in Masters Literature and Han anecdote collections, justifying diverse positions from Confucius's filiation to the great tradition (*Analects* [*Lunyu* 論語 ca. fourth to second century BCE] 9.5) and the importance of a ruler's sharing his pleasures with his people (*Mencius* [*Mengzi* 孟子], fourth century BCE, 1A.2, citing *Maoshi* 242) to the validation of universal love and the existence of ghosts and spirits (*Mozi* 墨子 4, 31, citing *Maoshi* 235). Later eulogies of rulers aspired to the same moral authority but often failed to retain credibility beyond the duration of political power, as in the case of Li Si's 李斯 (d. 208 BCE) steles glorifying the First Qin emperor's 秦始皇 (r. 221–210 BCE) achievements (*Shiji* 6.244–52, 261–62) or the countless panegyrics praising monarchs in later periods, although they may be admired for their formal excellence. The Feng 封 and the Shan 禪 sacrifices (sacrifices to heaven and earth), the ultimate ritual justification of rulership, were sometimes the subject of implicit debate. Guan Zhong 管仲 dissuades Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685–643 BCE) from the ambition to conduct them in *Guanzi* 管子 (ca. fourth to third century BCE). The Han poet Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE) urges Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) to perform them but combines flattery with injunctions of moral vigilance (*Shiji* 117.3063–72), while Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) is openly critical of the emperor's megalomaniac delusions in his chapter devoted to these sacrifices (*Shiji* 28). Even explicit recommendation of the sacrifices, such as Yang Xiong's 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) "Castigating Qin Excesses and Glorifying Xin"

("Ju Qin mei Xin" 劇秦美新, composed to legitimize Wang Mang 王莽 [45 BCE–23 CE], whose Xin Dynasty [9–23] replaced the Han), or Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) "Extending the Constant Rule" ("Dianyin" 典引), which eulogizes Han rule, should not be dismissed as mere sycophancy. Embedded therein are political ideals wishfully projected on a new or newly resurgent regime.

Myths of dynastic origins that confer heavenly mandate on rulers, found in *Shijing*, are elaborated in Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*). Ancestresses have pseudo-sexual union with divine beings and give birth to founders of dynasties; their stories are also told in *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (*Biographies of Notable Women*, first century BCE) compiled by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE). Supernatural signs of divine favor become a staple in accounts of rulers (especially dynastic founders) in historical writings and philosophical treatises, even though in some cases there is room to suspect irony (as in the accounts of the Han founder Liu Bang 劉邦 [r. 206–195 BCE] in *Shiji*). There is concomitant vilification of last rulers of failing dynasties (often by their successors). Zhòu 紂, the last Shang king, along with King You and King Li at the end of the Western Zhou, are often held up as counterexamples in Masters Literature and historical writings. More mundane anecdotes that function to burnish a ruler's image (e.g., Emperor Taizong of Tang 唐太宗, r. 626–649) are common in later periods (Chapter 28).

"Heaven's mandate is not constant" 天命靡常 (*Maoshi* 235): the transferral of "heaven's mandate" is the concern of various genres that urge a new ruler's accession or justify a military expedition against a leader in power, including the "memorial to the throne" (subdivided into *zhang* 章 or *biao* 表 according to the occasions of writing), "submission" (*zou* 奏), "opinion or discursive essay" (*yi* 議), and "military proclamation" (*xi* 檄, literally "haranguing revelation"). The abdication of the last Han emperor (r. 189–220) and the accession of Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) as the first Wei emperor (r. 220–226), for example, were facilitated by a rich body of writings presenting the transition as inevitable, including the repeated performance of "the rhetoric of refusal" by Cao Pi (Knechtges 2005). The formal castigation of one's foe, even when it involves multiple lies, may gain lasting fame on the strength of its rhetorical sweep, as in the case of Lü Xiang's 呂相 letter cutting off Jin's ties with Qin (dated to 578 BCE) in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*, ca. fourth century BCE; Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016: 2:800–807). The later genre of the "military proclamation" is likewise based on the polarity of good and evil. Chen Lin 陳琳 (d. 217) composed one on the crimes of the warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) on behalf of another warlord, Yuan Shao 袁紹 (154–202), and sent it to Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223), yet another contender for power. When Chen Lin later joined Cao Cao's camp, he explained his composition as involuntary, for, being detained by Yuan Shao, he was like "an arrow on a bowstring that could not but fly." The Tang poet Luo Binwang 駱賓王 (ca. 619–684?) wrote a military proclamation denouncing Empress Wu 武后 (624–705, r. 690–705) as a ruthless usurper in support of Li Jingye's 李敬業 (636–684) abortive insurrection. Insincerity or futility is no barrier against literary fame; both pieces are valued for the apparent moral clarity of their vision.

Discourses of power dwell on good rulers and bad rulers. Rulers as poets and literary patrons participate in, yet also exist somewhat beyond, such discourses. Immersion in fine writings, especially sensuous diction and romantic themes, is linked to obliviousness to duty and dynastic decadence. Such is the conventional representation of the court of Chen Shubao 陳叔寶 or Chen Houzhu 陳後主 (553–604, r. 582–89), the poet who was also the last ruler of the short-lived Chen dynasty (557–589). The merging of aesthetics and politics is remembered in more positive terms with the literary circle that flourished around the Cao ruling family of the Wei kingdom at Ye 鄴 (ca. 200s–210s). Xie Huilian's 謝惠連 (407–433) "Rhapsody on Snow" ("Xue fu" 雪賦) offers an idealized portrait of a literary coterie centered around the Western Han Prince of Liang (d. 144 BCE) (Chapter 28). The courtiers in that Han princely salon (Sima Xiangru, Zou Yang 鄒陽 [d. 129 BCE], and Mei Sheng 枚乘 [d. 140 BCE]), however, are usually characterized as "literary attendants" 文學侍從之臣, in contrast to the impression of poetic exchanges on relatively equal terms (often on the same topics) between courtiers and the Cao ruling family, which included the great poets Cao Cao and his sons, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226, r. 220–226), and Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232).

Some surviving letters from this period (e.g., Cao Pi's to Wu Zhi 吳質 [177–230] and Cao Zhi's to Yang Xiu 楊修 [175–219]) are moving testaments to how ties of friendship were interwoven with mutual evaluation and a heightened literary self-consciousness within the Ye literary community (Chapter 27), whose romantic image persists in Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) poetic sequence written in the voice of Cao Pi and poets in his circle, Xie Zhuang's 謝莊 (421–466) "Rhapsody on the Moon" ("Yuefu"月賦), Zhang Yue's 張說 (663–730) poem on Ye ("Yedu shi" 鄴都詩), and Yuan Haowen's 元好問 (1190–1257) glorification of "the romantic élan of Ye" (*Ye xia fengliu* 鄴下風流). However, disparaging anecdotes about Cao Cao appear already in *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*, fifth century), and Cao Cao and Cao Pi have often been presented as villains in fiction and drama about the Three Kingdoms since the thirteenth century.

The activities of Liang rulers and princes as patrons and poets define our very idea of "literature" and have immense cultural significance (Tian 2007), yet the lore surrounding them seems to figure less prominently as a romanticized subject in Chinese literary history. The same may be said of Tang emperors: their literary output grants insights into "the poetics of sovereignty" (Chen 2010), and their poetic exchanges with courtiers are told in anecdotes and later fiction, but the image of the "Tang emperor as poet" does not dominate cultural memory. It is when poetic genius and aesthetic sensibility are seen to be in tragic collision with political responsibility, as in the cases of Chen Shubao, Li Yu 李煜 (937–978, r. 961–975) (last ruler of the Southern Tang [937–975]), and Emperor Huizong of Song 宋徽宗 (1082–1135, r. 1100–1126), that the characters involved become common literary topics.

Rulers can become political ideals only when there is room to rectify failures, and the source of correction is usually the official or an outsider offering remonstrance (Schaberg 1998). Two lines about King Wen from *Shijing*, frequently cited in Warring States writings, praise his advisors: "It was with many splendid men/that King Wen achieved peace" 濟濟多士, 文王以寧 (*Maoshi* 235). The itinerant persuader (*youshui zhi shi* 遊說之士), an official, scribe, or jester who offers advice or remonstrance, dominates Warring States and early Han writings. Key passages in *Xunzi* 荀子 (fl. ca. 280s–230s BCE) and *Han Feizi* 韓非子 (ca. 280–ca. 233 BCE) delineate the perils, promise, and psychological manipulation in political persuasion (Li 2013). In Masters Literature and early historical writings like *Zuozhuan* and *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*, ca. third century BCE), the author often explicitly or implicitly identifies with the remonstrator, irrespective of whether he (or she, in the few examples in *Lienü zhuan*) is arguing for self-interest, expediency, or moral principles.

The good ruler becomes a composite historical agent by accepting remonstrance. For example, the famous account in *Zuozhuan* about the exiled prince Chong'er's 重耳 return to Jin to become its ruler (Lord Wen of Jin 晉文公, r. 636–628 BCE) and his subsequent rise to the status of overlord is marked by many speeches in which his advisors debate alternatives and offer advice; Chong'er seems almost passive. Lord Dao of Jin 晉悼公 (r. 573–558 BCE) is in the limelight only when he acknowledges his errors and affirms the rights of his minister, and the spectacular fall of King Ling of Chu 楚靈王 (r. 540–529 BCE) is dramatized through his imperviousness to the virtuosic remonstrance of his ministers (Durrant, Li, and Schaberg 2016: 1:364–394, 1:402–431, 2:902–905, 2:912–917, 3:1476–1481).

In Warring States writings, the remonstrator's crucial role is buoyed by the emphasis on reciprocity in the ruler-subject relationship. His importance persists in different ways when the demands of loyalty become more extreme after Qin unification in 221 BCE. Sima Qian explains the Han founder Liu Bang's victory by way of his amenability to advice and his opponent's failure to heed remonstrance (*Shiji* 8). He also conveys criticism of Emperor Wu's aggressively expansionist policies through the recorded remonstrance by the ministers Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (200–121 BCE) and Zhufu Yan 主父偃 (d. 126 BCE) against attacking the Xiongnu (*Shiji* 112). The loyal official martyred for his remonstrance later emerges as a cultural ideal, but in pre-imperial and early Han writings strategic self-preservation and canny persuasion hold greater sway.

The courtier Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (161–93 BCE), who combined jesting with ineffective political intervention, expresses nostalgia for pre-unification China, when warring domains left the persuader much greater room to maneuver, and laments that the more rigid hierarchy of ruler and subject diminishes the efficacy of remonstrance ("Response to the Guest's Critique" ["Da ke nan" 答客難]). The court poet, a more glamorous and more subservient figure than the itinerant persuader, may have to resort to "indirect remonstrance" (*juejian* 譎諫), seducing his audience with descriptions of extravagant pleasures and burying his remonstrative intention (assuming it is sincere) under ever grander and more paradoxical rhetoric in epideictic rhapsodies. His supposed alter ego, the master of illusions and rhetoric in these rhapsodies, always brings about the moral transformation of the represented audience (the king or the prince). But there is inherent tension between celebrating pleasure and offering admonition, between the seduction of hidden meanings and the clarity of the revealed message (Li 2013). It is questionable whether the audience is swayed by the moral message at the end of Mei Sheng's "Seven Stimuli" ("Qi fa" 七發) or by its celebration of sensual delights (Chapter 28). The same conundrum applies when the emperor comes to a sudden realization of his duties at the height of pleasure in Sima Xiangru's "Rhapsody on the Shanglin Park" ("Shanglin fu" 上林賦). The moral ambiguities of indirect remonstrance prompted Yang Xiong to castigate the genre as a trivial pursuit comparable to "carving insects" (*diaochong* 雕蟲), proper employment only for callow youths, despite his earlier success in garnering praise for his epideictic rhapsodies on imperial hunts (Chapter 29).

Anecdotes idealizing the Tang emperor Taizong's reign portray remonstrating officials and a responsive emperor (Chapter 28). Empress Wu of Tang instituted the rank of *shiyi* 拾遺 ("reminder of oversights"), a position held by many famous poets, including Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (ca. 661–702), Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831). There is implicit remonstrance in poems depicting social ills, the woes of warfare, or the sufferings of the people, such as some of Du Fu's poems about the An Lushan rebellion or Bai Juyi's "new Music Bureau poems" (*xin yuefu* 新樂府). Remonstrance implies faith in political engagement. The recurrent figure of the "frustrated scholar" or "misunderstood official" who does not meet with recognition or appreciation (Chapters 27, 28) can also articulate his political vision, sometimes in the guise of the "poet-historian" (*shishi* 詩史) who bears witness to the contemporary crisis, ponders historical judgment, and explores the relationship between history and memory, as in the case of Du Fu.

Many claim, following Sima Qian's idea of writing to "vent rancor and frustration" (*fa fen* 發憤), that political failure and disappointment become the impetus for literary creation (Chapter 24). One of Sima Qian's models is Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BCE), the prototype of the minister whose loyal remonstrance is rejected and who is driven by calumny into exile. The mythic journey to other realms, frustrated quest, and tragic overtones in Qu Yuan's "Encountering Sorrow" ("Li sao" 離騷) are sometimes invoked in the literature of exile, and the exiled official becomes a typical figure in the tradition. The Han poet Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BCE) composed an elegy lamenting Qu Yuan while in exile in Changsha (Chapter 28), as did the Tang poet Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819) during his banishment. The exiled official may not draw attention to his plight; some of Xie Lingyun's landscape poems were written during exile, but they are marked only by somewhat starker images of nature. He may even claim to exult in exotic scenes, as did Liu Zongyuan and Yuan Zhen in exile. Other poets, like Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842), depict hostile nature and alien customs with much greater abhorrence. Banished in 819 to Chaozhou 潮州 in the far south, Han Yu wrote that his kinsman had come along "the better to pick up my bones by the banks of the pestilent river" 好收吾骨瘴江邊 ("Demoted to Languan, Shown to My Grandnephew Xiang" ["Zuoqian zhi Languan shi zhisun Xiang" 左遷至藍關示姪孫湘]). But exile can also heighten sensibility and deepen empathy with the powerless, as Bai Juyi implicitly claims in the "Song of Pipa" ("Pipa xing" 琵琶行, 815), where the exiled official (Bai) and the erstwhile courtesan, "both lost souls at the edge of the world" 同是天涯淪落人, find solace in a moment of communion.

The word "exile" is usually used to translate the Chinese term *qianzhe* 遷謫 or *bianzhe* 貶謫, which refers specifically to an official's demotion to a lower rank and more distant place (away from the capital). But the different semantic range of the word "exile" in

English can be instructive. It encompasses other forms of displacement brought about by personal vicissitudes, warfare, political upheavals, and natural disasters. In *Shijing*, lamentations of soldiers caught in endless expeditions and of officials toiling for the "king's affairs" (*wangshi* 王事) away from home form a constant refrain. The plaint of the wanderer (*youzi* 遊子) and of the unwilling traveler about the sorrows of "being detained elsewhere because of public duty" (*jilü xingyi* 羈旅行役) is a recurrent theme. The imperial consort Zuo Fen 左芬 (ca. 255–300) compares herself to Qu Yuan, turning the palace into a locus of displacement as she laments separation from her family in "Rhapsody on Longing in Separation" ("Lisi fu" 離思賦). The Han palace lady Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 (first century BCE), sent to marry the Xiongnu ruler as "marriage diplomacy," has since Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300) become a common literary topic, variously invoking exile, nostalgia, unrecognized worth, or the definition of loyalty. Cai Yan 蔡琰 (ca. 170–ca. 215) was abducted and detained by the Xiongnu and was forced to leave her half-Xiongnu sons behind when she was ransomed. This double displacement is the subject of the poems attributed to her, "Poem of Sorrow and Rancor" ("Beifen shi" 悲憤詩) and "Eighteen Beats of the Barbarian Fife" (Hujia shiba pai 胡笳十八拍) (Chapters 24, 27). Her story also becomes a standard allusion. Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) expressed the sentiments of exile as he left his natal Wu (after its fall) for Jin (Chapter 29). Anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu* depict members of the northern elite who "crossed the river" and bemoaned the collapse of [Western] Jin. Liang writers who ended up in the north after the fall of the Liang dynasty, most notably Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581), lament their lost homeland and the end of an era with intense pathos (Tian 2007), giving the figure of the exiled official new dimensions of complexity.

It is a measure of how central the issue of political engagement is that it fosters a powerful counterargument: reclusion. The recluse is often embedded in references to Daoist and later Buddhist thought. He becomes a venue to criticize worldly ambitions and embodies the alternative of detachment or transcendence. Like the commoner, the barbarian, the monk, or the Daoist (among others), the recluse puts into question the values of the political and cultural center. Critics of Confucius's futile striving in the *Analects* urge disengagement and bear traits of the recluse, as do the wise men who disdain power and reject society in *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (fourth–third century BCE).

The recluse first appears in the poetic tradition as a "prince" (*wangsun* 王孫) exhorted to leave dangerous nature and return to human civilization in "Summoning the Recluse" ("Zhao yinshi" 招隱士), composed by a poet in the coterie of the Han prince Liu An 劉安 (ca. 179–122 BCE), King of Huainan 淮南王. In the spate of surviving third-century poems bearing a similar title ("Zhao yin shi" 招隱詩), notably those by Lu Ji and Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305), the beauty of nature seduces the "summoner" into forgetting his mission. "Against Summoning the Recluse" ("Fan zhao yin" 反招隱) by Wang Kangju 王康琚 (ca. fourth–fifth century) argues that the recluse has his rightful place in nature and there is no need to summon him, but there is also no reason to be seduced: "The lesser recluse hides among hills and swamps,/the great recluse hides in the court and the city" 小隱隱陵藪, 大隱隱朝市. Echoing Dongfang Shuo's assertion that he "escapes the world by being in court" 避世于朝廷, this claim that reclusion is a state of mind potentially raises, but also resolves, questions of sincerity or bad faith. (If it is all in the mind, why bother to become a recluse? If "inner detachment" is possible, why accuse a recluse of enjoying his lavish estate or pursuing social and political ambitions?) Still, with its lofty claims, the figure of the recluse cannot but invite unmasking. Thus Kong Zhigui 孔稚珪 (447–501) in "Proclamation on Behalf of Northern Mountain" ("Beishan yi wen" 北山移文) adopts the voice of the mountain spirit to castigate one Master Zhou for defiling the mountain as he hypocritically pursues worldly ambitions while pretending to be a recluse.

There are many gradations of balance or tension between worldly concerns and the ideal of the recluse, and each yields a somewhat different perspective on nature (Chapters 27, 29). It is interesting to note, however, that the question of "sincerity" or "genuine transcendence" often come up in posterity's judgment, whether it be Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 (365–427) relationship with his "fields and gardens" or that of Wang Wei 王維 (699 or 701–761) with his Wang River 輞川 estate. In Tao Yuanming's case, it is also an issue shaped by textual emendation and reception (Tian 2005, Swartz 2008). The recluse is almost always male, but the hidden and unsought beauty, often an analogy for the unrecognized man of talent and virtue, takes on the recluse's aura, as in Du Fu's "Beauty" ("Jiaren" 佳人).

The recluse is a potentially countercultural figure. This oppositional dimension is most obviously developed in the account of Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊 in Sima Qian's *Shiji* (61). Opposing the Zhou conquest of Shang as an act of "replacing violence with violence" 以暴易暴, they refuse to "eat the grains of Zhou" and die of starvation as recluses on Shouyang Mountain. Their defiance is all the more intriguing because early Zhou rule is lauded as ideal in canonical texts, and in endorsing their rancorous song Sima Qian is going against Confucius's judgment of their equanimity. Their unrelenting integrity at odds with the powers that be hints at secret affinities with the figure of the knight-errant (*xia* 俠). Dismissed or disparaged in Masters Literature, the knight errant is first celebrated in *Shiji* (124), where Sima Qian praises the ideals of generosity, valor, and good faith the knight errant embodies as he dispenses private justice in a world sadly lacking in public justice. As a rival locus of loyalty and authority, he is a doomed figure under unified Han rule, and his demise is chronicled in *Shiji* and Ban Gu's *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*). The dark side of the knight-errant's subversiveness remains the province of historical writings. Poets, notably Cao Zhi and Li Bai 李白 (701–762), celebrate the historical agency he represents. They sometimes extol his martial valor redirected against the country's enemies, as in the many ballads entitled "White Horse" ("Baima pian" 白馬篇). Just vengeance is also a recurrent theme. Pang E 龐娥, who slays her father's murderer, earns a place in Fan Ye's 范曄 (398–445) *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*) and is the subject of several ballads ("The Song of the Woman Xiu of Qin" ["Qin nü Xiu xing" 秦女休行]). Li Gongzuo's 李公佐 account of Xie Xiao'e 謝小娥 ("Xie Xiao'e zhuan" 謝小娥傳, after 818), who adopts male disguise to avenge the death of her father and husband, belongs to this tradition. Tang tales featuring knights-errant often emphasize their martial prowess (sometimes verging on magical feats) and absolute loyalty to their masters. Nie Yinniang 聶隱娘 in the eponymous story by Pei Xing 裴鉶 (late ninth century), however, switches masters, and she bases her political choice on judgment of their respective actions.

The knight-errant is sometimes described as "following his nature" (*renxing* 任性) or "giving free rein to his will" (*siyi* 肆意). He or she answers the desire to test the limits of systems of order and authority and may be related to a range of other figures. In *Shiji*, Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (d. 484 BCE), who relentlessly pursues vengeance; Lord Xinling 信陵君 (d. 243 BCE), who follows his sense of noble obligation against all odds; the proud rhetorician Lu Zhonglian 魯仲連 (third century BCE), who changes the balance of power among states but spurns rewards; unlikely biographical subjects like the assassin-retainers, the jesters, and the moneymakers (*Shiji* 66, 77, 83, 86, 126, 129) all share the aura of the knight-errant. Some of these figures become common allusions and poetic topics, often representing a kind of political agency at moments of limited alternatives. There are other modes of defiant self-assertion in the literary tradition. *Shishuo xinyu*, for example, offers anecdotes about men who flaunt their obsessions, disdain for conventions, and arrogance toward the powerful. The "ardently wayward man" (*kuangshi* 狂士, *kuangsheng* 狂生), a common figure in anecdotes, stories, and poetic self-representation, possibly rooted in the masters of sublime paradoxes in *Zhuangzi*, represents another attempt at imagining an oppositional stance vis-à-vis state and society.

DESIRE

Desire and political power are intertwined in the Chinese literary tradition, since men often write as women and about women in representing their social and political relationships (Rouzer 2001; Li 2014: 12–99). Images of women shape the representation of desire (and vice versa). In the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*, ca. fourth to first century BCE) tradition, the poet's failed quest of the elusive goddess provides the allegorical framework for the defeat and frustration of political ideals (Hawkes 1967). In "Encountering Sorrow," the speaker alternates between a female persona lamenting the calumny of jealous women blocking her access to the ruler and as a male persona "in quest [of the goddess] in realms above and below" 吾將上下而求索. References to the ruler and slanderers confirm the political dimension of the poem. "Rhapsody on Gaotang" ("Gaotang fu" 高唐賦) and "Rhapsody on the Goddess" ("Shennü fu" 神女賦), both attributed to Song Yu (ca. third century BCE) but probably of later provenance, show the poet moving from confident conjuration to hopeless longing, and the political message of good government at the end of "Gaotang" is forgotten. In "Goddess," the goddess who compliantly offers herself to the Chu king at the beginning of "Gaotang" after describing herself as "floating clouds" and "drifting rain" visits Song Yu in a dream. She is seductive but ultimately elusive, leaving the poet at the end in a state of profound melancholy. In Cao Zhi's "Rhapsody on the Goddess of the River Luo" ("Luoshen fu" 洛神賦), whose possible political implications are debated, it is the poet's doubt and hesitation that ruin any hope for union. There are numerous rhapsodies from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE on the ambivalent goddess, who comes to embody the possibilities, limits, and contradictions of desire (Li 1993: 10–36; Rouzer 2001: 39–72).

Closely related to the figure of the enigmatic divine woman is the idea of relishing and resisting temptation, first developed in "Rhapsody on Master Dengtu Enamored of Beauty" ("Dengtuzi haose fu" 登徒子好色賦, attributed to Song Yu) and "Rhapsody on the Beauty" ("Meiren fu" 美人賦, attributed to Sima Xiangru). To defend himself against the charge of being a seducer (of woman and by implication of the king), the poet elaborates the scenario whereby he rebuffs the advances of a beautiful woman. The drama of resisting temptation and controlling passion is internalized in a number of rhapsodies (ca. second century BCE–fifth century CE) which describe a lady so perfect and a passion so powerful and hopeless that the only resolution is to transcend passion and seek consolation in philosophy. In "Rhapsody on Stilling the Passions" ("Xianqing fu" 閑情賦) by Tao Yuanming, for example, the poet indulges in fantasies of impossible proximity to a paragon of female beauty and virtue, only to be defeated and liberated by the realization of inevitable mutability (which she also seems to share). The ambivalent goddess and the perfect but unavailable lady inspire the same dynamics of fascination and fear; their accounts share the premise that desire is justified but should also be restrained (Li 1993: 36–41).

In later poetry, the mysterious goddess sometimes becomes a cypher for a courtesan, a Daoist priestess, or an unavailable woman. Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca. 813–ca. 858) offers us superbly crafted poems about tantalizingly elusive objects of desire, impossible communication, interrupted rendezvous, prolonged or futile waiting, and abrupt departures. Their aura of mystery (he is the first to pointedly title his poems "Untitled" ["Wuti" 無題]), tension between "urgency and concealment" (Owen 2006: 407), and longing fed by unfulfillment in some ways develop dynamics comparable to those underlying the rhapsodies on goddesses. Should the language of ineffable loss and romantic longing be read as possible analogies for Li Shangyin's political aspirations and frustrations or his reaction to Tang factional politics? Li evasively anticipates such debates, claiming that "The rain of Chu [i.e., erotic diction], full of feelings, always conveys secret meanings" 楚雨含情皆有託 ("Having Finished Chanting a Poem at Zizhou, I Sent it to My Colleague" ["Zizhou ba yin ji tongshe" 梓州罷吟寄同舍]), but also gently mocking those who, "Ever since the completion of the 'Rhapsody on Gaotang,'/Always find the clouds and rain of Chu worthy of suspicion" 一自高唐賦成後, 楚天雲雨盡堪疑 ("Moved" ["You gan" 有感]).

Prose accounts of amorous goddesses and their lovers flourished from about the late third century on. These love affairs are usually consummated but mostly end with separation. The lyrical tales of Shen Yazhi 沈亞之 (781–832), "Sorrow on River Xiang" ("Xiang zhong yuan jie" 湘中怨解) and "The Dream of Qin" ("Qin meng ji" 秦夢記), have a dreamlike, visionary quality evoking longing and loss reminiscent of the rhapsodies discussed above. More often, however, the goddess is the active and dominant figure, whether peremptorily issuing commands (e.g., "Du Lanxiang" 杜蘭香) or unobtrusively loving, as in "Chenggong Zhiqiong" 成公智瓊, where the eponymous heroine, yielding priority to her lover Xuan Chao's wife, behaves like an undemanding concubine content with intermittent attention and intimacy. (Both stories are found in Gan Bao's 干寶 [d. 336] *Soushen ji* 搜神記 [*In Search of the Supernatural*].) The consequences of union are more drastic for Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao, who meet two goddesses in Tiantai Mountain and sojourn as their mates for half a year, only to find that seven generations have passed when they return to the human world (Liu Yiqing 劉義慶[403–444], *Youming lu* 幽明錄 [Records of the Realms of Darkness and Light]). Romantic initiative fuses with political power in Zhang Bi's 張泌 (fl. 960s–970s) "Wei Andao" 韋安道, where a deity, the Lady of Sovereign Earth, who marries Wei Andao, is first mistaken for Empress Wu, then defies the exorcists sent by the empress, and ends up conferring a painter's skills and an official position on Wei by summoning the empress to her court.

The goddess offers pleasures, riches, expanding horizons in all spheres of experience and knowledge, and sometimes even immortality. She may break norms by taking control or flouting rules (in one case, the Weaver Maid cuckolds the Cowherd Star by seeking a human lover), but she is normalized in some cases through marriage rituals. Most of the male human lovers are passive. This is especially true of accounts of encounters with local goddesses—the man would understand his experience only when he later sees the statue of his partner in a temple. The male lover may also be careless or suspicious, revealing his secret liaison or doubting its meaning. In a few cases, the goddess is a reward for his virtue, as in the case of the Weaver Maid who comes to Dong Yong because of his filial piety. (This story is told in *Soushen ji* as well as a Tang "transformation text" [*bianwen* 變文].) Increasingly, in Tang tales the man is a talented scholar pursuing and cementing his union with the goddess through copious poetic exchanges. In rare cases, he takes the initiative—e.g., as a tenacious lover who braves formidable tests to win the goddess in "Pei Hang" 裴航 by Pei Xing, and as the messenger who rescues the Dragon Princess in "Liu Yi" 柳毅 by Li Chaowei 李朝威 (d. 820).

Like goddesses, female ghosts and spirits speak to the promise and danger of desire. Spirits (*yao* 妖) of things and animals bewitch men, sometimes with lethal consequences. In Shen Jiji's 沈既濟 "Miss Ren" ("Renshi" 任氏, late eighth century), however, the fox spirit Miss Ren develops an intimate friendship with the initially predatory Wei Yin and is fondly protective of her lover Zheng, only to lose her life because of these ties. Ghost stories are often rooted in history—both the personal past of the characters and the historical past. Phantom heroines seek vindication of love frustrated in life (e.g., "Ziyu" 紫玉 and "Wang Daoping" 王道平in *Soushen ji*) or continue a liaison interrupted by death, as in "Li Zhangwu" 李章武 by Li Jingliang 李景亮 (ninth century) and "The Adjutant from Huazhou" ("Huazhou canjun" 華州參軍) by Li Chaowei. Desire is implicitly equated with life force when a female ghost can return to life through sexual union with a man. The process is interrupted in "Scholar Tan" ("Tansheng" 談生, third century) because of Tan's heedless impatience, but the ghost of Zhang Yunrong, Imperial Consort Yang Yuhuan's 楊玉環 (d. 756) maid, comes back to life through her affair with Xue Zhao ("Zhang Yunrong" 張雲容 by Pei Xing). Unlike Zhang, other historical ghosts sustain a retrospective gaze, and men who consort with them gain a deeper understanding of the past. In "Dugu Mu" 獨孤穆 (ca. ninth century), the ghost of a Sui princess who died during the fall of the Sui dynasty (581-618) offers herself to Dugu Mu, a descendant of a Sui general. She chants poems about this traumatic past and enjoins Dugu to rebury her. Having accomplished this mission and solemnized their union, Dugu dies. In a more lighthearted vein, Niu Sengru 牛僧儒 (779–ca. 848) allegedly wrote about his encounter with the ghosts of famous imperial consorts and empresses from Han to Tang in "Chronicles of Zhou and Qin" ("Zhou Qin xingji" 周秦行紀); feminine perspectives on momentous historical events unfold in elegant repartees that conclude with Niu's sexual union with the Han palace lady Wang Zhaojun. (Some scholars believe that Niu's political enemies attached Niu's name to this story to defame him.)

Women from other realms often emerge as dominant even in their pliancy and as irresistible even when they suffer rejection. This power balance is reversed in numerous works featuring the abandoned woman and the pining wife (Chapters 27, 28). When the abandoned woman first appears in *Shijing*, she sometimes avows unswerving devotion and lingering hopes for the husband's change of heart. Some examples (e.g., "The Man" ["Mang" 氓], *Maoshi* 58), by contrast, are remarkable for their forthright anger and denunciation of the faithless man. Ballads like "The One I Long For" ("You suo si" 有所思, ca. second century) continue that tradition. In that example, the female speaker burns the gifts intended for her inconstant lover and "scatters their ashes in the wind" 當風揚其往: "From now on,/No more longing" 從今以往, 勿復相思. The humbly plaintive voice is, however, more typical. In "Going Up the Mountain to Pick Fragrant Herbs" ("Shangshan cai miwu" 上山采蘼蕪), the abandoned wife "kneels with a straight back" to ask her former husband about his new wife, whose allegedly inferior industry supposedly vindicates the abandoned wife but offers her scant comfort. Some poems in the voice of or about the abandoned woman end with her hopes for peace in the household that rejected her; the figure thus underwrites a poetics of restraint ("resentment without anger" 怨而不怒).

Sporadic examples of poems by abandoned women from the period we cover survive, but some of the best-known stories of female authorship concern women who regain the affection of their estranged husbands through poetic virtuosity, such as Su Boyu's 蘇伯玉 wife (ca. third century), who composed the mainly trisyllabic "Poem in a Basin" ("Panzhong shi" 盤中詩), and Su Hui 蘇蕙 (fourth century), who wove a palindrome yielding 3,752 poems with 841 characters, called "The Picture of Heavenly Patterns" ("Xuanji tu" 璇璣圖), on a piece of brocade. The elaboration of specific historical contexts promise added pathos, as with the "Rhapsody of Self-Lament" ("Zidao fu" 自悼賦) by the neglected imperial consort Lady Ban (Ban Jieyu 班婕妤, ca. 6 BCE) and the "Song of Regret" ("Yuange xing" 怨歌行) attributed to her, as well as the "Song of White Hair" ("Baitou yin" 白頭吟), supposedly composed by Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 (second century BCE) to lament the inconstancy of her husband Sima Xiangru, the putative author of "Rhapsody on the Tall Gates Palace" ("Changmen fu" 長門賦), said to convey the sorrow and rancor of the neglected Empress Chen (Chapters 24, 27, 28). While the invention of authors particularizes the trope, it has also lent itself to allegorical purposes such as the expression of unabated loyalty despite political disappointments. Three surviving "Rhapsodies on the Expelled Wife" ("Chufu fu" 出婦賦) by third-century poets in the same circle (Cao Pi, Cao Zhi, and Wang Can 王粲 [177–217]) suggest the resonance of the abandoned woman as a social topic. Cao Zhi is also the putative author of several other poems on the theme, which have invited allegorical interpretations: is he using the trope of the abandoned woman to lament his persecution by his brother Cao Pi? Sympathy for the abandoned woman broadens into lamentations of injustice in numerous poems. "Drawing a Silver Pitcher from the Bottom of the Well" ("Jingdi yin yinping" 井底引銀瓶) by Bai Juyi is unusual in couching abandonment as the inevitable consequence of "licentious elopement" (*yinben* 淫奔); but even there the supposed logic of transgression and punishment fades beside sympathy for the female protagonist.

The figure of the pining woman (usually a wife or a palace lady, but sometimes a courtesan) is less fraught and more pervasive than that of the abandoned woman. Its premise is the "gender geography" of the woman at home and the man on the road (e.g., the traveler, the soldier, the official, the merchant). Separation yields two loci of longing, but while works about male longing for home only sometimes focus on the wife, the female perspective consistently centers on the absent man. She may let his voice take over as she imagines his trials and tribulations, as in "Picking Cocklebur" ("Juan'er" 卷耳, *Maoshi* 3) in *Shijing*. In "Banks of Ru" ("Rufen" 汝墳, *Maoshi* 10), another poem from *Shijing*, the speaker justifies her husband's absence because "the royal house is ablaze" 王室如燬. A standard trope is the soldier's wife lamenting her husband's hardships at the frontier, as in Li Bo's (701–762) "Autumn Song" ("Qiuge" 秋歌): "What day will the barbarians be quelled, so that/my good man will be let off distant missions?" 何日平胡虜, 良人罷遠征。That the pining wife speaks to the balance between public duty and private emotions and emblematizes steadfast devotion explains her easy assimilation by a poetics emphasizing affective edification.

The pining wife who would not adorn herself in her husband's absence is an intermittent refrain, but her image begins to be aestheticized with the "Nineteen Old Poems" ("Gushi shijiu shou" 古詩十九首, ca. early third century). The trend became more marked in the third century and reached a new height by the sixth century, as "boudoir laments" (*guiyuan* 閨怨) and "palace laments" (*gongyuan* 宮怨) become standard themes. In one of the "Nineteen Old Poems," she sits by the window and seductively reveals her white hand by the window because "an empty bed is hard to guard" 空床難獨守. In most cases, however, the pining woman's beauty aestheticizes longing and is meant to seduce only the reader. Some of them dispense with context and condense emotions in a gaze, as in poems entitled "Rancor on Jade Steps" ("Yujie yuan" 玉階怨) by Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499) and Li Bo. "Palace poems" (*gongci* 宮詞) or "palace laments" often describe palace ladies and consorts not enjoying the emperor's favor. The emperor as absent lover leaves even less room for forceful complaints, although some poets merge the palace lady's plight with the scholar-official's anxieties and imply muted protest, as in Li Shangyin's "Palace Poem" ("Gong ci" 宮詞): "Enjoying favor, she fears its shift; losing it, she grieves" 得寵憂移失寵愁. Ballads by Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen on the sufferings of aging palace women erase the aesthetic patina from the trope of the pining woman and convey forceful social criticism. Women poets adhere to conventions in depicting the pining wife, as shown in Bao Linghui's 鮑令暉 (fifth century) imitations of the "Nineteen Old Poems." The imperial consort Zuo Fen, however, breaks the mode by focusing her longing not on an absent emperor but on her natal family.

Although, as mentioned above, the ambiguous and unattainable divine woman in early rhapsodies and her reconfiguration as the elusive beloved in Li Shangyin's poetry emphasize male desire, it is the recurrent figure of the pining or abandoned woman and female (rather than male) desire that have become by far the more common poetic topics. Perhaps her emotions are more easily moralized or analogized with the sociopolitical choices (of lack thereof) of the male elite: it is common to read the figure of the pining or abandoned woman as an allegory for the rejected, misunderstood official. Perhaps male writers project their desire to be desired through her. Either way, she displaces the dangers of desire.

Anxieties about desire as excess and disequilibrium are embodied by the figure of the femme fatale, who as object of desire undermines moral, social, and political order. Bao Si 褒姒, the queen of King You of Zhou, is blamed for bringing down Zhou in "First Month" ("Zhengyue" 正月, *Maoshi* 192) in *Shijing*. By the third century BCE, analogous parings have been made between the iniquitous last rulers of Shang and Xia and their evil consorts Daji 妲己 and Moxi 妺喜 in Masters Literature and historical writings. Heedless, pleasure-loving last rulers and the consorts who bewitch them become cultural stereotypes in narratives of dynastic decline and fall. Women are also perceived as instigators of disorder because of their divided loyalty vis-à-vis natal ties and marital ties, and in pre-imperial writings this often means conflicts of interests between different domains. One woman urges her daughter to expose her husband's conspiracy against her father in *Zuozhuan*: "Any man can be a woman's husband, but she has only one father" 人盡夫也, 父一而已 (Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016: 1:124–125).

Dangerous women foment rivalries, sometimes through sexual transgressions. One of the most famous examples is Xia Ji 夏姬 in *Zuozhuan*: she wreaks havoc in Chen and Chu through numerous liaisons and is held responsible for shifting the balance of power in the sixth and the fifth century BCE (Li 2007: 152–160). Later depictions of the femme fatale combine voracious sexuality with lethal jealousy, as in "The Unofficial Biography of Zhao Feiyan" ("Zhao Feiyan waizhuan" 趙飛燕外傳, ca. ninth–tenth century). The femme fatale invites categorical judgments as well as fascination and even empathy. Such is the case with Yang Yuhuan, favored consort and erstwhile daughter-in-law of the Tang emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (r. 712–756). Many treat this as the classic example of duty versus passion and blame her for the mid-eighth-century dynastic crisis (the An Lushan rebellion); some are more forgiving and sympathetic. Du Fu offers moral condemnation in "Northern Expedition" ("Beizheng" 北征), but empathizes with her tragic fate in "Lament by the River" ("Ai jiangtou" 哀江頭). Bai Juyi mythologizes the relationship by focusing on the emperor's quest for Yang Yuhuan's spirit after her death in the "Song of Eternal Regret" ("Changhen ge" 長恨歌), while its accompanying prose narrative, "Account of the Song of Eternal Regret" ("Chenghen ge zhuan" 長恨歌傳) by Chen Hong 陳鴻 (ninth century), sternly criticizes Yang for ruining the realm. Pondering the figure of the femme fatale becomes one way to reflect on historical causation and mutability, as in Li Shangyin's "Mawei" 馬嵬. In the Tang tale "Yan Jun" 顏濬 by Pei Xing, ghosts of imperial consorts debate the historical responsibility for the decline and fall of dynasties and implicitly question the very notion of the femme fatale.

Anxieties about desire mean that virtue is often understood as restraint and self-mastery. Categories of female virtue often hinge on these ideas in *Lienü zhuan* and in some historical writings, although writings on the exemplary chaste woman are by no means as pervasive in the period under consideration as in later times. The chapter on "worthy ladies" (*xianyuan* 賢媛) in *Shishuo xinyu* presents wit and self-assertion as part of female exemplarity, an idea intermittently echoed in anecdotal literature. Works featuring beauties whose allure is elaborated but who ultimately spurn importuning suitors out of loyalty to their husbands, such as the *yuefu* poems "Mulberry on the Lane" ("Moshang sang" 陌上桑) or "The Officer" ("Yulin lang" 羽林郎), combine chaste resolve with witty self-assertion. Unlike the above-mentioned rhapsodies on goddesses that emphasize sexual and psychological tension, these poems present unself-conscious seduction and unproblematic (and somewhat comic) rebuffs based on unimpeachable moral reasoning. The story of Qiu Hu's 秋胡 wife also conjoins chastity with defiance. As told in *Lienü zhuan*, Qiu Hu leaves home five days after his marriage. Five years later, he propositions a woman during his homeward journey. The woman later turns out to be his wife, who harangues him before throwing herself into the river. Poems about Qiu Hu's wife veer between unease, as when Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217–278) blames her for being "too harsh" 太剛, and fascination, as shown in Yan Yanzhi's 顏延之 (384–456) depiction of infatuation and betrayal. The Tang historian Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) faults her for being an "overbearing shrew" 強梁之悍婦. Chastity is linked to restrained desires, but writings elaborating the idea often present boldness and an implacable will.

Many poems on courtship and marriage in *Shijing* celebrate romantic encounters, imminent (or recent) assignations, or joyous communion, often concretized through the giving or exchange of gifts. Ardent expressions of longing can be male or female, and the gender of the speaker or the beloved is often ambiguous. After the Han, boldly stated desire is usually couched in the woman's voice in poetry. In the second-century poetic exchange between Qin Jia 秦嘉 and his wife Xu Shu 徐淑, Qin's voice is more restrained. When a male poet avows love, he sometimes does so for a somewhat abstract "beauty" amenable to allegorical interpretations, as in Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139) "Poem on Four Sorrows" ("Sichou shi" 四愁詩).

The absent beloved is figured differently depending on the gender of the poetic persona, as shown in the above discussion of the goddess, the abandoned woman, and the pining woman. More generally, male desire can be implied in finely observed and sometimes voyeuristic descriptions of female beauty and longing (e.g., Southern dynasties court poems on amorous themes and their continuation in the Tang), but the tone implies control and is rarely passionate. Martyrs of love are celebrated in works like "Southeast Fly the Peacocks" ("Kongque dongnan fei" 孔雀東南飛, ca. third–fifth century), in which husband and wife, forced to part, die to vindicate their love and loyalty toward each other. But while wives who die for their husbands are almost always lauded for following higher principles of chastity or loyalty, Xun Can 荀粲 (third century), who died mourning his wife, is put in the category of "Blind Infatuations" ("Huoni" 惑溺) in *Shishuo xinyu*. Husbands do write moving poems mourning their wives, however; famous examples include elegies by Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300) and Yuan Zhen (Chapter 27).

The match between "male talents" and "fair ladies" as romantic ideals is a staple in late imperial literature. When this trope first takes shape in Tang accounts, the "fair lady" is often a courtesan (Owen 1996: 130–148). Arranged marriage being the norm, choice, uncertainty, and tension—the ingredients of romance—can only flourish in entertainment quarters. The courtesan is sometimes called a "goddess" or an "immortal," an association that comes to mind in Zhang Zhuo's 張鷟 (660–732) "Wandering with Goddesses in the Grotto" ("Youxian ku" 游仙窟), in which a romantic encounter with two widows, enlivened by poetic flirtation, witty repartees, and flowing, sexually explicit parallel prose, ends in sexual union with one of the women. The courtesan Li Wa's 李娃 unpredictable transformations also recall the goddess: she first abandons her lover and then unaccountably displays unswerving devotion in "Miss Li's Story" ("Li Wa zhuan" 李娃傳) by Bai Xingjian 白行簡 (776–826). Yuan Zhen's "Yingying's Story" ("Yingying zhuan" 鶯鶯傳), which traces the course of illicit love that begins with the male protagonist Zhang's fervent longing for Yingying and ends with his abandonment of her, also shares many echoes of rhapsodies on goddesses (her characterization, their sexual union, Yuan's poem about their relationship, and her limitless "transformations" as Zhang's justification for abandoning her). The story also includes Yingying's letter, in which she speaks in the plaintive voice of the abandoned woman. Yingying is from a good family in the story, although Yuan's poem ("Encountering an Immortal" ["Huizhen shi" 會真詩]), as well as the chorus of male commentary on the affair, suggest a courtesan in public purview. (Many scholars believe that the story is autobiographical, based on Yuan Zhen's abortive liaison with a courtesan. Yuan inscribes himself in the story as Zhang's friend who offers a poetic commentary on the affair.) The same precarious balance between being an elusive object of desire and being an abandoned woman unfolds in another story about a courtesan (again, the story only hints at her status), Jiang Fang's 蔣防 (ninth century) "Huo Xiaoyu's Story" ("Huo Xiaoyu zhuan" 霍小玉傳), where the abandoned woman as vindictive ghost is granted sweet revenge. Male poets, notably Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi, build accounts of their friendship around memories of romantic dalliances with courtesans, some of whom claimed both poets as patrons. This is yet another reminder of social mediation in the understanding of desire.

TRANSCENDENCE OR OTHERNESS

Transcendence or otherness signals clusters of figures: gods, ghosts, spirits, immortals, and the host of bizarre or demonic creatures beyond the realms of civilization; human agents who facilitate communication with these strange, transcendent, or otherworldly beings (e.g., shamans, diviners, monks, Daoists); and human seekers of higher truths or of immortality. The earlier sections discussed a number of these possibilities, including heaven and the high god that grant or withhold the mandate of heaven in early China, recluses who profess or pursue Buddhist or Daoist enlightenment, and goddesses and other "supernatural women" who define the perimeters of desire and the compass of allegory. From pre-imperial texts such as *Zuozhuan* or *Chuci* to Six Dynasties and Tang accounts (including Buddhist and Daoist texts) featuring transcendents, spirits, and ghosts, otherworldly beings impinge on human reality by positing (often unreachable) ideals, offering admonition, encouraging disengagement, or inspiring dread. I will explore whether such beings and the aspirants who seek them can be fully assimilated by the religious or philosophical systems that generate them. To what extent do they challenge structures of moral, social, political, and religious order?

In *Shijing*, the god on high offers personal counsel to King Wen, but what heaven conveys is said to "have no sound and no smell" 無聲無臭 ("King Wen" ["Wen wang" 文王], *Maoshi* 235). Imperial sacrificial hymns (*jiaosi ge* 郊祀歌) after the Han offer sedate and unparticularized praise of gods, ancestors, and supplicants. Often, however, gods and spirits have a tangible and distinctive presence, but they are not always figures of absolute moral authority. In *Zuozhuan*, for example, the gods are sometimes deceptive, inconstant, or merely local. The gods and spirits in "Nine Songs" in *Chuci* have to be wooed and entertained—they are seductive, plaintive, and unpredictable. "Encountering Sorrow" features faithless goddesses and semidivine intermediaries who harbor malice and ill will. *Zhuangzi* contains descriptions of higher beings with magical powers, but sometimes "lasting life" seems achievable only through death unto sensory reality, and in any case devices of dialogue and bracketing make it difficult to determine how literally one should interpret such accounts. *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 (*Biographies of Transcendents*, ca. first to second century) and *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (*Biographies of Divine Transcendents*) by Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) include reluctant or ambivalent immortals. In the latter, one Master White Stone (so called because he cooks white stones as food) refuses to ascend to heaven because the celestial hierarchy is more oppressive than the human one.

Some stories of immortals are built on, but also get entangled in, the paradox that one goes against life and nature—stills desires, refines away one's physical existence, controls breathing, ingests strange substances—in order to extend life and its pleasures indefinitely (Li 2002). But there are also many straightforward stories about immortals as purveyors of Daoist teachings, just as hagiographic accounts of eminent monks by Huijiao 惠皎 (497–554) and Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) embody Buddhist ideals. The boundaries of humanity remain the implicit issue: immortals who are supposedly more than human risk becoming less than human, even as the human incarnations of Buddha and bodhisattvas combine compassion with all-too-human errors of judgment.

Ghosts, sometimes malevolent, can also be agents of justice. Images of ghosts and those of immortals overlap, as evident in the lore about Li He 李賀 (790?–816?) and his poetry: his poetry is full of spectral imagery, but he is said to have been summoned by the immortals to write for them as he lay dying. Like divine beings, ghosts inhabit a world sharing permeable boundaries with the human realm. Stories about tricking ghosts or being tricked by ghosts, ghosts discharging karmic debts, or ghosts negotiating coexistence with humans (sometimes through poetic plaints and sometimes quite humorously) diminish the sense of their otherness.

The seeker in a quest for immortality or enlightenment appears in various guises and genres. *Mu Tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 (*Tradition of King Mu*), discovered in a tomb around 279 CE and possibly dated to around the third century BCE, describes the peregrinations of King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 (r. tenth century BCE). On Mount Kunlun in the far west, King Mu meets the Queen Mother of the West, who combines echoes of an immortal with traits of a distant ruler. The motif of journey is also central to "Distant Roaming" ("Yuanyou" 遠遊, ca. third–second century BCE). Following the model of the cosmic journey in "Encountering Sorrow" but reversing its speaker's frustrations and nostalgia for the human realm, "Distant Roaming" revels in tokens of power and pleasure, although it ends with an austere vision of Daoist void. In Sima Xiangru's "Rhapsody on the Great One" ("Daren fu" 大人賦), the Great One ascends as master, not seeker, in a heavenly journey resembling the imperial circuit. An ambivalent vision of the pathetic immortality of the Queen Mother of the West and a final glimpse of Daoist emptiness seem to be the crowning complement of the apotheosis of power rather than its negation (Li 2002).

The quester in heavenly journeys finds echoes in the traveler undertaking or imagining his movement in exotic landscape. In Sun Chuo's 孫綽 (314–371) "Rhapsody on an Outing to Tiantai Mountains" ("You Tiantai shan fu" 遊天台山賦), for example, the rhetoric of Daoist enlightenment, quest for immortality, and elaborate descriptions of landscape are framed as aesthetic contemplation and creation. For aspirants to higher truths, the journey may matter more than the goal, hence the poetic trope of "seeking the recluse and not finding him" (Varsano 1999). In Buddhist literature, the seeker of truth is the pilgrim who undertakes arduous journeys to obtain scriptures. Faxian's 法顯 (ca. 340–421) *Foguo ji* 佛國記 (*Account of Buddhist Kingdoms*) and Xuanzang's 玄奘 (ca. 600–664) *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (*Account of the Western Regions during the Great Tang*) both offer colorful descriptions and legends about exotic lands and peoples—the image of the traveler seems to overshadow that of the pilgrim (Tian 2011).

A deliberate quest is not a necessary precondition for encounters with the transcendent realm. Karmic connections determine the manifestations of bodhisattvas to humans, often offering salvation or meting out punishment. Buddhist karmic causality can also precipitate a journey to hell or a chance to negotiate karmic debts or power relations in the underworld, as in "Account of Emperor Taizong's Journey in Hell" ("Tang Taizong ru ming ji" 唐太宗入冥記) and "Maudgalyāyana Saves His Mother" ("Mulian jiu mu" 目連救母), both "transformation texts" from about the tenth century. By contrast, encounters with Daoist immortals are sometimes accidental and unconnected to personal history. For the human actors in these stories, humility is often the path to enlightenment. Emperor Wu of Han, featured in a number of stories about initiation into Daoist mysteries, refers to himself as "the petty, unworthy subject" 小醜之臣 in

"Secret History of Emperor Wu of Han" ("Han Wudi neizhuan" 漢武帝內傳 [ca. third–fourth century]), although the historical Emperor Wu embraced self-glorification.

From the early third century onwards, poems about wandering with immortals (*youxian* 遊仙), celebrating immortals (*yongxian* 詠仙), and seeking or learning to become an immortal (*qiuxian* 求仙, *xuexian* 學仙) flourished. "Pacing the void verses" (*buxuci* 步虛辭) and "green verses" (*qingci* 青辭) used in Daoist liturgies (popular since the Six Dynasties) also feature immortals. The poetic speaker summoning visions of immortals positions himself as observer, companion, or aspirant. In doing so, he may articulate a desire to escape from an oppressive reality (e.g., Cao Zhi), to express distain for "mundane men" (e.g., Xi Kang 嵇康 [or Ji Kang, ca. 223–ca. 262]), or to expand the imaginative realm with a mixture of playfulness and rancor (e.g., Kuo Pu 郭璞 [276–324]). Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263) wants to bid even the Queen Mother of the West farewell as he leaves all behind ("Singing My Cares" ["Yong huai" 詠懷], poem no. 58). Among Tang poets who wrote about immortals, Cao Tang 曹唐 (ca. 797–ca. 866) is the most prolific, but Li Bo's voice is the most distinctive. To have a resplendent vision of immortals dispelled is akin to a kind of enlightenment—a clear-sighted acceptance of mutability and the rejection of servility, as Li Bo shows in his "Dream Journey to Tianmu Mountain: Chanted upon Departure" ("Mengyou Tianmu yin liubie" 夢遊天姥吟留別). Sometimes Daoist immortals just hint at hidden meanings and secret passions, as in some of Li Shangyin's poems.

The motif of dream recurs in prose accounts of an enduring yet transient experience of an illusory realm. Among the most famous is Shen Jiji's 沈既濟 "Inside the Pillow" ("Zhen zhong ji" 枕中記, late eighth century), in which a Daoist encounters the disgruntled Lu Sheng in an inn and gives the latter a pillow as the innkeeper is cooking millet. Lu Sheng enters the world within the pillow, lives the life he desires, goes through multiple vicissitudes, and wakes up to find that the millet is not yet done. "The Governor of Nanke" ("Nanke taishou zhuan" 南柯太守傳, also called "Chunyu Kun" 淳于髡) by Li Gongzuo tells how Chunyu Kun enters a kingdom and lives a lifetime of glory and calumny in a dream, only to wake up to the realization that the kingdom is in reality an ant colony near his house. The dreamer is the inadvertent seeker of enlightenment: in both stories, the experience of "life in a dream" convinces the protagonist to embrace detachment and reject worldly pleasures and futile striving (Chapter 27). Paradoxically, the reader is given a much fuller impression of the dream world than of the moment of awakening.

This implicit ambivalence is even more marked in stories about the failed quest for enlightenment or immortality, where the reason for failure invites the reader's empathy. In Li Fuyan's 李復言 (ninth century) "Du Zichun" 杜子春, the eponymous wastrel hero, after thrice receiving help from a Daoist, offers to become his helper in the making of immortality elixir. Du fails in the endeavor, being unable to cut all ties of human attachment. In one of his trials, he is caught in the illusion of having been reborn as a woman, and he/she cries out when his/her baby is dashed to the ground. Had Du Zichun succeeded, he would have removed himself from the reader's sympathy. Again we are confronted with the problem of inhuman immortality and enlightenment (Li 2002).

The alien qualities of some deities point to the thin line between transcendence and otherness. Demigods, monsters, and strange creatures populating the realms beyond human civilization in *Shan hai jing* 山海經 (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*, ca. third century BCE) inspire both curiosity and dread (Chapter 29). In some ways, the figure of the barbarian is another manifestation of this ambivalence: routine denigration is mixed with residual fascination. In many cases, rhetorical contexts determine the functions of the barbarian—for example, the wise barbarian can expose the corruption of an overripe civilization, his successful otherness can justify political and social transformation, and his vilification or praise can buttress arguments for peace or war (Li 2017). Accounts of foreign peoples or non-Sinitic regimes in historical writings combine sober accounts of conflicts and negotiations with ethnographic curiosity and are sometimes laced with supernatural details. Defining the "barbarian other" is ultimately about cultural self-definition, just as the periphery reflects on the center (Chapters 28, 29), and old age and death can retrospectively reframe significant moments in life (Chapter 27).

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SECTION FIVE

EARLY AND MEDIEVAL CHINA AND THE WORLD

Editor's Introduction (Wiebke Denecke)

China studies, like the master narratives of Chinese history, tend to follow a powerfully centripetal force, streamlining stories of engagement with the world beyond China, of colonization and "Sinicization," of ethnic diversity and foreign rule, and of native cultural creativity and outside "influences" into a suitably coherent story of China's hegemony and centrality, even in its weaker moments. Thus the problem of Sinocentrism has typically been a problem of China's neighbors, both geopolitically and ideologically.

But recently the expanding horizons of our experience of the world and globalizing trends in the study of history have led scholars to embark on a search for the interconnectedness of the Eurasian continent, engaging questions of migration, ethnic diversity, and hybridization and uncovering the dynamics of peoples, languages, beliefs, and state power in cultural contact zones. This has produced outside-in histories of how nomadic peoples, in particular on the northwestern frontier, have shaped China (rather than the traditional other way around); it has produced a new incarnation of "Silk Road studies" sensitive to the complex interplay of ethnic and religious diversity; and it has inspired a resurgence of interest in the functioning of Literary Chinese as a lingua franca in East Asia, bringing attention to the distinctive literatures produced in Chinese outside of China proper, mainly in the "Sinographic Sphere" including Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

This section takes up early and medieval China in the world. How did various Chinese dynasties and regimes shape, and how were they in turn shaped by, the specific cultural geography of their peripheries? How did people communicate across languages and borders, and what role did translation play in Chinese cultural history? How did imaginations of the periphery figure in the Chinese literary tradition? What was China's role in the historical experience as well as in the imagination of its neighbors and their literary traditions? How did the major East Asian literary traditions outside China, namely those of Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, unfold in creative dialogue with Chinese models? And, for the purposes of this handbook, what can we learn about Chinese literature from their distinctive literary cultures?

The first chapter of this section, "Colonization, Sinicization, and the Polyscriptic Northwest," sketches different modes of political encroachment and cultural interaction in early and medieval China. "Colonization," "Sinicization," and the "acculturation of Buddhism" are all concepts coined to capture cultural interaction processes beyond and within China. Each simplifies very messy historical developments recalcitrant to easy generalization; worse yet, "Sinicization" tends to imply Chinese cultural superiority. Yet they all go some way to describe China's complex being in the world during the early and medieval periods. Chinese military expansion, the adoption of Chinese models by others—in the form of writing and administration, law codes, social norms, literature, various arts, and court culture—and the spread of Buddhism from India and Central Asia into China all had dramatic effects on literary production. From the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) on, it inspired the interest of writers in the frontier zones and found expression in the "biographical accounts" of foreign people in the official histories; in lists of new exotic fauna, flora, and gems that appeared in Han Dynasty rhapsodies; and in the spoils of imperial expansion brought to the capital and exuberantly celebrated in literary recitations at court. During the medieval period, the complex dual geopolitics of both southern dynasties and "Sinicized" regimes in the north claiming legitimacy led to the flourishing of the genre of "frontier poetry," which evoked the grim war experiences of soldiers on the bleak northwestern frontier and was particularly promoted by southern poets; the frontier appears also in "transformation texts" from the northwestern oasis of Dunhuang, which dramatize the lives of Han Dynasty figures tragically associated with the Northwest, such as general Li Ling or the Han princess Wang Zhaojun who was married off to a Xiongnu chieftain.

The polarity between "north" and "south" was just one coordinate on the cultural map of medieval China. The old hierarchy of "Chinese versus barbarian" was now complicated by the encounter with a culture that in one aspect at least, namely Buddhism, was deemed more venerable: that of India. At the same time, China came to acknowledge former "barbarians," like some of the Korean states and Japan, as "countries of Confucian gentlemen," a facelift in status that brought states within the Sinographic Sphere (Korea and Japan to the east and Vietnam to the south) into the generous fold of Chinese civilization. Against the politically and linguistically much more stable Sinographic Sphere, this chapter sets a "polyscriptic Northwest," where a host of non-Chinese scripts and languages flourished alongside Literary Chinese: the Indic script Brāhmī and its derivative Tibetan, as well as the Aramaic-derived Kharoṣṭhī, Sogdian, and Manichaean scripts.

The Northwest and its manifold languages were the principal vector of entry for Buddhism into China. The second chapter, "Translation," begins by tracing the encounters with ethnic and linguistic others in the early period and reminds us of the sudden urgency of cross-border communication as the Han Dynasty was facing the formidable foe of the Xiongnu steppe empire. The chapter also maps various hypothesized interlinguistic contacts, with Austroasiatic speakers to the east, Paleosiberian speakers to the north, Indo-European speakers to the west, and Tibeto-Burman speakers to the southwest. But it moves then to the lion's share of China's experience with translation, the feverish translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese during the medieval period. This extraordinary enterprise is certainly among the longest and largest-scale translation projects in world history. It involved thousands of people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who were employed in translation bureaus carrying out complex translation work based on rounds of oral recitation, linguistic transposition, and cross-checking, sponsored by successive dynasties over roughly a millennium. Beyond changing the intellectual, religious, and material culture of China and East Asia, the encounter with Buddhist texts, in phonographic scripts, constituted a significant cognitive change and stimulus in Chinese cultural history. This was the first time Chinese took non-Chinese scripts and languages seriously, and the encounter with Sanskrit meter in *gāthā* verses of Buddhist sutras as well as with the prosimetric style of Buddhist literature inspired the emergence of prose narrative and fiction and the development of Chinese "regulated poetry."

Translators employed various methods for various purposes; the early translations of Buddhist scriptures resorted to native Daoist terminology to translate Buddhist technical terminology and "familiarized" Buddhism, thus reaffirming native culture at a time when the deep linguistic and intellectual foreignness of Buddhism produced anxiety and cultural self-consciousness. In contrast, the short-lived strategy of "matching meanings" based on lists of Indic terms and presumed Chinese equivalents granted Buddhism the status of an independent tradition, with its own technical expertise. In an ultimate compromise, as seen in master translators like Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (334–413), translators settled on a mixture of semantic translation and transcription of Sanskrit terms that struck a balance between familiarizing and foreignizing Buddhist texts. Translation could even be used for domestic legitimation in China;

most famously, Wu Zetian managed to insert prophecies of the coming of a female monarch into the translation of Indic scriptures, and the authority of the institution of Buddhist translation covered up her manipulations. In closing, the chapter discusses translations in other directions. There were, for example, translations from Chinese into Sanskrit, most famously the Heart Sutra, which, though traditionally assumed to be a Sanskrit text, was probably a Chinese text eventually retranslated into Sanskrit. This is a stunning example of how some texts could and did move against the stream, from China to India, but it only underlines the fact that the greater part of China's experience with translation flowed from India to China.

During the first millennium CE, Buddhism connected the various emerging states of East Asia: as text in the form of translations of the Buddhist canon produced originally in China, as the international community of monks traveling and studying throughout Asia, and as ritual practice and its material culture—complete with sculpture and temple building, ritual calendars and their implements and relics. The remainder of this section is devoted to the "Shared Literary Heritage in the East Asian Sinographic Sphere" (Chapter 33), discussing countries that built their own textual traditions based on the Chinese script and textual heritage. Chapter 34–36 further elaborate on the distinctive developments of Sino-Korean, Sino-Japanese, and Sino-Vietnamese literatures.

While the cultural transfer of Buddhism into China had to proceed through translation of languages in non-Chinese scripts into Literary Chinese, with early and medieval East Asia we are practically in a "world without translation," a world in which educated people who did not share a common language could still read the same text, in the lingua franca of Literary Chinese, and, unlike in regions dominated by phonographic script languages, knowledge of any form of spoken Chinese or translation was not needed for mutual understanding within the Sinographic Sphere. In particular, Korea and Japan developed reading techniques that allowed readers to voice a text in their vernacular language without the intermediary of any form of Chinese. Learning these techniques was part of basic elite education. Therefore a text like the *Analects* or the Chinese version of the Lotus Sutra was no more "Chinese" than it was "Korean," "Japanese," or "Vietnamese," to Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese readers.

Thus the logographic nature of the Chinese script (as well as the possibility of using it in mixed form, for both logographic and phonographic inscription) created distinctive modes of cross-cultural communication and textual culture in the Sinographic Sphere. With the early modern period, translation of Chinese texts into vernaculars did become an important tool for the education and entertainment of women, children, and commoners, but this does not change the fact that, within the Chinese script world, translation was an option rather than a necessity, unlike with phonographic languages, which require cosmopolitan foreign language skills or translation for mutual intelligibility. The logographic script also enabled the distinctive phenomenon of "brush talk," which diplomatic envoys without a shared spoken language relied on when passing written notes back and forth and writing Chinese-style poetry for each other; and it created a distinctive biliteracy, with textual production in both Literary Chinese and various local vernaculars (rather than the bilingualism in medieval Europe, where the educated class both wrote and actually spoke Latin alongside the local vernaculars).

The peripheral states in the Sinographic Sphere came to adopt a number of political and social institutions based on Chinese precedents: central government structures and law codes, administrative record keeping and the compilation of historical chronicles, Confucian academies and an education system devoted to the Chinese Classics, as well as, with the exception of Japan, a civil service examination system linked to government service. They also shared certain literary institutions and practices, sustained by the flourishing book trade in the region: a canon of textual knowledge, based on extensive commentarial literature and exegesis; the Confucius cult,which connected the academy, the scholarly community, and the state; training aimed at honing fluency in administrative genres, often written in ornate prose forms, and at applying one's knowledge of the Classics to policy questions; and a literary corpus produced in Literary Chinese that strongly valued certain forms of self-expression and self-cultivation, emphasized the duty of both obedience and remonstration, found solace in the trope of the unsuccessful scholar whose talent goes unrecognized, and developed a counter-discourse justifying retreat from society during politically corrupt times.

The shared Chinese literary heritage remained a central reference point for the literary cultures of the various states in the Sinographic Sphere throughout the premodern period. But the emergence of written vernacular literature and eventually of vernacular scripts, such as Japan's *hiragana* and *katakana* syllabaries, Vietnam's invented *chữ nôm* characters, like Korea's *han'gŭl* script promulgated by King Sejong 世宗大王 (r. 1418–1450), led to a complex dynamic unfolding between Chinese-style and various vernacular literary modes. Despite differences depending on place and period, vernacular scripts and languages were generally associated with female reading and writing, private and personal concerns, love and romance, and popular genres. Often men were also prominently involved in the production and consumption of vernacular literature, beyond their domain of writing in Literary Chinese, but women had often no, and certainly less, opportunity to participate in the community and world of Chinese-style literature.

The presentation of the stories of Sino-Korean, Sino-Japanese, and Sino-Vietnamese literatures in this *Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature* is programmatic. We are standing at a crucial historical inflection point, where East Asia, which for almost two millennia was connected through the Chinese script, the lingua franca of Literary Chinese and its literary heritage, has lost its cosmopolitan language and is increasingly growing distant from its shared heritage. The past century has seen the rapid death of Literary Chinese in Vietnam, Korea, and Japan, and English is catching on as a new cosmopolitan language that will forever change the face of East Asia. As we are confronting this new phase in world history, the Chinese-style literatures of East Asia can provide us with a sense of the region's distinctive cultural commonalities. And they tell stories of creative engagement with and distance from Chinese literary history—sibling stories—that can teach us much about Chinese literature.

CHAPTER 31

COLONIZATION, SINICIZATION, AND THE POLYSCRIPTIC NORTHWEST

TAMARA T. CHIN

This chapter introduces the topic of "Early and Medieval China and the World" from three perspectives, explored in turn. Colonization and Sinicization are distinct but related historiographic narratives commonly used to highlight China's past as a real and imagined part of a culturally larger history. The chronological sketches below will address the literary genres at stake in histories of colonial frontiers and acculturation, and survey recent debates about the terms. The third section introduces the diversity of literatures in foreign scripts and languages that flourished alongside Literary Chinese texts, especially in eastern Central Asia or what is often called the Northwest (primarily the modern Chinese provinces of Xinjiang and Gansu).

Given a widespread assumption that Chinese was the only literary tradition of ancient China, the inclusion of non-Chinese literatures within an account of Chinese literature deserves initial clarification. China's Northwest has long been recognized as the most militarily vulnerable frontier for early and medieval China. It was the principal gateway for outward expansion and inward invasion, as well as for large-scale immigration and emigration. During the first millennium CE, the Northwest became the home of a large number of non-Chinese as well as Chinese writing systems. Since modern literary study has been shaped along national lines, these texts have largely been analyzed as unrelated traditions. While philologically practical, this approach has often obscured the overlapping geohistorical context of their production and circulation. The political choice of one writing system over another or the cosmopolitan flourishing of multiple scripts in religious centers became integral to what is introduced below as the "Polyscriptic Northwest." Many of these foreign texts were also translated into or out of Chinese, and in the case of Sanskrit Buddhist literature influenced mainstream medieval Chinese thought, religious practice, literary style, and prosody. "Literatures of the Roman Empire" are now recognized to include Aramaic, Punic, and Ethiopic as well as Latin and Greek. Similarly, the Sino-Japanese, Sino-Korean, and Sino-Vietnamese of the Sinographic Sphere, as well as the non-Chinese literatures that developed alongside Chinese during or between periods of Chinese imperial rule in the Northwest, deserve attention. This *geo*historical perspective may in the future help to mediate between scholarship on Classical Chinese and other literatures.

COLONIZATION

For the reader of canonical Chinese texts, the pairing of colonization and Sinicization echoes a traditional foreign policy distinction between military conquest (*zheng* 征*; fa* 伐) on the one hand and moral or cultural "transformation" (*hua* 化) on the other, or, more abstractly, between martial (*wu* 武) and civil/cultural (*wen* 文) principles. The modern term colonization, broadly defined by the anthropologist Michael Dietler as "the expansionary act of imposing political sovereignty over foreign territory and people," has a range of possibilities. Some scholars differentiate types of colonialism by the levels of violence or cultural persuasion used by settlers toward indigenous peoples; others emphasize the fidelity of settlers to their original cultures; yet others contrast the decentralized material frontier processes of colonization with ideological imperialism at the center.

Prior to the Qin (221–206 BCE) and Han establishment of unified empire, Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046–256 BCE) society had expanded from the heartland of the Yellow River basin (in northern China) through a range of violent and nonviolent processes: military conquest, intermarriage, adoption, Zhou outward migration, and the reorganization of non-Zhou populations according to Zhou lineage principles and political hierarchies. During the subsequent twelve centuries—spanning the establishment and expansion of empire (Qin-Han), the breakdown of unified rule during the Period of Disunion (or Northern and Southern Dynasties: 220–589 CE), and the reunification of empire (Sui-Tang: 581–907)—the territorial, ethnic, and political frontiers of *Zhongguo* 中國 (the Central States, i.e., China) and various Chinese empires frequently shifted. The following account highlights the specific importance, within the broader history and cultural poetics of China's militarized frontiers, of the Han dynasty wars against the steppe Xiongnu people in the Northwest that first introduced the institution of *tuntian* 屯田 "military-agricultural colonies." This Han-Xiongnu frontier later became the most important topos in medieval frontier poetry and political rhetoric, long after the end of the Han dynasty and the disappearance of the Xiongnu as a recorded ethnic group.

Historiography of the Frontier

The transformation of the frontier into an object of literature properly began in the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), with Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE) *Shiji* 史記

(*Records of the Historian*). Prior to the Han dynasty, Zhou historiographic texts such as the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) and its *Zuo* 左傳 and *Gongyang* 公羊傳 commentaries contain terse records of encounters between Zhou and non-Zhou groups and individuals, as well as scattered accounts of foreign customs. The *Shiji* records imperial projects from the earliest legendary times through the contemporary era of Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), which saw the largest territorial expansion in China's history: 1.5 million square miles north- and westward into modern-day Inner and Outer Mongolia, Gansu, Xinjiang, and the Ferghana Valley (Uzbekistan), and south- and eastward into Yunnan, Guangzhou, Vietnam, and Korea. It includes seven chapter-length "Arrayed Accounts" (*liezhuan* 列傳), each devoted to a frontier region or population that was not conquered until the Han dynasty (e.g., "Chaoxian liezhuan" 朝鮮列傳 ["Account of Korea"], "Dayuan liezhuan" 大宛列傳 ["Account of Ferghana"]). All but the "Xiongnu liezhuan" 匈奴列傳 ("Account of the Xiongnu") narrate the eventual Han military victory and administrative incorporation of a people. The "Xiongnu liezhuan" has always had a special significance, since the Northwest would remain medieval China's most vulnerable frontier. Its lengthy empirical observations about the steppe Xiongnu (e.g., kinship norms) are also often taken as the beginnings of Chinese anthropological writing or, retroactively, of modern Chinese "histories of ethnic minorities" (*minzu shi* 民族史).

The subsequent twenty-four official histories that span China's imperial history borrowed the *Shiji*'s literary structure, and included "accounts" of foreign groups and places (e.g., "Xiyu zhuan" 西域傳 ["Account of the Western Regions"]). These histories varied in their authorial sentiments. For example, unlike the xenophobic editorials of Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92 CE) *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*) and Fan Ye's 范曄 (398–445 CE) *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*), the *Shiji* presented an unexpectedly ambivalent relation to the truth claims of ethnography in the Han-Xiongnu context. Wei Shou's 魏收 (506–572) *Wei shu* 魏書 (*History of the Wei Dynasty*) and the *Jin shu* 晉書 (*History of the Jin Dynasty*) that was commissioned by Emperor Taizong of Tang 唐太宗 (r. 626–649) promoted the adoption of certain Chinese rituals and values, but largely resisted claims of superiority over steppe cultures (Honey 1990).

Chinese writing did not simply reflect the historical experience and imagination of the militarized frontier; it also became a disciplinary technology in the *tuntian* colony. Wooden administrative documents found at Han dynasty Juyan (Inner Mongolia) reveal the bureaucratic importance of recording biometric data, everyday payments and prices, as well as the highly regulated movement of goods and people across borders. Although not literary in the belles-lettristic sense, discoveries of these records, official letters, and the postal network reveal the importance of writing to the control of empire. Written observations of administrators and envoys likely provided source materials for the historiographers at the imperial court. Frontier excavations in Mongolia and around Dunhuang (in modern Gansu) have also yielded fragments of synonymica, or proto-dictionaries, that helped frontier officials to learn to write in the standard seal script. Documents from Tang dynasty Turfan (in modern-day Xinjiang) show that edicts on the proper size of a *tuntian* were not always followed in practice. These excavated documents from *tuntian* sites thus supplement or revise the primarily political accounts of *tuntian* settlement in the received historiographic tradition.

Frontier Poetry, *Fu, Bianwen*

The Han period's most popular literary genre, *fu* (prose-poetry, rhapsody), has often been associated with expansionist empire. *Fu* typically included euphonic lists of objects (e.g., types of flora, fauna, gems) and some *fu*-composers used these as metonyms for the material spoils of empire. Most famously, Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE) "Rhapsody on the Excursion Hunt of the Son of Heaven" (*Tianzi youlie fu* 天子游獵賦) substantially lengthened the genre's catalogues of exotica. This became a model for grand rhapsodies (*dafu* 大賦) on imperial hunting parks. These enumerated imperial possessions that were presumably acquired as military trophies or market trifles in frontier campaigns. The genre's signature verbal floridity thereafter came under the perennial suspicion of promoting excessive imperial expansion and materialism.

During China's subsequent split into the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the émigré court literati in the south developed a genre of what became known as "frontier poetry" (邊塞詩 *biansai shi*). Unlike the flamboyant Han rhapsody, medieval frontier poems used historical allegory to describe military campaigns and hardship, using the earlier Han-Xiongnu war as its primary theme or metaphor. Borrowing the toponyms, battle events and generals recorded in Han historiography and *yuefushi* 樂府詩 (Music Bureau poetry), southern poets positioned themselves as the Han, and their contemporary steppe dynasties in the north as the enemy Xiongnu. Since the northern courts (e.g., the Northern Wei dynasty in Luoyang) often adopted Chinese writing, names, and institutions to assert themselves as the legitimate inheritors of the Han dynasty and Central States, frontier poetry became a competing strategy of political role-play. Although some northerners also composed frontier poetry (identifying with the Han, not the Xiongnu), the poetic style and description of the bleak Central Asian Northwest primarily originated with southerners such as Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551), who had never actually visited the Northwest but found his inspiration in historical sources.

Thus the history of the Northwest during the Han dynasty (rather than, say, the Zhou dynasty frontier) came to provide the key idiom for frontier warfare during the medieval period. After the Sui-Tang reunification of the Chinese empire, Emperors Taizong and Gaozong of Tang 唐高宗 (r. 649–683) aggressively expanded Tang power into parts of the Northwest. They conquered the Eastern and Western Turks (*Tujue* 突厥) and re-established *tuntian* colonies. Tang dynasty poets and statesmen continued to look back to the Han-Xiongnu encounter in representing their most militarized frontier. As with earlier southern poets, few could draw on personal experience. Of the "Four Talents" of the early Tang—all of whom composed famous frontier poems—only Luo Binwang 駱賓王 (ca. 619–684?) had visited the Northwest. While fighting in the Tang army in the Western Regions, Luo Binwang composed "Xi ci Pulei jin" 夕次蒲類津 ("Stopping by Barkul Ford at Night"), which ends: "May it not be as [what happened at] the foot of Mt.

Lan,/Which in vain brought shame to the Han Empire" (Chan 2014). Mt. Lan is an allusion to general Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BCE), shamed by Emperor Wu, who had surrendered to the Xiongnu at Lan'gan shan 藍干山. Through frontier poetry and political rhetoric, the Xiongnu became a standard medieval metonym for the enemy Other (especially the Uyghurs), although the Xiongnu had been defeated in the fourth century and were no longer recorded by the fifth. Conversely, the Han became the transcendent metonym for the Central States Self. The latter substitution helped to transform the term Han from an originally political or geographical designation (the Han state, Han River, or Han dynasty) to an increasingly cultural-ethnic one by the Tang.

Among the thousands of texts discovered in a Buddhist cave in Dunhuang in 1900 was a set of prosimetric *bianwen* 變文 ("transformation texts"; prosimetric narrative), whose subjects included Tang dynasty Dunhuang military generals and Han dynasty figures associated with the Northwest. The cave was sealed shortly after 1000 and two *bianwen* respectively narrate in gory detail the conquests of non-Chinese neighbors or invaders by the local Tang generals Zhang Yichao 張義潮 (799?–872) and Zhang Huaishen 張淮深 (831–890). The *Zhang Yichao Bianwen* 張義潮變文 (*Transformation Text on Zhang Yichao*) glorifies Zhang's expulsion of the Tibetans from Dunhuang and his attack on the Uyghurs and Tuyuhun. These *bianwen* attest to the yet more polycentric era of competing empires and khanates that followed the An Lushan rebellion of 755, when the expanded empire of the earlier Tang period began to decentralize and contract. An Lushan 安祿山 (c. 703–757) had been a leading Sogdian-Turkish, Middle Persian–speaking general in the army of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang 唐玄宗 (r. 712–756) who seized the eastern capital of Luoyang. After the rebellion, an expansionist Tibetan Empire repeatedly invaded the Tang capital, and successive conquests and mass settlement by Tibetans, Arabs, Uyghurs, and Mongolic Tuyuhun finally forced the retreat of the Tang Empire out of Central Asia (including Dunhuang).

Both *bianwen* about the Zhang-lineage generals used the ancient term Xiongnu (and the early Zhou term *Xianyun* 獫狁) for the enemy. However, not all Dunhuang *bianwen* used the Han-Xiongnu metaphor to manifest support for Chinese imperial might. *Bianwen* on the Han dynasty generals Li Ling and Wang Ling, and on the Han Princess Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 (who was married off to a Xiongnu leader), survive from Dunhuang. In contrast to the *bianwen* on the triumphant Zhangs, and to Luo Binwang's frontier poem (above) that featured Li Ling's surrender as the ultimate disgrace, the Dunhuang *bianwen* on Li Ling makes him into a tragic hero. Li Ling had always been an ambivalent figure. Both the *Shiji* and *Han shu* contained references to Sima Qian's infamous punishment by castration for appearing to Emperor Wu of Han to defend Li Ling's surrender. However, the *bianwen* is far more explicit in its sympathy for both Li Ling and Sima Qian than in Chinese historiography. It ends with Li Ling's anguish at the execution of his mother and (Chinese) wife, and his open criticism of Emperor Wu of Han: "'Today the Imperial [Son of] Heaven should come to understand,/The Son of Heaven of the House of Han has wronged (*gu* 辜) Ling's virtue.'" This *bianwen* also gives extended voice (as historical accounts did not) to Li Ling's wife and mother in China, and their sense of injustice in facing execution for Li Ling's actions. To some degree this reflects the rise during the Han and post-Han period of the lyric voice of women at the frontier—especially in the poetic topos of Han women compelled to marry Xiongnu men (e.g., *Wang Zhaojun Bianwen* 王昭君變文 [*Transformation Text on Wang Zhaojun*] and Cai Wenji's 蔡文姬 *Hujia Shiba Pai* 胡茄十八拍 [*Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute*]).

Han dynasty settlements in the Northwest remained a literary and political theme through the late imperial and modern period, and are sometimes still implicated in how the term "colonization" (and colonialism and imperialism) is used or translated. In English-language scholarship, colonization has long been used both for the Han and Tang institution of military-agricultural *tuntian* colonies, and for more general expansionist acts in which Chinese settlers imposed political sovereignty elsewhere (e.g., the Qin dynasty expansion into Sichuan, the Jin court migration to the Yangzi Basin during the Period of Disunion, and Qing expansion into Xinjiang). By contrast, the standard modern Chinese terms *zhimin* 殖民 ("to colonize"), *zhimindi* 殖民地 ("colony"), and *zhimin zhuyi* 殖民主義 ("colonialism"), which were coined from European languages via Japanese in the nineteenth century, are more restrictively applied to the modern contexts in which Asian and African countries were encroached upon (e.g., the Opium Wars) (Perdue 2009). There is thus a disjuncture between the strictly modern *zhimindi* and the more neutral classical term *tuntian* that still refers to military farming in modern Chinese (by the Tang, there were *tuntian* within China proper). One might further observe that neither English- nor Chinese-language scholarship uses the term "colonization" to refer to non-Chinese expansion into early and medieval China, for example, the Northern Wei conquest and settlement of Northern China or the Tibetan, then Uyghur, conquest and settlement of the northern Tarim Basin (formerly the Tang's Western Regions). As in the case of Sinicization, the term's usage becomes more opaque outside a linear, monocentric narrative of Chinese history.

SINICIZATION

Sinicization generally refers to the adoption of Chinese practices and values (e.g., rituals, Chinese writing, examination system), whether voluntarily or as a consequence of conquest and colonization. For reasons addressed below, Sinicization is here used in a more restricted sense, in contrastive conjunction with broader terms such as acculturation, biculturalism, assimilation, and entanglement. Sinicization here refers to the self-conscious process of adopting a (variable) set of practices and values that are imagined to be, and posited as, those of a continuous, unchanging Chinese culture rooted in Zhou classical texts. Chinese culture in this ideal paradigm radiates ever further outward from the political center, the Central States. Sinicization here translates the classical term *hua* 化: the Zhou proposition that any outsider could be "transformed" (*hua*) into a member of the morally and culturally superior Zhou domain. The Five Confucian Classics and Warring States philosophers were the first to make this claim, often pitting the militarily agonistic and morally inferior foreigner (sometimes generalized as Yi 夷, Di 狄, Rong 戎, Man 蠻, or Hu 胡) against the Central States inheritors of Zhou civilization (the Hua 華, Xia 夏, or Zhou 周). Although there were important and influential Zhou traditions of alien wisdom, the foreigner generally appeared ignorant of ritual (*li* 禮), propriety (*yi* 儀) and writing (*wen* 文), until enlightened through peaceful Sinicization or military force. "If distant peoples do not submit, [the ruler must] cultivate civil culture and virtue to make them come (*lai*) to us" 遠人不服, 則修文德以來之. In this model, classical literature (*wen*) was both a vehicle of Sinicization and a legitimating marker of one's cultivated status. Generations of scholars and imperial officials through early and medieval China and beyond consciously drew on and appropriated this early rhetoric.

Although Zhou society spread through a broad range of military and acculturative processes, this universalizing ideological concept of moral-cultural transformation (*hua*/Sinicization) shaped the elite Zhou experience and narration of expansion across the Central Plain. By the Warring States period, Zhou society had become more uniform, differences between Zhou and non-Zhou were more pronounced, and thinkers from across this enlarged Zhou Sphere self-identified as Hua and Xia. As sketched in the previous section, Chinese empire expanded, contracted, or fragmented during the subsequent twelve centuries, at times including parts of Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Korea, and Vietnam. Through periods of war and peace, the specific places and times, directions and types, of acculturation varied drastically. Large-scale migration, warfare, colonization, intermarriage, cohabitation, and religious pluralism produced bicultural regimes and cultural entanglement rather than simple acculturation. It is commonly argued that China (the Central States) endured throughout this period as a cultural and political entity—while other world civilizations did not—by the Sinicization of both its conquerors and its conquered. However, as outlined below, ideological Sinicization was only one of the processes at stake, and the vectors of cultural change were not unidirectional.

Limits of Sinicization

Self-conscious narratives and practices of Sinicization flourished throughout the early and medieval period, but the protracted Han dynasty wars with the Xiongnu undercut the Zhou optimism of *universal* Sinicization. Han writers introduced into classical Chinese literature the figure of the *unchangeable* foreigner, who could not be persuaded or forced to Sinicize (*hua*). On the one hand, the *Han shu* celebrates as a shining example the case of Emperor Wu of Han's protégé, the Sinicized Xiongnu Jin Midi 金日磾. Jin, for whom the author uses the archaizing term *Yi di* 夷狄 ("foreigner"), dramatically rose in favor and office under Emperor Wu. After the emperor's death, Jin patriotically declined the invitation to become regent (i.e., de facto emperor of China), arguing: "I am someone from an outer state (*chen wai guo ren* 臣外國人). [Becoming regent] would make the Xiongnu disrespect the Han" (*Han shu* 68.2967). On the other hand, the *Han* *shu*'s "Xiongnu zhuan" ends with the impossibility of civilizing the Xiongnu into submission, and the *Shiji* gives a startling anecdote of a Han traitor who, instead of teaching the Xiongnu Chinese ways, scandalously argues the superiority of Xiongnu practices. The lament of the Han woman compelled to marry the alien, un-Sinicized steppe ruler in the Northwest also became an enduring Chinese poetic topos.

China's division into northern and southern dynasties during the Period of Disunion further complicates linear narratives of Sinicization. The immigrant steppe rulers in the north and the displaced Jin court in the south constructed two distinct "imagined cultural Spheres" (Swartz 2014). The north and the south each refashioned itself as the legitimate Chinese dynastic successor within the north-south rivalry *and* vis-à-vis their respective local populations. As addressed above, southern frontier poetry delegitimized the Central Plain's new settlers by archaizing them as the steppe Xiongnu, and repositioned the south (or *Jiangnan* 江南, lit. "South of the Yangzi River") as the Han. Jin literati generally represented the local population of the south (e.g., Yao 瑶, Yue 越, earlier Chinese settlers) as inferior, but continued to draw on a positive (if exoticizing) literary representation of the south as home to a distinct shamanistic Warring States Chu culture, especially as articulated in the poetic anthology *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Verses of Chu*). In contrast to the north, the south privileged purity of descent and more rigid familial classifications. It was in this complex cultural context that the belles-lettristic classical accomplishments for which the southern dynasties are now celebrated were produced (e.g., *Wen xuan* 文選 [*Selections of Refined Literature*]).

The Xianbei rulers of the North included themselves within an expanded notion of *Hua* 華, as dwellers within the Central Plain, and often reserved the (negatively inflected) term *hu* or (more neutral) *yi* for other immigrants or foreigners. Although the northern construction of the north-south split is often narrated in terms of self-Sinicization, some historians have emphasized that acculturation was not unidirectional. For example, the Xianbei Emperor Xiaowen 孝文帝 (r. 471–499) initially established his Northern Wei dynastic capital at Luoyang (the site of the Eastern Zhou and Later Han capitals), and his court adopted Chinese surnames, language, rituals, dress, and institutions. However, in conscious reaction, and perhaps as an ongoing effect of the mass migration from the Northwest steppe, the sixth century brought greater Xianbei-ization (or "counter-acculturation"). This included the court's use of the Xianbei's Turkic-Mongolic language and Xianbei surnames. The army was also a crucial site of cultural negotiation. Former Han armies had adopted the Xiongnu military mode of mounted archery, and the Later Han dynasty abolished universal conscription by recruiting large numbers of surrendered foreign soldiers, leading to the heavy reliance of all subsequent imperial armies on foreign soldiers and generals (e.g., the Sogdian general An Lushan). The Northern Wei army similarly recruited Chinese soldiers. However, in transforming them into steppe-style warriors, the Xianbei had to reform their own clan-based confederacy structure.

The Northern Wei Buddhist translator Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 invokes such debates over cultural identification and change in his *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (*A Record *of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*) (completed in 547 CE). The narrator's use of the term *hu* is descriptive rather than pejorative, especially in celebrating the beauty of foreign (*hu*) Buddhist temples patronized by the Wei rulers. A variety of perspectives are included: pro-north, pro-south, for and against coresidency with different ethnic groups. However, the most polarized (and pro-north) exchange is between the southerner Chen Qingzhi 陳慶之 and northerner Yang Yuanshen 楊元慎. After the southerner argues that true legitimacy lies with the "Left [Bank] of the Yangzi" (江左), i.e., the south, the northerner responds with a long, ethnographic rebuttal on the small, vile, tattooed bodies of southerners, who are unaccustomed to music, rituals, and laws and whose spoken language is an unchangeable mixture of *Hua* 華 (Chinese) and regional *Min* 闽 and *Chu* 楚. The author implicitly praises Yang's anti-southern "clear phrases and refined sentences" that successfully silence his opponent. After leaving the north, a transformed Cheng shows an unusual respect to northerners (*Bei ren* 北人). In the fashion of the Sinicized envoy, Chen paraphrases the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), insinuating the Northern Wei capital of Luoyang as the true source of civilization: "Splendid, splendid is the capital city,/A model for the whole nation to follow." Chen then changes his clothing and insignia to follow "Wei patterns" (*Wei fa* 魏法) and—according to Yang's apocryphal narrative—literati and common people in the south soon copied him. Thus, in this northern anecdote, to Sinicize is to become Wei (northern).

Buddhism and Acculturation

The spread of Buddhism from India across China during the Period of Disunion and the Sui-Tang dynasties, as witnessed by Yang Xuanzhi, presents the most important counter-narrative to Sinicization. Many bicultural Northern Wei and Tang dynasty rulers helped to sponsor the spread of this religion within which India, not China, was the prestigious moral-cultural center of the world. Sengyou's 僧祐 (445–518) *Hu Han Yijing Yin Yi Tongyi Ji* 胡漢譯經音義同異記 (*Record of Similarities and Differences in Pronunciation and Meaning When Translating Scriptures from Western Languages to Chinese*) narrates three separate origins of writing, giving the greater longevity to brāhmī and kharoṣṭhī over Chinese. Buddhism transformed Chinese material, political, and intellectual life during the first millennium CE. Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502–549), patron of the arts during the Southern Dynasties, saw himself as an emperor bodhisattva; Tang Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 used Buddhism to legitimate her brief reign as China's only female emperor (Zhou dynasty, r. 690–705). Buddhist monastic life disseminated quotidian Indian practices that ranged from sugar manufacture and tea drinking to the use of chairs. Different forms of poetry from the Period of Disunion and the Tang dynasty introduced Buddhist motifs and modes of perception. The Buddhist embrace of foreign lands and languages produced influential travelogues of Silk Road pilgrims Faxian 法顯 (ca. 340–421), Xuanzang 玄奘 (ca. 600–664), and Yijing 義浄 (635–713 CE), who visited India and Southeast Asia, and the Japanese monk Ennin 円仁 (793/4–864), who visited Tang China. The Sanskrit texts that travelers brought back from India enabled major translation projects, including that of the polyglot Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–ca. 409).

Many did not welcome Buddhism, however, and medieval monks and officials vigorously debated the cultural foreignness (or familiarity) of the religion. Modern scholars continue to explore the degree to which Buddhism "conquered" China or China "transformed"/Sinicized Buddhism—or both. *Bianwen* transformation texts likely originated in Indian Buddhist oral narrative traditions, and later influenced the rise of Chinese drama and popular narrative (Mair 2007). Buddhist miracle tales, by contrast, might be understood as transforming a foreign religion by narrating as history Buddhist acts performed by Chinese individuals on Chinese soil, and by pedagogically clarifying points where Buddhist teachings conflicted with non-Buddhist teachings (Campany 2012). The dialogue *Mouzi Li huo lun* 牟子理惑論 (*Master Mou's Treatise Dispelling Doubts*) exemplifies Buddhism's more syncretic entanglement with Daoist and Confucian texts, especially during the early medieval period.

Thus there is a greater need to look at Sinicization/*hua* as simply one process and narrative fantasy (of Chinese continuity, homogeneity, and superiority) that structured the history and experience of early relations with the larger world. Chinese literature shaped and was shaped by a historically shifting, often polycentric, political landscape, as well as by competing cultural imaginaries (e.g., north vs. south and Buddhist India vs. China). The critique of Sinicization as an adequate explanation of the acculturative processes in China's past bears comparison with that of the concepts of Hellenization and Romanization among western Classics scholars. Like Sinicization, Hellenization and Romanization were views derived from classical texts that presented the transmission of civilized customs to barbarians as the natural and necessary result of contact. The modern scholarly focus on Hellenization and Romanization, despite evidence of a far more complex and entangled set of Mediterranean encounters, was fostered by the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European a priori assumption that Greece and Rome *were* the civilizing and the colonizing centers of the ancient world.

Unlike classical *hua* (moral-cultural "transformation"), *Han hua* 漢化 (lit. "transformation into Han"; Han-ization or Sinicization) and *Hua hua* 華化 (Sinicization) appear to be modern terms. "Han" 漢 did not serve as an ethnonym until the Northern Wei period (386–534), and it did not begin to approximate our modern notion of Han Chinese ethnicity until the Ming-Qing period. Both *Han hua* and "Sinicization" began to circulate by the end of the nineteenth century, but further research is needed on their translingual histories. As in the case of "colonization," the problem with the term "Sinicization" is that it assumes monocentric narratives of Chinese history that retroactively conflate ancient and modern China. The classical discourse of moral-cultural *hua*/transformation described above differs from the modern notion of assimilating ethnic minorities into a Han-majority Chinese nation-state. The case of the Polyscriptic

Northwest, below, helps to clarify the much broader, polycentric contexts within which Classical Chinese literature developed.

THE POLYSCRIPTIC NORTHWEST

The terms "Sinographic Sphere" and "Polyscriptic Northwest" refer to two distinct literary-historical phenomena that emerged during China's increased entanglement with the larger world during the first millennium CE. The concept of the Sinographic Sphere, fully discussed in Chapters 33–36, builds on that of Sinicization. Briefly put, the Sinographic Sphere is the transregional script world defined by a shared use of Literary Chinese. Participants in this Sinographic Sphere in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam were trained in the Chinese logographic script and textual heritage, but not the Chinese language (Chapter 33). Since logographs primarily recorded meanings rather than sound values (unlike alphabetic scripts), Literary Chinese could be read using vernacular languages. Strategies included "gloss-reading" (*kundoku* 訓読 in Japanese), using Japanese (or Korean) word order, pronunciation, and morphology; writing glosses and abbreviated graphs into the Chinese text (*sŏktok kugyŏl* 釋讀口訣 in Korean); or using the Chinese logographs phonetically. Literary Chinese could thus be used for communication between speakers of mutually unintelligible languages without "translation" (e.g., the "brush talk" of envoys) (Denecke 2014). This Sinographic Sphere of Japan, Korea, and Vietnam developed largely outside the context of colonization. China had introduced writing during its colonization of Vietnam (111 BCE to 43 CE and 603 to 938) and the four commanderies established in parts of later Manchuria and northern Korea (108 BCE–313 CE), and both states regularly sent literate envoys. However, both countries, along with Japan (which had not been colonized, but sent envoys during the Six dynasties, Sui, and Tang), promoted Chinese writing, and Vietnam and Korea developed a Chinese-style bureaucracy with civil service examinations during later periods when not under Chinese control.

The Polyscriptic Northwest, by contrast, designates a historically shifting geocultural expanse of Eastern Central and Inner Asia (modern Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner and Outer Mongolia), partially referred to as *Xiyu* 西域 "Western Regions," that during the first millennium CE became the new home—and gateway into China—for a multiplicity of imported writing systems and languages (in addition to Chinese). The mosaic of oasis histories, such as those of Turfan and Dunhuang, makes little sense except as that of as a dynamic contact zone of multiple rival ethnic groups, polities, and empires, as well as of nonviolent cohabitation and Silk Road travel by monks, envoys, and traders. Early Chinese had absorbed some of the vocabulary and regional dialects of an array of oral cultures (e.g., Austroasiatic in the southeast). However, given the prestige of writing in China as a signifier of civilization (*wen* 文), the encounter with foreign (non-Sinographic) scripts, and not simply foreign languages, marks a watershed—hence the heuristic emphasis here on *polyscriptic* rather than polyglot.

Crucially, most of these imported traditions had already undergone literary development before they reached the Northwest. Extant writings in Brāhmī and Sogdian scripts, for example, were not only documentary, notative, or "sectorial" texts for accounting and administration; they were imaginative in their use of language, aesthetic form, or literary precedents (e.g., poetry). To borrow comparatist terms, these traditions were "literarized," not just "literized" (Sheldon Pollock). The story of the Polyscriptic Northwest is one of transregional importation, not evolutionary development. Unlike the historical shift in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, or Shang China from sectorial literacy (when writing is only used for those cultural activities for which it was invented, e.g., accounting) to cultural literacy (when other cultural domains have adopted writing), and unlike the second-millennium CE adoption of writing for vernaculars in South Asia, which involved a regional time lag between notative and imaginative literary texts, first-millennium CE immigrants to China's Northwest introduced writing systems that had already adapted and developed into literary traditions elsewhere. As with extant Literary Chinese texts from the Northwest, many of these texts were religious.

Thus one might contrast the eastward and westward extension of the Sinographic Sphere. The monographic spread of Chinese writing into first-millennium Korea, Vietnam, and Japan flourished after or without Chinese colonization; the westward expansion of the Sinographic Sphere generally accompanied Chinese colonial expansion (e.g., in *tuntian* military colonies) and soon became part of a polyscriptic contact zone as residents, immigrants, and successive regimes adopted non-Chinese and Chinese literary traditions. After the establishment and later fragmentation of Han imperial control in the Northwest, many oasis states and regions—and their often migrant populations—switched back and forth between different ruling groups. These included Xiongnu, Yuezhi (Kushan), Turk, and Uyghur, as well as various Chinese dynasties and states (e.g., Liao of the Six Dynasties Period; Tang dynasty). As Valerie Hansen puts it, "the peoples living in Central Asia were always moving, and the languages spoken in a given region often changed as a result. . . The norm in Central Asia was linguistic change, not linguistic continuity" (Hansen 2012).

Kharoṣṭhī was probably the earliest foreign writing system to join Chinese in the first-millennium Northwest. This Indic script (originating in Gandhara, in modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan) was widely used for writing both secular official and Buddhist texts in Prakrit (Gandhari) during the second to fifth centuries CE. Kharoṣṭhī was the official script of the kingdom of Khotan (Yutian; briefly under Later Han rule from 73 CE, and Tang rule 648–796), which issued bilingual Sino-Kharoṣṭhī coins. Archaeologists have also excavated over 800 Kharoṣṭhī texts and text fragments on wood, silk, leather, and paper around the Kroraina (Shanshan) Kingdom's capital of Loulan (formerly under Han rule, 77 BCE–16 CE; abandoned in 376 CE) and in towns with mixed populations that included large numbers of settled Chinese, such as Dunhuang (under Han rule, 111 BCE–107 CE; Western Liang, 400–421; Sui-Tang rule, 589–786). Scattered Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions have also been found further east, in the traditional Chinese capitals of Luoyang and Chang'an.

Brāhmī (another Indic script) replaced Kharoṣṭhī in the Northwest by the fifth century CE. Brāhmī holds a greater significance for Chinese literary and cultural history, since it was used for writing Sanskrit. It was also used for Agnean (Tocharian A), Kuchean (Tocharian B), and Khotanese (all Indo-European languages). The number of texts and text fragments bearing Brāhmī script excavated from the Northwest that have thus far been digitally cataloged by the International Dunhuang Project (over 33,000) exceeds that of texts bearing Chinese script (nearly 27,000). These highly approximate figures have more to do with the exigencies of preservation and cataloging, but they nevertheless give a sense of the importance of Brāhmī. The hundreds of Buddhist Sanskrit texts that Kumārajīva's team translated into Chinese in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and most of the thousands of Sanskrit texts discovered in the Northwest region, were written using Brāhmī. A tenth-century Chinese-Khotanese phrasebook translates phrases like "Bring me the vegetables" and "Do you know Chinese?" into Khotanese and transcribes the Chinese words into Brāhmī script so the Khotanese speaker could pronounce them.

Kuchean (Tocharian B) was used broadly through the eighth century CE across the northern Taklamakan, including in Turfan and Kucha, the native town of the Buddhist translator Kumārajīva. The over 6,000 extant Kuchean texts or text fragments in Brāhmī script include Buddhist religious texts, monastic and secular administrative texts, historical chronicles, travel passes, and royal orders. The Buddhist texts include prose-poetic narratives, similar to the Chinese *bianwen*, with formulaic Kuchean phrases that match those found in the captions of painted narrative scenes of Qizil's Buddhist cave murals (near Kucha), e.g., "Here the Bodhisattva throws a necklace to Mrgaja." Agnean (Tocharian A) was a more regional language than Kuchean, spoken around Agni (Yanqi or Qarashahr, Xinjiang), east of Kucha, through the early centuries CE. Over a thousand Agnean texts in Brāhmī are extant. These include Buddhist Jataka stories and the *Maitreyasamiti-Nātaka* (found elsewhere in Old Uyghur), in which the stepmother of the Buddha successfully overturns regulations forbidding women to hear Buddha's preaching.

Sogdian (a script derived from Aramaic) was one of the several writing systems used by speakers of Sogdian (an Iranian language) who inhabited China and Central Asia from the fourth century CE on. A mailbag destined for the Sogdian homeland of Samarkand (in modern Uzbekistan) was found near Dunhuang containing a set of Sogdian personal letters dating to 313/314 CE. Two of these letters are from a married freewoman named Miwnay: one to her mother, elaborating her financial straits and desperation to leave Dunhuang, and another to her husband, whom she blames:

> I obeyed your command and came to Dunhuang and I did not observe (my) mother's bidding nor (my) brothers'. Surely (?) the gods were angry with me on the day when I did your bidding! I would rather be a dog's or a pig's wife than yours! (Sims-Williams 2004)

Another letter is an important non-Chinese source for the watershed Xiongnu sacking of the Western Jin capital at Luoyang in 311 CE. It mentions the emperor's flight from Luoyang and the destruction of the city, and gives the Sogdian term *Xwn* ("Huns") for the Xiongnu: "these (same) Huns [who] yesterday were the emperor's (subjects)! And, sirs, we do not know wh[ether] the remaining Chinese were able to expel the Huns [from] Changan, from China, or (whether) they took the country beyond (?)" (Sims-Williams 2004)

The Sogdians dominated trade from Sichuan to Samarkand and Mongolia between the sixth and eighth centuries. Thousands of Sogdian texts (in various scripts) from the Northwest attest to the religious diversity of Sogdian-speakers: Zoroastrian, Manichaean, Buddhist (e.g., Jataka tales), and Christian texts—including a homily "On the final evil hour" translated from metrical Syriac into Sogdian. During the eighth century, Sogdians lost their relative political autonomy (in which they were headed by a Sogdian representative, the so-called *sabao*). They became increasingly integrated into the Tang administrative structure and Chinese society. Turkicized Sogdians played a prominent role in interstate relations in the Northwest, and the Uyghur steppe empire adapted the Sogdian writing system for Uyghur when they expanded into the Tarim Basin during the sixth to ninth centuries.

Texts in Tibetan (an Indic script), in Uyghur and Syriac (both Aramaic-derived), and in Manichean (a script closely related to Aramaic) have also survived from the end of the Tang period, when Tibetans, Uyghurs, Arabs, and Mongolic Tuyuhun finally forced the Tang Empire from Central Asia. Tibetans had since the seventh century developed Tibetan for translating Sanskrit Buddhist texts, and when the Lhasa-based Tibetan Empire expanded to include Kucha (790–800), Turfan (792–803), and Dunhuang (792–803), they used both Tibetan and Chinese for contracts, administration, and Buddhist texts. A bilingual stele inscription in Lhasa describes the peace treaty of 821/822 between the Tibetan king and Tang emperor in Tibetan and Chinese. The Dunhuang library cave contained over two thousand Tibetan scrolls and eleven volumes of *pothi* leaf pages. Although these include secular writings, most are duplicates of Buddhist works, primarily the *Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā sūtra* (*Perfection of Wisdom in a Hundred Thousand Verses Sutra*) and the *Aparimitāyur-nāma sūtra* (*Homage to Aparimitāyus Sutra*).

Following the collapse of the Uyghur Empire in 840 in Mongolia, Uyghur migrants to the Tarim Basin replaced the Tibetans. They primarily used the Uyghur script for writing (but also the Runic, Sogdian, Chinese, Brāhmī, and Syriac scripts). During the ninth century, the Uyghur script supplanted Chinese for use in contracts, and the Uyghur language replaced Sogdian as the region's common spoken language. Official, religious, and personal documents in Uyghur from the eighth to eleventh centuries have been found at Turfan, Kharakhoto, and Dunhuang. Dozens of Uyghur texts from the Dunhuang cave library, as well as many thousands of Uyghur and bilingual Chinese-Uyghur texts from Turfan, are now being digitized. Most were written on paper, at a time when the technology had reached the Arab world but not Europe.

This first-millennium polyscriptic, polyglot sphere cannot simply be disentangled from Chinese literature, because, as the archaeological contexts of Turfan and Dunhuang attest, many of these (often migrant, culturally plural) community members translated texts into and out of Chinese in their religious and secular activities.

The Manichean script was used for writing Manichaean religious texts in Parthian, Sogdian, and Middle Persian, but many Uyghur and Chinese translations of Manichaean texts have also been found in this region. These include a Chinese version of the Parthian "Sermon on the Light-Nous" in the style of a Buddhist sutra, and a long scroll from the Dunhuang cave library, *Moni jiao xia bu zan* 摩尼教下部贊 (*Hymns for the Lower Section* [i.e., the Hearers] *of the Manichaean Religion*), two of whose hymns are Chinese phonetic transcriptions of Parthian. The thousands of texts in Manichaean script found around Turfan include the *Huyadagman* (taken from its opening line, "Fortunate for us") and *Angad Rosnan* (*Bountiful Friend of the Beings of Light*) hymn cycles in Parthian and Sogdian. The Uyghur empire had established Manichaeism as their state religion in 763, and a trilingual Sogdian, Chinese, and Uyghur (in runic script) stele inscription dating to around 820 from Qarabalgasun in Mongolia extols Manichaeism. Prior to the second millennium, state-sponsored Manichaeism and Buddhism, as well as Christianity to a lesser extent, flourished around Uyghur-controlled Turfan.

The Nestorian Christian Church (Church of the East) left a large literary corpus at a monastery site at Shuipang, north of Turfan, dating to the Uyghur kingdom of Qocho (856–1335). It yielded over 1,000 primarily liturgical Syriac, Sogdian, Middle Persian, and New Persian Christian texts in Syriac script, as well as fifty Uyghur Christian texts in Syriac or Uyghur script. The Dunhuang library also included texts in many other, less common scripts not discussed here, including an eighteen-line Hebrew prayer from Psalms. Outside China, Arabic works by ninth-century Persian writers (such as Al-Baladhuri and Tabari) are useful for reconstructing the history of the Northwest. Prior to the large-scale conversions to Islam in the Northwest in the second millennium, Chinese and Arabic sources record the introduction of Islam into China by Arab and Persian traders, envoys, and soldiers beginning in the seventh century.

This kind of polyscriptic, multiethnic history was not, of course, restricted to the Northwest. During the Tang, thousands of foreigners generally lived in supervised wards with extraterritorial legal privileges. There were some exclusively non-Han villages, but no exclusively non-Han urban wards. With the rise of Muslim maritime trade in the eighth and ninth centuries, China's southern ports became a hub for Indians, Arabs, Javanese, and Malays. Some religious gatherings helped to maintain boundaries between ethnic groups; others served to break down ethnic boundaries (e.g., heterodox Buddhism and Daoism). From a literary perspective, however, the aridity of the Northwest, and its specific history of transcontinental migration and diverse religious textual production, have resulted in the preservation of an unusually large number of non-Chinese documents. The ongoing publication, digitization, and painstaking translation of these texts, controversially dispersed in the early twentieth century across Europe, Russia, Japan, and China, has helped to bring China studies into closer conversation with Central Asian studies (e.g., "Dunhuang-ology," "Silk Road studies").

Finally, future research is needed to situate the Polyscriptic Northwest and Sinographic Sphere in a broader comparative context. The Sinographic Sphere offers a potential form of what scholars of Sanskrit and Latin call a "literary cosmopolis." In the Roman and South Asian cases, trained literati produced and circulated literature to create a cosmopolitan culture across vast swathes of Eurasia. The expansion of the Sinographic Sphere during the Han through Tang dynasties is roughly contemporaneous and analogous, even if the balance and types of force and cultural persuasion involved in the expansion of Sanskrit, Latin, and Chinese differ. Comparative study may also illumine contact or rivalry between these spheres (e.g., the limiting of Sanskrit's northward spread into Vietnam by the Sinographic Sphere). At the same time, China's Northwest does not quite fit into this model of first-millennium Eurasia. Even during periods of Chinese imperial rule, the unstable Northwest became a palimpsest of multiple successive, overlapping, or rival literary cosmopolises or literary traditions (including Chinese). Comparisons with second-millennium, pre-colonial South Asia, when several textual traditions simultaneously created cosmopolitan cultures (e.g., Persian, Sanskrit, and Urdu), or with the polyscriptic and geoculturally decentered modern "Chinese" literature of Sinophone studies may prove more fruitful. Given the centrality of translation practices to its history, the Polyscriptic Northwest thus presents a potentially rich future site for comparative approaches to Literary Chinese.

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CHAPTER 32

TRANSLATION

DANIEL BOUCHER

The most significant interlinguistic transfer ever attempted in premodern Chinese history is without a doubt the massive translation of Indic Buddhist texts into Chinese from the late Han through the Song dynasties. This millennium-long enterprise transformed the religious, literary, and intellectual landscape of China. But Buddhist missionaries were not the first foreigners the Chinese had to engage. For at least a millennium before, Chinese from the central plain region had relations, often hostile, with a variety of peoples to their east, south, west, and especially north. This essay will chart some of the encounters with foreigners before the coming of Buddhist missionaries, especially as these left traces of interlinguistic contacts. Then I will detail the methods by which the translations of Indian Buddhist scriptures were carried out and how wrestling with these texts led to new reflections on the nature of the indigenous script and language vis-à-vis an encounter with a literary other for the first time. I will also look at the role the state took in promoting and making use of Buddhist translations for political purposes. And finally, I will examine some additional data for translations of other religious traditions and for significant roles for Chinese translations among peripheral peoples.

Pre-Buddhist Translations: Conceptualizing the "Barbarian"

There can be no doubt that the Chinese of the central plain were confronted with a variety of ethnic and linguistic others from at least the Shang period. We have references to the Qiang 羌 in the west, the Rong 戎 and Di 狄 in the north, and the Yi 夷 to the south and east, to name only some of the most prominent tribes mentioned in the earliest literary and inscriptional records. But even apart from often hostile foreigners, it is also likely that relations with principalities peripheral to the Zhou court, states routinely conceived of as part of greater China of antiquity, must have involved some now invisible interlinguistic negotiations. So attempts to understand the earliest Chinese efforts to span these linguistic divides are not unrelated to the question of what we mean, or should mean, by "Chinese" and, by extension, what constitutes a Sinitic language (Pulleyblank 1983; Mair 2005; see also Chapter 31).

In the context of the reduced status of the Zhou royal house, the eastern Zhou world was dominated socially, politically, and economically by peripheral states like Qi 齊, Jin 晉, Qin 秦, and Chu 楚. Various non-Zhou peoples were assimilated into these peripheral states, as demonstrated by archeological evidence even where the literature was silent, thus blurring the boundaries between "Chinese" (*Hua-Xia* 華夏) and "Barbarian" (Falkenhausen 2006, esp. chaps. 5–6). Intermarriage between the Zhou elite and Rong and Di peoples is mentioned in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*), and some Rong and Di leaders were reported to be well versed in Chinese literature. From all appearances, the Spring and Autumn Period must have experienced an unprecedented degree of cultural pluralism which would have necessitated frequent interlinguistic exchanges (Hsu 1999: 562–570).

Interlinguistic contact with foreign peoples only occasionally left traces in our earliest sources, but some of those traces are distinctive. There appears to be, for example, strong evidence for early loan borrowings into Old Chinese from Austroasiatic. Mei and Norman (1976) have shown that Yue peoples in the southeast were very likely Austroasiatic speakers and that Austroasiatic speakers were also a significant strand of ancient Chu culture. Several words related to Mon-Khmer languages were likely absorbed into Old Chinese during the first half of the first millennium BCE. Pulleyblank (1996) has suggested that the Yi people to the east were also Austroasiatic speakers and that they may have constituted a distinct cultural sphere from modern Vietnam to as far north as the Shandong peninsula, in the ancient states of Zou 鄒 and Lu 魯, famously the homes of Mencius 孟子 (fourth century BCE) and Confucius (551–479 BCE) respectively. While the monolithic stature of the Chinese written language has obscured the interlinguistic contributions of these ancient speakers, what would become the Zhou ecumene was constituted by the intersection of Hua-Xia and "barbarian" peoples.

It is not until the Han dynasty that evidence for interlinguistic contact between the Chinese and their neighbors becomes more extensive, both because of aggressive Han expansion and because of the appearance of the first systematic records of contact with new peoples who represented more substantial threats. Thus the stakes for communicating effectively with foreigners, especially frequently hostile ones, were often very high. And none more so than with the Xiongnu 匈奴, who troubled the Chinese court along the northern frontier for most of the Former Han. Uneven trade agreements and intermarriage of Chinese princesses to Xiongnu leaders ensured regular contacts, sustained trade along the border, and a frequent need to renegotiate the terms of the treaty (see Di Cosmo 2002: 193–196). Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE), the earliest source for most of what we know about the Xiongnu, travelled extensively collecting data for what would become his grand history. He records a sizeable number of Xiongnu words in his *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*) along with their Chinese translations, expanding a tradition that goes back to at least the *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書 (*Left-over Books of Zhou*)

(Di Cosmo 2002: 280–281). The identification of the Xiongnu language remains uncertain, but Pulleyblank (1962: 239–265), following the earlier suggestion of Ligeti, surmised on the basis of the reconstructed pronunciation of Chinese transcriptions of Xiongnu words that it is likely they spoke a language in the Yeniseian family, whose only surviving member today is Ket in Siberia. This hypothesis has received additional support from Vovin (2000).

How did these interlinguistic exchanges happen? Certainly trade was common, apart from official tribute missions, as evidenced by both the literary histories and archeological finds along the ancient border (Yü 1967). There were also Han defections to the Xiongnu, most famously Zhonghang Yue 中行說, a eunuch from the state of Yan who served as a tutor to a Han princess given in a marriage alliance to a Xiongnu chieftain by Emperor Wen of Han 漢文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE). Zhonghang soon after his arrival became a political advisor to the Xiongnu chieftain, assisting him in negotiations with the Han court, and of course becoming reviled by later Chinese historiographers (Chin 2010). Given the stakes of these communications for the Chinese, the Han government initiated the office of the *da honglu* 大鴻臚, "Chamberlain for Dependencies," which was responsible for supervising the reception of princes and other high officials at court as well as overseeing diplomatic relations with non-Chinese dignitaries. This office included the Director of Interpreters (*yi guan ling* 譯官令), who assisted in greeting foreign envoys in audiences at court, as well as interpreters in chief (*yizhang* 譯長), many of whom may not have been Chinese (Hulsewé and Loewe 1979: 84, n. 83).

One of the Han strategies for dealing with the Xiongnu was to establish alliances with principalities to the west, beginning famously with Zhang Qian's 張騫 mission to the oasis kingdoms of the Tarim Basin in 123 BCE. This excursion brought the Han court into its first recorded contacts with Indo-European speakers. Pulleyblank has contended that many of the peoples first encountered in the Tarim Basin region were Tocharian speakers, including the Yuezhi 月氏, Wusun 烏孫, Dayuan 大宛, and Kangju 康居, albeit on admittedly thin evidence (Pulleyblank 1966). Nevertheless, early Chinese contact with Tocharian speakers is virtually certain, since at least a few loan words from Tocharian have made their way into Chinese. A good example is the word *mi* 蜜 (Eastern Han *mjiət*), "honey," possibly from Tocharian B *mit*, recorded at least as early as Wang Chong's (27–100 CE) *Lun heng* 論衡 (*Balanced Discourses*).

Some of the states provided Zhang Qian with interpreters along his journey, and we can reasonably speculate that unofficial trade preceded official diplomatic relations, so merchants who traveled this route were likely common linguistic resources for interstate communication. But not all communications happened via commerce. Marriage alliances were considerably more effective with rulers of the western regions than they had been with the Xiongnu. Of particular importance were requests for Han princesses by Wusun rulers, who made common enemy with the Han court against the Xiongnu. In 64 BCE, the Wusun ruler sent marriage gifts to the Han court, and in light of recent efforts by the Wusun to repulse the Xiongnu, Emperor Xuan 宣帝 (r. 73–49 BCE) assigned Liu Xiangfu 劉相夫 to be his bride. He arranged an official staff and complement of attendants who were established at Shanglin Park, where the princess could study the Wusun language (Hulsewé and Loewe 1979: 152–153). Liu Xiangfu was not the only woman to have this kind of diplomatic importance. Feng Liao 馮嫽, an attendant to Princess Jieyou who had already been married to multiple Wusun leaders, was herself married off to the Supreme Leader of the Right among the Wusun. She is reported to have been instrumental in a series of negotiations with Wusun leaders at the behest of Han officials, even being summoned back to court by Emperor Xuan for a personal consultation. As Anne Kinney notes, she had virtually unprecedented authority for a woman as an agent of the Chinese court in sensitive international negotiations, and her fluency in the Wusun language and culture is likely to have been instrumental toward that end (Kinney 2014: 214–215).

If by now we have seen evidence of Chinese interlinguistic contacts with Austroasiatic speakers to the east, Paleosiberian speakers to the north, and Indo-European speakers to the west, by early in the Later Han we see our first literary evidence of contacts with Tibeto-Burman speakers to the southwest. In the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*) are transcribed in Chinese characters three short songs in a language called Bailang 白狼, to which are appended what purport to be translations of these passages (Coblin 1979). The *Nanman xinanyi liezhuan* 南蠻西南夷列傳 ("Biographies on the Southern Man and Southwestern Yi") of the *Hou Han shu* reports as follows: "In the language of the distant barbarians the meanings of words are difficult to determine. . . . There is an official of Jianwei Commandery 犍為郡, Tian Gong 田恭, who is on intimate terms with them and knows their language quite well. I, your subject, ordered him to inquire into their customs and translate their words" (Coblin 1979: 181, with modifications). A close analysis of the Chinese renderings of these songs shows that rather than being a translation of the transcribed Bailang text, the Chinese was composed independently (Coblin 1979: 196). The phonology of the transcribed songs points to these texts as perhaps the earliest recorded instance of a Tibeto-Burman language, in particular "a closely related sister language of the Lolo-Burmese" branch within that family (Coblin 1979: 204).

The earliest Chinese encounters with ethnic others in the pre-Buddhist period unfortunately provide little evidence of how interlinguistic transactions were carried out. This is due in all likelihood to the fact that these encounters were almost always oral-aural, since we have no reason to believe that any of the languages on the periphery of the Chinese empire had a written form, at least in this earliest period. The Chinese written language has thus exercised a twofold hegemony. First, it has severely diminished our ability to see just how extensive these cross-cultural influences were, since they largely remained under the radar of Chinese historiographic interests. Second, even foreign peoples who did learn Chinese for mercantile or political reasons would have had their native concerns subsumed under the weight of an already lengthy Chinese literary heritage, replete with its own values and ethnocentrisms. It wasn't until the Chinese confronted a significant literary other for the first time that the balance of power could shift and render the foreign voice visible in more concrete terms. This shift occurred with the coming of Buddhism to China at the turn of the Common Era.

BUDDHIST TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSLATORS: PROCEDURES AND PROBLEMS

The translation of Indian Buddhist scriptures into Chinese was one of the most extraordinary cross-cultural exchanges of the ancient world. It was all the more astounding when one considers the linguistic gulf between the two cultures. Sanskrit and Chinese could hardly be more heterogeneous. Sanskrit is a highly inflected language codified in an elaborate prescriptive grammar and written in a phonographic script. Chinese, on the other hand, is uninflected, in fact uninflectable, with no formal grammatical tradition and written in a logographic script. Complicating matters further, the first translators of these texts, whether Indian, Central Asian, or Chinese, were largely unprepared to bridge the divide between these two worlds, and the earliest attempts betray the difficulties involved.

Despite legends that place the beginning of Buddhist translation in the first century CE, it is almost certain that the first reliably datable translations begin with those of the Parthian An Shigao 安世高, who arrived at the capital of Luoyang early in the reign of Emperor Huan 桓帝 (r. 147–168 CE). It is likely that An Shigao was a monk, and all of his translations belong to mainstream genres, namely texts representing the ideas and ideals of earlier, *śrāvaka*-oriented Buddhism, in contrast to the Mahāyāna scriptures that would soon dominate the translation enterprise. The origin of foreign translators during the first century or more of the transmission of Buddhism to China is largely west Central Asia, particularly those of Parthian, Sogdian, and Yuezhi ethnicities, despite the fact that Buddhism appears not to have had a strong foothold in their native territories in this early period. This region was largely within the influence of the Kushan empire. This fact has long led scholars to suggest that the Indic source texts first coming to China were written in Gāndhārī Prākrit rather than Sanskrit, since the former served as a kind of lingua franca in both administrative and religious contexts within Kushan-influenced territories (Boucher 1998).

The Yuezhi translator Lokakṣema initiated the first translations of Mahāyāna sūtras at the capital, and it is in his corpus that we see the first details of the actual procedures of the translation process. A good example of this evidence is the colophon to his translation of the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (*The Concentration on Direct Encounters with Buddhas of the Present*) (*Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經):

> The *Banzhou sanmei jing*: On the eighth day of the tenth month of the second year of the Guanghe reign period [= November 24, 179], the Indian bodhisattva Zhu Shuofo 竺朔佛 [var. Foshuo] issued (*chu* 出) the text in Luoyang. At that time the one who transferred the words (*chuan yan zhe* 傳言者) was the Yuezhi bodhisattva Lokakṣema. He conferred [his oral translation] upon Meng Fu 孟福, styled Yuanshi 元士, of Luoyang in Henan [commandery] and Zhang Lian 張連, styled Shaoan 少安, who served as assistant to the bodhisattva, [both of whom] took down [the

> translation] in writing (*bi shou* 筆受), causing it subsequently to be disseminated. In the thirteenth year of the Jian'an reign period [= 208], [the translation] was revised [*jiaoding* 挍定, lit. "collated and established"] and made complete at the Buddhist Monastery (*Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, *Taishō* 55: 48c.9–14).

We should note the fundamentally oral-aural nature of the process. An Indian named Zhu Shuofo is described as issuing (*chu* 出) the text, presumably reciting a manuscript he held in his hands (other records describe his bringing a manuscript to Luoyang). Although many scholars routinely render *chu* as "to translate," it is clear that that can't be the case here. It is Lokakṣema who "transfers the words" of Zhu Shuofo's recitation of the text to two Chinese scribes, who must be the ones responsible for converting Lokakṣema's vernacular rendition into the semiliterary Chinese that characterizes these early translations. One of the scribal assistants, Meng Fu, is known to have assisted with Lokakṣema's translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*The Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines*) (*Bore daoxing jing* 般若道行經), also in 179 CE, and he, together with another Chinese on that committee, Zibi 子碧, are known from two stele inscriptions to be connected with a local Daoist cult in modern Hebei (Zürcher 2007: 332, n. 91).

The effects of these procedures on Buddhist translations would be long-lasting. The oral-aural process of translation would leave clear traces of the vernacular language of the late Han capital in the finished products, including the use of verbal complements (e.g., *quzhi* 去至, *guidao* 歸到), *shi* 是 as a copula, and new reduplicative binomes (e.g., *zhuanxiang* 轉相, *yifu* 亦復) (Zürcher 1977, Matsuo 1988, Zhu 1992). And these vernacularisms would seep into the language of the medieval period, showing up in modest ways in texts such as the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*) of the early fifth century (Yoshikawa 1955) and culminating in new genres of vernacular Buddhist texts by the Tang, especially in the "transformation texts" (*bianwen* 變文) found at Dunhuang (Mair 1989). The committee process, whereby a foreigner recites the text aloud and Chinese scribes take down the translation into Chinese, sometimes with a bilingual intermediary, would remain in place even when the foreign missionary acquired command of Chinese, as in the case of Kumārajīva (344–ca. 409), or when a Chinese monk gained mastery of Sanskrit, as in the case of Xuanzang 玄奘 (ca. 600–664). The division of labor on these committees in later eras could grow to be very elaborate, including reciters of the Indian text, verifiers of its meaning, scribes, polishers of style, and proofreaders (Fuchs 1930, Ch'en 1960).

We also see the effects of having Daoist sympathizers on these committees. Among the strategies for rendering Indian Buddhist technical terms into Chinese was to borrow from the rich preexisting religious vocabulary of indigenous traditions. So when confronted with a term like *nirvāṇa*, some translators drew from a text such as the *Laozi* 老子, which had become liturgically significant in the emerging Celestial Master movement of late Han Daoism, and rendered it as *wu wei* 無為, "nonaction," referring to the recommendation that the genuine sage should not interfere with the natural operations of the Dao in the sociopolitical realm. Later Chinese Buddhist exegetes, such as Dao'an 道安 (312–385), would question the wisdom of this strategy, suggesting that Daoist vocabulary conveys a misleading understanding of the Buddhist import of these texts. Some translators took this critique very much to heart and avoided as much indigenous religious vocabulary as possible, including the short-lived exegetical strategy to "match meanings" (*ge yi* 格義) whereby numbered Indian lists of technical terms were matched to supposed parallels of Chinese lists (Mair 2010). Such translators were often more inclined to transcribe Indic terms by imitating their sounds with sinographs rather than rendering their meaning. This strategy could lend an aura of exotica to the finished product, as was common with Lokakṣema's renderings, or be seen as alienating to native readers—hence Zhi Qian's 支謙 third-century revisions of several of Lokakṣema's translations with a strong preference for semantic translation over transcription, including even Indian place names (Nattier 2008, 120). Some compromise between these two practices would eventually become the norm, as captured in Kumārajīva's readable and popular style in the early fifth century.

THE RECEPTION OF BUDDHIST TRANSLATIONS: THE WRITTEN SIGNS

The difficulties in the encounter with Indian languages and the uncertainties that plagued the early translators were indeed sources of anxiety for Chinese exegetes. But it was also true that the very complexity of Buddhist texts—their obscure transcriptions, esoteric technical terms, and recondite ideas—could signal profundity to some. The very difficulty of achieving literary elegance in other words could be seen as a mark of an unadorned truth which words could not fully capture. And, of course, there were precedents in Chinese intellectual history for just such notions. We see a reflection on these issues in a preface to an early translation of the *Dharmapada* (*Faju jing* 法句經), very probably by the lay translator Zhi Qian 支謙, who, though of Yuezhi heritage, had been born in China and was thoroughly versed in the Chinese language and literary tradition (*Chu sanzang ji ji*, T 2145, 55: 49c–50a; see Willemen 1973: 210–213 for a translation of the entire preface). The conception of Indian scripts and languages as a form of "celestial language" that could only be imperfectly conveyed in a Chinese form according to this preface was echoed strongly in Daoist circles of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, particularly among adherents of the Daoist Lingbao 靈寶 school. Just as Laozi and Confucius had already noted how words hide meaning and conceal the ultimate truth, so too would Daoists suggest that the obscure language of their new revelations could only be imperfectly translated from their divine origins into the human realm (Bokenkamp 2014, citing this very passage by Zhi Qian).

The celestial origins of Indian languages would continue to inform Chinese understandings for centuries to come, and the difficulties of making sense of them would remain vexing. One of the most detailed attempts to negotiate the divide was in an essay by Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518), a *vinaya* master who lived in Jianye (modern Nanjing) in the south. Sengyou was committed to discerning the Indian pedigree of the Buddhist texts then circulating in China. His compilation of biographies, colophons, prefaces, translation lists, and other notices, the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (*Collection of Records on Rendering the Tripiṭaka*), was compiled ca. 515 and represents our earliest extant catalogue for discerning reliable attributions among the earliest translations.

At the beginning of his catalogue, he includes an essay in which he attempts to describe the differences and similarities between Indian and Chinese languages. One of the most profound impacts made by Buddhism was in presenting a significant foreign *written* tradition to the Chinese for the first time. Buddhist texts arrived in two different phonographic scripts, Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī. This required the Chinese to discern how written signs could represent the sounds of a language without being in themselves words. Sengyou begins in much the way Zhi Qian's preface argued, in noting the contingency between written signs and their meaning, alluding to the statement in the twenty-sixth chapter of *Zhuangzi* 莊子 that "characters are 'rabbit snares' for words; words are 'fish traps' for concepts" (*CSZJJ*, T 2145, 55: 4b.3). He too notes the celestial origin of Indic scripts, in contradistinction to Chinese graphs (see Chapter 3).

More interesting is Sengyou's attempt to explain how Indic scripts work, attempting with great difficulty to use the Chinese script as a model. He explains how Indic scripts use half characters (i.e., letters) and full characters (i.e., words) to express concepts. He demonstrates this by suggesting that a half character is like taking the Chinese graph *yan* 言 (to say) as a stand-alone constituent and combining it with another half character *zhe* 者 (nominalizing particle) to form the full character *zhu* 諸 (all). Understanding these principles is essential to effective translation for Sengyou. It is why the early translators, insufficiently versed on either the Indic or Chinese side, erred in clearly conveying the purport of their texts (see Boucher 2005 for a translation of the entire essay).

The inscrutability of Indic scripts was in part due to the fact that the Chinese had long negotiated differences between local languages through a common written medium. Different Sinitic languages, what today are often called dialects or, more accurately, topolects (*fangyan* 方言), could have different ways of pronouncing the same word, but they would share the same graph for representing it in writing. As Chad Hansen notes, prior to encountering a significant foreign literary language like Sanskrit, there would have been "little reason for a theory of translation or interlinguistic meaning. The character itself would serve the relevant interlinguistic role" (Hansen 1989: 79). Sengyou, then, is among the first to attempt to conceptualize just such a theory of interlinguistic transfer. Centuries later, even very learned Chinese scholars would continue to misunderstand the fundamental nature of Indic phonographic scripts. The Song scholar Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162), compiler of the encyclopedic *Tongzhi* 通志 (*Comprehensive Treatise*), despite great acumen in philology, could still not come to grips with a phonetic-based writing system (Mair 1994).

These engagements with Indic scripts and Buddhist literary style rippled well beyond Buddhist circles in China. One of the most distinctive features of Sanskrit Buddhist literature is its prosimetric form. The encounter with Sanskrit meter in the *gāthā*s (*jie* 偈) of Buddhist sūtras would have far reaching effects on the Chinese literary tradition. Mair and

Mei (1991) have shown that under the influence of Sanskrit meter, in which light and heavy syllables alternated in specific patterns, Chinese literati beginning with Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), a contemporary of Sengyou, created tonal patterns that imitated the euphonic effect achieved by meter in Sanskrit. More specifically, the classification of the Chinese tones into two prosodic categories, level and deflected (modeled on the Sanskrit light and heavy syllables), the imposition of tonal rules on the internal syllables of a poetic line, and the matching of the middle syllables in two lines of a couplet were unprecedented in the Chinese literary tradition (Mair and Mei 1991: 377). These new patterns would give rise to "recent style poetry" (*jinti shi* 近體詩), which would emerge in the sixth century and come to play a central role among literati of great renown during the Tang and beyond.

The Politics of Translation

As Buddhism increasingly penetrated gentrified circles from the fourth century, it came to be seen as a valuable asset for advancing a broad range of social, economic, and political interests. After the fall of the Western Jin (265–317), non-Chinese rulers in the north often courted Buddhist monks to shore up their own rule—in effect, using a foreign religion in the process of being locally domesticated to add legitimacy to their own attempts to reign over a native Chinese population. One of the ways certain rulers supported Buddhism was in the state sponsorship of the first large translation bureaus in China, a practice that appears to begin with the enthusiastic support of Yao Xing 姚興 of the Later Qin (r. 394–416) and his patronage of the Kuchean monk Kumārajīva, whom he welcomed to his court in 402.

Yao Xing put more than 800 monks at Kumārajīva's disposal to translate scriptures in an imperial park. Several of these monks were very prominent in the north, having formerly trained with the great fourth-century exegete Dao'an. Yao Xing is reported to have personally held the old translations of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines* (*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) as Kumārajīva held the Indic text so he could collate them with his new translation. Kumārajīva is said to have revised old transcriptions to match contemporary pronunciation, devised new translations of technical Buddhist vocabulary, and retained old usage when he perceived it as adequate (see Robinson 1967: 73–88).

The irony of Kumārajīva's prolific translation and promotion of Mahāyāna scriptures in the early fifth century is that it is at precisely this time that the first large-scale translations of earlier, Mainstream collections of scriptures, scholastic treatises, and complete *vinaya* translations are being produced by other scholar-monks, many of whom had come from Jibin 罽賓 (Kashmir/Gandhāra), where Kumārajīva trained, to work under the enthusiastic support of the Later Qin regime (384–417). Relations among this expatriate community in Chang'an were not always harmonious. For example, Yao Xing was concerned that should Kumārajīva die prematurely, his translation skill would be lost forever. So as to ensure that his "dharma seeds" (*fazhong* 法種) would not disappear, he persuaded Kumārajīva to accept ten concubines, setting him up in a household outside the monastery, so that his progeny could carry on his work (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, T 2059, 50: 332c). Not surprisingly, both Indian and Chinese monks had reservations about this arrangement, and criticism of Kumārajīva's lax behavior was sometimes later linked to a style of translation that similarly took excessive liberties (Lu 2004: 23–31).

Future emperors sympathetic to Buddhism would follow Yao Xing's example, patronizing foreign monks at court to carry out new translations even as they hoped to benefit from the support these monks might provide to their rule. And none were more supportive—and more in need of support—than China's only female ruler, Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690–705). Wu Zhao stands out not only as China's only female empress but as a fervent patron of Buddhism. Monks, both foreign and domestic, returned the favor, buttressing her reign by inserting prophecies in new translations predicting the emergence of a female *cakravartin* (universal monarch) in China who was also a bodhisattva. Wu Zhao acknowledges this prophecy herself in a preface she authored to the new translation of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (Huayan jing 華嚴經) in 699:

> As I have in former *kalpas* planted [karmic] causes, I am grateful to receive the Buddha's prophecies. The Golden Transcendent (i.e., the Buddha) sent down his decree: the verses of the *Great Cloud* appeared first; the Sovereign (lit. "the jade screen"; *yuyi* 玉扆) displayed the portents, and the prose of the *Rain of Jewels* arrived later. (Forte 2005: 190, with modifications)

Wu Zhao makes reference to two Buddhist sūtras here: the *Dayun jing* 大雲經 (*Mahāmegha-sūtra*) (*Great Cloud Sūtra*) and the *Baoyu jing* 寶雨經 (*Ratnamegha-sūtra*) (*Rain of Jewels Sūtra*). The *Dayun jing*, despite many assertions to the contrary in traditional and modern times, is an authentic Indian scripture that includes the Buddha's prediction that a goddess will reign over a great territory in the body of a woman (see Forte 2005: 3–69 on the authenticity of the sūtra and 342–343 for the prophecy). More importantly, a commentary to this sūtra found at Dunhuang (S. 6502) was compiled by nine monks from prominent state-sponsored monasteries and presented to the throne sometime before August 690. This commentary, the *Dayun jing shenhuang shouji yishu* 大雲經神皇授記義疏 (*Commentary on the Meaning of the Prophecy About the Divine Sovereign in the Great Cloud Sūtra*), specifically connects the Indian text's prophecy with Empress Wu, who then had this commentary circulated throughout the empire.

But it was not only Chinese monks who contributed to her religious propaganda. A south Indian monk named Bodhiruci, who had already been invited to the Tang court in 683 but only arrived in China under Empress Wu's Zhou dynasty, probably in 692, was commissioned to translate the *Ratnamegha-sūtra* from Sanskrit in 693 (on Bodhiruci's life and translation career, see Forte 2002). Early in the translation of this Indian scripture, we find the following prophecy:

> Devaputra (*tianzi* 天子), it is because of the numberless roots of good that you have planted that now you have obtained so luminous a light, and it is because of this, oh

> devaputra, that in the last period following my nirvāṇa, in the fourth five-hundred-year period, when the law is about to fade away, you, in the country of Mahācīna (i.e., China) in the northeastern region of this Jambudvīpa, will be in the position of an *avaivartika* (irreversible to awakening). Since in reality you will be a bodhisattva, you will manifest a female body and you will be the sovereign head. (Forte 2005: 196, with modifications)

What is extraordinary about this interpolation into the translation of an authentic Indian sūtra is not only that it predicted the reign of a Chinese female empress who would be an irreversible bodhisattva, but that the translation team that carried it out included thirty-two named participants. These included the Indian Bodhiruci, but also other Indian monks then at the capital who assisted with explaining the Sanskrit text, the ambassador of a king from central India, a Korean monk, and Chinese officials and scribes, as well as Chinese monks involved in the compilation of the earlier commentary on the *Dayun jing* (see the list of participants in Forte 2005: 248–253). All of the participants had vested interests in supporting Empress Wu's claims to the throne given her lavish support for Buddhism against other traditions and her courting of foreign dignitaries, whose recognition cemented her claims to represent China to the world. This kind of symbiotic relationship between the translators and the empress could have made the interpolation appear as an obvious implication of the Indic prophecy. The irony here is that the attribution of a Chinese translation to an Indian or Central Asian dharma master was almost always the essential step for insuring the authority of a work as the words of the Buddha. In this case, Bodhiruci's presence did divert suspicious attention from any concerns about the authenticity of the text by later bibliographers, including those critical of Wu Zetian's usurpation of the Tang throne.

Translation in Other Directions

Not all translation activity in the medieval period involved Buddhist texts or Buddhist translators. Early in the twentieth century, Édouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot identified a Dunhuang manuscript as a Manichaean text translated into Chinese, in all likelihood from Parthian, though it differs in significant ways from parallels extant in Middle Iranian languages (Lieu 1998: 59–75). Other Manichaean documents have since come to light in the Pelliot and Stein collections from Dunhuang. There is also some evidence that a Nestorian Christian from the Syriac tradition named *Jingjing* 景淨 (identified as Adam in a bilingual Syriac-Chinese inscription) may have collaborated with an Indian monk from Kapiśa named Prajñā in the late eighth century on a translation of a sūtra on the six perfections, the *Dasheng liqu liu boluomiduo jing* 大乘理趣六波羅蜜多經 (*The Sūtra on the Six Perfections Containing the Gist of the Truth of the Mahāyāna*). The contemporaneous Buddhist cataloguer Yuanzhao 圓照 was, however, skeptical of the linguistic competence of both of them (Takakusu 1896). Even Hindu philosophical works have found their way into the Buddhist canon. The prolific translator Xuanzang studied all manner of philosophical schools during his tenure at the great Buddhist university Nālandā in north India. He is said to have defeated both non-Buddhist heretics and Hīnayāna Buddhists in debate. In preparation for these debates, Buddhists had to master the teachings of other schools, and at least one of the treatises of the Vaiśeṣika school was translated into Chinese by Xuanzang, the *Shengzong shijuyi lun* 勝宗十句義論 (*Vaiśeṣika-daśapadārthaśāstra*) (*The Treatise on the Meaning of the Ten Verses of the Vaiśeṣika School*) (see Ui and Thomas 1962).

Xuanzang is of course most famous for his translation of the massive cache of Buddhist texts he had acquired on his journey to India, an enterprise that was avidly supported by the Tang court. His translation oeuvre included the largest of the Perfection of Wisdom texts as well as *abhidharma* treatises and Yogācāra manuals previously unknown in China, in addition to previously translated texts he retranslated. Besides his Buddhist work, Xuanzang was commissioned by Emperor Taizong, who had strong Daoist sympathies, to translate the *Daode jing* 道德經 (*Classic of the Way and the Power*) into Sanskrit so that it could be sent with envoys to India, purportedly at the request of King Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa in east India (see Pelliot 1912, esp. 381–427, on the circumstances of this translation). Xuanzang set to work with Daoist scholars, but the difficulties in making sense of a Chinese Daoist classic in Sanskrit proved to be overwhelming, and there is some uncertainty as to whether it was ever completed, let alone sent to India (on which see Sen 2003: 263–264, n. 131).

Xuanzang may well be responsible for a translation into Sanskrit that did make it back to India. Jan Nattier has argued that the Heart Sūtra, the famous encapsulation of the perfection of wisdom genre, may in fact be a back-translation from Chinese into Sanskrit, most probably by Xuanzang (Nattier 1992). It has been well known for some time that the short Heart Sūtra is an extract from the larger *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines*, a text known in China since the third century. However, when we compare the Sanskrit of the shorter recension of the *Heart Sūtra* with the extant Sanskrit of the Larger Perfection of Wisdom text, there are curious substitutions in vocabulary even as the meanings are consistently equivalent—and this despite the fact that their respective Chinese translations are virtually identical. So what this means is that the Chinese translation of the Heart Sūtra attributed to Xuanzang indeed looks like it was taken from the Chinese translation of the Larger Perfection of Wisdom sūtra attributed to Kumārajīva. But the Sanskrit Heart Sūtra does not line up with the Sanskrit Larger Perfection of Wisdom, and this appears to be because it was in fact translated from Chinese. The most likely mechanism by which this could have happened is that Xuanzang translated the Chinese extract from the Larger Sūtra into Sanskrit and made it available to Buddhists in India. Afterwards, the text took on its own life in India once the extract was framed like a sūtra, with a number of commentaries being produced on it between the eighth and eleventh centuries.

The Heart Sūtra is not the only example of a Chinese Buddhist text being the source of a Buddhist text in another language. Some forty Sogdian Buddhist texts have been discovered, including some from Dunhuang, almost all of which were translated from existing Chinese translations of Buddhist texts (Yoshida 2013). A curious observation about Sogdian Buddhism is that it appears to have been an expatriate phenomenon; there is extremely little evidence of an active Buddhist presence in historical Sogdiana (in the vicinity of Samarkand) even as Sogdians are noted on translation committees in China from the third century. Many of the translations into Sogdian appear to date from the seventh and eighth centuries, a time when Sogdians had a considerable presence especially in the capital cities (on the Sogdians in China, see de la Vassière [2002] 2005, esp. chap. 5).

We also know that a number of Chinese Buddhist texts were translated into Tibetan during the early period of the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. Tibetans regarded China as a legitimate source of Buddhist knowledge early on, and quite a number of important works were transmitted to Tibet from Chinese, including the famous *Xianyu jing* 賢愚經 (*Scripture on the Wise and the Fool*). During the middle of the ninth century, when the Tibetans had a strong military presence in Gansu, the monk known in Chinese as Facheng 法成 and as ’Gos chos grub in Tibetan translated a number of Chinese Buddhist works into Tibetan, including works as diverse as Dharmarakṣa’s third-century translation of the Mahāyāna scripture *Upāyakauśalya-jñānottara-bodhisattva-paripṛcchā-sūtra* (*Questions by the Bodhisattva Superior in Gnosis about Skillful Means*) (on which see Tatz 1994) and the Korean monk Wŏnch’ŭk’s (Ch. *Yuance* 圓測, 613–696) commentary on Xuanzang’s translation of the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* (*Explaining the Underlying Meaning*), an important scripture in the Yogācāra school (see Inaba 1977). This latter translation would go onto have considerable influence among later Tibetan exegetes, particularly Tshong kha pa (1357–1419).

Buddhist translation activity tapers off dramatically after the Tang. The Tang court divested itself from involvement in the process, and especially government sponsorship, from early in the ninth century. No new scriptures are entered into the canon until approximately the last two decades of the tenth century, when there was a brief flurry of translation work (on which see Sen 2002), but with a dramatically reduced competence (see Brough 1964; for an explanation of this decline, see Bowring 1992). And with the decline in the fortunes of Buddhism in India and the Muslim invasions of Central Asia and the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, any further transmission of Buddhism to China became all but impossible.

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CHAPTER 33

SHARED LITERARY HERITAGE IN THE EAST ASIAN SINOGRAPHIC SPHERE

WIEBKE DENECKE

(WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY NAM NGUYEN)

THE twentieth century is a much-invoked inflection point. The end of traditional multiethnic empires and the rise of industrialized mass warfare, media revolutions, and of course "modernity" are considered unprecedented in the history of humanity. But one irreversible turning point has gone largely unnoticed: the death of Literary Chinese as the authoritative lingua franca of East Asia, the so-called "Sinographic Sphere" of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, of cultures that traditionally relied on the Chinese script and literary language. This is a major event in human cultural history, as it means the disappearance of the world's last cultural sphere where a strongly "logographic" script (which records the meaning of "words" rather than sound value as "phonographic" alphabets or syllabaries do) enabled the thriving of distinctive literary cultures for almost two millennia. The invention of writing started with logographic scripts: Egyptian hieroglyphs, Mesopotamian cuneiform, Chinese characters, and Mesoamerican glyphs. But they all have long since died out and been replaced with phonographic scripts, with the exception of Chinese characters. As an effect of the regional hegemony of Chinese empires, many surrounding states adopted Chinese culture and its script during the first millennium CE. Although Japan, Vietnam, and Korea went on to develop their own phonographic scripts right before or during the second millennium CE which led to the blossoming of local vernacular literatures and the eventual abandonment of Chinese characters in Vietnam and, increasingly, in Korea, Literary Chinese remained the language of government, scholarship, Buddhism, and refined belles-lettres well into the twentieth century.

Pre-twentieth-century East Asia was thus "biliterate" (Denecke 2014a, 45–56), relying on two written idioms, namely Literary Chinese and local vernaculars. In the early twentieth century, vernacular movements led by reformers and revolutionaries inspired by Western ideas of "nation-states" and "national languages" swept East Asia's old lingua franca so effectively aside that at the beginning of the twenty-first century its true historical significance in the region is largely forgotten. Nowadays, the school curricula and public consciousness in Japan, Vietnam, and Korea celebrate the works of their vernacular literature as the true "national literary tradition" and tend to consider the commanding corpus of Chinese-style texts that until only a century ago stood at the center of education and literary life as a somewhat exotic and difficult foreign relict. This modernist mythology of national literature is not just untrue to the history of each individual tradition and of East Asia as a whole, it also fosters further divisiveness in a region which in the current media is largely defined negatively through the lingering painful memories of war and Japan's imperialist expansion, colonial exploitation, and more recently economic and military competition.

Little did the early-twentieth-century language modernizers realize in their patriotic zeal and frantic search for national salvation how unique and convenient the lingua franca of Literary Chinese had been. Today, acknowledging its centrality for East Asian culture can evoke specters of Chinese hegemony for Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese, especially in the light of China's meteoric political and economic rise on the world stage over the past couple of decades. But do its extinction and replacement with Global Anglo-American as the new lingua franca in the region have any more savory political and cultural connotations?

This chapter sketches the nature and significance of East Asia's "Sinographic Sphere." It explores the usefulness of the concept, discusses the channels of cultural contact and shared material culture characteristic of that sphere, and explains what strategies were used to adapt China's textual heritage to local conditions and how they resulted in distinctive literary cultures that shared as much as they differed.

The term "Sinographic Sphere" defines East Asia through its logographic script and textual heritage. What cultural phenomena do logographic scripts enable? What is the nature and significance of East Asia's biliteracy? What does it mean that the world's last surviving transnational logographic "script world" has now disappeared (following on the death of cuneiform around the second century CE)? And how can we bring the memory of East Asia's biliteracy back into public consciousness and mobilize it for building a shared regional identity for today's East Asia? While even a summary treatment of these questions, in particular of the last two, goes far beyond the scope of this essay, they mark the horizon of this chapter's inquiry and of the prominent inclusion of East Asia's Chinese-style literature in this handbook.

This essay aims to illustrate the shared literary heritage in the Sinographic Sphere, focusing, spatially, on its surviving states, namely Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Temporally, it focuses on the first millennium CE but sometimes reaches far beyond the timeframe of this handbook, especially in the case of Korea and Vietnam, due to the poor survival of early sources. This makes sense, because the significance of the Sinographic Sphere and its recent demise are best grasped in the *longue durée*.

NAMES

"East Asia" commonly refers to "Greater China" (including the PRC, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and sometimes Singapore), Korea, Japan (including the former Ryukyu kingdom), and Vietnam. Today, both Western and East Asian languages use terms borrowed from the Greek "Asia" to refer to this region (Ch. *Dong Ya*, J. *Higashi Ajia*, K. *Tong Asia*, V. *Đōng Á*). In Herodotus's *Histories*, Asia is one of the three continents of the world, alongside Europe and Africa. In antiquity, its meaning ranged from, most broadly, the iconic Other—the Persian Empire and the "Orient"—to a Roman province in modern-day Turkey. This sweeping range of meaning continues today, as "Asia" is perceived as an ominous historical force, as in popular notions of the twenty-first century as the "Asian century," but also a geographical region (South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, etc.).

Concepts characterizing the region in cultural terms emphasize China's hegemonic influence: "Sinic world" (Reischauer 1974; Huntington 1993) or "Sinosphere" (Fogel 2009; used differently in Matisoff 1990). The shared religious traditions and ideologies of Confucianism, Buddhism, and statutory law are often evoked to define commonality. The concept of a "Sinographic culture sphere" (J. *Kanji bunkaken* 漢字文化圏, used here in the short form "Sinographic Sphere") defines commonality based on a shared script and textual culture. A postwar historian of Early China, Nishijima Sadao, developed this concept in detail when formulating a broader theory of the "East Asian World." He saw the adoption of Chinese characters by peripheral states not as a reverential bow to a "higher civilization" but as an inevitable tool for those states to maintain diplomatic ties with China through the correspondence required by the tribute system. The adoption of Chinese characters in turn gave access to the world of Chinese political thought, law, scholarship, the Buddhist canon in translation, and literature, among others; it established Literary Chinese as a lingua franca in the region, enabling communication across radically different vernacular languages and also making possible the recording of those vernaculars (Nishijima 1983: 586–594).

The concept of a "Sinographic Sphere" is certainly not unproblematic (Lurie 2011: 348–353), but its advantages arguably outweigh its problems. It highlights writing as a catalyst in the creation of a distinctive East Asian cultural sphere. The best way to see the transformative power of the shared script is to look at the broader implications of the adoption of Chinese characters in East Asia (Denecke 2014b). First, it created biliteracy and biliterate literary traditions, recorded in Chinese-style and vernacular idioms. Biliteracy differs from both bilingualism and diglossia. Unlike with the "bilingualism" of the European Middle Ages, whereby the educated classes learned written and spoken Latin in addition to their local vernaculars, elites in East Asia did not need to learn a form of spoken Chinese to read and write Literary Chinese. Because of the logographic nature of the Chinese script they only needed to master a reading technique to voice a Chinese text by pronouncing the Chinese characters in their own vernacular and rearranging or adding grammatical elements as needed. Especially in Early Japan, hardly anybody spoke any form of Chinese beyond people of continental descent and the handful of students and of monks who were sent on government-sponsored fellowships to study the latest trends in Buddhist doctrine. Instead, Japanese were largely monolingual, voicing Literary Chinese texts through a reading technique called "gloss-reading" (J. *kundoku* 訓読), which involved switching the Chinese words into Japanese word order, voicing them in Japanese pronunciation, and adding the wealth of Japanese morphology, such as cases and inflections, that Chinese does not have. Although the technique of glossing, in particular the process of reading texts written in a more prestigious "cosmopolitan" language in a more local vernacular language, is certainly ubiquitous and an "essential stage" in the borrowing of writing systems (Whitmann 2011), the strongly logographic nature of the Chinese script produced different patterns of linguistic and literary interaction, and, ultimately, made for quite distinctive literary cultures in the Sinographic Sphere compared to premodern Europe's alphabetic script sphere. For example, in contrast to the bilingualism of medieval Europe, rooted in Latin as a shared spoken language, East Asia shared a "grapholect," or "scripta franca," as one might call it. The term "diglossia" is as inappropriate as "bilingualism" in the premodern East Asian context. It typically refers to the coexistence of high- with low-register languages, such as local dialects, exemplified by High German and Swiss German or Modern Standard Arabic versus Egyptian, Sudanese, or Levantine Arabic. Dialects, though used in certain local genres of literature, are clearly subordinated to the high languages employed in administration, the media, school education, and literary production. This can certainly not be said of Japan (on the problems of the concept of "diglossia" from a Korean perspective, see King 2015). Although Chinese-style writing was overall the authoritative "high language" of government, clergy, and belles-lettres, certain genres and occasions demanded the authoritative "high" use of vernacular Japanese: prayers to the gods (J. *norito* 祝詞), early imperial decrees (J. *senmyō* 宣命), poems praying for the safe travel of overseas embassies, and the courtly genre of *waka* 和歌 poetry since the tenth century are all examples of "high" use of the supposedly "low" vernacular and show that premodern Japan does not fit the diglossia model.

Second, the shared logographic script produced a distinctive mode of communication: when envoys from different polities met, they communicated in "brush talk," conversing by passing a piece of paper back and forth, in the absence of a common spoken language. Though unable to talk about the weather or lunch, in writing they could commune on the most sophisticated level or grace each other with poems steeped in the shared canon of the Confucian Classics and poetry, thus confirming their belonging to the Sinographic Sphere, while exploring their differences.[1] Both Chinese dynasties and the peripheral states benefited from this "imagined community," as we can see in the poem written by Emperor Xuanzong of Tang 唐玄宗 (685–762) for the Japanese ambassador Fujiwara no Kiyokawa 藤原清河 (d. ca. 778), who came to China in 752. Its closure blends a compliment for the Japanese ambassador with the celebration of China's cultural power: "Thanks to this astonishing Confucian gentleman, Our royal transformative power will shine brightly abroad" 因驚彼君子, 王化遠昭昭 (*Quan Tang shiyi* 1.1). Ironically, Kiyokawa had little chance to do so, because his attempts to return home failed and he lived out his life in China.

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[1] For Vietnam, see Kelley 2005. Brush talk exchanges could have considerable domestic impact in the countries involved, as seen with the 1764 Chosŏn mission to Japan. See Zhang 2011: 95–148.

Arguably poetry, rather than more informational prose, was the lingua/scripta franca of premodern East Asia. It communicated sentiments of friendship and commonality and thus was often used during the decisive official moments of cross-cultural encounter, namely welcome or farewell banquets. The power of this traditional mode of communication was illustrated one last time in Shiba Shirō's 柴四郎 (1852–1922) *Strange Encounters with Beautiful Women* (*Kajin no Kigū* 佳人之奇遇, 1885–1897; adapted by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] into Chinese and by Phan Châu Trinh潘周楨 [1872–1926] into Vietnamese). At one point in the novel, four national activists—a Japanese and a Chinese man, and a Spanish and an Irish woman—compose Chinese-style poems when in Philadelphia, the embodiment of liberalism. How else should this cosmopolitan company have communicated? But by that time the prominent use of Chinese-style poetry in a supposedly "modern" political novel was criticized (Sakaki 2006: 156–176).

As we will see below, the shared script also produced distinctive modes of textual circulation and translation in East Asia. Chinese and Chinese-style texts circulating between the different East Asian polities could be read and understood by any sufficiently literate person, even if a given text was ultimately voiced in Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese and not mutually intelligible in speech; unlike in monolingual cultural spheres with phonographic scripts, translation was not needed, as the vernacular voicing of Chinese texts was part of general literacy training. When full-fledged translations or adaptations of Chinese texts into the vernacular became popular in the early modern period, they were part of vernacularization processes propagating Chinese texts to women, commoners, and children.

All these peculiarities of East Asian cross-cultural communication and textual culture are ultimately rooted in the power of the logographic writing system and make the description of East Asia as a distinctive cultural sphere, the Sinographic Sphere, highly meaningful. As attractive as the recently proposed idea of a "Sinographic Cosmopolis" based on Sheldon Pollock's model of a "Sanskrit Cosmopolis" and its vernacularization (Pollock 2006) is, the lack of importance of script in the South Asian case and the lack of a full-fledged cosmopolitanism, for example during the early and medieval periods in Japan, makes this idea not quite applicable to the East Asian case (King forthcoming). The Chinese script could certainly be used phonographically, as in China itself in the transcription of foreign names and words, where characters were used for sound rather than meaning. However, it was the logographic use of Chinese characters that created commonality, just as the development of syllabaries (sometimes based on the simplification of Chinese characters used phonographically) eventually led to the creation of vernacular scripts and regional difference.

Channels

Conquest and colonization, the processes that drove "Hellenization" and "Romanization" in antiquity and later "Europeanization" or "Westernization" from the age of exploration through the colonial period, were not the main catalysts of "Sinicization" in East Asia (Chapter 31). The Japanese archipelago was never conquered or colonized. And although parts of today's Korea and Vietnam were colonized during the Han, the periods of most intense adoption of Chinese culture in Korea during the Three Kingdoms 三國 (first century BCE–668 CE), Unified Silla 統一新羅 (668–935), Koryŏ 高麗 (918–1392), and Chosŏn 朝鮮 (1392–1910) periods did not occur under direct Chinese imposition; even in Vietnam, which has the longest and most violent history of Chinese domination (for most of the millennium before 938 and again during the Ming invasions of 1407–1427), the most significant periods of adaptation of Chinese culture occurred during the independent Lý 李 (1009–1225), Trần 陳 (1225–1400), and Nguyễn 阮 (1802–1945) dynasties.

Chinese empires were certainly built through expansive warfare, and there were formative moments of military conflict in East Asia: Emperor Wu of Han's 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) conquest of Nanyue 南越 (V. Nam Việt, sometimes already considered a "Chinese" state, as it was founded by a Qin military commander), and of Old Chosŏn, traditionally assumed to have been founded by Korea's legendary ancestor Tan'gun 檀君, brought along Han Dynasty soldiers, writing, and culture.

The second formative moment, intensified by the reunification of China under the Sui and Tang dynasties, saw the birth of East Asia proper, the emergence of secondary state formation on the Chinese periphery and the development of a power balance between the East Asian states that was to last, with modifications, for one and a half millennia. Emperor Yang of Sui's 隋煬帝 (r. 604–618) disastrous attempts to conquer Koguryŏ and the internecine struggle between the Three Kingdoms of Koguryŏ 高句麗, Paekche 百濟, and Silla 新羅, resulted in unification of most of the Korean peninsula under Silla by 668. Silla had defeated its two competitors with the help of Tang armies and was hard pressed, though ultimately successful, in expelling its former ally, who had his own plans for Korea.

The military conflicts between the Sui reunification of China (589) and Silla's unification of Korea (668) triggered anxiety and hastened programs of centralization on the Japanese archipelago. The adoption of the new imperial title Tennō 天皇 and of the less "barbarian" name of Nihon日本 (rather than Wa 倭), court ranks, and the imperial ancestor cult of the sun goddess Amaterasu in Ise, as well as the first attempts to trace and legitimize the Yamato state through historical chronicles, fall roughly between the late sixth and the late seventh centuries. This was also one of the rare moments in East Asia's premodern period when migration played a formative role in the spread of Chinese culture. Although there is ample evidence of close connections between Japan and the Korean peninsula in the prehistoric period, the scope and the vectors of cultural flow from the continent through Korea to Japan—in particular the degree to which technologies travelled with migrants—remains hard to quantify. But we know for sure that the destruction of Paekche by Silla in 663 led to an exodus of its elites to Japan, which benefited greatly from this influx of know-how through continental scribes and craftsmen. Possibly about a third of eighth-century Japanese bureaucrats could trace their origins to Korea (Farris 1998: 121). Before the early modern period, this type of formative migration remained quite rare within East Asia. But seventeenth-century Vietnam, for example, saw a significant influx of Chinese migrants. They formed the Sino-Vietnamese diaspora community of the Minh hương 明香 (明鄉), who came to dominate the diplomatic corps of nineteenth-century Vietnam (Whitmore 1996, 223).

Although neither the Sui nor the Tang ambitions with regard to Korea were realized, the military unrest in the region during the seventh century led to a spectacular spread of Chinese culture that marks the emergence of East Asia as a thriving multistate region united by the creative adaptation of Chinese cultural precedents. In a third formative moment for East Asia, this balance was thoroughly upset by Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 豊臣秀吉 (ca. 1536–1598) invasions of Korea during the last decade of the sixteenth century, in an attempt to reach China and invert the East Asian order. It was later dismantled by East Asia's fourth transformative moment, Japan's victory over China in 1895 in the first Sino-Japanese War, which reversed the millennia-old power balance between China and its periphery, unexpectedly propelling Japan to a hegemonic position. We still live in this moment of a fundamental reshaping of the East Asian power balance.

If not conquest, colonization, or migration, the main mode through which Chinese culture spread in East Asia and catalyzed secondary state formation was diplomacy within the perimeters of the Chinese tribute system. From the first half of the first millennium CE, emergent leaders of tribal confederations sent tribute goods and missions to Chinese dynasties in exchange for investment with prestigious Chinese titles. Diplomatic literacy, the ability to engage in proper diplomatic protocol with China through "state letters" (Wang 2005: 139–179), was a crucial precondition for negotiating relations with China; it also stimulated the domestic use of writing in the fledgling peripheral states. In the hagiographic tenth-century *Shōtoku taishi denryaku* 聖徳太子伝略 (*Abridged Biography of Prince Shōtoku* [574–622]), the Japanese prince, the symbolic figurehead of the introduction of Buddhism and Chinese-style state building, is shown drafting diplomatic letters to the Sui emperor and hosting poetry banquets for foreign envoys. And in *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (*History of the Three Kingdoms,* 1145), King Munmu 文武王 (r. 661–681) praises the abilities of the extraordinary scholar-official Kangsu 強首 (d. 692), who lived through the stormy military unrests of the seventh century and negotiated the tricky diplomacy with the Tang court through the Silla unification:

> Kangsu served as a scribe, conveying our intentions in letters to China, Koguryŏ, and Paekche, and successfully established friendly relations. Our former king (Muyŏl 武烈王) pacified Koguryŏ and Paekche with military aid from Tang China, but his military achievements were also based on Kangsu's literary ability. (*Samguk Sagi* 46.429)

The power of literary ability and diplomatic literacy is put on a par with military might.

Most often, measures of Chinese-style state building in East Asia aimed at centralization. Central administrative structures were created, authoritative titles for rulers introduced, administrative records kept, court histories—often expressions of a fledgling native consciousness—compiled, and, for daily court routine, Chinese-style clothing, reign periods, and calendric systems adopted or adapted; Chinese-style law codes were promulgated, Buddhism was propagated, and the provinces were connected to the center through administrative hierarchies, infrastructure, and registration systems for tax collection and military conscription.

It is important not to overemphasize direct Chinese influence, because the mutual interaction between China's peripheral states was at least equally important for their adoption of Chinese culture. Koguryŏ, for example, during its entanglement with Chinese dynasties adopted some aspects of Chinese culture several centuries earlier than Silla, on the southeastern side of the Korean peninsula. In fact, both Koguryŏ and Paekche, Silla's western neighbor facing the continent, seemed to have helped the largely preliterate Silla cope with Chinese-style diplomatic correspondence until the first half of the sixth century, when Silla rapidly developed into a Chinese-style polity. Similarly, the impact of all three kingdoms on Japan—whether in Buddhist doctrine, practice, and sculpture or scribal culture, gloss-reading techniques, and Confucian education—is pervasive and yet to be assessed in its full scope (Farris 1998, chapter 2; Como 2008).

STRATEGIES

Paradoxically, Chinese culture could become the shared heritage of East Asia only because it was strongly nativized in the peripheral states and adapted to their sociopolitical, practical, and aesthetic needs. Two elements were particularly important for the nativization of Chinese textual culture: the development of reading and writing techniques that made Chinese texts accessible and digestible, and the establishment of Confucian academies that provided prestigious education, conferring authoritative social status or even government positions.

The unifying power of the Chinese script in the Sinographic Sphere stands in stark contrast to the radically different languages that relied on it. While Classical Chinese is largely an isolating monosyllabic language with word order on the SVO (subject-verb-object) model and shows little inflection or affixing (like Vietnamese), Japanese and Korean are agglutinative languages at the opposite end of the linguistic spectrum: words, morphemes, are usually polysyllabic; verbs and adjectives are highly inflected and heavily affixed; objects precede their verbs (SOV), and particles are needed to mark syntactical function.

This disjunction between a shared script and radically different grammar patterns proved an enormous challenge in particular for early Korean and Japanese writers and readers of Literary Chinese. The response to this challenge was the development of gloss-reading techniques that allowed rendering a Chinese sentence in native syntax and sound and, conversely—and this is crucial—inscribing texts in accordance with Chinese syntax, so that it was encoded in the lingua franca of the region and remained legible to all members. Because Japan developed the most pervasive, continuous, and well-documented gloss-reading strategies, I focus on the Japanese case to explain the process. The common technique for reading Chinese texts in Japan has been *kundoku* 訓読 or "reading through (Japanese) glossing" (Kin 2010; Lurie 2011, chapter 4). Comparable to Chinese commentators who glossed ancient words with contemporary language (Ch. *xungu* 訓詁), a Japanese reader would vocalize a Chinese phrase in accordance with Japanese syntax and pronunciation. In Modern Mandarin, for example, the famous opening of the Confucian *Analects* reads *xue er shi xi zhi, bu yi yue hu* 學而時習之、不亦說乎 ("to learn and sometimes review what one has learned, is that not pleasure?)." A Japanese reader could voice these characters, with variations depending on period and context, for example as *manabite toki ni kore o narau, mata yorokobashikarazu ya*.

The Japanese vocalization of a Chinese sentence through *kundoku* involved three procedures. First, the association of Chinese logographs with Japanese words (e. g., 習 "review" with the Japanese word *narau*). Second, the transposition of the phrase into Japanese word order (e.g., inverting object and verb: inverting the Chinese *xi* ("reviewing") *zhi* ("that which [one has learned]") into the Japanese *kore* ("that which [one has learned]") *narau* ("review"). Third, the addition of suffixes and particles (e.g., the object marker *o* in *kore o narau* ("review what one has learned").

In Japan, the earliest appearance of *kundoku* markings (J. *kunten* 訓点), a practice that extends the Chinese use of tone marks (J. *shōten*声点), dates to the late eighth century, but evidence for *kundoku*-style grammatical inversions of verb and object, for example, are already visible in seventh-century wooden tablets. Recent research indicates that *kundoku* practices reached Japan through Korea. In particular, the practice of dry-point glosses, marking up texts with a sharp point such as the other end of a writing brush, seems to have Korean origins and appears often in texts associated with Huayan 華嚴 Buddhism (J. *Kegon*, K. *Hwaŏm*), which was influential in Nara-period Japan (Lurie 2011: 195–202). To write Chinese-style texts, writers used "reverse *kundoku*," producing texts in Chinese word order and without grammatical markers. The extraordinary efficiency, thanks to Chinese characters, of these reading and inscription techniques was exploited for the last time by the throngs of Chinese who went to study in Japan in the early twentieth century. Liang Qichao wrote a treatise on how to use *kundoku* to help his compatriots learn modern Japanese more quickly and gain access to the wealth of Japanese translations of Western works—a more efficient route than having to learn European languages (Kin 2010: 82–86).

Because of the grammatical similarities between Korean and Japanese, the gloss-reading techniques developed on the continent were highly successful in Japan. While *kundoku* was not the only method of reading Chinese texts in Japan, it was by far the most overwhelmingly used, and one that did not change substantially throughout the premodern period. Premodern Korea, however, saw the development of several reading and writing techniques (see also Chapter 34). Because of the complexity of consonant clusters in Korean, in contrast to the comparable simplicity of both the Chinese and Japanese syllabic systems, scribes faced greater challenges representing Korean with the available Chinese character phonograms. Also, the greater exposure to and authority of Chinese culture probably played a role in the less continuous history of Korean writing practices (Lee and Ramsey 2000: 44–60). *Hyangch'al* 鄕札 ("local letters") was the most radical and accurate attempt to record Korean with Chinese characters. It resembled Japanese *man'yōgana* 万葉仮名 writing, since it recorded phrases mostly phonographically, using Chinese characters like a phonographic syllabary, in addition to mixing them with semantically used Chinese characters. Although it probably had wider usage than we can grasp in Silla sources, it survives only in the transcription of twenty-five "native" or "local songs" (K. *hyangga* 鄕歌) from the Three Kingdoms, Unified Silla and early Koryŏ periods, after which it died out.

In contrast, the most passive method of inscribing Korean texts was writing in Literary Chinese while inserting reading marks consisting of smaller (and sometimes simplified) characters indicating word order changes, particles, and inflections: *kugyŏl* 口訣 ("oral formula," or *t'o* 吐) resembles *kundoku* and *kunten* and allows transformation of a Chinese sentence through gloss marks into Korean (Whitman 2011). The gloss marks are similar to the use of *katakana*. Covering the broad spectrum between the two polar opposites of *hyangch'al* and *kugyŏl*, *idu* 吏讀 ("clerical reading") describes all sorts of inscriptional methods that show varying degrees of nativization in terms of word order, affixation, and particles, depending on the writer's ability and ideological and generic choice. It was mostly used for practical administrative genres and was in wide use until the nineteenth century.

Scholars have struggled to conceptualize the act of gloss-reading. Although sometimes described as translation of sorts, *kundoku* is not translation in any conventional sense, because there is only one text (not an original and a translation). Also, premodern Japanese were largely monolingual but did not perceive Chinese texts as foreign. *Kundoku* was simply a reading and writing technique that was part of domestic literacy training.

Besides the shared script and gloss-reading and writing techniques, the thorough education in canonical Chinese texts created commonality in East Asia. There is no space here to go into the intricate history of the various government-sponsored and private educational institutions in premodern East Asia. Suffice it to say that the elite education at the state-sponsored academies, with their detailed institutional regulations of personnel, curriculum, exam procedures, and genres, contrasts sharply with the private-based, unregulated, and elusive education system in Western antiquity (Denecke 2014a, chapter 1). The Spanish rhetorician Quintilian (ca. 35–100), our most extensive source on education in Rome, defines it as learning how to read and write and studying grammar and literature, geometry, astronomy, principles of music and logic, and rhetoric and philosophy, the ultimate goal of such a comprehensive education. But not least because education was private, the concrete nature, trajectory, and content of ancient Greco-Roman education remains hard to delineate from surviving sources. Also, the status of the instructors differed radically in early East Asia and in Rome, where bilingual Greek slaves and freedmen—paradoxically, a socially lower but culturally higher class— taught elite males Greek and Latin literacy; it would be rather ludicrious to imagine Chinese slaves as instructors in the East Asian state academies. And although, conversely, students and monks from the peripheral countries were sent to study in China, not unlike Romans who routinely completed part of their training in the Greek-speaking parts of the Roman world, their number was very small in comparison. The most exceptional case of "outsourced education" in early East Asia was probably Silla, which even sent members of the royal family to study in China. Silla provided the greatest number of foreign students in late Tang schools, with eighty-eight Sillans passing the Tang civil service examinations during the ninth century, among them the brilliant Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn 崔致遠 (857–?) (Holcombe 2011: 113; see also Chapter 34).

The foundation of Confucian academies appears in later historical sources as a symbolic moment in the civilizational process. Koguryŏ presumably founded its first institution in 372, the same year the first Buddhist monk arrived; Paekche seems to have had a thriving textual culture, encompassing the reading of histories, administration, medicine, and divination by the sixth century (*Sui shu* 81:1818); Silla saw the foundation of its first academy in 682 (set up together with a Ministry of Works and Ministry of Adornments and Lacquer [*Samguk sagi* 8, 80], roughly contemporary to the foundation of an academy in Japan, whose organization was first laid out in the Taihō 大宝 Code of 701; and the first imperial academy in Vietnam was founded in 1076. Although there were professional tracks such as mathematics, law, or calligraphy in different periods and states, the heart of these academies was the study of the Confucian Classics, the histories, and ornamental belles-lettres such as the *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature)*. It was part of the curriculum in Silla (*Samguk sagi* 38.366–367) and a centerpiece, together with China's first three official histories, of Japan's Letters Track (J. *kidendō* 紀伝道), which rose to great popularity in the ninth century and produced the majority of Heian scholar-officials. Intimate knowledge of the *Wen xuan* and the histories provided students with a broad command of administrative and ritual prose, with a repertoire of Chinese historical anecdotes and moral exemplars, and with precious literary vocabulary. Already the earliest extant Japanese poetry anthology, *Kaifūsō* 懐風藻 (*Florilegium of Cherished Airs,* 751), plotted its preface on the *Wen xuan* preface, and Heian literary culture was saturated with references to the *Wen xuan*. So iconic was the stature of this collection that scholars in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam eventually produced their own *Wen xuan* featuring choice pieces of their local Chinese-style traditions: Fujiwara no Akihira's *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粋 (*Literary Essence of Our Court*, 1060s), Sŏ Kŏjŏng's *Tong munsŏn* 東文選 (*Eastern Wen xuan,* 1478, 1571), and Bùi Huy Bích's *Hoàng Việt văn tuyển* 皇越文選 (*Wen xuan of the Imperial Việt*, 1825) (see also Chapter 19).

East Asia's academies were associated with an examination system. What stunned early modern European missionaries in China was the connection between a state-run examination system and recruitment into civil service. The idea of a system that seemed to place merit over birth and allow for dramatic social mobility was most attractive for contemporary Europeans in the grip of the hazards of absolutist monarchies. Although access to the academies was often limited to children from families of a certain rank, and much modern scholarship has highlighted the limitations for social mobility in these systems, it is important to acknowledge the very existence of institutions that in their principles and ideological rhetoric rewarded moral and academic worth.

Again, it is impossible to outline the exact nature and complex development of the exam system in the various East Asian states within the scope of this chapter. Silla established a form of examinations in 788, and Koryŏ initiated exams in 958, which basically continued until 1894 (see also Chapter 34). Vietnam established exams in 1075 and held on to the system the longest of all East Asian states, namely until 1919, when Emperor Khải Định 啓定 of the Nguyễn 阮 Dynasty abolished it because the court was "determined to reform," and the old civil service examination was deemed to "incompetently serve as a method of recruiting talents" (*Nam phong* 17 [1918]: 310). As in China, in early modern Korea and Vietnam the civil service examinations were not merely one social institution among many. They had a sweeping grip on the moral values, marriage politics, economic choices, political practices, daily lives, and literary imagination of its people. And they created public spectacles. In Chosŏn Korea, the government opulently feasted the three highest-ranking graduates, with a procession to the Confucius Temple and a parade on horseback followed by musicians and actors. With more than 14,606 candidates chosen in the highest-level examination (K. *munkwa* 文科) on 744 occasions throughout more than 600 years of Chosŏn history, the spectacle of exam success (and failure) was omnipresent (Lee 2003: 2). In Vietnam, during their long history of 845 years (1075–1919), the civil service examinations had about 3,000 candidates who passed its highest level (V. *tiến sĩ* 進士), and their names are inscribed on stelae in the Temple of Literature in Hanoi (Cōng Hậu 2013).

Japan did not develop a civil service examination system. Heian Japan did have a three-step exam system, with testing on the bureau, ministry, and imperial levels. But due to the power of aristocratic lineages, exam success did not translate into recruitment and political success. Scholars did have authoritative status, which is even obvious in parodies castigating their stuffiness, presumption, and lackadaisical diction appearing in vernacular works such as Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari* 源氏物語, ca. -1014). But after the heyday of the State Academy during the eighth and ninth centuries, its social significance declined, to the point that it was not even rebuilt when it burned down in the twelfth century (Ury 1999: 373). With the famous exception of Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903), who earned senior first rank posthumously after dying miserably in exile due to machinations of the ascendant Fujiwara clan, scholars were and remained typically of middle rank. The function of the Academy was taken over by clan schools (J. *bessō* 別曹), and Confucian learning became a hereditary profession, with members of the Nakahara and Kiyohara clans specializing in the Classics and members of the Sugawara, Ôe, and some branches of the Fujiwara clan focusing on the Letters track (Ury 1999, 367–75).

Confucian academies and the examination system produced a distinctive literary culture with local inflections throughout East Asia. Students and graduates were educated to share a canon of textual knowledge and of commentarial literature and exegesis, to develop strategies to apply this knowledge to policy questions in writing, and to acquire sophisticated fluency in administrative genres. Also, the Confucius cult, in particular the usually biannual celebration in honor of Confucius (釋奠 Ch. *shidian*, K. *sŏkchŏn*, J. *sekiten*, V. *thích điện*) connected the academies and Confucius temples to the court and its political ideology. Though already stipulated in the *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rituals*), the ceremony came into its own in the Six Dynasties Period and was adopted throughout East Asia. It continues (or has recently been revived) in Confucius temples throughout East Asia. The celebration could take distinctive local forms. The first celebration in Japan is recorded for 701, and in early Japan it featured lectures on a canonical text and the composition of poems on a specific topic line drawn from the day's text. This differed from contemporary Tang practice, which seems not to have included poetry composition, and even from Six Dynasties precedents, which included poetry composition but, for all we can see, in archaicizing tetrasyllabic stanzaic poems without topic lines.

By virtue of their curriculum, students and graduates shared an outlook on life that emphasized self-cultivation, the duty of both obedience and remonstration, the rhetoric of lamenting lack of official success or of "not meeting one's time" and finding an appreciative ruler and patron; disappointment, strained effort, and periods of unemployment—the often vastly more pervasive flipside of exam triumph and career success—fostered sentiments of reclusion and retreat from society. These themes became a prominent part of the literary repertoire of East Asia's Chinese-style literary traditions.

Literary Culture

Books

The most momentous object of transcultural exchange in East Asia was undoubtedly the book, in various forms. The material foundation of the thriving literary cultures of East Asia was the importation or production, preservation, and circulation of texts. There are cases of texts from the peripheral states that presumably made their way to China even as early as, in Japan, two sutra commentaries attributed to Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 that were taken to Koguryŏ and China in the seventh and eighth centuries (Kornicki 2001: 306–312). But the ostentatious pride that usually resonates in anecdotes surrounding such rare cases highlights the fact that the overwhelming majority of the book flow went from China to its neighboring countries. Books, both Buddhist and secular, were brought back from tribute missions to China, requested from China by courts, or brought back home by monks. Japanese missions to Korea were nicknamed "sutra-seeking missions" in Korea, because Japanese officials made altogether eighty official request for complete sets of the Buddhist canon, the best available edition being the one produced in Koryŏ Korea based on Song and Khitan versions and reprinted again in the thirteenth century, after the printing blocks were destroyed by the Mongols (Kornicki 2011: 71). The prominence of books in the material flows in East Asia has led the Chinese scholar Wang Yong 王勇 to coin the notion of a "book road" (Ch. *shuji zhi lu* 書籍之路,

J. *bukku rōdo* ブックロード). Wang created the concept to draw attention to a model of cultural interchange distinct from the Eurasian "silk road," which transported largely material goods. Books, however, were both material objects and intellectual vectors. This is a valuable concept, although we need to keep in mind that the East Asian book road, unlike its Eurasian correlate, was largely a one-way street flowing out of China into the periphery, and that the books were largely in one "language," East Asia's lingua franca of Literary Chinese.

Literary cultures are as much shaped by the survival of texts as by their loss. In Korea, regular national disasters and invasions—such as those of the Mongols, Japanese, and Manchus—caused massive damage to book collections. Even more dramatically, in Vietnam no manuscript or printed text before 1697 survives (Chapter 36). The fifteenth-century scholar Hoàng Đức Lương 黃德良 laments the lack of surviving Sino-Vietnamese texts, faulting not just destruction in times of turmoil but also censorship and lacking efforts to compile and transmit texts. Consequently, people fell back on Tang poetry and retrievable Chinese texts:

> Alas! How can it be possible for a civilized country which has been established for thousands of years to lack writings to prove its culture, but instead to recite the words of Tang writers? How sorrowful it is! (Trần Văn Giáp 1990: 37–38)

In the preface to the "Bibliographical Treatise" of the *Đại Việt thông sử* 大越通史 (*General History of the Great Việt*), Lê Quý Đôn 黎貴惇 (1726–1784) added to these reasons the lack of a central library, the exagerated focus on works related to exam success rather than literary worth, and even a kind of bibliophilic hoarding that led people to collect but refuse to share or circulate their treasures.

East Asia's archetypal moment of book loss that mesmerized later imagination was the legendary "burning of the books" at the order of the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇帝 (r. 221–210 BCE) in 213 BCE. It became a symbol used to explain Japan's extraordinary success in book preservation. There is no question that in Japan, as elsewhere, many texts fell prey to time or were transmitted only in fragments, but Japan managed to become the "outsourced treasure-house" of Chinese texts lost on the continent. The most recent compilation of so-called *issonsho* 佚存書 ("lost-and-preserved texts") runs to seventy volumes and over 38,000 pages (Jin 2012). From at least the Song, the Chinese resented this state of affairs, as evident in Sima Guang's 司馬光 (1019–1086) "Song on a Japanese Sword" ("Riben daoge" 日本刀歌, preserved in Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 [1007–1072] personal collection, Jin 2014). He explains that Xu Fu, dispatched to the island of immortals before the burning of the books, brought Chinese books to Japan and laments that the Japanese court forbids returning these long-lost books to China, and the Japanese instead pay the Chinese off with cheap rusty swords! Since the nineteenth century, the rediscovery, philological study, and editing of such texts have become a source of vivid exchanges between Chinese, Korean, and Japanese literati. These stories of textual loss with a transcultural happy, if often complex, ending make for a distinctive phenomenon in East Asian cultural history.

Anthologies, Genre Hierarchies, Genres

Literary anthologies were a crucial vector for textual preservation in East Asia. Whereas Greco-Roman antiquity produced few anthologies, and generally only of epigrams, the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) and canonical medieval literary collections set a precedent for prolific literary anthologization in East Asia, and their production, commissioned or private, and comprehensive or personal collections transmitted a great part of premodern East Asian literary production. Anthologies differ from integral texts in fundamental ways. By knitting pieces from different authors, periods, and contexts into a single narrative, compilers produce their own supernarrative and become authors of sorts. They can inscribe political, cosmological, and aesthetic agendas into a collection's configuration and arrangement scheme that exceed or even contradict the original texts. They are "supertexts" of sorts. This makes imperially commissioned anthologies—so common in East Asian history—particularly interesting, as they reveal a characteristically complex relationship to the court, state ideology, and literary memory.

One reason anthologies became such a successful literary form was the genre spectrum and genre hierarchy in East Asia. Epic poetry and drama, the most authoritative genres in the European genre hierarchy, were ill-suited for anthologization. But short lyrical poetry, which in Europe only became more esteemed with the Middle Ages, stood at the top of the East Asian genre hierarchy and lent itself to collection in anthologies. East Asian authors produced Chinese-style texts in a wide variety of genres, although *shi* 詩 poetry had a particularly prominent position. They were not productive in the "Classics" and "Masters" category of the four-fold bibliographic scheme—canons that were basically closed before the emergence of East Asia and to which later authors could only contribute in the form of commentarial literature. In the "Histories" category, teams of court historians produced more or less Chinese-style official histories in Japan (the Six National Histories [*Rikkokushi* 六国史] of the eighth through ninth centuries), Korea (*Samguk sagi*, which partially transmits the lost early historiography from Korea's Three Kingdoms Period; *Koryŏsa* 高麗史 [*History of Koryŏ*, fifteenth century]; and *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [*Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 1413–1865]), and Vietnam (the lost *Đại Việt sử ký* 大越史記 [*History of Great Viet*, 1272] and its extant expansion *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* 大越史記全書 [*Comprehensive History of Great Viet*, 1479 and 1697]). Alongside official historiography there existed a swath of historiographical genres—local, clan-based, private, professional, written in different linguistic forms, even in the vernacular, depending on time and place.

The bulk of East Asia's Chinese-style literary production fell in the "Collections" (*ji* 集) category, and literati throughout East Asia basically produced in all major Chinese genres ranging from rhapsodies to various forms of *shi* poetry, and from ornamental parallel prose to administrative prose and religious genres like prayers, funerary genres, or laments. Still, it is important to keep in mind that behind the same genre label, local incarnations that developed rather differently from Chinese precedent could lurk. For example, the popular "poetry prefaces" 詩序 (Ch. *shixu*, J. *shijo*) in Heian Japan were a companion genre to the distinctively Japanese genre of "Topic Poetry" (J. *kudaishi* 句題詩), heptasyllabic regulated poems composed on five-character topic lines according to a strict rhetorical template, which was probably inspired by Tang examination poetry and became the most important poetry genre used on formal court occasions and excursions from the mid-tenth century (Satō 2007, Denecke 2007). Or the Chinese genre labels can hide different status in local literary culture: while "rhapsodies" never quite took off in Japan and never played the authoritative roles they did in Chinese cultural history, "pseudo-biographies" 假傳 (Ch. *jiazhuan*, K. *kajŏn*), originally probably inspired by texts like Han Yu's "Biography of Fur Point" (*Mao ying zhuan* 毛穎傳), had a disproportionately large presence in Koryŏ and Chosŏn literary life and helped develop new modes of prose fiction (Lee 2003: 136–138; Liu 2012; Wang 2009: 225–236).

Vernacular Scripts and Literatures

One thing that came to diversify East Asia and distinguish each of its literary traditions was the development of vernacular scripts and literatures. Although the inscription technique did not change (*man'yōgana, hyangch'al*, and *chữ nôm* 字喃/𡨸喃/𡦂喃 script already mixed logographic and phonographic uses of Chinese characters to inscribe the local vernaculars), the emergence or promulgation of vernacular scripts did eventually facilitate vernacular literary production.

Based on cursive writing and simplifications of phonographically used Chinese characters, Japan's *hiragana* 平仮名 and *katakana* 片仮名 syllabaries emerged around the ninth century. Cursive *hiragana* became the medium of choice for vernacular poetry and fledgling vernacular prose, while square *katakana* was primarily used for glossing Buddhist texts. In Vietnam, *chữ nôm*, using both standard Chinese characters and locally invented ones to record vernacular Vietnamese, took shape as a writing system under the Lý 李 dynasty, and started being employed for literary composition during the Trần 陳 dynasty (Nguyễn Quang Hồng 2008: 126–127). The demotic script had its heyday between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries and was mostly used by Vietnamese literati. It was also employed in written format for interpreting (*diễn nghĩa* 演義) Confucian texts and other Chinese works. A number of Chinese novels were adapted into Vietnamese using the *nôm* script. The most famous example is the *Tale of Kiều* (*Đoạn trường tân thanh* 斷腸新聲, aka *Truyện Kiều* 傳翹), a verse adaptation of the Chinese *Tale of Jin, Yun, and Qiao* 金雲翹傳 by the poet Nguyễn Du 阮攸 (1765–1820). These Vietnamese adaptations, which often greatly differed from their Chinese base stories, enjoyed a wide array of audiences, including literati, women, and commoners. Unlike the forty-seven letters in each of the *kana* syllabaries, *chữ nôm* was not a systematic syllabary but consisted of an extensive set of more than 37,000 characters (Vũ Văn Kính 2005, 7). Though not an official writing system, the *nôm* script lingered even after 1910, when the French protectorate of Tonkin (northern Vietnam) officially adopted *chữ quốc ngữ* 𡨸國語 ("script for the national language"), an adaptation of the Roman alphabet devised by the seventeenth-century French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes and other missionaries. Vernacular verse narratives in *chữ nôm* woodblock print still had a readership until the 1930s, despite the widespread use of the Roman *chữ quốc ngữ*.

Korea's vernacular script, *han'gŭl* (originally called *hunmin chŏng'ŭm* 訓民正音 "correct sounds for the instruction of the people"), was invented at King Sejong's 世宗 (r. 1418–1450) court and promulgated in 1446. As the first text written in *han'gŭl*, scholars composed *Yongbiŏch'ŏn'ga* 龍飛御天歌 (*Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*), a panegyric song cycle in 125 cantos praising the achievements of the founders of the Chosŏn dynasty, complete with a Chinese version (at the time more comprehensible) and a scholarly commentary (Lee 1975). Unlike other East Asian scripts that derive from Chinese characters and adhere to their syllabic nature, King Sejong's court created a twenty-eight-letter alphabet (though still arranged in syllabic blocs), with consonants visualizing their physical place of articulation and vowels representing metaphysical symbols of heaven, earth, and humankind (Ross King in Daniels 1996, section 17). Although the king's and scholars' explicitly articulated goal was to devise a script that anyone could learn in a morning, or "even an idiot, in no more than ten days" (Desgoutte 2000: 54) the general consensus has been that *han'gŭl* was to remain of low status and little used, a bare literacy tool for women and children, until its sweeping national promotion in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, this view is increasingly questioned, because the invention of *han'gŭl* enabled the flourishing production of bilingual vernacular editions (*ŏnhaebon* 諺解本), in particular of canonical Confucian and Buddhist texts (see also Chapter 34).

Despite fundamental differences between the history and nature of East Asia's vernacular scripts, it is safe to say that vernacular scripts were more easily associated with female reading and writing, private and personal concerns and romance, and more popular genres—they were also called "female hand" (*onnade* 女手) and "female script" (*amgŭl* 암글) in Japan and Korea respectively; in Vietnam, women writers generally employed the demotic *nôm* script for their compositions. In contrast, Chinese characters suggested primarily male authorship and consumption, official purpose, and authoritative genres ranging from administrative prose to miscellaneous essays and poems composed at homosocial male gatherings.

However, biliteracy and vernacular literatures took different trajectories throughout East Asia. Premodern Korea did have vernacular literature, but the vernacular "literary tradition" before the early modern period appears as a rather erratic set of thinly documented genres. There are twenty-five "native" or "local songs" (*hyangga*) recorded in *hyangch'al*, and twenty-two "Koryŏ songs" (*Koryŏ kayo* 高麗歌謠, 10th–14th cent.) recorded in *han'gŭl* in later Chosŏn anthologies. From the fifteenth century, a variety of vernacular forms emerged, such as *akchang* 樂章 ("eulogies"); *sijo* 時調, the metrically most clearly defined and most successful Korean genre, still popular today; and the lengthier narrative *kasa* 歌詞. These genres, together with vernacular novels, *p'ansori* 판소리 pieces, and autobiographical memoirs by female authors, most famously Lady Hyegyŏng 惠慶宮 (1735–1816) (Kim Haboush 1996), make up the bulk of premodern vernacular texts. Various reasons contributed to this disparate history of vernacular literature in Korea: the lack of a uniform writing system to record vernacular language; pervasive oral transmission, which we can only grasp through later recording and redactions by moralistic Chosŏn scholars; and the high prestige of Chinese-style writing, which pushed vernacular genres into low status in the genre hierarchy.

Vietnam's vernacular literature, though considered secondary to Chinese-style literature, still enjoyed a certain standing with both emperors and literati. Emperor Lê Thánh Tông and the members of the learned "Altar of Poetry" (Tao Đàn 騷壇) society compiled the brilliant *Hồng Đức Quốc Âm Thi Tập* 洪德國音詩集 (*Anthology of Verse in National Language from the Hồng Đức Reign*, fifteenth century). Two of the greatest intellectual figures of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Vietnam, Nguyễn Trãi 阮廌 (1380–1442) and Nguyễn Bỉnh Khiêm 阮秉謙 (1491–1585), composed *Quốc Âm Thi Tập* 國音詩集 (*Collection of Verse in National Language*) and *Bạch Vân Quốc Ngữ Thi Tập* 白雲國語詩集 (*Collection of White Cloud Verse in National Language*). Thanks to the typological and syntactical proximities between Vietnamese and Chinese, Vietnamese poets could emulate almost all Chinese poetic forms, such as regulated poetry, rhapsodies, and eulogies, while composing in the vernacular. Thus the vernacular literature in *nôm* script can be treated as the naturalization of Chinese textual culture in the local Vietnamese context.

Only Japan developed a continously flourishing and quite independent vernacular literary tradition from its literate beginnings. The more than four thousand and five hundred vernacular poems preserved in the eighth-century *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (*Collection of Myriad Leaves*, ca. 759) stand in stark contrast to the two dozen Korean *hyangga*, especially because we know of a large ninth-century poetry collection, *Samdaemok* 三代目, that is lost but might have given us many more clues about the role of *hyangga* in Silla literary culture. But we cannot simply explain away the remarkable difference between the emergence and development of vernacular literatures in early Japan and Korea with reference to coincidences of transmission. For various complex reasons, the fate of Japan's thirty-one-syllable vernacular *waka* poetry became intimately intertwined with court culture from the tenth century, in the form of imperially sponsored anthologies, editing projects, court events such as poetry contests, and hereditary poetry lineages of court nobles (such as the Rokujō 六條 and Mikohidari 御子左 [Nijō 二條, Kyōgoku 京極, Reizei 冷泉] houses). This enabled, uniquely in premodern East Asia, the elevation of a vernacular genre to the level of Chinese-style poetry. Thanks to the prominence of its use as a manual for *waka* composition, the *Tale of Genji* was also gradually canonized from the thirteenth century. But we must not forget that the elevation in the genre hierarchy mostly applied to the *Genji;* generally, tale literature (*monogatari* 物語) remained of low status, alongside vernacular diaries and drama such as Noh, *bunraku* 文楽, and *kabuki* 歌舞伎, which only with the Meiji Period (1868–1912) were suddenly elevated to the unprecedented, distorting heights of a "national canon of Japanese literature." True, the "Koryŏ songs" were adapted for court *entertainment*, and actually survive because their melodies were adopted into the Chosŏn repertoire and recorded in compendia of court music (Lee 2003, chapter 5). But *waka* rose to a *courtly art*, and the probably rather low-class performers of Koryŏ songs, with their dancing, trilling of melodic nonsense lines, and earthy, sometimes bawdy amorous themes, are a far cry from the Japanese courtiers' chanting of *waka* poems, with their superbly codified diction, elite flair, and firmly established tradition of scriptualization and anthologization.

Women Writers

Although vernacular genres in all East Asian traditions were more strongly associated with women, in terms of production, performance, consumption, and content, men did also, in some cases quite prominently, participate in the vernacular literary sphere. The opposite was not true to the same degree. Despite variations depending on place and period, East Asia's Chinese-style literary sphere was male-dominated. In early Japan, where women appear in authoritative roles as imperial ancestor (the sun goddess Amaterasu), tribal chiefs, empresses, and household leaders, there were some female authors writing in Chinese-style forms. But they disappear after the ninth century, which is often blamed on the influence, however weakened, of Confucian law codes promoting patrilineal registration and male-dominated hierarchies (Sekiguchi 2003). In the mid-Heian period, women continued to participate in the consumption of Chinese and Chinese-style literature, famous examples being Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (d. ca. 1014) and Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 (d. early eleventh century), who knew their Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) much better than some of their male family members or colleagues at court. But it would have been improper for them to write in Literary Chinese; and even a woman's frequent use of Chinese characters (rather than *kana* letters) was castigated as stiff, unfeminine, and pretentious. Only the much diversified and socially dramatically broadened literary stage of the Edo period (1603–1868) saw some women—most famously Ema Saikō 江馬細香 (1787–1861), the companion of the poet and historian Rai Sanyō 頼山陽 (1780–1832)—emerge as Chinese-style authors (Nagase 2007).

Only a few works by women were published in Chosŏn Korea, although there is a large corpus of *kasa* poems written by women in *han'gŭl* and circulating among family and friends (Kim 1996: 122–136). But very few women left poems in Chinese-style forms, except for famously rare cases such as Hŏ Nansŏrhŏn 許蘭雪軒 (1563–1589), whose talent in Chinese-style poetry was promoted by her brother, the scholar Hŏ Pong (Kim Kichung in Kim-Renaud 2004, chapter 4).

Women could actively participate in the male-dominated sphere of Chinese-style writing by playing by its rules, but they could also use its language to unmask male privilege, polygamy, and misogynist social conventions. Take for example Hồ Xuân Hương 胡春香 (1772–1822), who together with Nguyễn Du is considered one of the key founding figures of Vietnamese national literature and is still quite alive in popular imagination today. Her erudition matched that of the greatest scholars of her time, but in her writings she used boldly colorful and coarse language. Although the bulk of her oeuvre is written in *chữ nôm*, she also used Chinese-style writing, elegantly and discreetly revealing the fragile fate of women. The transition to modernity fostered particularly interesting profiles of socially active women voicing their visions in various idioms and media. Sương Nguyệt Anh 孀月英 (Nguyệt Anh the Widow), editor-in-chief of the first Vietnamese newspaper for women, composed poems in Chinese-style forms and in *chữ quốc ngữ* vernacular, also translating Chinese vernacular novels and writing editorials defending women's rights.

A New Era for the Sinographic Sphere

The Sinographic Sphere has entered its third and final phase. After the functioning of Literary Chinese as a lingua franca within China and the Chinese states of the first millennium BCE and its retooling as the lingua franca in East Asia over roughly the first two millennia CE, it has virtually disappeared at the beginning of the third millennium, and the commonality it afforded is waning. Obviously, Chinese characters are still used in East Asia, although, interestingly, Korea and Vietnam, the states with the traditionally stronger links to Chinese culture, make drastically reduced use of them or have virtually completely abandoned them. Unfortunately, discussions about the "future" of the Sinographic Sphere rarely pinpoint the heart of the matter, namely the monumental inflection point constituted by the death of Literary Chinese in the twentieth century. They tend to focus on peripheral cultural remnants of the Sinographic Sphere: the fate of Chinese characters in the face of the simplified/traditional character divide, the ideological shadows of Confucianism, economic success, modernization, and cultural difference from the West (e.g., Mizoguchi 1992: 423–478).

Instead, a thorough assessment of the consequences of the death of Literary Chinese and the distorting effects of the ideology of "national literature" on literary studies in the region is urgently needed; the neglect of Chinese-style literature, the misrepresentation of traditional literary culture and genre hierarchy (and compensatory upgrading of folk and vernacular literature), the meaningless split into Chinese-style and vernacular literature, and the lack of an integrated study of East Asia's unique biliterate traditions plague literary historiography in all East Asian countries. At its extreme, the national-literature model resulted in attempts to completely excise all Chinese-style texts from literary history, as with scholars in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s—hard pressed during yet another time of war and occupation—who tried to shrink the Vietnamese tradition exclusively to texts written in the vernacular (Phạm Văn Diêu 1960: 44).

Thus, studying the Chinese-style literature produced in East Asia is a project of historical revisionism, an antidote to the distortions of modern models of national literary historiography as well as to the divisive issues of colonization, war wounds, and territorial quibbles that currently dominate East Asian foreign relations. Reconstructing and revitalizing the shared heritage of East Asian "Letters" 文, the basis for East Asian commonality is thus as much a historical duty as it is an ongoing project of shared memory and reconciliation (Kōno et al. 2015).

But studying East Asia's Chinese-style traditions also contributes to a deeper understanding of Chinese literature and culture (Zhang 2011). Not only can pronunciation glosses and the modern languages help reconstruct the phonology of earlier stages of the Chinese languages, the "outsourced treasure house" of Chinese texts preserved outside China is a rich trove of source materials. Furthermore, compilations of Tang poetry produced in East Asian countries, for example Japanese "couplet charts," can help us reconstruct more of the contemporary Tang canon and glance behind the veil that the canonization of Tang poetry during the Song Dynasty has imposed on us. Also, the history of East Asia's Chinese-style literature can serve, in the form of a heuristic experiment, as an alternative literary history of China, in which originally Chinese literary phenomena play out differently when introduced into a different sociopolitical environment and literary culture. This can help us to carefully rethink entrenched teleologies of Chinese literary history.

As we move into the third phase of the Sinographic Sphere, when ideologies of the modern nation-state have made historical awareness and scholarly research of Chinese heritage in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam challenging and even unpopular, it is an explicit goal of this Handbook to inspire China scholars to seriously study the rich and thought-provoking Chinese-style literatures of East Asia for their historical importance, heuristic value, and contemporary relevance to East Asia's peaceful integration.

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CHAPTER 34

SINO-KOREAN LITERATURE

SIM KYUNG-HO AND PETER KORNICKI

(WITH TRANSLATIONS BY JOHANN NOH
WIEBKE DENECKE)

THE SCOPE OF SINO-KOREAN LITERATURE

THE traditional meaning of the term "literature" or "letters" 文 (K. *mun*) in premodern Korea as elsewhere in East Asia encompassed a wider scope than the modern concept of "literature" (*munhak* 文学).[1] It refers not only to refined writing in Literary Chinese, but also to more utilitarian public and private writings in Literary Chinese composed in the context of daily life. Thus, "Sino-Korean literature" includes not only literary writings but also historical records, scholarly essays, public documents such as diplomatic correspondence, and private texts such as correspondence in Literary Chinese. Works in Literary Chinese with interspersed vernacular expressions as well as works using Chinese characters phonetically to inscribe the Korean language belong under the purview of Sino-Korean literature.

Although Korea's vernacular script, *han'gŭl*, was invented in 1446 and promulgated by King Sejong 世宗 (r. 1418–1450), Literary Chinese remained the language of government, scholarship and belles lettres until the early twentieth century, when it was abandoned in response to the rise of national consciousness and a reappraisal of the role of the vernacular. Thus, literature written in hybrid Sino-Korean styles or in plain Literary Chinese constitutes the greatest portion of Korean classical literature, while *han'gŭl* was used for private communications, especially by women; for translations of Chinese vernacular fiction; for bilingual works; and, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for classical Korean fiction (*ko sosŏl* 古小說).

The premodern elite, the members of the *yangban* class, appropriated Chinese literature for their own purposes, but they also tried to establish their own distinctive styles of Sino-Korean literature. They initiated new trends and new forms of literature to reflect their own political and cultural allegiances at various stages in the history of Korea. They were keen to express their thoughts and feelings from within a Korean context and, in their Sino-Korean works, they absorbed, both consciously and unconsciously, forms derived from oral storytelling, folk songs, and other popular genres.

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[1] Unless indicated otherwise the transcription of terms and titles in this chapter is Japanese.

Writing system	Form of prose, inscription styles	Corresponding form of poetry composition
standard Literary Chinese	Tang and Song ancient-style prose (*Tang Song komun* 唐宋古文)classicist prose based on Qin and Han models (*Chin Han komun* 秦漢古文 [*ŭigomun* 擬古文]), essays (*sop’um* 小品) prose based on written vernacular Chinese (*kobaekhwa ŭijangmun* 古白話擬作文) parallel prose (*saryungmun* 四六文)	*shi* poetry (including song lyrics)
	exam literature (*kwamun* 科文) (*shi* poems, *fu* rhapsodies, exegetical essays [*ŭiŭi* 疑義], examination essays *kwach’aek* 科策)	exam poems, *shi* poetry
	Buddhist literature	Korean-style poetry without rhyme (*Chosŏn sik kop’ung* 朝鮮式 古風) and *shi* poetry
Korean-style Chinese (including “clerical reading” [*idu* 吏讀])	*hyangch’al* (鄉札 “local letters”) Complex Sentences of gloss-reading (*hundok* 訓讀) and sound-reading (*ŭmdok* 音讀) in the early Chosŏn period	
	public documents	*shi* poetry (*yangban* authors) Korean-style poetry without rhyme (local low-ranking officials)
	administrative documents and practical documents related to everyday life	
vernacular script (*han’gŭl*)	*Ŏnhae* 諺解 Korean translations and adaptations accompanying Literary Chinese texts in bilingual editions documents related to everyday life in *han’gŭl* letters prayer texts posthumous biographies novels and translations of vernacular Chinese fiction	Korean-style poetry without rhyme

The Cultural Context of the Development of Sino-Korean Literature

The reception and dissemination of Chinese literature in Korea and the composition of literary works in Literary Chinese by Koreans are inextricably linked to three social characteristics that Korea has in common with Vietnam but rather less so with Japan (see also Chapter 33). The first is the maintenance of tributary relations with successive Chinese dynasties. Diplomatic correspondence and appointments as envoy to China were usually entrusted to men whose command of the Chinese literary tradition and compositional skills as poets were such as to reflect well on the home country. Literary skills were thus of inestimable diplomatic value and significance.

Second, some aspects of the civil service examination system were in force from the Koryŏ Dynasty (918–1392) onwards, and in these examinations, literary skills in Literary Chinese were tested as men competed for official positions. It was thus indispensable for a career in officialdom to be able to compose impeccable verse and prose in Literary Chinese. What is more, poetry written in Literary Chinese offered the possibility of literary recognition in China, which a small number of Koreans managed to achieve.

Third, it was not until the middle of the fifteenth century that a vernacular script was developed; this was generally called *chŏng'ŭm munja* 正音文字 ("script representing the correct sounds") or *ŏnmun* 諺文 ("vulgar writing"), but is now known as *han'gŭl* in South Korea and *chosŏn'gŭl* in North Korea. In previous centuries, Chinese graphs had sometimes been used as phonograms to record Korean poetry, a practice that was also used extensively in Japan, but this technique was not used for prose in Korea. So up to the fifteenth century, almost all Korean writing that has come down to us is in Literary Chinese, with a small amount of vernacular poetry.

Further, it should not be forgotten that the scriptural language of Buddhism in East Asia was Chinese. Much of the oldest evidence for the proficiency of Korean writers in Chinese, therefore, comes from monks who spent years in China and whose writings form part of the Buddhist archive of East Asia irrespective of their country of origin. Those writings mostly circulated in manuscript form, for although printing was certainly being practiced in the Koryŏ Dynasty and during the Unified Silla period (668–918) before it, most printed works were Buddhist in content. Thus it was overwhelmingly in the form of manuscripts that Chinese literature and Korean writings in Literary Chinese circulated in Korea. Before Silla unified Korea in 668, the peninsula was divided between three kingdoms, and of these it was Koguryŏ (37 BCE–668 CE) that had most direct contact with China and took to Chinese writing earliest. In 372, Buddhist texts in Chinese are said to have reached Koguryŏ, and it was in that same year that an institution of higher learning was established in the Koguryŏ capital.

Korean elites respected and appropriated the works of Chinese literature, philosophy, and history as canonical models, and they narrated their native history and expressed their ideas and feelings in Literary Chinese from within the Korean political and cultural context. Sino-Korean literature was thus able to play a prominent role thanks to the active adoption of Chinese culture ever since the Three Kingdoms Period (first century BCE–668 CE) and to the institutional fostering of scholar-officials recruited through the civil service examination system from the Koryŏ Dynasty until the end of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1910).

The candidates for the civil service examination (*kwagŏ* 科擧) were required to hone their skills in various literary styles of "exam literature" such as *shi* poems, *fu* rhapsodies, exegetical essays (*ŭiŭi* 疑義), and examination essays *kwach'aek* 科策. However, because these pieces were not regarded as works of high literary value, they were in most cases not included in the personal literary collections (*munjip* 文集) of the *yangban* literati. Children of *yangban* families were trained from an early age in the various examination genres, so the rhetorical decorum of the examination genres sometimes affected their style of literary composition throughout their lives.

According to the *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (*History of the Three Kingdoms*, 1145), King Sinmun 神文王 (?–692) established a National Academy (*kukhak* 國學) in the seventh century; this was later renamed T'aehakkam 大學監 by King Kyŏngdŏk 景德王 (r. 742–765) and was revived under King Hyegong 惠恭王 (r. 765–780). Students at the Academy studied classical Chinese texts like *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*), *Shujing* 書經 (*Classic of Documents*), *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), *Liji* 禮記 (*Record of Rites*), *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳 (the *Zuo Tradition* of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*), *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*), *Xiaojing* 孝經 (*Classic of Filial Pietry*), and *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*). Later, King Wŏnsŏng 元聖王 (r. 785–798) established the *Toksŏ samp'umgwa* 讀書三品科 (a system of reading examinations in three grades) to select talented people for government positions. While students at the National Academy in Tang China learned the *Lunyu, Xiaojing, Laozi* 老子, and the *Jiu jing* 九經 (*Nine Classics*) as required subjects, in the state of Silla the *Wen xuan* was added to the curriculum instead of *Laozi* and the *Jiu jing* were replaced with the *Wu jing* 五經 (*Five Classics*). Most of the students seem to have been of the hereditary "head-rank six" class (*yuktup'um* 六頭品) and were restricted in the level of office they were able to attain because of the so-called bone-rank system (*kolp'umje* 骨品制) of aristocratic rank based on family lineage. In most cases students were employed in government after nine years of study.

Silla started to send students to study in Tang China in 640. After the normalization of diplomatic relations, which had been broken off since the war between Silla and Tang during Silla's unification of the Korean peninsula, the Silla court even sent members of the royal family to study at the State Academy Directorate (Ch. *guozijian* 國子監) in Chang'an. (see also Chapter 33). A certain Kim Ungyŏng 金雲卿 passed the "Guest and tributary examination" (Ch. *bingong ke* 賓貢科) as the first candidate from Silla in 821. In 837, the number of students from Silla amounted to as many as 216, and by the Late

Tang fifty-eight candidates had passed the "Guest and tributary examination" and a further thirty-two succeeded during the Later Liang and Later Tang Dynasties. Most of them came from the "head-rank six" class, and some received high praise in China for their literary achievements; a good number of their poems were included in *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (*Complete Tang Poems*). There are also many "epistolary verses" (Ch. *zengda shi* 贈答詩) exchanged between Silla and Tang literati in *Quan Tang shi* that show the active level of cultural exchange between Silla and Tang China.

When Silla unified the peninsula, its reach did not extend to the northern borders of Koguryŏ, and in 699 a new state was created by Koguryŏ refugees, which is known as Parhae in Korean and Bohai in Chinese. This state came to an end in 926 when it was overwhelmed by Khitan tribes from the west and its literary heritage was destroyed. However, whatever vernacular languages may have been spoken there, the written language was Literary Chinese, so Parhae was another participant in East Asia's Sinographic sphere. Evidence of this survives in a number of pieces of diplomatic poetry preserved in contemporary Japanese chronicles and poetry collections and in the surviving poems of refugee Parhae poets who fled when their country was overrun (Yi 1998: 64–72, Cho 2005).

In the Koryŏ Dynasty, the civil service examinations were first established in 958. The examinations were divided into the more prestigious examination testing literary composition and an exam testing knowledge of the Classics. Candidates in literary composition demonstrated their skills in composing *shi* poetry, *fu* rhapsodies, *song* 頌 odes, and problem-essays (*ch'aek* 策) in three stages. In 1369, King Kongmin 恭愍王 (r. 1351–1374) adopted the examination system of the Yuan court, establishing a three-stage examination system consisting of provincial examinations (*hyangsi* 鄉試), the metropolitan examination (*hoesi* 會試), and a final palace examination (*chŏnsi* 殿試).

The Chosŏn court combined the Koryŏ dynasty's examinations in literary composition and the Classics into the "Literary examination" (*munkwa* 文科), and established a new military examination (*mukwa* 武科). Examinations in the Chosŏn Dynasty were divided into four broad categories: literary licentiate examinations, literary examinations, military examinations, and miscellaneous examinations (including medicine and foreign languages). This examination system functioned until the Kabo Reforms of 1894.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the distinctive literary style of examination poems and rhapsodies was established. "Examination rhapsodies" were composed on topics selected from the Chinese histories, while "Examination poems" (*kwasi* 科詩) consisted of thirty-six lines of seven characters each, set in rhymed regulated verse, prefaced by a topic phrase extracted from an older poem, and featuring a character from the topic phrase of the title as a rhyming word ta the end of the eighth line (Yi 1994).

In the early Chosŏn Dynasty, handbooks composed in China for the study of parallel *fu,* petitions, letters, and examination essays were distributed by both the central and local governments. Prominent examples included *Yuanliu zhilun* 源流至論 (Exhausting Discussion of All Developments), compiled by Lin Jiong 林駉 and

Huang Luweng 黃履翁 during the late Northern Song; Ouyang Qiming's 歐陽起鳴 *Ouyang lunfan* 歐陽論範 (*Ouyang's Model Essays*) from the Yuan; and Liu Renchu's 劉仁初 *Sanchang wenxian* 三場文選 (*Xinkan leibian liju sanchang wenxian duice* 新刊類編歷擧三場文選對策) (*Essays on Selections of Refined Literature from Examinations Held at Three Sites*) from the Yuan. Later, the Korean government began publishing compilations of compositions by candidates who had won first place in the examinations, and many private compilations survive from the late Chosŏn Dynasty which have yet to be published.

The Chosŏn court promoted scholarship and honed the composition skills of scholar-officials by adopting the educational institutions of the Koryŏ dynasty, most importantly the National Academy and the civil service examination system. King Sŏngjong 成宗 (r. 981–997) of Koryŏ established the National University (*kukchagam* 國子監) and also conducted a "monthly composition exercise" (*wŏlgwabŏp* 月課法). During the reign of King Sejong and the early reign of King Sejo 世祖 (r. 1455–1468), scholars were trained at the Hall of Worthies (*Chiphyŏnjŏn* 集賢殿). They were ordered to collate, annotate, or compile various books, and also composed ritual hymns and eulogies (*akchang* 樂章). In the late Chosŏn Dynasty, King Chŏngjo 正祖 (r. 1776–1800) promoted Confucianism and made efforts to establish new domestic standards for literature, scholarship, and politics. He also compiled many scholarly collections with selected civil officials (*ch'ogye munsin* 招啟文臣), and planned to edit the complete works of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). Emphasizing the unity of knowledge and action both in private cultivation and political practice, he sought to promote the study of the Confucian Classics.

During the Three Kingdoms Period, it had already been common to compose poetry at royal command, but the tradition of composing poetry in response to a poem by the king using the same rhyme was firmly established during the reign of King Sŏngjong 成宗 (r. 1469–1494). Han Myŏnghoe 韓明澮 (1415–1487), the father of King Sŏngjong's queen consort, constructed the Apgujŏng pavilion 狎鷗亭 and summoned literati to compose poems on the occasion. King Sŏngjong presented him with eight pieces of poems on the Apgujŏng pavilion in 1476 and 1477, calling on literati to compose poems in response. In 1477, Han Myŏnghoe had the king's poems carved in stone along with the names of twenty-nine Chinese scholars and seventy-five eminent Korean statesmen, and Sŏ Kŏjŏng 徐居正 (1420–1488) composed a record of the occasion. The Chosŏn kings often shared opinions with their scholar-officials through poetry, for example conversing in linked verse to affirm their shared aspirations. This custom blossomed particularly during the reign of kings Yŏngjo 英祖 (r. 1724–1776) and Chŏngjo.

Writing linked verse collectively by dividing up poetry lines into rhyme words (*punun yŏnjang* 分韻聯章) played a great role at poetry parties (*sihoe* 詩會) among the *yangban* elite until the late Chosŏn Dynasty. The earliest case of this practice is recorded in Yi Chehyŏn's 李齊賢 (1287–1367) *Song sinwŏnwoe puksang sŏ* 送辛員外北上序 (*Preface to the Poem on Vice Director Sin's departure for the Yuan Court*) which describes how twenty-eight people wrote linked verse in divided rhymes based on a farewell party poem by a certain Chŏng Chahu 鄭子厚 for Sin Ye 辛裔 (?–1355), a Korean envoy to Yuan China (Sim 2013c).

THE AUTHORS OF SINO-KOREAN LITERATURE

From the Three Kingdoms Period to the early Chosŏn Dynasty, the principal authors of Sino-Korean literature were Buddhist monks rather than scholar-officials, kings, and their brothers, as was the case during most of the Chosŏn Dynasty. Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–686), Wŏnch'ŭk 圓測 (613–696), and Ŭisang 義湘 (義相) (625–702) were not only eminent Buddhist monks but also remarkable authors of Sino-Korean literature, composing records, commentaries, and Buddhist *gāthā* verse.

The remarkable poet and scholar-official Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn 崔致遠 (857–?), who for some time served at the Tang court, composed *Nanghye hwasang pi* 朗慧和尙碑 (*Inscription of the monk Nanghye*, 890) at the order of Queen Chinsŏng 眞聖女王 (r. 887–897), and from this it appears that Liu Xie's 劉勰 *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon*) and Lu Ji 陸機's "Wen fu" 文賦 ("Rhapsody on Literature") were circulating in Silla. According to this inscription, King Kyŏngmun 景文王 (r. 861–875) invited Nanghye to the capital in 871 and asked him about the teachings of the Buddha, while quoting from *Wenxin diaolong*:

> King Kyŏngmun said, "Though I am not eloquent, I have a weak spot for literary composition. I have read Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong* and it says 'those who are absorbed in the principle of being and those who are bounded by non-being may have a clear vision from one perspective. But if someone wants to reach the true source of things, that would be the ultimate state of Prajñā.' Can you tell me about that ultimate state?" The great monk answered, "If it is indeed the ultimate state, all logic ceases. This is the mind-seal that we should only practice in silence."

Later Buddhist monks developed the genre of *gāthās*, hymns and Zen-inspired poetry (*sŏn si* 禪詩). In the late Koryŏ Dynasty, they also participated in poetry parties held by scholar-officials. Moreover, they carried on the legacy of Du Fu's poetry: poet-monks such as Wŏlch'ang 月窓 and Man'u 卍雨 helped the Chosŏn court produce an annotated edition and bilingual vernacular edition (*ŏnhaebon* 諺解本) of Du Fu's work. For example, Yu Pangsŏn 柳方善 (1388–1443) continued Wŏlch'ang's study of Du Fu's poetry, which contributed to the development of poetics in the early Chosŏn following the reestablishment of the literary composition examination and the composition of *shi* poetry and *fu* under King Sejong. His study of Du Fu's poetry played a major role in the production of *Ch'anju pullyu Tu si* 纂註分類杜詩 (*Classified Collection of Du Fu's Poetry with Annotations*, 1444) and *Pullyu Tu gongbusi ŏnhae* 分類杜工部詩諺解 (*Bilingual Vernacular Edition of Du Fu's Classified Poetry*, commissioned in 1481) (Sim 1999).

However, it is very difficult to give an account of the intellectual and literary history of the early Chosŏn Dynasty, owing to the lack of sources concerning Buddhism. Although Confucianism functioned as the dominant political ideology during the reigns of King Sejong, Munjong 文宗 (r. 1450–1452), and Sejo, Buddhism was supported at the royal court and in the intellectual and religious life of the people, including the scholarly elite. Not only notable Buddhist monks but also kings and princes fostered the development of Buddhism. However, once Confucianism became established as the principal political ideology, documents relating to Buddhism were lost. For example, King Sejong ordered the crown prince (the later King Munjong), Prince Suyang 首陽大君 (the later King Sejo), and Prince Anp'yŏng 安平大君 (1418–1453) to supervise Buddhist ceremonies. Prince Anp'yŏng was delighted to comply, while playing a leading role in the literary gatherings of scholars belonged to the Hall of Worthies in the mid-sixteenth century. Owing to the lack of the necessary sources, a comprehensive study of Chosŏn intellectual and literary history that accords Buddhism its proper place is yet to be undertaken (Sim 2015a).

Meanwhile, from the mid-Koryŏ Dynasty onwards, elites often expressed their awareness of social realities and their anxiety about social problems in their poems. For example, Yi Kyubo 李奎報 (1168–1241) wrote poetry that reflects concerns about the real world around him rather than the life of privileged scholar-officials. The following poem, supposedly written on behalf of farmers, is a good example.

> Exposed to rain, I weed crouching on the furrow,
> my dirty and dark figure is not that of a man.
> Princes and nobles, do not disdain me,
> your riches, honor, and luxury all come from me.
> New grains, green, are still in the field,
> but county clerks are out to collect taxes.
> Tilling hard to enrich the state depends on us.
> Why do they encroach upon us and strip our skin? (Lee 2003: 121)

Did this moving and evocative poem reflect genuine social concerns, or is it an intellectual conceit?

In the late Koryŏ Dynasty, small and middling landowners had become critical of Buddhism, which had previously been the ideological foundation of power, and they spearheaded the reform of the political and economical system, encouraging, for example, the observance of family rituals (*karye* 家禮) and the construction of ancestral shrines. Scholar-officials of the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties endorsed the Confucian motto of "literature conveying the Way" (*mun i chae to* 文以載道) and in their writings conveyed their ideas about private cultivation and political practice. Since the ultimate goal of the study of the Confucian Classics was to pacify the realm (*p'yŏng ch'ŏnha* 平天下), it was natural that they should have concerned themselves with actual politics. They severely criticized literary works which were indifferent to social problems and the pursuit of social justice and which they thought contained nothing but rhetorical flourishes. Instead, they strove for a poetics of "gentleness and sincerity" (*onyu tonhu* 溫柔敦厚), and sometimes distanced themselves from political realities to atune themselves to nature.

In the late Chosŏn Dynasty, authors from a variety of social backgrounds participated in literary activities: scholar-officials, the *chung'in* 中人 middle class, the underprivileged sons of *yangban* by secondary wives (*sŏŏl* 庶孽), female writers, and poet-monks (*sisŭng* 詩僧). Works concerning the king and the ruling system were mainstream, while those expressing people's inner psychology and a sense of community, reflecting real life experiences and the voice of the people, constituted another stream. Although Sino-Korean literature was strongly influenced by the transmission of family knowledge passed down from one generation to the next and by the transmission of teachings from master to disciple, each historical period gave birth to its own new literary trends.

If we look at the writings of Confucian scholars, different literary trends can be identified in each period, for Confucianism in Korea emphasized different values and served different social-political functions at each stage in history. Overall, belles lettres were not given the highest priority, and literary trends with purely aesthetic intentions did not really emerge. Until the mid-Koryŏ Dynasty, Confucian scholars had no shared opinion about the social-political function of literature, nor did they have common interests in specific literary themes or techniques, and thus there were no "literary trends" to speak of, although aristocrats and critical scholars pursued literature in their own distinctive ways. Thus, under the Koryŏ military regime the so-called "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" (*chungnim ch'ilhyŏn* 竹林七賢), named after China's eponymous free-spirited poets, formed a literary group and together engaged in various literary pursuits. Although it might not count as a "literary movement" in the modern sense, they had broadly the same vision of what functions literature should serve and thus created a literary trend of sorts. In the late Koryŏ Dynasty, a group of newly emerging literati merged Neoconfucian ideas with the political motto of "literature conveying the Way," spearheading a literary trend that was to become central to literature of Confucian inspiration. During the Chosŏn Period the roles and ideals of its authors further diversified, giving birth to a rich body of literature written by government officials, Confucian scholars, writers of belles lettres, recluses and virtuous men, and writers who distanced themselves from the reigning political ideology (Yi 1982, Sim 2013b).

The reigns of King Sŏnjo 宣祖 (r. 1567–1608) and Kwanghaegun 光海君 (r. 1608–1623) marked a cultural highpoint: the brilliant scholar Hŏ Kyun 許筠 (1569–1618) expressed innovative ideas in his treatises, fictional biographies, and fictional writings such as *The Tale of Hong Kiltong,* and the great writer Ch'oe Rip 崔岦 (1539–1612) promoted ancient-style prose (*komun* 古文). The early seventeenth century, however, was beset with various political problems, including rebellions, factional rivalry at court, diplomatic tensions with China, the Manchu invasions of Korea in 1627 and 1636, and the conflicts between those who were for or against making peace with the Qing empire. Sin Hŭm 申欽 (1566–1628), Chang Yu 張維 (1587–1638), Ch'oe Myŏnggil 崔鳴吉 (1586–1647), and Yi Sik 李植 (1584–1647) all sought their own solutions in this confused political situation. For example, Chang Yu promoted the concept of "heavenly design" (*ch'ŏn'gi* 天機), which emphasized the individual nature of each human being, and Ch'oe Myŏnggil, applying Wang Yangming's 王陽明 (1472–1529) ideas to the Korean context, criticized his contemporaries' blind loyalty to the Ming court in his *Pyŏngja pongsa* 丙子封事 (*Memorial in the Year of Pyŏngja*) (Yi 1982).

In the eighteenth century, as the range of authors expanded, theories and practices of literature began to include many new elements. In this period, while leading government officials and literati belonging to minor factions or the lower ranks of the elite were forming their own independent literary circles, the literary scene flourished as a result of their mutual interconnections and interactions. Since the eighteenth century, the gulf between Seoul and rural areas had increased so that, while the cultural traditions of each faction that had been transmitted from generation to generation continued, new literary trends emerged that transcended the century-old factionalism and created a common ground (Sim 2013b).

In the Chosŏn Dynasty, the majority of authors belonged to the *yangban* elite; accordingly, their literary works focused on supporting the successful governance of the dynasty (*kyŏngguk munjang* 經國文章) and glorifying the state (*hwaguk munjang* 華國文章). The activities of their literary circles shaped their class identity. Although they sometimes give insight into the living conditions of nonelite people, they were less interested in the circumstances of their actual lives than in the material foundations of society.

In the late Chosŏn Dynasty, as the hierarchy of Confucian scholars diversified, poor scholars (*hansa* 寒士) who shared living space with the middle and lower classes of society created their own new literary world. Although on the surface they took a self-deprecatory attitude toward their literary accomplishments, they found their own ways to foster their self-esteem. For example, Yu Hŭi 柳僖 (1773–1837), who worked as a doctor to earn a living, ended his life without any official post, but he left behind a voluminous literary collection, *Munt'ong* (文通). He never lost his ambition to rectify faults in society and expanded the scope of his thinking by adopting new ideas such as European calendrical science. He explains in his *Munch'aek* 文責 (*Tasks of Literature*, 1831) that he found a deeper meaning to his literary activities in a daily life where scholars and ordinary people coexisted in harmony (Sim 2014).

In the late Chosŏn Period, a hybrid Korean-style Chinese (*pyŏn'gyŏk hanmun* 變格漢文) was used in various artistic compositions and novels in Literary Chinese. The Chinese collection *Jiandeng xinhua* 剪燈新話 (*New Stories Told While Trimming the Wick*) was widely studied in rural areas as a primer for literary styles of official documents as well as various examination genres for the provincial examinations (*hyangsi* 鄉試). Yi Ok 李鈺 (1760–1815) mentions that people in the countryside studied *Jiandeng Xinhua,* and he himself appreciated the value of the hybrid Korean-style Chinese used among lower-class people in contrast to standard Literary Chinese.

Many stories included in the nineteenth-century story collection *Yoram* 要覽 (*Overview of the Essentials*) seem to have been read not as fiction for entertainment but as a training guide that helped lowly officials compose texts in "clerical reading" (*idu* 吏讀). Examples abound, and of particular interest is the fictional *Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn chŏn* 崔致遠傳 (*Biography of Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn*), also included in *Yoram*, which emphasizes in particular the role of lowly officials. When quoting from texts in standard Literary Chinese such as the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*Extensive Records from the Taiping Reign*), it retains the language of the original, but the rest of the text shows the typical features of hybrid Korean-style Chinese: first, switching Chinese words into Korean word order; second, frequent use of compound words of Korean origin; third, frequent use of diction typically used by lowly officials; fourth, frequent duplication of expressions, violating the principle of changing words to avoid duplication (*pyŏnmun p'ibok* 變文避複); and fifth, frequent use of the character *yu* 有 in predicate position. Given these features, it is probable that this collection was compiled by and for lowly officials (Sim 2013a).

In late Chosŏn much poetry on romantic love affairs was composed. Chŏng Yagyŏng 丁若鏞 (1762–1836) mentions in his *Aŏn kakpi* 雅言覺非 (*Realization of the Errors in Everyday Phrases*) that this style was called Korean-style *kop'ung* 古風 ("old style"). In late Chosŏn writing poetry in the *kop'ung* style, which had no rhyme, was popular among the people. According to Chŏng Yagyŏng, children practiced writing poems matching the number of characters while omitting the *rhyme*. The case of prayer texts (祭文 *chemun*) was similar. Until mid-Chosŏn, they were in most cases rhymed and in regular lines. In Late Chosŏn, when writers of Sino-Korean literature lost their connection with the literary high society of the court and kept themselves alive by living in and writing for rural communities, unrhymed prayer texts in regular lines increased (Sim 2000).

Sino-Korean literature did not come to an end at the beginning of the twentieth century, nor did it disappear under Japanese colonial rule. In spirit, however, it was transformed into a literature of nationalism or one that compromised with the realities of colonial rule while carrying on the legacy of premodern literary traditions.

The Forms of Sino-Korean Literature

Stelae inscriptions, collections of rubbings, manuscripts, and personal collections of the literati (*munjip*, both in woodblock and movable-type print) constitute the most important forms of Sino-Korean literature. Before the mid-Koryŏ Dynasty, it was uncommon for scholars to compile their personal collections. However, we can study texts from that period through stelae inscriptions and collections of rubbings, which constitute a large part of the surviving materials. Some literary works dating from between the Three Kingdoms Period and the early Chosŏn Dynasty are preserved in *Tong munsŏn* 東文選 (*Eastern Selections of Refined Literatur*e, 1478). It includes 4,302 pieces by 500 writers, including Silla poets such as Kim Inmun 金仁問 (629–694), Sŏlch'ong 薛聰 (655–?), and Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn. Similarly, *Sinjŭng Tongguk yŏchi sŭngnam* 新增東國輿地勝覽 (*Compendium of the Geography of the Eastern Land* [*Korea*]), commissioned by King Chungjong 中宗 (r. 1506–1544) in 1530, includes poems related to each geographical area and features a few lost works from the Koryŏ and early Chosŏn dynasties.

The oldest extant encyclopedia (*yusŏ* 類書) is *Taedong unbu kun'ok* 大東韻府群玉 (*Encyclopedia of the Eastern Land Classified by Rhyme*, 1589), which was compiled by Kwŏn Munhae 權文海 (1534–1591) and only printed between 1812 and 1836. A catalogue of the source materials used stands at the head of the encyclopedia; of the works mentioned in the section on Korean books, around forty are now lost. One of them, *Silla sui chŏn* 新羅殊異傳 (*Silla Tales of Wonder*), is an interesting case, since fourteen of its stories survive in other works. One of the stories, *Sŏnnyŏ hongdae* 仙女紅袋 (*The Fairy Maiden's Red Pocket*), tells an apocryphal story involving Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn and the tombs of two beauties; it is the longest of all extant tales of marvels from the Silla Period (Komine and Masuo 2011).

From the late Koryŏ and throughout the Chosŏn Dynasty, many writers compiled literary anthologies, some of which were disseminated in woodblock editions. However, there also exists a vast amount of manuscript material, such as "remarks on poetry" (*sihwa* 詩話) or essays (*manp'il* 漫筆), which were commonly not printed but circulated separately in manuscript. Most of the Chinese-style poems composed in response to or rhyming with poems by the king (*kaengjae* 賡載) as well as most linked verse were preserved in the form of manuscript scrolls. While many response poems to the king were preserved in the royal library, linked verse written by literati hardly survives.

From the mid-Koryŏ, literati began to compile their own personal collections, or hoped that somebody would collect their works after their death. Thus a great number of personal collections were compiled and published in premodern Korea. The oldest extant personal collection is Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn's *Kyewŏn p'ilgyŏng chip* 桂苑筆耕集 *(Collection of Writings while Ploughing the Cassia Grove with a Writing Brush*). He went to Tang China in 868 at the age of twelve, took the top place in the examinations in 874, and served in a series of administrative offices in the Chinese civil service. During his time in China he became acquainted with several Chinese poets, and his poetry and prose in Chinese was sufficiently highly esteemed by his Chinese contemporaries to be mentioned in the bibliographic chapters of the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang*). He returned to Korea in 885. In 886, he presented *Kyewŏn pilgyŏng chip* and another collection of his works, the *Chungsan pokkwe chip* 中山覆簣集 (*Overturning the Basket and Completing One's Learning at Zhongshan: A Collection of Writings*) to King Hŏngang 憲康王 (r. 875–886), along with a collection of regulated verse. In 898, he was dismissed and retired to his "Reading Hall" and to a life of wandering around mountain temples throughout Korea, at some of which he left poems inscribed on rocks. Many of his extant poems appear to reflect the loneliness of his life in China, such as one entitled "On a rainy autumn night":

> I only chant painfully in the autumn wind,
> for I have few friends in the wide world.
> At third watch, it rains outside.
> By the lamp my heart flies myriad miles away. (Lee 2003: 97)

The number of personal collections compiled during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties amounts to 1,079. Personal collections were often re-edited in order to include more works than the author had originally included in his own collection. There were also exceptional cases of personal collections published by special grace of the king. The compilation process for personal collections produced in the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties followed certain rules. Typically, works were divided into poetry and prose, with poetry featuring in chronological order and prose classified by genre and style. This template is rooted in practices of the Song Dynasty and in collections such as that of Su Dongpo's works. Often supplemental materials such as a chronology of the author's life, related works composed by his friends, or later literary criticism on his works were added. Compilers of personal collections generally aimed to include the author's complete works, although some collections by the *chung'in* middle class and sons of *yangban* by secondary wives contain only particular genres that showcase the strength of the author. There are many personal collections from the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties that single out *pyŏllyŏmun* 騈儷文 (parallel prose) and *sangnyangmun* 上樑文 (letters for ceremonies marking the completion of the foundations of a building) as an independent genre category. Parallel prose style was considered to be indispensable, as it was also associated with genres of diplomatic correspondence, although its mannerist formalism was criticized. *Sangnyangmun* was singled out because the house-foundation ceremony, which was required after laying the foundation of any government building throughout the country, was a crucial event ensuring the longevity of the building and the connections between the community members (Sim 2015b).

Scholar-officials during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties greatly esteemed biographical genres that recorded and evaluated a person's life, such as epitaphs (*myoji* 墓誌, *myobi* 墓碑), biographical chronicles (*hengjang* 行狀), and narrative biographies (*chŏn* 傳). These works were designed to exalt a person's achievements and bring honor to his family, thus receiving recognition from the central government and local community. Some literati composed alternative biographies (*pyŏljŏn* 別傳) to pique their readers' interest by describing the personalities of ordinary people. Because Confucian mourning rituals and funerals constituted an important part of their lives, scholar-officials during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties often wrote prayer texts which would also contain biographical details of the deceased. This was particularly meaningful because, deployed in this way, their literary skills affirmed their status in local society.

Editors of personal collections generally aimed to collect the author's complete works, but certain choices were obviously left to the discretion of the compiler. First, works related to Buddhism were categorically excluded; second, editors strove to include all works, but absolutely had to include forms such *shi* poetry and various prose genres as well as *fu*; third, editors usually emphasized works related to governance of the state. Texts that were originally penned in hybrid Korean-style Chinese such as "clerical reading" inscriptions were not included or sometimes transposed into standard Literary Chinese and included in this modified fashion.

As for stelae inscriptions, another central corpus of Sino-Korean literature, few remain from the Three Kingdoms Period. They can be broadly divided into four categories: first, texts for the dead set up at the grave; second, stelae recording a person's achievements; third, signs for administrative use; and, fourth, stelae with instructions for preserving a gravesite. The first category is the most numerous. Inscriptions from the Three Kingdoms Period and the Northern and Southern States Period (between the late seventh and early tenth centuries, when Unified Silla and Parhae coexisted) are written in different styles depending on their function and distinctive character: some are in standard Literary Chinese, while others are in hybrid Korean-style Chinese. The oldest among the datable inscriptions are *Tŏkhŭngni kobun myochi* 德興里古墳墓誌 (*Epitaph of the Tumulus in Tŏkhŭngni*, 408) and *Kukkangsang Kwanggaet'o kyŏng p'yŏngan hot'aewang pi* 國岡上廣開土境平安好太王碑 (*Stele of Great King Kwanggaet'o*, 414). There are more inscriptions from Koguryŏ, and many epitaphs and stone monuments have been excavated from Silla. The styles of the inscriptions can be divided into four categories: first, prose in standard Literary Chinese; second, parallel prose in standard Literary Chinese; third, prose in standard Literary Chinese with verse attached at the end; and, fourth, texts in hybrid Korean-style Chinese, including "clerical reading" inscriptions.

During the Koryŏ Dynasty, tombstones set up above the ground were in most cases for Buddhist monks. Memorial stones buried in the ground were for Buddhist monks, court officials, women, or children. In the Chosŏn Dynasty, memorial stones for court officials and Buddhist monks were set up above ground, whereas those for women, the *chung'in* middle class, and children were buried in the ground. In the nineteenth century, the use of tombstones and memorial stones started to spread widely (Sim 2010).

VERNACULAR READING OF CHINESE TEXTS

At least by the eighth century, techniques for reading Chinese texts using the vernacular had been developed. These are known as *sŏktok kugyŏl* 釋讀口訣 and they made use of dry-point glosses (marks made in a text using a sharp point such as the wrong end of a writing brush) or abbreviated characters (*t'o* 吐) placed in Chinese texts to enable Koreans to read Literary Chinese as if it were Korean. This is a similar practice to that of *kundoku* in Japan, and it is likely that the practice was developed initially by learned monks of the Flower Ornament (Ch. Huayan) school of Buddhism and transmitted by them to Japan. In Korea, vernacular reading of Chinese texts seems to have been confined to Buddhist texts. Sometime around the thirteenth century, *sŏktok kugyŏl* gave way to *ŭmdok kugyŏl* 音讀口訣, a mixed strategy in which whole phrases of Chinese were read in Chinese order in Sino-Korean pronunciation with forms of the verb *hada* used to connect them and the Korean copula used to complete the sentence (Whitmore 2011: 98–99).

The invention of *han'gŭl* in the fifteenth century aimed in the first place to make the Chinese classics more accessible to a wider population rather than to facilitate the development of Korean literary forms. In fact, although *han'gŭl* was indeed used for letters and for other forms of vernacular writing, the overwhelming bulk of writing in Korean using *han'gŭl* is to be found in hybrid books in which a Chinese text was accompanied by a translation into Korean. These are called *ŏnhaebon*, a term that combines the old name of the *han'gŭl* script, *ŏnmun* ("vulgar writing"), and the word *haesŏl* 解說, meaning "explanation". Thus *ŏnhaebon* contained first a paragraph of a Chinese text, usually a classical text from China but occasionally texts written in Chinese in Korea, presented in the form of *ŭmdok kugyŏl*, that is, with the Korean pronunciation indicated beneath each character and with Korean verbal forms and occasional particles represented in *han'gŭl*; after this came a Korean translation.

The earliest *ŏnhaebon* were produced in the second half of the fifteenth century, thus not long after the invention of *han'gŭl*, and at that stage they consisted not of Confucian texts but mostly of Buddhist texts and of the work of Chinese poets of the Tang dynasty. Later a wide range of *ŏnhaebon* were published, including new versions of the *Four Books* with revised translations based on the interpretations of Zhu Xi, medical and veterinary texts, and even a Korean work on firearms, the *Hwap'osik ŏnhae* 火砲式諺解 (*Vernacular Explanation of the Technique of Using Firearms*). These have been little studied, except for the light that the translations throw upon the development of the Korean language, but the translations also reflect the interpretive stances adopted towards the Chinese texts they translated and therefore served to "fix" the interpretations, which often reflected those of Song Dynasty China (Hong 1994: 113–127; Yun 2003, 2007).

The Relationship between Sino-Korean Literature and Classical Chinese Literature

Throughout the various stages of its history, Sino-Korean literature was influenced in various ways by Chinese texts and books. However, Korean writers never simply imitated Chinese literature, but absorbed and appropriated it selectively. For example, while song lyric (Ch. *ci* 詞) was a popular genre starting in the Song Dynasty in China, it had few practitioners in Korea.

The relationship between literary developments in Ming and Qing China and Sino-Korean literature during the Chosŏn Dynasty shows interesting characteristics. First, the Chosŏn court and its elites had a negative attitude toward scholarship under the Ming Dynasty and were not active in reprinting personal collections of Ming literati. However, late Chosŏn literati appreciated the classicism of the "Former and Latter Seven Masters" of the Ming (Ch. *qian hou qizi* 前後七子) while also creating their own distinctive world of Sino-Korean literature.

Second, at first Chosŏn elites had high regard for Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1662), because he added poems of Chosŏn origin to the history of poetry under the Ming in his *Liechao shiji* 列朝詩集 (*Collected Poems of the Dynasties*). However, when they understood in the eighteenth century that Qian had been criticized by the Qing government, scholars like Park Chiwŏn 朴趾源 (1737–1805) began to find fault with him.

Third, the three Yuan brothers of the Gong'an school (Ch. *Gong'an pai* 公安派), especially Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610), had a deep impact upon the development of Sino-Korean literature. Yuan Hongdao's work stimulated ethnic consciousness in literature, emphasized the immediacy of true feelings in literary expression, took a stance against classicism, and expanded the repertoire of narrative techniques used in Sino-Korean literature. Late Chosŏn literati were also affected by Yuan Hongdao's "marvelous writing" (Ch. *qiwen* 奇文) when they speculated about questions of fiction and reality. However, they kept a distance from his theories on Buddhism, and urban literati living in Seoul rejected the essayistic *xiaopin* 小品 style of the late Ming, also practiced by Yuan Hongdao, because they regarded this style as inappropriate for a government official (Sim 2004).

Fourth, in the late Chosŏn some literati welcomed the literary style of works like Zhang Hu's 張潮 (1650–?) *Yuchu xinzhi* 虞初新志 (*Wizard Yuchu's New Records*), which dealt with the individual characters and the daily life of ordinary people, and Wang Shizhen's 王士禎 (1634–1711) theory of spirited charm (Ch. *shen yun shuo* 神韻說), which opposed Shen Deqian's 沈德潛 (1673–1769) theory of prosodic form (Ch. *ge diao shuo* 格調說). However, most literati, unable to free themselves completely from a sense of anxiety about society, criticized Wang Shizhen's idea of "spirited charm" as artificial and contrived. Meanwhile, Chŏng Yagyŏng criticized both Wang Shizhen's and Zhao Zhixin's 趙執信 (1662–1744) ideas about tonality. He argued that it rather complicated the understanding of the presence of tonal patterns in seven-syllable old-style poems and suggested another theory derived from empirical research based on actual poetry.

It is true that Sino-Korean literature was in general composed in Literary Chinese, and that the Chinese Classics and Chinese literature were respected and appreciated as canonical models by Korean authors throughout the various stages of Korean history. However, Sino-Korean literature was not just a part of Chinese literature or a miniature version of it. Korean authors, while respecting and appreciating Chinese literature, created their own distinctive world of Sino-Korean literature.

Korean *shi* poetry, for example, was certainly in some respect hackneyed, as it could hardly escape the clichés of Chinese poetry, and Confucian scholars in the Chosŏn Dynasty did not develop a poetics of literature that acknowledged human desire as genuine feeling. However, with their deep faith in the laws of nature, their poems were able to capture the vitality of nature and humanity's harmonious communion with nature. Women poets also came to the fore in the Chosŏn dynasty, for example Hŏ Nansŏrhŏn 許蘭雪軒 (1563–1589). In the seventeenth century, Chosŏn literari created the new concept of "Chosŏn-style poetry" (*Chosŏnshi* 朝鮮詩) or "Chosŏn-style" (*Chosŏnp'ung* 朝鮮風) literature that posited a new poetics which pursued distinctively Korean styles of poetry. Yi Ik 李瀷 (1681–1763) probed into the question of the existence of Korean-style poetry by asserting, however warily, that vernacular diction could also be poetic language. Similarly, Chŏng Yagyŏng asserted that, just as Chinese poetry kept changing with the various ages of Chinese history, Sino-Korean poetry changed along with the stages of Korean history.

Not only Sino-Korean poetry but Sino-Korean literature in general was preoccupied with certain topics from its earliest stages: resistance against foreign powers, a strong consciousness of the borderlands, an interest in native history as well as vernacular language and literature, an appreciation of high culture and civilization, the rediscovery of ethnic identity and recognition of a national community, and the discovery of the nature of a country that had its own distinctive identity different from that of China.

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CHAPTER 35

EARLY SINO-JAPANESE LITERATURE

WIEBKE DENECKE

TERMINOLOGIES, TEMPORALITIES

ONE dreary autumn night in Kyoto in the early 990s, a soaking-wet messenger from the senior official Fujiwara no Tadanobu bursts into the residence of Empress Teishi with a letter for her lady-in-waiting Sei Shōnagon. "'You are there in the flowering capital, beneath the Council Chamber's brocade curtains'—how should this end?" Tadanobu's attempt to rekindle a cooling affair with Shōnagon through a line the Chinese poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) had written to a friend in Chang'an when exiled to Jiangzhou is a witty provocation. Shōnagon certainly knows her Bai Juyi, but as a Heian period (794–1185) woman she is confined to composing in Japanese and cannot simply reply with the "end" of the poem in Chinese. Her ingenious answer gains her Tadanobu's and the court's admiration: she seizes a piece of dead charcoal from the brazier and responds in the "woman's hand" of *kana* letters: "Who will come visit this grass-thatched hut?" In little more than a dozen syllables she manages four things at once. She proves her knowledge of Bai Juyi's next line, where the poet sits on a rainy night in his grass-thatched hut beneath Mount Lu; she reproaches Tadanobu for letting their passion die down; she caps a seven-syllable line from a Chinese poem with half a *waka* 和歌 poem, in two seven-syllable lines; and when resorting to the piece of charcoal, she brilliantly draws on the material poetics of *waka*, which combines words with apropos objects. This is Heian court literature at its best. It showcases the intricacies of Japanese literary culture, revealing the place of Chinese learning, literary gender roles, the dynamics between Chinese-style and vernacular idioms, the importance of creative wit, and—with Bai Juyi's poetry functioning as conversational lexicon—the peculiar reception of Chinese poetry in Japan.

Sino-Japanese literature stands out among the Chinese-style literatures of East Asia for the wealth of texts preserved from the early period (seventh through twelfth centuries), for its complex symbiosis with a flourishing vernacular tradition from its beginnings, and for its pervasive reliance on gloss-reading techniques of Chinese texts (*kundoku* 訓読; see Chapter 33).[1] These techniques allowed transforming Chinese texts into Japanese sound, syntax, and morphology and enabled a distinctive linguistic and creative distance from continental literary production. Unlike with parts of Korea and Vietnam, which had had complex histories of Chinese colonization and influence since the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), Japan's greater creative distance was encouraged by its insular distance and absence of direct colonization. This had significant cultural consequences: unlike its East Asian neighbors, Japan never instituted a Chinese-style civil service examination system connecting classical learning to government recruitment; it was more generous in its adaptation of Chinese precedent to local sociopolitical conditions and literary and aesthetic values; and its involvement with China happened in the early period predominantly through texts, as very few envoys, students, and monks, apart from traders, actually set foot in China, and even fewer Chinese came to Japan.

We use the term "Sino-Japanese Literature" here (and Chapter 33) to refer to the corpus of literary texts that Japanese wrote in accordance with Chinese syntax between the sixth and twentieth centuries (Wixted 1998). Sino-Japanese was the authoritative written language of government, the Buddhist clergy, scholarship, and refined belles-lettres into the twentieth century. The terminology used to describe this corpus is notoriously thorny and disputed. The word 漢文 (J. *kanbun*, K. *hanmun*, V. *hán văn*) came to be used outside of China to refer to both texts written in China and texts produced in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam in varieties of Literary Chinese. The modern projection of national and ethnic categories onto linguistic terms, associating a country and nation with one national language, has made it impossible to find a satisfactory translation for the traditional term 漢文. "Literary Chinese" and "Japanese Literature in Chinese" have often been used. Literary Chinese throughout East Asia has also been called "Sinitic" (Mair 1994), highlighting the artificiality of the written language in contrast to spoken vernaculars. However, all the above terms play up the foreignness of Sino-Japanese texts rather than acknowledging them as central pillars of Japanese premodern cultural history. At the same time, they downplay the degree of stylistic variation and possible hybridization with the local vernacular. "Sino-Japanese" draws attention to local vernacularization processes. Peter Kornicki has argued, most radically, that the term should be reserved for those texts written in Japan that contain so many vernacular elements that the text would be incomprehensible to readers outside Japan (Kornicki 2010). This still introduces an artificial distinction between supposedly "pure" and "abnormal" forms of Literary Chinese, not unlike the modern concept of "deviant" (*hentai* 変体) *kanbun* (Minegishi 1986; Rabinovitch 1996).

Linguists call "Sino-Japanese" the lexical layer of Chinese origin in the modern Japanese language, which connects East Asia just as Latinate diction has done for European traditions. But we understand "Sino-Japanese" here as a premodern cultural and literary category. More than other translations of the term *kanbun* (or *kanshibun*

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[1] Unless indicated otherwise the transcription of terms and titles in this chapter is Japanese.

漢詩文), "Sino-Japanese Literature" captures the linguistic environment in which its authors were writing (characterized by the dominance of the local vernacular), highlights the hybridity of Japanese literary culture with its strong and long-standing vernacular tradition, and allows for the notion of a "hyphenated spectrum" of styles making texts more "Sino" or "Japanese" based on synchronic factors (genres, occasions, education of the author) and diachronic change (flow of people and texts between Japan and the continent).

In literary contexts, a more elegant solution is "Chinese-style literature," because it comes close to the transregional word *kanbun* and allows us to dispense with the cumbersome ethnic hyphenations of "Sino-Japanese," "Sino-Korean," and "Sino-Vietnamese." It also highlights the literary edge of the term, emphasizing stylistic choice over linguistic law. Though convenient, it unduly downplays the physical location of literary production—in linguistic, political, and social terms. In this chapter, we use "Sino-Japanese" and "Chinese-style" literature as best compromises, while being aware that no single term captures the enormous variety of *kanbun* styles produced throughout premodern Japan and, for that matter, East Asia.

Variability in Sino-Japanese styles was the result of a complex web of factors determined by genre, changes in the sites and actors of literary production, and shifts in Sino-Japanese relations and exchanges with the continent. The codified language of poetry, bound by meter, rhyme, or tonality of each Chinese syllable, kept Sino-Japanese poetry and parallel prose (in four and six syllables) closest to forms of Literary Chinese. However, flexible prose forms absorbed vernacular dimensions more readily, introducing, for example, the rich array of honorific and humble expressions in Japanese that are needed when depicting social interactions between figures of different social status. This resulted in a stronger vernacularization of prose, as with the bureaucratic diary style of Heian courtier diaries (*kokiroku* 古記録), the nativized plotlines of Buddhist anecdotal literature, or the mixed Sino-Japanese style (*wakan konkōbun* 和漢混交文) of medieval warrior tales (*gunki monogatari* 軍記物語).

Dramatic sociohistorical changes have shaped the changing stages and actors of Sino-Japanese literature over the past fifteen hundred years. In the ancient (Asuka (592–710), Nara (710–794), and Heian (794–1185)) period, the court was the center of literary production and the "Confucian scholars" (at first many descendants of Korean scribal lineages, then graduates of the State Academy and members of the hereditary scholarly families) produced the bulk of Sino-Japanese literature, nourished by Six Dynasty and Tang textual models. With the medieval period (twelfth through sixteenth centuries) and the emergence of successive shogunates, Zen monks in the monasteries of the "Five Mountain" (*Gozan* 五山) system functioned as ambassadors to China and produced Sinological scholarship and Sino-Japanese literature in a radically different mode, enthusiastically responding to Song and Ming literary models. With the early modern period and the Tokugawa shogunate, Sino-Japanese literary production spread through all classes of society, including commoners, while bringing women authors back into a domain that had been virtually exclusively male since the early Heian period. It reached an unprecedented peak with the promotion of mass schooling and the flourishing of print culture, the thriving of new forms of Confucian ideology and education, and the diversification of genres, topics, and idioms, not least due to the influx of Ming and Qing vernacular fiction. This body of texts, passionately received in Japan, fundamentally changed how Japanese authors viewed China, their own Chinese-style tradition, and their vernacular language and literature.

Although the shifts in the history of Sino-Japanese literature were not as sudden and clear-cut as sketched above, the history of Sino-Japanese literature, if we can even talk of it as a continuous tradition, has been episodic and highly sensitive to transformations in the political system, in patterns of Sino-Japanese exchange, and in the social groups and social occasions that produced Chinese-style writing.

In this chapter, we focus on the ancient period until the twelfth century, because the creative appropriation of Chinese models until the Tang Dynasty dominated Sino-Japanese literature until at least the twelfth century, with Song literary models becoming prominent during the medieval period. For a handbook that ends with the Tang, it makes sense to adopt the waning and transformation of the reception of Tang literature in Japan as the temporal limit for our treatment of Sino-Japanese literature.

ORIGINS AND CONTEXTS

Unlike Chinese literature, whose history can be told as the triumphant rise of a pioneering civilization, Japanese literature has to start with a story of influence and reception. This is uncomfortable for a modern nation state in search of a unique identity, and even worse because it entails multiple stories of reception. During the formative first millennium CE, varieties of "Chinese" culture of numerous dynasties reached Japan via southern and northern sea routes and through the various states on the Korean peninsula: the Three Kingdoms of Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla and the Confederation of Kaya into the seventh century, and Unified Silla and Parhae, a state covering parts of today's Manchuria and North Korea, between the seventh and tenth centuries.

It is hard to pinpoint the beginning of writing in Japan, but beginning in the fifth century CE, scribes from the Korean peninsula in the service of Yamato kings, the regional power in the Kinai region of western Japan, produced inscriptions on stone, swords, and bronze mirrors. The recent discovery of tens of thousands of wooden tablets (*mokkan* 木簡) from the capital areas has given us the precious opportunity to reconstruct the remarkable explosion of literacy during the seventh and eighth centuries. From merchandise labels and writing exercises to snippets of texts testifying to the emerging administrative and literary cultures under strong Buddhist influence, the corpus of the wooden tablets gives exceptional insight into what, how, and why people were writing and reading (Lurie 2011).

Nowhere is the cultural connection between Buddhism and writing more evident than in the hagiographic biographies of Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 (574–622), who is credited with the introduction of Buddhism into Japan and with authoring the first longer texts, namely three sutra commentaries and a "Seventeen Article Constitution" that outlines administrative etiquette for the emerging imperial court at Asuka. The tenth-century *Shōtoku taishi denryaku* 聖徳太子伝略 (*Abridged Biography of Prince Shōtoku*) illustrates the range of literacies that contemporaries considered constitutive of cultural competence. He is a master interpreter of Buddhist scriptures, master author of sutra commentaries, master calligrapher, a host of poetry banquets for envoys, and also a Confucian moral paragon. His mind-boggling precocity in textual matters is explained through the narrative device of reincarnation. As the reincarnation of the Chinese Tiantai Buddhist patriarch Huisi 慧思 (515–577), he is an ideal transmitter of continental knowledge, competent in all its forms, yet destined to found a new textual regime in a fledgling peripheral state.

Complementing archaeological evidence and the narratives in the early Japanese chronicles, *Kojiki* 古事記 (*Record of Ancient Matters*, 712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書記 (*Chronicles of Japan*, 720), the preface to *Kaifūsō* 懐風藻 (*Florilegium of Cherished Airs*, 751), Japan's earliest extant poetry anthology, fleshes out the forces that generated the production of Sino-Japanese poetry on the archipelago. Based in part on the preface to Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501–531) *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*), it exploits the multiple meanings of *bun* 文—pattern, ornament, civilization, writing, texts, Confucian learning—to sketch the rise of Japanese civilization and literature (Denecke 2006). Starting before the advent of human civilization (*jinbun* 人文), the preface states that the first texts reached Japan in the form of diplomatic documents from the Korean kingdoms of Paekche and Koguryŏ, followed by the arrival of Korean teachers who also brought along fundamental texts like the *Analects* and the *Qianzi wen* 千字文 (*The One Thousand Character Text*). But it was Emperor Tenji 天智天皇 (r. 668–671) who established the custom of composing Sino-Japanese poetry at court banquets for which literati were probably invited over from the newly established State Academy (*daigakuryō* 大学寮). Tenji promoted learning and literature because he understood that "to shape customs and transform habits nothing is better than literature." In short, the *Kaifūsō* preface highlights five successive factors facilitating the emergence of literature: diplomacy, texts (sometimes with teachers attached), court entertainment, the State Academy, and an ideology of "Letters" (*bun*), a concept which integrates the more specific practices of poetic composition into the broader world of government and civilization (for a survey of the world of Letters and literature in early and medieval Japan, see Kōno et al. 2015).

Diplomacy certainly gave the first writing arriving from the continent value and meaning. As participants in the Chinese tribute sphere, Japanese chieftains received official titles from Chinese dynasties in exchange for vassal status and tribute missions as early as 57 CE. The frequency and significance of missions to China picked up in the seventh century, stimulated by the unrest on the Korean Peninsula during the end of the Three Kingdoms period (first century BCE–668), which saw Paekche's elite fleeing to Japan during Silla's conquest and unification of the 660 and 670s. A mere nineteen (or twenty) missions between 607 and 838 were instrumental for establishing the statutory law system (*ritsuryō* 律令), for the emergence of Tendai 天台 (Ch. Tiantai) and Esoteric Buddhist schools in Japan, the transmission of Tang poetry collections and poetics, devotional art, architecture, court music, and more (on the history in particular of the book and of book imports, see Kornicki 1998). The last mission, scheduled for 894, was canceled. A combination of factors has been made responsible for the abandonment of the missions—the dangerous trip, costliness, the instability of the waning Tang Dynasty, and an increasing turn towards domestic matters and native culture.

Endorsed on the stage of East Asian diplomacy, Sino-Japanese poetry found its first domestic uses at the courts of the brothers and emperors Tenji and Tenmu 天武天皇 (r. 672–86) in the later seventh century. Over the next centuries, Sino-Japanese poetry came to structure everyday court life. There were annual festivals adopted from Chinese custom that featured poetry composition, such as the "Winding Stream Festival" (*kyokusui* 曲水) on the third day of the third month, "Tanabata" 七夕 or the yearly encounter between the Weaver Maid and the Cowherd on the seventh day of the seventh month, and the "Chrysanthemum Festival" on the Double Ninth, the ninth day of the ninth month. The early-ninth-century courts of Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇 (786–842) and Junna 淳和天皇 (786–840) produced three imperially sponsored Sino-Japanese anthologies in rapid succession, a tradition that continued in transformed fashion with the twenty-one vernacular imperial anthologies (*chokusenshū* 勅撰集) compiled since the *Kokinwakashū* 古今和歌集 (*Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems*, 905) into the fifteenth century. The imperial court continued to be the center of literary production throughout Japan's early period. Thus the dominant poetic modes were panegyric praise compositions (and their flip side, laments of failure in one's official career and timely success); occasional poetry on seasonal events, celebrations, imperial outings and excursions; poems composed at diplomatic banquets hosted for envoys from surrounding states like the Korean states of Silla and Parhae; and pieces associated with other court institutions, such as the State Academy. Many Sino-Japanese poems (*kanshi* 漢詩), in keeping with their origin in court entertainment and performance, were composed collectively on set topics and with predetermined rhyme-words.

The State Academy was the third crucial factor that shaped the early history of Sino-Japanese literature. Many of its early graduates came from continental clans with scribal expertise (Hisaki 1990: 40). Often officials who were called to court to compose poetry for festivals and celebrations were related to the State Academy and its graduates. Japan never developed an examination system that linked academic success to government recruitment. The dominant scholarly families that produced the great majority of Heian scholars and Chinese-style poets were the Sugawara 菅原 and the Ōe 大江 clans and the Ceremonial branch of the Fujiwara 藤原. They ran their own schools in preparation for the exams. Though politically of lesser consequence, the State Academy was a crucial symbolic site embodying the prestige of Chinese learning, and the services its graduates and faculty rendered to the state were considerable: drafting administrative documents that kept the government running on a day-to-day basis in both the capital and the provinces, serving as tutors to the imperial family and giving lectures on canonical Chinese texts, and, not of least importance, educating the next generation of scholars (Smits 2007 and Steininger 2017). Still, the disjunction between cultural capital and actual political influence, which became ever more conspicuous from the late ninth century, led writers of vernacular tales and diaries to make fun of the Academy as a place of dusty, stuffy erudition out of touch with common sense and fashion, and of scholars as pathetic and self-important creatures. Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (d. ca. 1014) gleefully satirizes the academicians in *Genji Monogatari* 源氏物語 (*The Tale of Genji*) when the son of Genji, the blue-blooded romantic hero of this Heian tale of marriage politics, love, and court life, undergoes his coming-of-age ceremony and is subsequently introduced into the State Academy to begin his studies (translated in Washburn 2015: 427–429).

The Academy also stimulated the production of "academic" poetry in a distinctive Japanese mode: on the occasion of the *sekiten* (Ch. *shidian*) 釋奠 ceremony in honor of Confucius or the conclusion of a lecture cycle on the *Wen xuan* or the "Three Histories"—the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*), *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Former Han*), and *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*)—the academicians would gather and compose poems, often using topics or topic lines from the given lecture text. Composing poetry for the *shidian* was customary during the Six Dynasty Period, but the practice disappeared in the Tang, unlike in Japan, where it enjoyed great popularity during the Heian period and beyond (McMullen 1996). And unlike Chinese "poems on history" (*yong shi shi* 詠史詩), such as the ones preserved in the *Wen xuan*, Heian Period "poems on history" came from a lecture event on the Three Histories, were written on a set topic, and did not contain a poet's reminiscence about things past. This type of "academic" poetry offered Heian scholar-poets a creative venue for exploring the deeper meaning of the relevant lecture text and had a hermeneutic purpose. The practice of composing poetry on "topic lines" (*kudai* 句題) was part of a larger phenomenon in early Japanese literary culture, with poets writing poems on topic lines from the Chinese Classics, Histories, Buddhist scripture, and Tang and Six Dynasties poetry.

The Corpus of Early Sino-Japanese Literature (Eighth through Twelfth Centuries)

Nara Period (710–784)

The establishment of a permanent capital in Nara precipitated the production of longer texts, including imperial histories, law codes, poetry anthologies, and poetic treatises. In quick succession, two imperial chronicles were produced, the *Kojiki* (712), which legitimates the historical foundations of the imperial ruling clan from its foundation by the sun goddess Amaterasu, and the Chinese-style *Nihon shoki* (720), which pulls together a large number of earlier sources into a more complex assessment of the origins of Japan's imperial institution, its aristocratic clans and rulers. A collection of local gazetteers from various provinces, the *Fudoki* 風土記 (*Records of Customs and Lands*, 713), complements the historical narratives of the center with local legends and transmitted oral lore. Adopting the chronicle format and omitting the sections on biography, treatises, or hereditary houses that became so defining for Chinese imperial historiography, the *Nihon shoki* and its subsequent "Six National Histories" (the last being completed in 901) constitute early Japan's brief tradition of imperially commissioned Chinese-style histories.

The close nexus between the court and literary production is evident in *Kaifūsō*, which contains 120 poems by sixty-four authors, including imperial family members, court officials, and monks. Most poems come from poetry banquets for seasonal festivals, imperial excursions, or banquets hosted for Silla envoys. The title is programmatic: *kaifū* 懐風 ("cherished airs") looks to preserve the poetic production since Tenji's court at the short-lived capital at Ômi; *sō* 藻, a water-plant metaphor for elegant writing, lays claim to literary sophistication. With its chronological arrangement and its inclusion of biographies for the imperial family (and monks), *Kaifūsō* is a kind of poetic chronicle of eight decades of Chinese-style state building based on Tang models. As one of the earliest poetry anthologies in a secondary literary culture, which eagerly strove to emulate its reference culture, China, it shows a keen historical consciousness. Just as the *Wen xuan* preface provided inspiration for the vision of literary history in the *Kaifūsō* preface, Chinese medieval poetry provided a model of individual authorship and a rich treasury for sophisticated diction. No Shang or Zhou king could have written the couplet Emperor Monmu 文武 (r. 697–707) crafted on "moon":

> 臺上澄流耀 Its liquid luster shines on the terrace
> 酒中沈去輪 as its departing wheel sinks into the wine cup. (*Kaifūsō* 15)

Only the practiced observation and poetic obsession with surfaces in Six Dynasties poetry allowed Monmu to set the vast canvas of moonlight on the smooth surface of a large terrace against the glimmering speck of moon reflected in the poet's wine cup.

Early Heian (794–ca. 900)

Modern scholars have called the ninth century the "Dark Age of National Style" (*Kokufū ankoku jidai* 国風暗黒時代) because it saw the production of imperial Sino-Japanese anthologies, while *waka* received imperial sanction only with the *Kokinwakashū* in the tenth century. Emperor Saga and his successor Junna commissioned three imperial anthologies: *Ryōunshū* 凌雲集 (*Cloud-Topping Collection*, 814), *Bunka shūreishū* 文華秀麗集 (*Collection of Exquisite Literary Flourish*, 818), and *Keikokushū* 経国集 (*Collection for Ordering the State*, 827). Saga vigorously promoted literature and gathered a devoted salon of poet-officials. His enthusiasm for *kanshi* is also evident in the support for his daughter Princess Uchiko 有智子内親王 (807–847), one of the rare female Heian *kanshi* poets. *Keikokushū* is most ambitious in sheer volume and its unprecedented inclusion of prose genres such as rhapsodies, poetry prefaces, and examination essays in addition to poetry. Unlike existing Tang anthologies, Saga's compilers were keenly interested in experimenting with arrangement schemes: by official rank and site of composition (*Ryōunshū*), topic category (*Bunka shūreishū*), or genre (*Keikokushū*). The Saga anthologies constituted a groundbreaking step in literary history. They were the first imperial anthologies, and the nostalgia for the tragic Ômi court that hovered over *Kaifūsō* gave way to a proud exaltation of the present era's splendors. They propagate the ideology that "Literature is the great affair in ordering the state," in the words of Cao Pi's "Discourse on Literature" ("Lun wen" 論文), which opened *Ryōunshū* and named *Keikokushū*; Saga received private lectures on *Wen xuan*, which contained the treatise and poetry of the Cao family literary salon and might explain the manifold references to the Cao court. Just as Cao Pi's treatise pioneered literature as personal, immortal achievement and a realm distinct from politics, while highlighting the traditional nexus between politics and literature, the Saga anthologies evoked that courtly theme but claimed a new, "modern" (*kindai* 近代) aesthetic autonomy for belles lettres (Denecke 2015a).

Whereas we only have a handful of poems per poet during the Nara Period, with the Heian period we start having personal collections of individual authors, although only the six collections discussed below survive today.

The *Spirit and Mind Collection* (*Seireishū* or *Shōryōshū* 性霊集) is the personal collection of Kūkai 空海 (774–835), who is credited with the foundation of the esoteric Shingon sect. Having studied in Chang'an between 804 and 806, he was a major mediator and transmitter of Chinese culture. He brought back many personal collections of Six Dynasty and Tang poets and compiled *Bunkyō hifuron* 文鏡秘府論 (Ch. *Wenjing mifu lun*) (*The Secret Treasury of the Mirror of Letters*), which preserves excerpts of Chinese medieval poetical manuals that disappeared in China in the wake of the contempt of Song Dynasty literati for the "pedantry" of technical poetics. Poetics was not just a pastime for him; it was directly related to his concerns about proper pronunciation and recitation of Buddhist sutras. He was one of the very few Heian Japanese who seems to have had a masterful command of spoken Chinese, in addition to his superior writing skills and intellectual depth.

The *Denshi kashū* 田氏家集 (*Shimada Poetry Collection*) is the personal collection of Shimada no Tadaomi 島田忠臣 (828–892), a close associate of the Sugawara clan, as he studied with Sugawara no Michizane's father and became the young Michizane's first tutor and later father-in-law. Unlike his pupil, he probably did not pass the last step of the civil service exams and, while lacking family background, entered the bureaucracy as a low-level bureaucrat, serving most of his life in middle-ranking posts. But his poetry contains such a refreshing earthy curiosity towards simple things that scholars sometimes claim for him what is usually associated with his student: that he transformed the courtly medium of *kanshi* into a mouthpiece for personal concerns, inspired by the popular verve of Bai Juyi's newly introduced poetry collection.

Kanke bunsō 菅家文草 (*Sugawara Literary Gems*, 900) is one of the largest and most varied extant personal collections of Sino-Japanese literature and owes its status to its author, his poetic versatility, and his tragic fate. Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903) had an exceptionally distinguished career, eventually reaching the highest level of court offices as Minister of the Right (Borgen 1986). His fall from grace, probably due to machinations of the Fujiwara clan, was sudden, dramatic, and poetically productive. Banished to Dazaifu 太宰府, the government headquarters in Kyushu, in 901, he died in exile, but an intimidating string of natural disasters and deaths in the imperial family and Fujiwara clan helped his posthumous rehabilitation and even his deification as Tenjin 天神, the god of thunder and scholarship, today one of the most popular gods, worshipped in thousands of shrines all over Japan.

Scholars connect Michizane's literary legacy intimately to the reception of Bai Juyi's poetry in Japan. Literary historians often celebrate him for his turn away from the courtly style and his adoption of a voice that presumably expresses "feelings" rather than poetic decorum. They praise in particular his more plaintive exile poetry, written during a brief banishment to Sanuki province in 886 and during his last years in Dazaifu. The works from his final exile are preserved in *Kanke kōshu* 菅家後集 (*The Later Sugawara Collection*, 903). But we should not forget that this serves the prejudices of both traditional Chinese and Western romanticist poetics: at least since Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE), the idea that suffering produces good writing has been a staple of Chinese poetics, and the idea of valuing sincere feeling against the stifling constraints of poetic etiquette is a still popular legacy of nineteenth-century romanticism. Suggestively, in a tradition where literary artistry was valued over autobiographical sincerity it could work the opposite way: critics have, inversely, faulted Ovid with becoming "too realistic" and losing his literary sophistication in his exile poetry (Denecke 2014: 203–233).

A more productive way of understanding the relationship between Bai Juyi's and Michizane's poetry is to ask what Bai Juyi's oeuvre helped Michizane do in his own poetry. There is no question that Michizane's work shows an unprecedented variety of topics, versatility of poetic expression, and lyrical urgency. He appropriated much from Bai Juyi, including poses of the leisurely everyday, the careful compilation of his own collection, the practice of occasionally adding self-commentary to his poems, and persistent gestures towards Bai Juyi's poems and life. Bai Juyi had become an iconic yardstick by Michizane's time. An envoy from Parhae flatteringly said that Michizane's poems reached to the level of Bai Juyi's, and Emperor Daigo 醍醐天皇 (885–930) supposedly even found that they topped Bai Juyi's poetry. In the next century, Bai Juyi's works penetrated deeply into Japanese culture. They appear as conversation pieces in Sei Shōnagon's 清少納言 (d. early eleventh century) *Pillow Book* (*Makura no sōshi* 枕草子), as sustained subtexts to Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji*, as subjects for screen paintings, and even as a primer for *kanbun* education for elite women. There are many possible reasons for Bai Juyi's superlative prominence in Japan, but important factors were certainly his great contemporary popularity in China; his often refreshingly straightforward diction;

his Buddhist humility, which had him serve the Buddha through the expedient means of poetry's "crazy words and fancy expressions" (*kyōgen kigo* 狂言綺語); and, most appealingly for Heian courtiers, his ideal of being both "official and recluse" (*ri'in* 吏隠).

Mid- and Late Heian (ca. 900–1185)

The turn of the tenth century constitutes a major inflection point in Japanese cultural history. It is often seen as a moment of increasing "nativization," with the end of the missions to China signaling a turn inward, the rise of the power of the Fujiwara clan occasioning major changes to the Chinese model of government (such as the introduction of the powerful position of regent and chancellor), and the emergence of the native *kana* syllabaries and of vernacular prose genres such as tales and diaries. The contrast between a dark-age "Sinicized" phase and the glorious emergence of native culture is obviously too simple to be true, but the turn of the tenth century does mark far-reaching shifts in Japan's cultural landscape. We enter a new phase of engagement between vernacular and Chinese-style literatures, resulting in the production of a number of "synoptic texts," which juxtapose native and Chinese-style verse and challenge the reader to compare and contrast the different poetic modes (Denecke 2014: 265–288).

An intriguing example is *Shinsen Man'yōshū* 新撰万葉集 (*New Myriad Leaves*, 893/913), a collection of about 250 *waka* poems matched with Sino-Japanese seven-syllable quatrains. Two thirds of the *waka* stem from a late-ninth-century poetry contest, during which two parties composed poems on the topics of spring, summer, fall, winter, and love, the basic arrangement pattern of later imperial *waka* anthologies starting with the *Kokinshū*. The preface links the collection to the eighth-century vernacular collection *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (*Collection of Myriad Leaves*) and, to enhance this genealogy, the *waka* are written in *Man'yōgana*, Chinese graphs used phonographically, rather than in the newly emerging *kana* script. The aesthetic play with the juxtaposition of native *waka* and Chinese-style quatrains teases out some inherent poetic differences between *waka* and *kanshi*: the reliance on cosmological causality in the *kanshi* versus the impressionistic descriptiveness of the *waka*, analogies between nature and the human realm in *kanshi* versus a preference for metonymy and metaphor in *waka*, and the palpable presence of the poet as viewer or writer in *kanshi* versus the absence of an implied gaze or references to writing in *waka* (Denecke 2014: 265–288). However, because the *kanshi* were written in response to *waka* from the poetry contest, many *kanshi* appear to be "nativized," for example those dealing with the topic of love, otherwise not a prominent topic in Heian *kanshi*.

The inverse dynamic is at work in another synoptic text compiled during that time, Ōe no Chisato's *Kudai waka* 句題和歌 (*Waka on Topic Lines*, 897) or *Chisatoshū* 千里集, which culls Chinese lines from poems mostly by Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen and juxtaposes them with a poetic "translation" into *waka* poems. Here, *waka* poems sound like "translationese" of *kanshi* aesthetics. The aesthetics of contrastive juxtaposition is even explored in prose: the *Kokinshū* features a native (*Kana*) and a Sino-Japanese (*Mana*) preface (Wixted 1983). There is much dispute over which text was written first, and the vernacular preface became undoubtedly the classical cornerstone of *waka* poetics, comparable to the "Great Preface" to the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*) for *shi* poetry. But for an early-tenth-century reader, vernacular prose was a riveting novelty, the *Kana* preface being one of the earliest vernacular prose texts. Ironically, although the Chinese-style preface complained that the influx of Chinese characters, poems, and rhapsodies (*shifu* 詩賦) had led to a decline of *waka*, it was written in the expected language for prose prefaces and thus lent the *Kokinshu* authority by its linguistic form, while railing against the Chinese(-style) literary tradition.

Japan's unquestionably most influential synoptic text is the *Wakan rōeishū* 和漢朗詠集 (*Collection of Japanese and Chinese Texts for Recitation*, hereafter *Collection*), an anthology of excerpts culled from texts by Chinese and Japanese authors compiled by Fujiwara no Kintō 藤原公任 (966–1041) around 1013 as a wedding gift for his daughter. It features some 800 poems and excerpts from various prose genres arranged by 125 encyclopedic topics in two books. The topics in the first book progress through the four seasons and their related festivals and customs. The second book treats topics selected from nature and human society, ranging from meteorology, botany, and zoology, letters and wine, houses and temples, emperors and ministers, and friends and courtesans to more abstract themes such as the impermanence of all things or—the ultimate closure to the collection—"whiteness." Although many topical categories are borrowed from Chinese encyclopedias, Kintō added his own and arranged them in unique fashion. The effect was stunning. Within a century, the *Collection* was graced with commentaries, and it quickly became a schoolbook that taught necessary courtly skills. It became a primer for poetry chanting and calligraphy practice, and was committed to memory as a poetic dictionary for literary knowledge, anecdotes, and elegant diction. For centuries, it functioned as a mind-map for poetic topics and served as a method to learn how to compose "Topic Poetry" (*kudaishi* 句題詩), the mainstream genre of Heian *kanshi* for public occasions. The most prominent poet in the collection is Bai Juyi. His poetry heads most of the topic categories, followed by Sino-Japanese excerpts and capped with *waka* poems.

Although the "synoptic" nature of the *Collection* has obviously no precedent in China, it is ultimately a product of Six Dynasties and Tang "couplet culture," which prized the excerpting of beautiful couplets (Ch. *chaoju* 抄句), their compilation into "couplet charts" (Ch. *jutu* 句図), or their reproduction in calligraphy on hanging scrolls; similarly, medieval technical poetics focused obsessively on the couplet or line as the main element of poetic meaning. The *Collection* is a "couplet charts" of sorts, which, unlike the Chinese "couplet charts" which eventually fell into oblivion, helped shape Japan's literary culture, poetic production, and performance culture for centuries.

Kintō served during the reign of Emperor Ichijō 一条天皇 (r. 986–1011) and the splendid regency of Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長 (966–1027), a period immortalized as the time when the female writers Murasaki Shikibu, Sei Shōnagon, and Akazome Emon 赤染衛門 (d. ca. 1040) lived and wrote, and thus a central focus for later imaginations of the "classical age." *Honchō reisō* 本朝麗藻 (*Beautiful Flourish from Our Court*, ca. 1010), an anthology of more than 150 poems and a dozen prefaces compiled by the scholar-official Takashina no Moriyoshi 高階積善 (dates unknown) and arranged similarly to the *Collection*, with the first book following the seasons and a second book with encyclopedic topics, contains much of the poetry—mostly "Topic Poetry"—composed at poetry banquets during Emperor Ichijō's reign. Although writing on topics was popular during the Six Dynasties and the Early Tang, as is evident in *Li Qiao Baiyong* 李嶠百詠 (*Li Qiao's Hundred Verses*), and the rhetorical template of poems required for the Chinese civil service examination certainly inspired Japanese "Topic Poetry," the genre took on a distinctive form in Japan and gained far greater social and aesthetic importance (Satō 2007 and 2016, Denecke 2007). The "topic line" was usually culled from a pentasyllabic Chinese poem (or in the late Heian Period increasingly invented) and each of the couplets of the resulting "Topic Poem"—a regulated heptasyllabic poem composed on the line—had to follow a rhetorical template. The first couplet "stated the topic" (*daimoku* 題目), including all five topic-line characters; the second couplet "broached the topic" (*hadai* 破題), using ornate synonyms to restate the topic line; the third couplet usually included a "reference anecdote" (*honmon* 本文) from the Chinese histories, encyclopedias, and primers; and the fourth couplet concluded the poem with a polite "statement of feeling" (*shukkai* 述懐). Although this highly codified type of poetry did not make for inspired verse of poetic geniuses, it was a perfect and elaborate medium of social discourse during poetry banquets and gave everybody the opportunity to dash off an acceptable poem with relative ease. Furthermore, it encouraged the subtle verbalization of nature appreciation, leading to lexical expansion and diversification of allegorical expressions of virtuous and harmonious governance through natural imagery.

The second most influential Sino-Japanese text after the *Collection* was Fujiwara no Akihira's 藤原明衡 (ca. 989–1066) *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粋 (*Our Court's Literary Essence*, ca. 1066) (Denecke 2015b). Akihira established the fame of the Ceremonial Fujiwara branch of scholars by compiling model collections for literary education and emulation: *Honchō monzui* showcases scholarly and administrative genres, *Meigō ōrai* 明衡往来 (*Akihira's Letters*) contains models for personal correspondence, and *Shinsarugaku ki* 新猿楽記 (*Account of New Monkey Music*), an account of a palace guard's family's visit to a popular festival, contains portrayals of contemporary types and professions ranging from provincial governors, students, Yin-Yang masters, and monks to sumo wrestlers, prostitutes, and gamblers. In *Honchō monzui*, Akihira canvasses two centuries of *kanbun* literature since the Saga court through 420-some pieces by seventy authors (excluding lower-ranking officials, monks, and women). Himself an avid collector of couplets, though his collection is lost, Akihira created a "deselected couplet chart" of sorts: he included 90 percent of the Sino-Japanese excerpts in the *Collection* as entire texts, which also shows the enormous popularity of the *Collection* at the time. Featuring thirty-nine genres, like the *Wen xuan*, Akihira highlights venerable Chinese genres like rhapsodies and *shi* poetry, but his collection was clearly geared towards mid-Heian exigencies. He adopted not even a third of the *Wen xuan* categories and filled the roster with genres relevant to Heian reality, such as "appointment documents," "*waka* prefaces," and the religious genres in the last two books, which with the exception of "prayers" are all of Japanese origin. But even genres with the same name could be two different things: most of the mere nine "prefaces" in the *Wen xuan* are for literary collections and thus not comparable to the 150 "prefaces" in *Honchō monzui*, which were composed during poetry banquets as companion pieces to Topic Poems.

Also in contrast to the *Wen xuan*, dissent, criticism, and parody of court life have a prominent place in *Honchō monzui*. This resonated with mid-Heian literati's disappointment with the contemporary scholarly world, where success was hard to earn, but political and economic reward was meager. Yoshishige no Yasutane's 慶滋保胤 (d. 1002) "Account of My Pond Pavilion" ("Chiteiki" 池亭記) formulates much of the problems that two centuries later Kamo no Chōmei 鴨長明 (ca. 1155–1216) would voice in *Hōjōki* 方丈記 (*Account of My Ten-Square-Foot Hut*), also a confession of reclusion and social disgust, but Yasutane is still more ambivalently caught between the dreams of political significance (which his Confucian values rather than his personal ambition demanded) and an alternative life, allowing him "a body at court and a mind's ambition set on reclusion." Minamoto no Shitagō's 源順 (911–983) "Song of a Tailless Cow" 無尾牛歌 illustrates the sting of bitter social satire in *Honchō monzui*. Extolling the invisible virtues of his seemingly handicapped treasure—it doesn't dirty its behind with its tail when pooping, is not put to hard work, is never stolen because uniquely recognizable, etc.—Shitagō's closing promise to repay his cow once he himself gets promoted is a hardly veiled way to say that Shitagō is treating his beast better than the emperor treats his loyal scholar-officials.

Honchō monzui's ambivalent role as a model anthology with at times satirical and plaintive tones contributed to its sustained success. With the advent of print culture in the seventeenth century, it was printed repeatedly, a sign that its pieces still served as models for literary composition and were internalized by generations of students. Its echoes resonate throughout Japanese literature, ranging from war tales to travel accounts and even to *kana* prose.

Indicative of the new themes and concerns that appear in the Late Heian period is *Honchō mudaishi* 本朝無題詩 (*Non-Topic Poems From Our Court*). With more than 770 poems by thirty poets ordered by thirty-seven topic categories ranging from events and locations to seasonal themes, it constitutes the largest collection of eleventh- and twelfth-century *kanshi*. As a collection that by virtue of its title features poetry other than mainstream courtly Topic Poetry, it gives us a remarkable view of a new poetic world that points toward the medieval period. Many poems discuss the pleasures of ordinary life, of gathering with friends and undertaking mountain temple visits. They dispense with elaborate allusions to Chinese poetry. Instead, some take up typical *waka* topics such as deutzia (a flowering plant, *u no hana* 卯花) or clover (*hagi* 萩 or *shika naku kusa* 鹿鳴草), which had not been part of the *kanshi* repertoire.

By the Late Heian, there was a rich corpus of Sino-Japanese literature, to which Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041–1111), scion of the most prominent scholarly clan next to the Sugawara, contributed a good and variegated share. He was a superior writer of rhapsodies and Topic Poetry, composed "accounts" (*ki* 記) of fox spirits (Smits 1996), puppeteers, and female entertainers, and authored lives of Buddhist saints and immortals, in addition to compiling a massive ceremonial compendium of the Ōe family and having his own *waka* collection. He sketched his vision of literature and letters in an allegorical "Account of the Realm of Poetry" ("Shikyōki" 詩境記):

> As for the Realm of Poetry: it lacks water or soil, mountains or rivers and has no inhabitants or settlements. Even its whereabouts are unknown. One gets there in the blink of an eye just to be suddenly gone again. Reaching this fair realm is one of the most difficult things to achieve. Brush and ink are its expanse, sentiment and suffering its customs. Taxes are collected in units of blossoms and moon, and salary is exchanged with smoke and mist. (*Chōya gunsai*, 64; Gotō 2012: 265–290)

Masafusa goes on to enthusiastically recount the history of Chinese literature, to finish by lamenting Japan's scarcity of literature and good poets. But by the end of the Heian period, Sino-Japanese literature had thrived for about half a millennium and consisted of a rich and diversified body of texts. Masafusa was for once wrong.

EPILOGUE: WHAT CHINESE LITERATURE SCHOLARS CAN LEARN FROM SINO-JAPANESE LITERATURE

Marginalized within today's Japanese literary studies by the monopoly of native vernacular literature in Japan's national literary canon and still considered derivative and imitative by many China scholars, Sino-Japanese literature has yet to receive the attention it deserves. Scholars have recently realized that it is a promising research field with many a hidden treasure to be discovered. So far, China scholars have recognized the importance of Sino-Japanese literature largely based on what I like to call the "outsourcing model" (which appreciates Japan as a treasure trove of Chinese texts lost in China) or the "canon correction model" (which uses Japanese anthologies that include Chinese poetry and poetics as a corrective that can help us peek beyond the Song canonization of Tang poetry). But Sino-Japanese literature can do much more for scholars of Classical Chinese literature. We should add an "alternative literary history model," which throws the history of Chinese literature into clearer relief by virtue of a detour via Japan. To give just one example, it is often taken for granted that poetic production moved away from the court with the High Tang. After all the High, not the Early, Tang has made Tang poetry "Tang" and a worthy part of world literature. Modernist models of Chinese literary history celebrate this as a moment of triumph, a liberation from the stifling constraints of court conventions and an unleashing of individual voice and creativity. But once contrasted with the Japanese persistence of court-centered literary production up until the thirteenth century, the High Tang turn appears far more surprising and begs for a more extensive historical explanation, and also for a reexamination of this lingering modernist (and actually rather nineteenth-century Romantic) bias in Chinese literary studies.

From this perspective, the Japanese literary tradition allows us to ask, for example, how Tang poetry unfolded differently from Japanese *kanshi*, or what Tang poetry could have been but only became in Japan (and vice versa) and why that was so. Like a historical experimental laboratory, Japanese literary culture allows us to look at Chinese literature in an oblique, productively defamiliarizing and refamiliarizing light that can help reassess well-established myths of Chinese literary history.

It can be particularly helpful in rehabilitating the value of Chinese court literature, in drawing attention to the aesthetics of composing on set topics, highlighting issues of recitation and performance, and giving sufficient consideration to the importance of the education system, primers, encyclopedias, and technical manuals for literary production, all of which, again, have been underappreciated in Chinese literary studies because of the Romantic-modernist bias. The corpus of Sino-Japanese literature and its rich body of fine modern scholarship is of distinctive importance as an integral part of Japanese literature and literary studies. As such, it can also teach us much about Classical Chinese literature.

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CHAPTER 36

SINO-VIETNAMESE LITERATURE

PETER KORNICKI

The passage of time has been particularly unkind to the literary heritage of Vietnam: not a single book that was printed before 1697 has survived, although printing began in Vietnam centuries earlier, and not a single ancient manuscript either. What is more, some 75 percent of the books that survived the Second World War are now lost, mostly due to the bombing and destruction that accompanied the American War, as the Vietnam War is known in Vietnam. This essay, therefore, necessarily takes the story of Vietnamese engagement with Literary Chinese texts and of Vietnamese writing in Chinese far beyond the end of the Tang dynasty, in fact up to the middle of the nineteenth century. After all, Chinese literary forms that definitely reached Vietnam during the Tang dynasty had an impact that lasted for centuries after the end of the Tang, and so here the focus will be on the lasting role of Literary Chinese in Vietnamese culture and on the encounter between Chinese texts and vernacular writing.

Not all the losses mentioned above were due to the American War. The climate is frequently blamed, as are the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century and the Ming invasion in the fifteenth century. But in addition, when there was a change of dynasty, it was common for the transition to be accompanied by the wanton destruction of palace libraries, and already by the eighteenth century there was a sense of desperation about the preservation of ancient works. It was for that reason that the famous scholar Lê Quý Đôn 黎貴惇 (1726–1784) compiled a bibliography of the Vietnamese writing of the past, which at least preserves the titles of many works that are now lost. In the preface he lamented how much had been lost and described the devastation of Vietnam's literary heritage with a deep sense of loss (Gaspardone 1934: 6–7; Dutton, Werner and Whitmore 2012: 239–242).

In spite of all the losses, some early texts written in the lands now called Vietnam have survived in later copies or editions, and the best example is *Li huo lun* 理惑論 (*Treatise Dispelling Doubts*). This defense of Buddhism from the charge that it offended Chinese notions of propriety was written in the second century by the monk Mouzi 牟子

(Chinese pronunciation; in Vietnamese Mâu Tử). He lived in the Red River basin, where Hanoi is now situated, and his treatise is much earlier than any texts that survive from Japan or Korea, so what is the explanation for the production of texts much earlier in Vietnam?

For much longer than Korea, the northern part of what is now Vietnam spent long periods under Chinese occupation and administration, from 111 BCE to 40 CE, from 43 to 544, from 603 to 938, and finally, under the Ming, from 1407 to 1427. So Mouzi's *Treatise* was written in what at the time was just another part of China, albeit one in which Vietnamese and other languages were spoken. Nothing is known of Mouzi, and he may just as likely have been a Chinese immigrant as an ethnic Vietnamese. What is interesting, though, is that he mentions the existence of both Indian and local monks; some of these local monks must have been ethnic Vietnamese, and since Buddhism in East Asia was a textual religion requiring knowledge of Buddhist scriptures in their Chinese translations, this is the first sign that "locals" were becoming adept in Chinese. (Tran 1932: 206–215). In the third century, a man called Kang Senghui 康僧會 (d. 280), who was of Sogdian origin, became a Buddhist after moving to the Red River basin and began translating Sanskrit texts into Chinese, showing that Buddhism was well established there by that time (Hanh 2001). At least by the fifth century, Vietnamese monks had enough command of Chinese to be able to write Buddhist treatises, for three such treatises survive, and in the Tang dynasty several Vietnamese monks made their way to Tang China, as Chinese sources reveal (Chan 2004: 331; Nguyen 1997: 12–13). By this time, some candidates from Vietnam were already passing the metropolitan exams in China. One of them, Jiang Gongfu 姜公輔 (in Vietnamese Khương Công Phụ; d. 805), who was born to a Chinese immigrant family, rose to high rank at the top of the bureaucratic ladder.

After the collapse of the Tang dynasty, troops from the Southern Han dynasty tried to take over Vietnam, but the assault was repulsed, and as a result Vietnam ceased to be a part of China in 938. In the years 1407–1427, there was a brief period when Ming armies invaded and attempted to occupy Vietnam, but this too was unsuccessful and the Ming withdrew in 1427. The Ming invasion led to the removal of many books and records (Ong 2010), but it made no difference to the high esteem which Chinese texts enjoyed in Vietnam right up to the beginning of the twentieth century. They formed the core of the educational curriculum, knowledge of them was tested in the civil service examinations, and they influenced poetry composition both in Literary Chinese and in Vietnamese.

As in Korea and Japan, the Chinese script was the only form of writing known in Vietnam for centuries. It was, however, unsatisfactory for writing Vietnamese, so in time a vernacular script evolved, known as *chữ nôm* 𡦂喃. This began to develop in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and includes several thousand characters invented on the model of Chinese characters (see also Chapter 3), but there are few extant vernacular texts written in *chữ nôm* that date from before the fifteenth century. Even when texts written in *nôm* became more common, many of them were either translations from or rewritings of Chinese works or works written under their influence.

Nevertheless, *nôm* was indispensable for writing Vietnamese, and it became increasingly a matter of political choice. During the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, reformist regimes began to arrange for the translation of the Chinese Classics into Vietnamese using *chữ nôm*; these translations do not survive, however, because successor regimes saw the translations as subversive. As a result, most of the extant *chữ nôm* translations were done from texts written in Literary Chinese by Vietnamese (Taylor 2005: 174–175). During the short-lived Tây Sơn dynasty of 1788–1802, the official written language ceased to be Chinese and became instead Vietnamese written in *nôm*. This rule applied even to government business and the civil service examinations, but after the collapse of the dynasty the official written language became once again Literary Chinese. On the other hand, in 1829 the Vietnamese monarch Minh Mạng 明命 (1791–1841) went so far as to prohibit the use of *chữ nôm*, at least in court documents and the civil service examinations (Thompson 2010: 394).

Chinese poetry was introduced to Vietnam when it was under Chinese occupation. The oldest extant poem written in Chinese by somebody from the Vietnamese lands is a lament that was written in 815 by Liêu Hữu Phương 廖有方: he had been up to the Chinese capital to take the civil service examinations but had failed. There is no need to feel sorry for him, as he passed the following year and got an official appointment, and the poem is preserved in *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (*Complete Tang Poems*) (Taylor 2008: 525–526). By the time Vietnam became independent in 938, it is clear that the Literary Chinese of written texts had been appropriated as the formal written language of Vietnam without any sense that it was the language of China. Consider, for example, this poem written in Literary Chinese by Lý Thường Kiệt 李常傑 (1019–1105):

> The Southern emperor rules the southern land.
> Our destiny is writ in Heaven's book.
> How dare you bandits trespass on our soil?
> You shall meet your undoing at our hands.

The poet is said to have read this poem out to his troops in 1076 before leading them to victory against China in the war of 1075–1077, but whether that story is true or not, what is striking is that there is no irony in the fact that this anti-China poem was written in Literary Chinese (Huynh 1996: 27).

It goes without saying that for Vietnamese to be in a position to compose passable Chinese poetry they needed to have access to the Chinese Classics, such as the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), and the works of the famous poets of the Tang dynasty. How and when these works reached Vietnam is unknown, but an anecdote told of an envoy from Song China who reached Vietnam in 987 is suggestive. When he recited a poem by the Tang poet Luo Binwang 駱賓王 (ca. 619–684?), a local monk is said to have interrupted and sung out the last couplet. As Taylor points out, since the pronunciation of Vietnamese at the time is thought to have been close to that of the Late Middle Chinese spoken by the Song envoy, this anecdote is not implausible (Taylor 2008: 527). What it suggests is that the poetry of Luo Binwang was already well known in Vietnam, and that doubtlessly applied to the works of other Tang poets, too.

At any rate, Chinese remained the medium for written poetry, and even after the invention of *chữ nôm* and the development of vernacular poetic traditions, well-educated men were expected to be able to compose poetry in Chinese; some women were able to do so, too. This skill was particularly important for rulers. In 1332, King Trần Minh Tông 陳明宗 wrote this poem in farewell to two envoys who were returning to the Yuan court in China:

Post-horses galloped through miasmal wilds.
You brought your star to light this seaside realm.
A hero's will can face the world at large;
A sovereign's heart should treat all men alike.
Yuëh [i.e., Vietnamese] hills and streams give poets peerless lines:
Chou [i.e., Chinese] rain and dew pour from the emperor's writ.
Tomorrow, we shall sunder South and North;
Today, do not turn down this cup of wine. (Huynh 1996:28)

There is, of course, a subtext to this poem. Kublai Khan (1215–1294), the founder of the Yuan dynasty in China, had invaded Vietnam three times in the thirteenth century but proved unable to conquer it. Eventually, in return for Vietnamese acceptance of Yuan supremacy, the Mongols agreed to be satisfied with a tributary relationship instead of conquest. Since Vietnamese customarily referred to themselves as the "South" and to China as the "North," the last two lines of the poem remind the envoys that Vietnam and China are separate, while acknowledging that their relationship is friendly.

One of the most celebrated Vietnamese poets is Nguyễn Trãi 阮廌 (1380–1442), who was also a famous statesman, strategist, and writer. He wrote poetry both in Literary Chinese and in Vietnamese, and among his Chinese poetry is this poem:

Among the great, no smooth and open world.
At home, a lord enjoys his mums [chrysanthemums] and pines.
Desponding like Shao-ling, you have turned gray;
blithe as Beihai, you can yet fill your cup. (Huynh 1996: 39–40)

Since Shao-ling 少陵 was a pen-name of Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), the great Tang poet, and Beihai 北海 another name for Kong Rong 孔融 (153–208), a writer who held high office in the Han dynasty, Nguyễn Trãi is here making oblique allusions that show his familiarity with Chinese history and writing. This kind of referentiality was to be expected when Vietnamese wrote poetry in Chinese, and it was not uncommon in poetry written in Vietnamese, too.

As King Trần Minh Tông's poem shows, nationalism was not incompatible with writing poetry in Literary Chinese. Not only that, but national pride actually required Vietnamese to be adept at writing poetry in Literary Chinese. This was particularly so in the case of envoys traveling to the Chinese capital, who tended to be selected for their poetic skills. This was because poetry was an important part of diplomatic exchanges in premodern East Asia, and no state wished to be humiliated as a result of being represented by an envoy whose poetry was second-rate. Poems were exchanged not only with their Chinese hosts, but also with envoys from other states. Lê Quí Đôn was a member of the diplomatic mission which traveled to Qing China in 1760, and he impressed Korean envoys with his talents as a poet and writer in Literary Chinese. Poetic exchanges between Vietnamese and Korean envoys were common on such occasions. As one Vietnamese envoy wrote:

> Although we are from regions separated by mountains and seas
> our source is the same—the writings of ancient sages.

The writings he is referring to were the so-called Chinese Classics, but here the sense is that they do not so much belong to China as to humanity, or at least humanity in East Asia (Kelley 2005: 64, 88–89, 183–185). It is for this reason that it has been said that, "Classical Chinese . . . is as much Vietnamese, Japanese or Korean as it is Chinese' " (Taylor 2005: 173).

One of the most accomplished envoy-poets was Nguyễn Tông Khuê 阮宗奎 (1692–1767), who made two journeys to Beijing. He compiled a collection of poetry about Chinese history and another entitled *Sứ Hoa tùng vịnh* (*Collected Verses on an Embassy to China*); a Korean envoy whom he met on both occasions wrote a preface in which he admired not only Nguyễn Tông Khuê's learning but also his poetic inspiration: "In all of his writings the meter and intonation is exquisite and his descriptions deep . . . he has extensively absorbed the way of the ancients" (Kelley 2005: 43–47).[1]

The notion that all East Asians were participating in a common world of script, writing, and ideas was not, however, quite how things seemed to the authorities in China. Participation in the poetry exchanges in the Chinese capital was, for the Chinese authorities, part of the unequal relationship between China on the one hand and the tributary states which sent embassies to China. In 1705, a collection of envoy poetry was published in China under the title *Huang Qing shi xuan* 皇清詩選 (*Imperial Qing Collection of Poetry*). This includes poetry by Vietnamese, Koreans, and poets from the kingdom of Ryukyu (now Okinawa, part of Japan) but not by Japanese, even though there was much poetry written in Literary Chinese by Japanese in the eighteenth century; this was simply because Japan was not in a tributary relationship with China, while Vietnam was, and it had nothing to do with the quality of the poetry.

The most important anthology of Vietnamese poetry in Literary Chinese, which preserves texts from much earlier times, is the *Toàn Việt thi lục* 全越詩録 (*Complete Anthology of Vietnamese Literature*). This was compiled in the 1770s by Lê Quí Đôn, who, as noted above, lamented the loss of earlier texts, and in his preface he sought to explain why so much poetry had been lost. This was very clearly an attempt to preserve what had survived to his time and to prevent further losses, but he also included poems by Chinese and Koreans, recognizing that much poetry by Vietnamese was composed in the context of exchanges of poems by envoys (Dutton, Werner, and Whitmore 2012: 235–239). A more restrictive line is taken in *Imperial Vietnamese Anthology of Poetry* (*Hoàng Việt thi tuyển* 皇越詩選), which was compiled by Bùi Huy Bích 裴輝璧 (1744–1818) and published in 1825. The contents are organized chronologically, starting off with verses by two Vietnamese monarchs of the eleventh century and ending with the work of poets of the mid-eighteenth century. But only poetry written in Literary Chinese by Vietnamese is included, so it maintains the strict division between vernacular poetry and that written in Literary Chinese.

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[1] Kelley gives the name as Li Bancun, supposing him to be Chinese, but it seems he was in fact a Korean envoy.

Chinese poetry did not only stimulate Vietnamese poets writing in Literary Chinese, it also had an impact on vernacular forms of poetry. Some of it was translated or rewritten in Vietnamese and then sung or performed, but during the Trần dynasty (1225–1400) Vietnamese poetry in *nôm* began to develop, conforming to the rules of the Tang "regular style" poetry. The pioneer was Nguyễn Trãi, who developed a Vietnamese version of this type of poetry in seven-syllable lines following the Chinese pattern. Later, in the seventeenth century, there was a shift to the Vietnamese pattern of alternating lines of six and eight syllables. This Vietnamese poetry was not shy about acknowledging its debt to Chinese poetry, often making allusions to Chinese poems and borrowing or adapting conceits taken from Chinese poetry (Taylor 2008: 533; Phạm 1980: 17–18, 165–166, 207–221). Several significant women poets are known from these later centuries, among them Đoàn Thị Điểm 段氏點 (1705–1748), who wrote poetry in Chinese and also translated some Chinese poetry into Vietnamese, and Hồ Xuân Hương 胡春香 (1772–1822), who had a classical education but wrote poetry in Vietnamese (Pastreich 2001: 1099; Balaban 2000).

Since the official written language of administration and of the civil service examinations was Literary Chinese, apart from a few periods when Vietnamese writing in *nôm* was favored, there is in Vietnam as in Korea and Japan a vast range of prose writing in Chinese, from historical chronicles to short essays. Bùi Huy Bích, who compiled the anthology of poetry mentioned above, also produced *Imperial Vietnamese Selections of Refined Literature* (*Hoàng Việt văn tuyển* 皇越文選). The title was modelled on the *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*), which was compiled in China in the sixth century, for *văn tuyển* is simply the Vietnamese pronunciation of the two characters read *Wen xuan* in Chinese. This contains mostly short texts, some taken from inscriptions and others from official documents, and consequently it presents only a small selection of self-consciously literary pieces.

Literary Chinese was in fact the medium for a wide range of prose writing in Vietnam, including not only Confucian writings but also historiography and medicine, Buddhist writings, law codes, edicts, and memorials to the throne. Memorials were intended to draw the king's attention to a particular issue, and the conventions of the genre required the memorialist to write with excessive humility at the outset and the conclusion, with the matter at hand sandwiched in the middle, as is clear from these extracts taken from a memorial about an economic crisis in Nghệ An province presented in 1789 by Nguyễn Thiếp 阮浹 (1723–1784):

> I memorialise as a simple bureaucrat who concerns himself with crude and simple matters and who has hidden himself away in seclusion. I am a disgraceful, foolish one, while Your Majesty has broad power and learning. . . . In Nghe An, the earth is barren and the people are impoverished. . . . One must pay serious attention to famine and epidemics, which cause people to die of hunger or to move and shift about. . . . The greater the number of officials is, the more harassment the people must endure. . . . Neither the generals and officers nor the bureaucrats and officials show any discipline or restraint. . . . This is not only about the good fortune of the common people but also about the fortune of the state. Your humble subject looks up to you with extreme reverence and with great trepidation and presents this petition with all sincerity, (Dutton, Werner, and Whitmore 2012: 194–195)

The key to a successful memorial, of course, lay not only in tact but in mastery of rhetorical elegance in Literary Chinese. Although court business and government were conducted in Vietnamese, the written record was in Chinese, and thus every memorial presented had to demonstrate competence in Literary Chinese. Since all officials had to pass examinations which primarily tested their knowledge of Chinese texts in order to attain office, such competence ought to have been second nature.

One of the most accomplished essayists in Chinese was Lê Quí Đôn, whose lament for the lost writings of the past was referred to above. He compiled anthologies of Vietnamese poetry in Chinese and wrote historical works and commentaries on Chinese classical texts, including the *Shijing* and the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*). His *Vân đài loại ngữ* 芸臺類語 (*Categorized Sayings from the Imperial Library*) is an encyclopedic work which covers a wide range of subjects. He explained the rationale for it in his preface, dated 1773:

> According to the Ancients, the expression "scrutinize things to arrive at knowledge," in its full acceptance signifies a culture capable of assisting in the perfecting of one's self as well as in caring for one's family, administering the nation and bring peace to the world. Culture understood in this sense is infinitely vast. . . . Through my readings I perceived that the Ancients studied everything in this way. I acquired the habit of noting events recorded in books and, according to the case, copied them or made my own comments on them. (Nguyễn and Hữu 1984: 292–295)

The "Ancients" Lê Qui Đôn referred to were of course the sages of Chinese antiquity, but he was very much a scholar in the tradition of the great Confucian scholars of the Song dynasty, whom he referred to obliquely in the closing sentences of his preface. So it is no surprise to find that one of the topics he included in his *Categorized Sayings* was the knotty question of "principle" (*li* 理) and "essence" (*qi* 氣), which was fundamental to the neo-Confucianism of the Song dynasty. What is surprising, however, is to find the discussion making reference to Mohammed and the Islamic calendar and to Jesuits resident in Beijing such as Matteo Ricci and Ferdinand Verbiest (Dutton, Werner, and Whitmore 2012: 170–174). It is clear from this that he had access to some of the Chinese writings of the European Jesuits in China, possibly when he went on a diplomatic mission to China in 1760, and he had no hesitation about incorporating such nonclassical allusions into his prose in order to broaden the frame of reference.

The most important Vietnamese historical chronicle is *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* 大越史記全書 (*Comprehensive History of Great Viet*), which was compiled by royal order and completed in 1479. This appears to be an amplification of an earlier chronicle which was presented to the throne in 1272. Later supplements took the narrative up to the eighteenth century, and there were further state historical projects in the nineteenth century, providing a rich and detailed official historical record (Chen 1976). All subsequent official histories were also composed in Chinese, with no aids for readers unable to read Chinese. In the case of Buddhist, Confucian, and moral texts, however, there was by the seventeenth century a growing tendency to add vernacular explanations in *nôm*, and some nineteenth-century editions of the Chinese classics include translations on the lower half of the page (Whitman 2011). Medical writings, on the other hand, tended either to be in Chinese or Vietnamese. As in Korea and Japan, Chinese pharmaceutical knowledge was of little use if the plants prescribed were not available outside China, hence the search for local equivalents. This necessity compelled medical writers to turn to *nôm* at least to record local plant names.

Of all the later Chinese writings that reached Vietnam, it was Chinese fiction that had the most significant impact. One of the earliest examples is the legend of the encounter between Confucius and the child prodigy Xiang Tuo, which seems to have been a very popular story in the Tang dynasty. Nineteen manuscript versions of the story have been found in the caves of Dunhuang, and later there was a Ming edition printed in 1595. Three Vietnamese manuscript copies of this work in Chinese survive in Hanoi, and they seem to have more in common with the Dunhuang versions than the Ming edition, so it appears that this story had long circulated in Vietnam (Wang 2003: 289–313). Another example is the famous *Jiandeng xinhua* 剪灯新話 (*New Stories Told while Trimming the Wick*, 1378): this is a collection of supernatural stories by Qu You 瞿佑 which prompted similar works in Japan and Korea as well as Vietnam. It had reached Vietnam by 1467, and in the sixteenth century Nguyễn Dư produced a collection of stories titled *Truyền kỳ mạn lục* 傳奇漫錄 (*Casual Collection of Strange Tales*), which was the first of many such collections inspired by *Jiandeng xinhua*. This collection and others were written in Chinese with notes in Chinese, but in later editions notes were added in *nôm* to the Chinese texts, and these bilingual editions were followed by Vietnamese translations in *nôm* (Yan 1987).

The most famous work of Vietnamese literature is *Truyện Kiều* 傳翹 (*The Tale of Kieu*), written by Nguyễn Du 阮攸 (1765–1820). This is a long poem in Vietnamese written in six-eight rhythm that tells of the vicissitudes of a beautiful and talented woman who goes through various ordeals to save her family. Although written in Vietnamese, *The Tale of Kieu* is based upon the anonymous seventeenth-century Chinese novel *Jin Yun Qiao zhuan* 金雲翹傳 (*Tale of Jin, Yun and Qiao*; Kiều is the Vietnamese pronunciation of the character read "Qiao" in Chinese). The "talented man and beautiful woman" theme found here is common in Chinese fiction of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and earlier still in Tang dynasty *chuanqi* 傳奇 tales, and it also had an impact on Korea and Japan, but in this case the amalgam is with verse forms and conventions that were of Vietnamese origin. *The Tale of Kieu* is an elegant reminder of the fact that, even in the case of prose and poetry in Vietnamese, the literary point of reference was often China.

As in Korea and Japan, at some point techniques evolved for reading Chinese texts using the vernacular, but the contours of this practice are not yet well understood. Nevertheless, at least by the eighteenth century it had become increasingly common to combine Chinese texts with vernacular translations or explanations to facilitate understanding. Indeed, at the end of that century the short-lived Tây Sơn emperor ordered the production of translations of Chinese canonical texts. In 1839, a new edition of the *Four Books* with interlinear vernacular commentary was published under the title *Tứ thư ước giải* 四書約解; this included a preface which drew explicit attention to the difference between the Vietnamese and Chinese languages and the difficulty this posed for Vietnamese students. Nevertheless, knowledge of Chinese remained indispensable for education and political life up to the early twentieth century. There is no clearer sign of this than the fact that the independence activist Phan Bội Châu 潘佩珠 (1867–1940) published his call to action, *Việt Nam vong quốc sử* 越南亡國史 (*History of the Loss of Vietnam*, 1905), in Literary Chinese; Hồ Chí Minh, too, used Literary Chinese in 1941 to urge the elderly to join the resistance against the French.

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