Chapter Three

The Course of Canonization and Universal Synthesizers in Thought and History

3.1. The Need for Hermeneutics in the Early Han

In this chapter, the focus is on two seminal scholars whose importance to classical scholarship is obscured by their contributions to the fields of philosophy and history: Dong Zhongshu in the former and Sima Qian in the latter. But at the core, the practices of these synthesizing writers merely reflect the role of classicist as hermeneut, not textual critic. These twin roles, equally honorable and necessary, are equally evident in the history of Chinese classical scholarship and were often assumed by the same master, depending on the task at hand. It is true that contemporary scholarly trends often influenced classicists to choose or at least emphasize one approach over the other. This is immediately apparent in the Western Han concern for New Text interpretation that gave way to Eastern Han Old Text exegesis, and in the Song dynasty, preoccupation with the message of the Way and its immanent manifestations over the need for unravelling the course of textual transmission. And it is true that rare classicists in both the East and the West mastered both approaches, textual critic and hermeneut. For the West, I have in mind the two German classicists Friedrich Wolf (1759–1824), the father of modern Homeric scholarship, and the peerless Ulrich Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848– 1931), the last great master of modern classical scholarship to gain expertise in both approaches before the dryness of the exclusively philological approach rendered the profession of classicist a byword for dullness and triviality, especially in Germany. For the East, I merely cite Zhu Xi 朱 熹 (1130–1200), whose importance as an interpreter overwhelms his profile as a nascent textual critic, and Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724–1777), who was at the forefront of evidential research and was a refined thinker and moralist. Nevertheless, in general, contemporary trends and personal predilections governed scholarly approaches. In the case of the early Han, political imperatives impelled classicists towards their hermeneutical endeavors.[1]

[1] In this work I use the term "hermeneutics" loosely as a synonym for "interpretation." In vol. 3 of this series I treat the rise of speculative hermeneutics under the influence of Daoist mysticism and Buddhist ontology during the southern Six Dynasties era and its progressive distancing of classicists from the text of the classics. No such specialized meaning is intended here.

With the need to establish the new imperium, work out its policies, and provide firm intellectual justification, classicists in the early Han tended to mine the classical remains for their political teachings. Therefore, early classicists were more prone to devote themselves to the message of the classics instead of being occupied with the accuracy of their texts. It may seem counterintuitive, as we saw from chapter 2, that undercurrents of textual criticism flowed in channels that still remain obscure, and the need for recovering and mending classical texts in the post-Qin era must have been critical. But given the needs of the state, classical hermeneutics naturally came to the fore. This implies that during the early Han, access to at least some of the classics was sufficiently ample to support this effort. While chapter 4 analyzes the nature of textual criticism in the Western Han, this chapter emphasizes two great synthesizers who reflect the hermeneutic approach, providing a better background for later treatment of the Old Text/New Text controversy. Ban Gu's 班 固 (32–92) analysis of classical scholarship during this period will be important to review but must await treatment in a later chapter. However, Ban Gu's work should be read as a counterfoil to Sima Qian's "Grove of Confucians" collective biographies of classicists, given the differing ideological outlooks and narratological methods of the two great historians.

3.2. Gongyang's Commentary and Intellectual Currents during the Early Han

Along with the various legal, political, and ritual imperatives required to organize and operate the new empire, just as important was the need to design and implement an ideological system. Initially, legalistic measures inherited from the Qin remained in place, and Daoist thinking continued to form the unexamined intellectual assumptions of the new empire. This is seen most prominently in the encyclopedia on ideal rulership sponsored and edited by the King of Huainan, Liu An 劉安 (d. 122 BC), a work commonly called the *Master of Huainan* 淮南子.

The *Master of Huainan*, according to Ban Gu, originally consisted of two parts: one with a collection of twenty-one "esoteric" chapters and the other with thirty-three "exoteric" chapters, the former congeries dealing with the Way and the latter with miscellaneous matters. The work currently includes twenty-one chapters, which are assumed to represent the extant "esoteric" section.[2] In this work, the ideal ruler is called the "Realized Man" (*zhenren* 真 人) and defined in terms that reflect the Daoist preoccupation with spontaneous and unforced unity with the Way; he is in both essence and practice a Daoist sage: "As for the so-called Realized Man, his nature matches the Way. Hence he possesses yet seems to lack, is full yet seems to be empty, resides in unity yet does not realize duality, works on the inner but does not acknowledge the outer. He understands the grand purity, and returns to simplicity through non-action. He embodies his original

[2] Consult Charles Le Blanc in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley, CA: The Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), 189–95.

nature and embraces his spirits in order to roam within the boundaries of heaven and earth" 所謂真人者也，性合於道也。故有而若無，實而若虛；處其一不知其二，治其內不識其外。明白太素，無為複樸，體本抱神， 以游于天地之樊.[3] The connection between this type of sage and the ruler of the human realm is made in the chapter entitled "Art of the Ruler" 主術:

> The art of the ruler of men is to manage non-purposeful affairs and to practice wordless teaching. He remains tranquil and still, not acting; he adheres to a single principle, not wavering. He follows established practice in employing underlings; he encourages results without wearying himself. For this reason, he intuitively understands what to plan, yet lets his aides bring it up; he is able to verbalize it, yet lets those who carry it out explain it; he is able to walk on foot, yet lets masters of ceremony lead the way; his ears are able to hear, yet he lets ministers of state advance remonstrance. For this reason, in his consideration he is never wrong, in his planning he never misses the mark; his words form literary models, his conduct forms standards for the entire world.
>
> 人主之術，處無為之事，而行不言之教。清靜而不動，一度而不搖，因循而任下， 責成而不勞。是故心知規而師傅諭導，口能言而行人稱辭，足能行而相者先導，耳能聽而執正進諫。是故慮無失策，謀無過事，言為文章，行為儀錶於天下。[4]

The Confucian model of rulership was not only ignored, it was specifically rejected due to the neglect on the part of Confucians of so-called sagely masters in their own tradition who cultivated their natures and practiced hands-off policies that do not contravene natural processes. Their prissy Victorian attitudes restrict their spontaneity:

> Confucians of today do not explain the basis of desire, instead prohibit what they desire; they do not trace the source of their pleasures, instead they wall off their pleasures. This is just like trying to block a breach in the fonts of the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers with their hands. Now as for shepherding the people, it is just like raising fowl and livestock but not

[3] *Huainanzi*, "Jingshen" (ZZJC ed.), 7:103.

[4] *Huainanzi*, "Zhushu," 7:127. For the Daoist conceptions in this text that ideally should guide the sovereign, see Kung-chuan Hsiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, trans. F. W. Mote, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the Sixth Century A.D.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 570– 82; and Roger T. Aims, *The Art of Rulership: A Study in Ancient Chinese Political Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 167–209. These studies present an English translation of the "Zhushu" chapter. Chapter 8, "Benjing" 本經, is particularly valuable because it explains the basis for eliminating "humaneness and fealty, the rites and music" 仁義禮樂 as the foundation of government policy and social stability, since they are useful only in redressing specific defects.

blocking off the walls of the paddock, producing desires, or fettering their feet, restricting movement. But they still desired to help them end their days after a long life—how could this be possible? Now as for Confucius's disciples who mastered all learning, including Yanhui, Jilu, Zixia, and Ran Boniu, Yanhui died young, Jilu was flayed alive in Wei, Zixia lost his sight, and Ran Boniu encountered violence. These were all due to forcing their natures, contravening their passions, and not attaining equilibrium.

今夫儒者不本其所以欲，而禁其所欲；不原其所以樂，而閉其所樂。是猶決江河之源，而障之以手也。夫牧民者，猶畜禽獸也，不塞其囿垣，使有野心，系絆其足， 以禁其動，而欲修生壽終，豈可得乎。夫顏回、季路、子夏、冉伯牛，孔子之通學 也，然顏淵夭死，季路菹于衛，子夏失明，冉伯牛為厲。此皆迫性拂情，而不得其和也。[5]

This understanding of the role of rulers and its emphasis on inward cultivation negates the value of book learning for both rulers and ministers as something external to the spirit. The ruler "knows without learning, and sees without looking" 不學而知，不視而見.[6] In "Jingshen," rustic peasants in remote regions are delighted by rapping on basins and tapping on vases to accompany their ritual singing. But by comparison, such delight appears painfully impoverished when grand drums are struck and large bells are rung. Textual learning versus internal cultivation is again contrasted: "Storing the *Poems* and *Documents* and cultivating literary learning without understanding the aims of ultimate truth is to be followers of those who rap on basins and tap on vases. Those who do not work politically in the world actually possess the grand drums of learning" 藏詩書，修文學，而不知至論之旨，則拊盆叩瓶之徒也。夫無以天下為事者，學之建鼓矣.[7] In an age of moral decline, "piecemeal learning" (*couxue* 湊學), as it is termed, is useless since it does not lead to "tracing the mind and returning to the root" 原心反本.[8] Such an ideology is hardly conducive to fostering classical studies. Because of their misplaced emphasis, "Confucians are unable to cause the people to lack desires, but can prohibit them; are unable to cause the people to stop being joyful, but can prohibit it. As for causing the realm to fear punishments and not dare to rob, how is it as good as being able to cause the people to lack the heart of a robber?" 儒者非能使人弗欲，而能止之；非能使人勿樂，而能禁之 。夫使天下畏刑而不敢盜，豈若能使無有盜心哉。[9]

[5] *Huainanzi*, "Jingshen," 7:110.
[6] *Huainanzi*, "Jingshen," 7:103–4.
[7] *Huainanzi*, "Jingshen," 7:109.
[8] *Huainanzi*, "Jingshen," 7:110.
[9] *Huainanzi*, "Jingshen," 7:111.

Such a governing ideology as described in *Master of Huainan* was utterly useless to empower the person of an emperor since, conceptually, such a sage ruler stood aloof from worldly machinations and interventions and was not even concerned with providing the worldly needs of his subjects; instead he passively conformed with the impersonal and imperceptive operations of the Way. He lacked an ego, private goals, and even a well-defined corporeal identity! Confucianism brought such a detached and ethereal figure down from the clouds and injected him into the mundane ruling process.

By the time of Emperor Wu, Confucianism was pressed into service to provide the ideological support for the vision he conceived of in his personal drive for despotism. On the macro level, the Confucian system was necessary in order to underpin the theory of a unified realm and justify the exaltation of the now corporeal ruler who was only too willing to intervene in worldly affairs. A bureaucracy to enable such interventionism was recruited based on the twin pillars of classical scholarship and ability to compose poetry of the excursive, rhapsodic *fu* 賦 variety. Internal cultivation of the nature now gave way to the external erudition of textual mastery and verbal artistry. The paired Confucian concepts of loyalty and filial piety were drummed into service, prioritized in the rhetoric of empire, and ineluctably incorporated in the mental background of classical scholarship, no matter which text they addressed.[10]

On the micro level, the question of imperial succession soon came to the fore. In the West, Rome demonstrated the potential for chaos when succession was not settled into well-grooved tracks. After the death of the first emperor, Augustus, the throne passed from Augustus to his adopted son, Tiberius, and thence to the latter's grandnephew and adopted grandson, Caligula. Claudius then inherited with a gentle push by a proclamation of the Praetorian Guard; he was Caligula's uncle. The throne next passed to Nero, the grandnephew, stepson, and adopted son of Claudius, and the great-great-grandson of Augustus. The Julio-Claudio dynasty ended with the suicide of Nero. The next four emperors were as unrelated to the Claudio branch as they were to each other, having been installed by the popular acclaim of the Spanish legions, Praetorian Guard, German legions, and eastern legions, respectively. The last claimant, Vespasian, was at least succeeded by two sons, one after the other. Later dynasties did no better. So ran the herky-jerky course of the imperial seat of the Romans, a royal if not divine comedy apportioning the throne based on power politics, not principle—skipping generations, elevating the distant or adopting the distaff without rhyme or reason discernible by outsiders.

In the East, a formal method of succession was needed in the early Han to avoid such ad hoc maneuvering and backroom plotting, which must have been anxiously anticipated by the court from early on. Happily, the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* provided the necessary ideology

[10] See Jin Wen 晉文, "Lun jingxue yu Handai zhongxiaoguan de zhenghe" 论经学与汉代忠孝观的整合, *Jianghai xuekan* 江海学刊 2001.5:124–27.

on both the macro and micro levels. Its value probably led the way to reviewing other Confucian classics for their utility in the process of maintaining power and governing the realm.

The backdrop to the popularity of the *Gongyang Commentary* lies in the widespread use of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as a written source to be mined for both political precedents and governing principles, a use that seems to have started with Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (200–121 BC).[11] He was an older contemporary of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–ca.104 BC), a one-time pupil of Master Huwu and a specialist of the Gongyang tradition; his policy is described as "utilizing the principles of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to evaluate officials to select as ministers for the Han" 以春秋之義繩臣下取漢相.[12] He is noted for being the first prime minister appointed on the basis of his classical erudition, and a long line of such prime ministers followed after him.[13]

The *Gongyang Commentary* is credited to Zixia 子夏, disciple of Confucius; Gongyang was merely the surname of an early individual and some of his descendants who figured in the oral transmission of Confucius's original teachings on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The following hoary tradition, deriving from a late Eastern Han apocryphal work, the *Xiaojing Goumingjue* 孝經鉤命決, identifies the provenance of this commentary in an oblique way:

> When Confucius was among the masses, he was unable to put his virtue into practice. His intentions were recorded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, his conduct in the *Classic of Filial Piety*. He entrusted the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to Bu Shang [Zixia], the *Classic of Filial Piety* to Zeng Shen [Zengzi].
>
> 孔子在庶，德無所施，功無所就。志在春秋，行在孝經，以春秋屬商，孝經屬參.[14]

According to hoary tradition, what Confucius entrusted to these two worthy disciples were the textual and oral interpretations of the classic *Spring and Autumn Annals* and his teachings concerning the cardinal core of moral conduct and filial piety, which teachings then formed a separate classic.

Xu Yan 徐彥, a scholiast active in the Tang dynasty, preserved more information on the early formulation and transmission of the formal commentary traceable to Zixia. Xu once composed an epexegesis (*shu* 疏 , a commentary on another commentary) devoted to an earlier exegetical work on the *Gongyang Commentary*, He Xiu's 何休 (129–182) *Explanations and Glosses of Gongyang on the Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋公羊解詁. In Xu's epexegesis, he clarified and expanded on He's work. Both the commentaries of He Xiu and Xu Yan became enshrined as the official "commentary and epexegesis" or "commentary and sub- commentary" (*zhushu* 注疏) on the Gongyang school of *Spring and Autumn* learning when the Thirteen Classics were brought together under imperial command and printed in 1584 with the best Han and Tang commentators. In Xu's epexegesis, he preserves a passage from a lost "preface" to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* by the Eastern Han classicist Dai Hong 戴宏:

> Zixia transmitted [these teachings] to Gaoyang Gao; Gao transmitted them to his son Ping; Ping transmitted them to his son Di; Di transmitted them to his son Gan; Gan transmitted them to his son Shou. By the time of Emperor Jing [Liu Qi 劉啟, r. 156–141], Shou and his disciple Master Huwu from Qi both set them down on bamboo and silk. And, together with Dong Zhongshu, they were seen amid the charts and apocryphal texts.
>
> 子夏傳與公羊高，高傳與其子平，平傳與子地，地傳與其子敢，敢傳與子壽。至漢景帝時，壽乃其弟子齊人胡毋子[/生]都著于竹帛，與董仲舒皆見于圖讖。[15]

This lineage of transmitters cannot be complete, even if it were historically valid, since, as the Qianlong bibliographers indicate, quotes from many masters—Master Shenzi 子沈子, Master Simazi 子司馬子, Master Bogongzi 子北宮子, and others—are found throughout the commentary; they were "transmitting classical masters, not all of whom it seems derived from Master Gongyang" 蓋皆傳授之經師不盡出於公羊子.[16] Master Huwu and Dong Zhongshu were contemporaries and competitors in interpreting the *Spring and Autumn Annals* according to the Gongyang school. Master Huwu was active as a teacher in Qi and Lu, and Dong Zhongshu taught in Zhao.[17] Gongsun Hong, who rose from commoner status to become chancellor in his old age in 124 BC, was another specialist in *Gongyang's Commentary* who was influenced somewhat by Master

[11] On this practice, see Lu Ruirong 盧瑞容, "Rujia 'tongjing zhiyong' shijian zhi kaocha—yi Xi-Han chaoting 'Chunqiu jueshi' wei zhongxin de tantao" 儒家通經致用實踐之考察—以西漢朝廷春秋決事為中心的探討, *Wen Shi Zhe xuebao* 47 (1997):1–32.

[12] *Hanshu* 24b.1160: "Gongsun Hong was made prime minister on the basis of his Confucianism [mastery of classical learning]" 公孫弘以儒相.

[13] *Hanshu* 81.3366.

[14] *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏 1.3a.

[15] *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan zhushu*, "Preface by He Xiu," 2a.

[16] *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要. *Guoxue yaoji congkan* 國學要籍叢刊 (Taipei: Han- Jing Wenhua Shiye Youxian Gongsi, 1981), *juan 26, jingbu* 經部 *26, Chunqiu* lei 春秋類 (p. 147). Two modern compilations are indispensable for any informed study of the *Gongyangzhuan*: Zhou He 周何, ed. *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan zhushu kao* 春秋公羊傳著述考. *Shisanjing zhushu kao* 十三經著述考 (Taipei: Guoli bianyiguan 國立編譯館 and Dingwen shuju 鼎文書局, 2003); and Huang Kaiguo 黃開國, *Gongyangxue fazhanshi* 公羊學發展史 (Beijing: Renimin Chubanshe, 2013).

[17] *Shiji* 121.3118; see p. 3128 for a short biographical snippet of Master Huwu.

Huwu. Out of all the interpretations from these three specialists on this text, only Dong Zhongshu's have been handed down.[18]

3.3. The Course of Canonization

After Emperor Wu ascended the throne in 140 BC, he dismissed scholars occupied with Legalist and Diplomatist (*zonghengjia* 縱橫家) thinking.[19] But to fill the ideological void, he took steps to insert Confucian theories of rulership. His first move was to establish in 136 BC five royal chairs of classical scholarship for erudites, specialists on each of the Five Classics.[20] The next year, after the death of the pro-Daoist Empress Dowager Dou 竇 太 后 (205–135 BC), the grandmother of Emperor Wu, he was able to proceed unrestrained with his reforms. The most obvious sign of these reforms occurred over a decade later, when in 124 BC he granted the appointment of disciples for the Five Erudites and established a system of bureaucratic recruitment based on excellence in classical studies.[21]

A recent review of the process of classical canonization during the Western Han emphasizes the political motivations of Han Wudi's turn towards Confucianism. Yen-zen Tsai deepens our understanding of the dynastic dynamics

[18] Previously I noted Gongsun Hong's influence on utilizing the *Spring and Autumn Annals* for guidance in political decisions. Here it should be mentioned that Ban Gu's bibliographic monograph includes a work attributed to Hong in 10 fascicles. *Hanshu* 30.1727. Two letters, two policy responses, one memorial, and one stray quote are assembled in Ma, *Yuhanshanfang jiyishu*, 6:229–30. Another work in Ban Gu's monograph (*Hanshu* 30.1713) devoted to the *Gongyangzhuan*, a *Gongyang zhangju* 公羊章句in thirty-eight fascicles, is attributed by Yu Jiaxi in a posthumous work to Master Huwu himself. See Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, "'*Hanshu* Yiwenzhi suoyin gao' xuankan (Xu, Liuyi) xia" 漢書藝文志索隱稿選刊（序， 六藝）下, *Zhongguo jingxue* 中國經學 3 (2008): 1–11; p. 5.

[19] *Hanshu* 6.154–57.

[20] *Hanshu* 6.159. Chen Hongsen asserts that it was not until 124 BC that the Five Erudites were established, a move that also included the assignment of disciples for them. See Chen Hongsen 陳鴻森, "Han Wujing Boshi sheli niandai bian" 漢五經博士設立年代辨, conference paper presented at *Shoujie Zhongguo jingxue xueshu yantaohui huiyi* 首屆中國經學學術研討會會議, held at Tsinghua University, Beijing, Nov. 5 and 6, 2005.

[21] *Hanshu* 6.172. Each of these founding and developmental steps, and more taken later throughout the dynasty, are treated in detail by Li Weixiong 李威熊, "Liang Han jingshu duzun yu jingxue zhu wenti de tantao" 兩漢經術獨尊與經學諸問題, *Keng-Meng xuebao* 42 (1981): 141–72. See further Tang Zhijun 湯志鈞, "Xi-Han de 'duzun Rushu' he jing jinguwen de xingti" 西漢的獨尊儒家和經今古文的興替, *Zhongguo jingxue* 中國經學, 3 (2008): 22–39.

at play.[22] Tsai explains that "Han Wudi's understanding of Confucianism, one has to note, was by no means value-neutral. What attracted him about this school, as expounded by Dong, was its functional quality more than anything else Han Wudi's scriptural involvement was politically motivated, and it was aimed at practical gains."[23] Tsai posits the following four reasons to support these conclusions: First, this imperial patronage of the Five Classics "thwarted, if not extinguished, the development of other philosophical schools." Second, because of Emperor Wu's expansionist policies, numerous administrators were required. Third, he recruited Confucians as specialists in the rites. And fourth, he desired to counter the growing status of Confucians by making use of their popularity for his own ends.[24] Based on reason number two, one function of canonization is the effort to control and restrict; therefore, even while promoting the use of the Confucian classics, canonization effectually placed them under the control of the state.[25]

This standard scenario for the progressive establishment of Confucianism and its entrenchment into the intellectual firmament molded traditional Chinese understanding of the history of classical scholarship. But recently, insightful reevaluation has challenged the legitimacy of this scenario. The best summary of this new conceptualization and exposition of a new chronology is by Wang Baoxuan. He argues that the formal implementation of the notion of "dismissing the hundred schools, solely venerating Confucian learning" did not take hold until the reign of Emperor Cheng (r. 33–7 BC) and proposes a tripartite schema for how it evolved. Stage 1, from the beginning of the Han in 206 BC until the establishment of the Five Erudites in 136 BC, is characterized by an open

[22] Yan-zen Tsai, "Scripture and Authority: The Political Dimension of Han Wu-ti's Canonization of the Five Classics," in *Classics and Interpretations: The Hermeneutic Tradition in Chinese Culture*, ed. Ching-I Tu (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 85–105. This entry is a dense distillation of Tsai's PhD dissertation, "*Ching* and *Chuan*: Towards Defining the Confucian Scriptures in Han China (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.)," (Harvard University, 1992).

[23] Tsai, "Scripture and Authority," 93–94. However, another political dimension, one that actually worked against Confucianism, is missed by Tsai. He asserts that during the domination of Huang-Lao thought in the early Han, Confucianism remained merely one of the ideological choices. True enough, but the fact is that a certain degree of bias was held toward Confucianism after the founding of the dynasty, given that Xiang Yu had been the Duke of Lu. After his defeat, this loyalty to him resulted in the holdout of the state of Lu against joining Liu Bang. This point is noted by Wang Baoxuan 王葆玹 in *Xi-Han jingxue yuanliu* 西漢經學源流 (Taipei: Dongda Tushu Gongsi, 1994).

[24] Tsai, "Scripture and Authority," 94.

[25] A general theoretical exposition of this notion is by Aleida and Jan Assmann, "Kannon und Zensuralskultursoziologische Kategorien," in *Kanon und Zensur: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikatin II*, Aleida und Jan Assmann, eds. (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1987), 7–27.

governing policy based on Huang- Lao ideas that encouraged acceptance of the status quo—in other words, the political system inherited from the Qin. Such a statist stance accepted all systems of thought, including the Hundred Schools alongside Confucian classics and Daoist texts. This was the inheritance of the liberal intellectual atmosphere in the Warring States period. Stage 2, from 136 BC up to the reign of Emperor Cheng (r. 33–7 BC), marked the ascendancy of the Confucian classics and the subjugation of the Hundred Schools to play subsidiary roles of "commentaries" (*zhuan* 傳) and (*ji* 記) to these classics, but they were in nowise repressed. It was only during Stage 3, from the reign of Emperor Cheng to the interregnal reign of Wang Mang 王莽 (9–23), that the Hundred Schools were dislodged from even this subsidiary role and regarded as of no consequence to the politically based intellectual arguments of the time.[26]

What has not changed in our modern perspective of the past is the debt owed by Western Han Confucians to *Gongyang's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, which became the *primus inter pares* of the Five Classics during that time. And the rationale for the popularization of the Gongyang reading of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* classic instead of the readings of Guliang or Zuo Qiuming by Emperor Wu lay in its widespread ideological utility. First, it had been used back during the reign of the founding emperor to decide the direction of succession. Even as late as 150 BC, this text was used to arbitrate the question of imperial succession; its teachings concerning primogeniture once again won the argument. The immediate beneficiary of this policy was Emperor Wu himself, ten years later. Second, it stressed the "exaltation of the lord and the abasement of ministers" (*junzun chenbei* 君尊臣卑). Third, it taught the worldview of the "grand unity" (*da yitong* 大一統) of the realm. This latter teaching was perhaps the central core of the political theory taught in the *Gongyang Commentary*. This theory on unity was buttressed by the teachings on "esteeming the yielding of kingdoms" (*chongrangguo* 崇讓國). This view was necessary due to the re-adoption of the feudal system of the Zhou, which, under the early Han, was embodied in the enfeoffment of prominent figures not related to the throne in their own "kingdoms"; later they were replaced by princes of the blood royal. But the conceit of independence fostered by the early Han's system created the threat of revolt that was real and, sadly, recurrent. *Gongyang's Commentary* supplied the ideological underpinnings to strengthen all of these components of the new and necessary conception of empire.[27]

[26] Baoxuan, *Xi-Han jingxue yuanliu*, 103–53.

[27] This section on the ideological utility of the *Gongyangzhuan* for the early Han is based on Zhang Duansui 張端穗, *Xi-Han Gongyangxue yanjiu* 西漢公羊學研究 (Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe, 2005). Zhang Duansui accepts all of the above pragmatic factors in the popularity of the *Chunqiu* according to the *Gongyang* reading in the early Han but adds an explanation based on the overriding theoretical background for the primacy of this classic among the other four during this age: the increasing reliance on objective historical truth in the argumentation of contemporary thinkers. Among

3.4. Dong Zhongshu and Confucian Classicism

During the early Western Han dynasty, Dong Zhongshu 董 仲 舒 (ca. 179–ca.104 BC) was the grand synthesizer of Confucian thought as molded to political policy. Michael Lowe characterizes his influence as follows: "Dong Zhongshu . . . contributed to the emergence of what may be termed Han Confucianism more effectively than any other thinker before Liu Xiang, thus providing an intellectual basis for the maintenance of imperial government as an integral element within the cosmic system." [28] As such a synthesizer, he is generally approached—very appropriately—more as a political philosopher than as a classicist. His synthetic view of the unified realms of Heaven, Earth, and Man and the coincidence of the cosmic with the quotidian is generally taken as epitomizing his thought. Yet his concurrent roles as teacher and classical interpreter are also acknowledged as forming the archetypal profile of Confucian master and erudite, at once establishing both the Confucian intellectual program and the classical educational project upon which it was based. In this regard, Wang Yongxiang calls Dong Zhongshu "the first great Confucian master of the Han dynasty, in the main based on his study of *Gongyang's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*. Dong inaugurated the trend of classical studies of the era and was thereby renowned in his generation" 董仲舒作為漢代地一大儒，主要以治公羊春秋開一代經學之風而聞名於世.[29] Wang further notes two great contributions that defined this great Confucian: First was his proposal to implement the policy of "dismissing the hundred schools, solely venerating Confucian learning" 罷黜百家，獨尊儒術. Second was the establishment of an examination system based on the classics to recruit officeholders.[30] Zhang Quancai crystalizes Dong's contributions to the development of classical scholarship into four categories: he "promoted and clarified Confucius" 推明孔氏, "repressed and banished the Hundred Schools" 抑黜百家, "established an educational program and taught it" 立學施教, and "mastered the classics and applied them to practical matters" 通經致用.[31]

Ban Gu reports that Dong Zhongshu emerged as the founding master of Han Confucianism due to his mastery of the *Gongyang* tradition of *Spring and Autumn Annals* interpretation combined with his promotion of *yinyang* esoterics: "When the Han arose, it came after the destruction of learning. During the epochs of

the Five Classics, the *Chunqiu* was naturally the most historically oriented and therefore of the greatest utility to this argumentation. See Zhang Duansui, "Xi-Han *Chunqiujing* chengwei wujing zhi shou zhi yuanyou" 西漢春秋經成為五經之首之緣由, *Donghai Daxue wenxueyuan xuebao* 41 (2000): 1–58.

[28] Michael Loewe, in *Routledgecurzon Encyclopedia of* Confucianism, ed. Xinzhong Yao, 2 vols. (London: Routledgecurzon and NY: Routledge, 2003), 1:191–94; p. 191.

[29] Wang Yongxiang 王永祥, *Dong Zhongshu pingzhuan* 董仲舒評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue Chubanshe, 2006), 402.

[30] Wang, *Dong Zhongshu pingzhuan*, 402.

[31] Zhang, *Liang Han jingxueshi*, 183–87.

Emperors Jing and Wu, Dong Zhongshu studied *Gongyang on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, was the first to promote *yinyang* cosmology, and became the founding patriarch of Confucian classicism" 漢興，承秦滅學之後，景、武之世，董仲舒治公羊春秋，始推陰陽，為儒者宗.[32] If there were any causal connection between these two fields of thought and Dong Zhongshu's rise to founding father, this success should be ascribed to the field of *Gongyang* interpretation, not speculative thought. This is because *Gongyang's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* provided a perfect ideological platform upon which to build the architecture of Western Han imperialism, as discussed above.

Dong Zhongshu's short mention in Siam Qian's "Grove of Confucians" is laconic to the point of being sketchy at best. If Sima had studied under Dong (as some have supposed despite the lack of any direct evidence[33]), he certainly revealed little biographical data concerning his master and only one or two details of his personality. The scholarly aspects of his story are presented by Sima Qian as follows:

> Dong Zhongshu was a man of Guangchuan. During the reign of Emperor Jing the Filial [Liu Qi 劉啟, r. 157–141 BC], he was appointed to be an erudite on the basis of his studies of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. He lectured and recited behind lowered curtains; his pupils transmitted his teachings one to the other according to seniority, some never seeing his face. Such was his assiduousness that it seems that for three years Dong Zhongshu never even gazed out at the school garden. When entering and exiting court, he would do nothing contrary to ritual in either his appearance or deportment. Students and scholars both venerated him as their master. . . . Up until his death, he never worked at an occupation, instead devoting himself to cultivating his studies and composing works. Hence, in the interval between the rise of the Han until the fifth generation, only the name of Dong Zhongshu was renowned for being enlightened in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. He transmitted the learning of *Mr. Gongyang*.
>
> 董仲舒，廣川人也。以治春秋，孝景時為博士。下帷講誦，弟子傳以久次相受業， 或莫見其面，蓋三年董仲舒不觀於舍園，其精如此。進退容止，非禮不行，學士皆師尊之。……至卒，終不治產業，以修學著書為事。故漢興至于五世之閒，唯董仲舒名為明於春秋，其傳公羊氏也。[34]

[32] *Hanshu*, "Wuxingzhi" 五行志, 27a.1317.

[33] For a recent review of this issue, see Yu Qijun 余其濬 (Trever McKay), *Shiji yu Gongyangxue* 史記與公羊學 (Master's Thesis, National Taiwan University, 2008), 81–87.

[34] *Shiji* 121.3127.

Next comes a narration of the effect Dong's dabbling in esoteric arts made on his official career outside of academia. This preoccupation started after he was made chancellor of the king of Jiangdu early in the reign of Emperor Wu.

> When the present ruler ascended the throne, Zhongshu was appointed the chancellor of Jiangdu. On the basis of the transformations of the natural disasters and anomalies recorded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, he extrapolated why yin and yang operated in strange ways. Hence when seeking rain he blocked off the yang and opened up the yin; when stopping rain he did the opposite. He performed this throughout the entire kingdom and never failed to gain the results so desired. When the court demoted him to counselor of the palace, he dwelled at home and composed a record of disasters and anomalies. At this time, after fire broke out at the imperial shrine [to Gaodi] in Liaodong, Zhufu Yan detested him, secured this work, and sent it up to the Son of Heaven. The Son of Heaven summoned all the scholars and showed them the work, some of whom criticized and satirized it. The pupil of Dong Zhongshu Lǚ Bushu did not realize that it was his master's work, regarding it as base and ignorant. Thereupon, Dong Zhongshu was demoted to scribe. He should have been executed, but he was pardoned by imperial edict. Thereupon Dong Zhongshu ultimately did not dare to speak again of disasters and anomalies.
>
> 今上即位，為江都相。以春秋災異之變推陰陽所以錯行，故求雨閉諸陽，縱諸陰， 其止雨反是。行之一國，未嘗不得所欲。中廢為中大夫，居舍，著災異之記。是時遼東高廟災，主父偃疾之，取其書奏之天子。天子召諸生示其書，有刺譏。董仲舒弟子呂步舒不知其師書，以為下愚。於是下董仲舒吏，當死，詔赦之。於是董仲舒竟不敢復言災異。[35]

Sima Qian's concluding section includes a nod to Dong's character and his political rivalry with another specialist on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*:

> Dong Zhongshu was incorruptible and upright. At that time China was resisting the four barbarian tribes. Gongsun Hong was studying the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, but was not comparable to Dong Zhongshu, but Hong had power that rarely had been seen in the world, and reached the position of one of the three highest ministers. Dong Zhongshu considered Hong to be a mere hanger-on and flatterer. So Hong detested him and spoke to His Highness, saying: "Only Dong Zhongshu can be appointed a chancellor to the king of Jiaoxi." The King of Jiaoxi had long heard of Dong Zhongshu's good conduct, and treated him well. But Dong Zhongshu feared that if he stayed long he would be implicated in a crime, so he sought a dismissal on the basis of illness and returned to live at

[35] *Shiji* 121.3127–28.

home. Up until his death.

董仲舒為人廉直。是時方外攘四夷，公孫弘治春秋不如董仲舒，而弘希世用事，位至公卿。董仲舒以弘為從諛。弘疾之，乃言上曰：獨董仲舒可使相繆西王。膠西王素聞董仲舒有行，亦善待之。董仲舒恐久獲罪，疾免居家。至卒。[36]

The biography concludes with the lines already translated above concerning his avoidance of a commercial career, his unique enlightenment in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and his transmission of *Gongyang's Commentary*.

Ban Gu 班 固 (32–92) composed an individual biography for Dong that was considerably expanded and included the texts of three of Dong's memorials to the throne and other matter.[37] It is admirably utilized by Sarah Queen to provide the foundation of a more expansive view of Dong's life.[38] But it is useful to limit our view of Dong here to what Sima Qian presented about him in order to approach a more refined understanding of Sima Qian's ambiguous views of Dong. Ban Gu obviously supported the harnessing of classical studies to the training and recruitment of officials and saw nothing wrong with officialdom as the viaduct to prosperity and fame; he also was an ardent advocate of the monolithic power of the house of Liu under the Western Han as far as it justified the same policy under the Eastern Han. He could therefore fully extol Dong Zhongshu's career as well as happily present his thought in detail.

Sima Qian is reticent to mention Dong's thought in this biographical sketch. From the language of Sima Qian's postface to his history, it is obvious that he greatly respected Dong Zhongshu. A prominent instance of this is when Sima Qian cites Dong for his understanding of Confucius's rationale for composing the *Spring and Autumn Annals*:

> The Senior Counsellor Hu Sui asked, "Formerly why did Confucius compose the *Spring and Autumn Annals*?" The Grand Historian said, "I heard Master Dong say, 'When the Way of Zhou declined and was abandoned, Confucius was the Superintendent of Police; the various feudal princes felt threatened by him, and the grandees at court obstructed him. Confucius realized that his teachings were not being adopted and that the Way would not be enacted. He confirmed the rights and wrongs of two-hundred and forty-two years to serve as the standard of the world. He censured the Son of Heaven, disparaged the feudal princes, and chastised the grandees for the sole purpose of clarifying royal affairs.'"

上大夫壺遂曰：昔孔子何為而作春秋哉？太史公曰：余聞董生曰：周道衰廢，孔子為魯司寇，諸侯害之，大夫壅之。孔子知言之不用，道之不行也，是非二百四十二年之中，以為天下儀表，貶天子，退諸侯，討大夫，以達王事而已矣。[39]

Yet, unlike Ban Gu, he includes none of Dong's famous memorials to the throne, nor does he attempt to explain Dong's philosophy. It may appear contradictory to praise Dong in the postface but skim over him briefly in the collective biography of classicists. The first source concerns his scholarship and abandonment of careerism; the latter mentions his thought almost in the ether, devoid of any political framework. Could it be that Sima Qian endorses Dong for his moral example and mastery of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* yet opposes how Dong applied his learning in the service of the policies of Emperor Wu? The last sentence from the "Grove of Confucians" collective biography lends some support to this reading and underscores Sima Qian's odd habit of understated criticism—a practice widely dispersed, as he often reserves it for treatment elsewhere in his history outside of his short biographical epitomes or even formal biographies: "And Dong Zhongshu's sons and grandsons all reached high office on the basis of their learning" 而董仲舒子及孫皆以學至大官.[40] This line can be viewed as a negative condemnation from the perspective of the narrative aim of the entire chapter. I will examine the narratology of Sima Qian's collective biography of classicists later on, especially focusing on the narratological purport of which biographical details are left out and which are included, but suffice it to state here that among Sima Qian's criticisms of the official commandeering of classical learning by the court is his very obvious denunciation of how it was co-opted for the purpose of bureaucratic success and pecuniary reward. Since the line quoted previously concerning the high office reached by Dong Zhongshu's descendants concludes Sima Qian's collective treatment of Confucian classicists, it can be viewed as a summation of the worst of these official offenses against the purely intellectual purpose and moral application of classical scholarship. And it should be recalled that Sima Qian's biography of Dong concludes not with the highlights of his official career but with his specialty as a classicist on *Gongyang's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*.

[36] *Shiji* 121.3128.

[37] *Hanshu* 56.2495–2528.

[38] Sarah A. Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon: The Hermeneutics of the* Spring and Autumn Annals *According to Tung Chung-shu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13–38. Other works devoted to Dong run more along the lines of intellectual biographies or textual studies of his *Chunqiu fanlu*. For examples of the former, see Wang Gaoxin 汪高鑫, *Dong Zhongzhu yu Handai lishi sixiang yanjiu* 董仲舒与汉代历史思想研究 (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2012); Li Weixiong 李威熊, *Dong Zhongshu yu Xi-Han xueshu* 董仲舒與西漢學術 (Taipei: Wenshizhe Chubanshe, 2012); and Huang Pumin 黃朴民, *Tian ren heyi: Dong Zhongshu yu Liang Han Ruxue sichao yanjiu* 天人合一：董仲舒与两汉思潮研究 (Changsha: Yu-Lu shushe, 2013); for the latter, see Michael Loewe, ed., *Dong Zhongshu, A 'Confucian' Heritage and the Chunqiu fanlu* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) and the above-mentioned work by Queen.

[39] *Shiji* 130.3297.

[40] *Shiji* 121.3129.

3.4.1. Dong Zhongshu as Classical Hermeneut

Before delving into the thought of Dong Zhongshu as it relates to classical scholarship, I must first point out the allusive, impressionistic nature of his interpretive approach. Dong's heuristic goal is to learn the lessons of the past to guide future political actions, usually put as the "grand meaning" (*dayi* 大義), but this is not done by focusing on the text of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and its events but on its message. It is true that this "grand meaning" is often embodied in multivalent terminology, parsed by classicists as its "subtle wording and grand meaning" (*weiyan dayi* 微言大義). The implications of this roundabout way of expression are often only teased out by revealing hidden associations, connecting widespread threads, uncovering historical contexts, and defining specialized terminology. This approach that stresses hermeneutics over textual exegesis is natural, given the orientation of Dong Zhongshu's classical scholarship as based on *Gongyang's Commentary*, which, together with *Guliang's Commentary*, was concerned primarily with the political and philosophical significance of the narrative and rhetoric of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and its specialized terminology, not with explaining the historical background of events chronicled within or identifying historical personages involved in such events.

This overall approach is seen in the opening line of the "Jinghua" 精華 chapter of Dong's masterpiece: "The *Spring and Autumn Annals* is prudent in its diction and careful in its rankings of statuses and positions" 春秋慎辭，謹於名倫等物者也.[41] He illustrates these points with a treatment of why certain technical terms in warfare are appropriate for describing the Chinese or large-scale action but not applicable to native peoples or small-scale action. His conclusion is that "for this reason, great and small do not exceed their levels, and noble and base are commensurate with their positions; this is the correct doctrine" 是故大小不逾等，貴賤如其倫，義之正也.[42] Later in this chapter he explains his allusive hermeneutics:

> The ancients had a saying that went: "If one does not know the future, see it in the past." Now the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as a field of study is something that speaks of what has gone before and clarifies what is to come. Nevertheless, its terminology embodies the subtleties of Heaven, hence this terminology is hard to understand. If one is unable to examine it closely, it remains silent as if meaningless. If one is able to examine it closely, everything is contained. For this reason, if those who study the *Spring and Autumn Annals* link it all together when grasping one end, see one opening and broadly connect it up, then all-under-heaven is revealed.
>
> 古之人有言曰：不知來，視諸往。今春秋之為學也，道往而明來者也。然而其辭體天之微，故難知也。弗能察，寂若無；能察之，無物不在。是故為《春秋》者，得一端而多連之，見一空而博貫之，則天下盡矣。[43]

The inherent possibility, even necessity, of a reading from the perspective of micro- intertextuality, or intra-textual comparative reading, is also revealed in the "Zhulin" 竹林 chapter. Dong states that "the *Spring and Autumn Annals* records the gains and losses of the world and reveals the reasons for it being so. It is highly obscure yet clear; lacks exposition yet is evident; this must be examined" 春秋記天下之得失，而見所以然之故。甚幽而明，無傳而著，不可不察.[44] Without the micro-intertextuality reading described above as "linking it all together when grasping one end, seeing one opening and broadly connecting it up," it would be impossible to reveal the reasons for the gains and losses of the world. The "Yubei" 玉杯 chapter provides a convenient conclusion to the approach of intertextuality required to comprehend the "grand meaning" of this classic:

> For these reasons, those who discourse on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* must penetrate it through comprehensiveness, seek it through its causalities, group what can be compared, peruse related categories together, and eliminate its superfluities. By these means the Way of men may be made pervasive and the methods of kings established.
>
> 是故論《春秋》者，合而通之，緣而求之，五其比，偶其類，覽其緒，屠其贅，是以人道浹而王法立以為天下儀表，貶天子，退諸侯，討大夫，以達王事而已矣。[45]

Huang Kaiguo describes Dong Zhongshu's shifting semantics of terminology, with the meaning often dependent on context more than etymology, as the interplay between "constant diction" (*changci* 常辭) and "temporary diction" (*bianci* 變辭).[46]

Elsewhere in the "Jinghua" chapter, the same flexibility of interpretation granted by Dong to the reading of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is also granted to the other earliest classics:

> I have heard that there are no universally applicable glosses in the *Poems*, there are no universally applicable prognostications in the *Changes*, and

[41] Zhong Zhaopeng 鍾肇朋, ed. *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi* 春秋繁露校釋, 2 vols. (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renmin Chubanshe, 2005), "Jinghua" 精華, 1:159. The new complete translation by Queen and Major reappeared too late to be of use to the current study; consult Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*. Translations from the Asian Classics (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[42] Zhong, *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, 1:159.

[43] Zhong, *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, 1:186.

[44] Zhong, *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, "Zhulin", 1:97.

[45] Ibid, "Yubei", 1:50.

[46] Huang Kaiguo, *Gongyangxue fazhanshi*, 233–37.

there are no universally applicable terms in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*; whether they derive from flexible adaptability or constant principle, they are all for the purpose of according with heaven.

所聞詩無達詁，易無達佔，春秋無達辭，從變從義，而一以奉人[=天]。[47]

This is clearly an invitation to approach these classics within the paradigm of contextualized reading; it is an appeal to authority from intertextual hermeneutics, not from textual exegesis.[48]

Yet modern specialist Chen Ming'en unintentionally suggests an opening for a more philologically based reading. He argues that Dong Zhongshu's hermeneutics is prefaced by an approach to textual reading (*jiedu* 解 讀) that focuses on three thematic categories: the "beginning" (*duan* 端), "section" (*ke* 科), and "point" (*zhi* 指).[49] Chen finds two beginnings, six sections, and ten points that form the presentation of Dong's cosmological and political thought. Yet I suspect that these three terms may also suggest a reading of this classic in a more literal sense, exegesis undertaken on three different levels, re-translating these three terms as "superficial meaning" (*duan* 端), "category" (*ke* 科), and "purport" (*zhi* 指). It is for this reason that Dong's statement that "there are no universally applicable terms" in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is valid in that a word, given the particular narrative context, sometimes requires an approach on one of the three levels, sometimes an approach on another level. It is the combination of all of these categories that allows readers to reach a comprehensive understanding of the "subtle words" of the *Spring and Autumn Annals.* And it is Dong's comprehensive linkage of disconnected threads, scattered inferences, and

[47] *Chiunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, "Jinhua," 1:181. This quote must derive from an edition of the *Gongyang zhuan* that is no longer extant. Liu Xiang's 劉向 (77–6 BC) *Shuoyuan* 說苑, "Fengshi" 奉使, preserves a variant orthography on the original *da* 達 , that of *tong* 通 , with no change in meaning. See the notes of the modern editors of Wang Yinglin 王應麟, *Kunxue jiwen* 困學紀聞, 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2008), 2:757–58, and the notes on textual variants in *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, 1:182–83.

[48] See the treatment by Huang Kaiguo, *Gongyangxue fazhanshi*, 237–39.

[49] Chen Ming'en 陳明恩, "Dong Zhongshu Chunqiuxue zhi yifa lilun—duan, ke, zhi tiaoli zhi xue de jiangou ji qi neihan" 董仲舒春秋學之義法理論—端、科、指條例之學的建構及其內涵, *Zhongguo Xueshu nankan* 中國學術年刊 , no. 27, Spring (2005): 1–18; accessed at http://ch.ntnu.edu.tw/SIS/app/paper.php?action=show_content&Sn=393. For this and similar studies, see also his *Quanshi yu jiangou: Dong Zhongshu Chunqiuxue de xingcheng yu kaizhan* 詮釋與建構董仲舒春秋學的形成與開展 (Taibei: Xiuwei Zixun Keji, 2011).

disparate narratives that reveals the "grand meaning" of the text.[50] If this view is valid, Dong's approach to this classic may be characterized at its first stage as contextualized textuality before undertaking his more refined intertextual hermeneutics.

3.4.2. The Six Aims of the Spring and Autumn Annals

Dong Zhongshu once provided some guidance to traverse the fecund field of his thought by adumbrating the six main aims of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. In his chapter "Correcting Connections" 正貫, these six main aims in turn identify the major themes of his commentarial masterpiece.

The first aim is "Citing the Heavenly Commencement" 援 天端. This commencement refers to spring as the first of the four seasons. To cite it is to follow this natural order of heaven, especially in the political realm. Zhu Yongjia and Wang Zhichang, editors of a modern Chinese translation, indicate that Dong uses two avenues to convey his ideas on this natural order: first is the theory of the portents of calamities and disasters, and the second is how the king imitates Heaven in his rulership, the subject under discussion in this chapter.[51] The *Spring and Autumn Annals* commences by associating the king with spring: "During spring of the prime year the king corrects the proper month" 元年春王正月.[52] Dong quotes an abbreviated version of this line and the response of *Gongyang's Commentary* in his chapter "Sandai gaizhi zhiwen" 三代改制質文:

The *Spring and Autumn Annals* states, "The king corrects the proper month." The commentary states, "To whom does king refer? It refers to King Wen. Why does it first state 'king' then afterwards states 'to correct the proper month'? The king corrects the proper month. Why does it state that the king corrects the proper month? Answer: the king must receive the mandate and then become king. The king must change the correct calendar, change ritual clothing and colors, devise the rites and music, and make them all uniform under heaven."

春秋曰王正月，傳曰：王者孰謂？謂文王也。曷為先言王而後言正月？王正月也。何以謂之王正月？曰：王者必受命而後王。王魯和改正朔，易服色，制禮樂，一統於天下。[53]

In his masterpiece, Dong creates the need for an intertextual reading of his own work by placing his commentary on this passage elsewhere, a not-uncommon

[50] Chen Ming'en 陳明恩, "Dong Zhongshu *Chunqiu* Gongyangxue jiejing fangfa xilun" 董仲舒春秋公羊學解經析論, *Jingxue* 8 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 2000): 209–48.

[51] Zhu Yangjia 朱永嘉 and Wang Zhichang 王知常, *Xinyi Chunqiu fanlu* 新譯春秋繁露 (Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 2007), 1:378.

[52] *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏 (SSJ ed.),1.5a.

[53] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, "Sandai gaizhi zhiwen," 1:421.

narratological practice of his. In "Zhulin" he writes, "As for the ordering of terminology in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, he placed 'king'; in between 'spring' and 'to correct'; isn't this stating to follow heaven's dispensations above and to correct the people below? Afterwards one may become king, and so on" 春秋之序辭也，置王於春正之間，非日上奉天施而下正人，然後可以為王也云爾.[54] Dong ultimately lays this interplay between Heaven, spring, and the establishment of an official calendar at the feet of Confucius: "As for Zhongni's compilation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, above he sought to correct Heaven's commencement and the positions of kings and dukes and what the myriad hosts desired, and below to clarify the causes of gains and losses and raise up the worthy and talented, to await a later sage" 仲尼之作春秋也上探正天端王公之位，萬民之所欲，下明得失起賢才，以待後聖。[55]

The second aim is "To Record Gains and Losses" 志 得 失 , a reflection of Dong's exemplar historiography. Already cited is the following relevant quote: "The ancients had a saying that went: 'If one does not know the future, see it in the past.' Now the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as a field of study is something that speaks of what has gone before and clarifies what is to come."[56] Therefore past history holds guidance for present and future political actions—a strong endorsement to read this classic with, of course, guidance from Dong's commentary.

The third aim is "To Affix Guilt and Set Punishment" 論罪定誅. A snippet from the chapter "Jinghua" explains Dong's legal philosophy in brief:

> As for the adjudication of crimes in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, it must be based on the facts and the motivations must be traced. For one whose motivations are evil, he can be charged before even committing a crime; the leading figure in a crime should be dealt with special harshness. One with a just rationale should be judged lightly.
>
> 春秋之聽獄也，必本其事而原其誌。誌邪者不待成，首惡者罪特重，本直者其論輕。[57]

In considering mitigating factors, Dong's legal views are as context-based as his classical hermeneutics. This aspect of Dong's thought must have played a large part in his pragmatic approach to this classic, for he composed an additional work of commentary, *Dong Zhongshu Adjudicates Cases according to the Gongyang*, in 16 fascicles 公羊董仲舒治獄十六篇.[58] It must have been lost early on, for in the thirteenth century Wang Yinglin could only find three quotes

[54] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, "Zhulin," 1:108.
[55] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, "Yuxu" 俞序, 1:356.
[56] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, "Jinghua," 1:186.
[57] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi* 1:177.
[58] *Hanshu* 30.1714.

preserved in two encyclopedic sources, two in the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 and one in the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚.[59]

The fourth aim is "To Establish the Doctrine and Determine the Order" 立義定序, or to clarify the relative positions between lord and minister. Dong approaches this man-made political order by placing it within the context of the natural Heaven- man relationship in the "Lihe gen" 離合根 chapter:

> Heaven elevates its position and manifests its phenomena below, conceals its actions yet reveals its light. It elevates its position to be venerated; it manifests its phenomena below in order to be humane; it conceals its actions in order to be spiritual; manifests its light in order to be brilliant. Hence the way its position is venerated and it dispenses humaneness, conceals its spirituality and manifests its light, is the actions of Heaven. Hence the lord of men models Heaven in his conduct. For this reason he deeply conceals himself within and thereby appears spiritual; he is broad of vision without and thereby appears enlightened. He employs the collective worthies and thereby gets things done. He therefore does not himself labor in state affairs and thereby is honored. He loves all life, does not reward or punish on the basis of joy or rage, and thereby acts humanely. Therefore, the lord of men takes non-action as his Way and regards lack of self-interest as precious. He is established in the position of non-action and utilizes officials with means at their disposal; this is sufficient to not need to take action himself while his aides guide and advise For this reason no one sees his actions yet merit is accomplished. This is why this type of lord of men models himself on the actions of Heaven.
>
> 高其位而下其施，藏其行而見其光，高其位所以為尊也，下其施所以為仁也，藏其行所以為神，見其光所以為明，故位尊而施仁，藏神而見光者，天之行也。故為人主者，法天之行，是故內深藏，所以為神；外博觀，所以為明也；任羣賢，所以為受成；乃不自勞於事，所以為尊也；汎愛羣生，不以喜怒賞罰，所以為仁也。故為人主者，以無為為道，以不私為寶。立無為之位而乘備具之官，足不自動而相者導進。 故莫見其為之而功成矣。此人主所以法天之行也。[60]

Elsewhere in the same chapter, Dong describes how ministers should model themselves on the earth:

> Those who serve as ministers model themselves after the way of earth;

[59] Wang Yinglin, *Kunxue jiwen*, 2:759. Wang terms the book Dong Zhongshu's *Chunqiu jueyu* 春秋決獄, or *Adjuticating Cases According to the Chunqiu.* For six Qing and Republican compilations of scattered passages from this work, see Sun and Chen, eds., *Zhongguo guyishu jiben mulu jieti*, 62.
[60] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi* 1:371.

they reveal their appearances, let their qualities show to demonstrate to men. Like earth's topography—high and low, sheer and level, firm and soft, rigid and pliant, fertile and barren, good and bad—good and bad qualities add up for the lord to tailor the use of his ministers. Hence whether their appearances be suitable or not, they may be recruited and tailored. Those who act as ministers, in comparison to the earth, value being trustworthy and manifest all their qualities before their lord; the lord may then recruit and tailor them. Hence the royal is held in awe and not rendered ineffective. Those who serve as ministers constantly exhaust their qualities and strengths to manifest their weaknesses and strengths, causing their lords to recruit and value them in their assignments. This is just like the earth's complete manifestation of its own qualities, hence they are easily gained ["recruited"] and tailored for use.

為人臣者法地之道，暴其形，出其情以示人，高下、險易、堅耎、剛柔、肥臞、美惡，累可就財[=裁]也。故其形宜不宜，可得而財也。為人臣者比地貴信而悉見其情於主，主亦得而財之，故王道威而不失。為人臣常竭情悉力而見其短長，使主上得而器使之，而猶地之竭竟其情也，故其形宜可得而財也。[61]

The doctrine of the ruler modeling after heaven above and ministers imitating the earth below thus should be a spontaneous conforming to both the natural cycles of heaven and the given qualities of the earth. Therefore, the actions of both ruler and ministers—how the one rules and how the others serve—confirm the order of their positions in the hierarchy of both heavenly and earthly realms. This cosmologically based ontology provides a political system that is both theoretically well-conceived and buttressed by observable celestial and terrestrial phenomena.

The fifth aim is "Record Sagacious Methods and Express the Doctrine of Yielding" 戴賢方表謙義, a reference to Dong's thought on the interplay between maintaining constant principles while adopting temporary expediency on occasion. If this dual approach is adopted, taking a step backward in order to move forward, or taking a crooked path in order to return to the straight one, "then we will witness a return to the orthodox among all the expedient means" 見復正焉耳.[62] In the context of treating the differences between "unvarying rites" (*jingli* 經 禮) and "modified rites" (*bianli* 變 禮), the "Yuying" 玉 英 chapter expresses this duality simply, as follows: "Be enlightened concerning the matters of unvarying and modified rites; afterwards one may realize the distinction between light and heavy and may utilize with appropriateness the expedient" 明乎經變之事，然後知輕重之分，可與適權矣。[63] The sixth and final aim is less an aim than an approach to the reading of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, a mindset-cum-methodology for approaching its overall interpretation and, to a lesser extent, its specific exegesis. Dong described this effort as needed due to the nature of this classic's "subtle words and grand meaning," which are "obscure and hidden, not amenable to a comparative evaluation, yet when delving deeply then its essence is attained" 幽隱不相踰 [=諭] 而近之則密矣. It accommodates Dong's flexible hermeneutics in that context governs interpretation and linguistic level governs exegesis. This approach was addressed previously, so it will not be repeated here.

[61] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi* 1:374.
[62] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, "Zhengguan," 1:305.

Dong Zhongshu accomplished these six commentarial aims with elegant prose, incisive argumentation, expansive scope of vision, and politically useful application. Add to all of this his sterling personal example of moral probity and scholarly dedication, and it is easy to see why he has been called the founding ancestor of Confucian classicism. The next universalist to be treated, Sima Qian, was equally eminent in his field and his scholarly legacy equally pervasive and perpetual. Yet he dedicated his universal historical vision to negating the nefast use of Confucian classical scholarship made by the house of Han. What Dong Zhongshu strove to undergird by his classical hermeneutics, Sima Qian dedicated himself to undermine by his classically based historiography.

3.5. Sima Qian, the Historian's Records, and the "Grove of Confucians"

Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 BC–ca. 86 BC), like Dong Zhongshu before him, does not elicit the association of classicist upon first notice. His role as Grand Historian— chronicling the history of China from legendary times to the reigning son of heaven, Emperor Wu—and the stamp his historical work placed on the written format and historiographical consciousness of all later historians understandably overwhelms any other perception of his intellectual profile. This is especially true in that he is regarded as the father of Chinese historiography on a level of eminence enjoyed by that of Herodotus (ca. 484–ca. 425 BC) in the West, with whom Qian is often compared.[64] Yet he was impelled on his project

[63] *Chunqiu fanlu jiaoshi*, "Yuying," 1:129.
[64] For a comparison along these lines, see Deng Siyu 邓嗣禹, "Sima Qian yu Xiluoduode (Herodotus) zhi bijiao" 司马迁与西罗多德 (Herodotus) 之比较, in Ju Lindong 瞿林东, ed., *20 Shiji Ershisishi yanjiu congshu* 20 世纪二十四史研究丛书, vol. 3, *Shiji yanjiu* 史记研究, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo Da Baikequanshu Chubanshe, 2009), 2:455–81. A major point of comparison is their respective treatments of the foreign peoples, especially nomadic folk, beyond their civilized realms; on this consult Hyun Jin Kim, "Herodotus and Sima Qian," in his *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China* (London: Duckworth, 2009), 72–99, and Siep Stuurman, "Herodotus and Sima Qian: History and the Anthropological Turn in Ancient Greece and Han China," *Journal of World History* 19 (2008): 1–40. Another

of composing a universal history in adherence to the principle of filial piety; his patrimony was the historical vision and several completed chapters of a history of China bequeathed to him by the deathbed injunction of his father.[65] It is not strange, then, that other traditional Chinese virtues informed his work as subtle narrative backdrops, if not overt thematic guidelines. My treatment of Sima Qian and his great work here will therefore examine his role as classicist more than his role as historian. This can be accomplished by analyzing not only his use of the classics to compose his history but also the narratology of his work, especially that of his collective biography of Confucian scholars, teachers, and bureaucrats, called the "Grove of Confucians" 儒林列傳.

3.5.1. The Life of Sima Qian

Sima Qian's self-styled "self-postface" 自 序 is the foundation of our understanding of Sima Qian and his work. It serves as the concluding chapter, in which he describes the purport of his work and also reviews the aim of each chapter *ad seriatim*. It further records his ancestral background in the office of astrologer, his historian-father Sima Tan's 司 馬 談 (d. 110 BC) commitment to composing a universal history, Tan's essay defining the parameters, strengths, and weaknesses of each major school in his "Treatise on the Essential Aims of Six Schools" 論六家要指, and Tan's deathbed injunction to his son to continue his work.[66]

This chapter commences with autobiography composed in the third person: "Qian was born at Longmen and plowed and pastured at the south of the mountain. When he was ten he could recite old text classics" 遷生龍門，耕牧河山之陽。年十歲則誦古文. Given the nature of Chinese historiographical convention,

occasional foil for comparison is the Roman historian Tacitus; see Fritz-Heiner Mutschler, "Tacitus und Sima Qian: persönliche Erfahrung und historiographische Perspektive," *Philologus* 151 (2007): 127–52.

[65] Some modern Chinese scholars have seen evidence of the hand of Sima Tan in composing thirty-six chapters in the *Shiji* that range across all five generic divisions and even grant him sole authorship of these chapters. Zhang Dake reviews the evidence and concedes the influence of Sima Tan on this history, but he denies the logic and methodology behind the ability to ascribe individual chapters to him. See Zhang Dake, "Sima Tan zuoshi kaolun shuping" 司马谈作史考论书评, in *Shiji yanjiu* 史记研究, *Zhang Dake wenji* 张大可文集, vol. 2 (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2013), 49–61. Zhang Dake' s article first appeared in 1984; a more recent recapitulation by another scholar isolates some twenty-two chapters that strongly suggest Sima Tan's authorship, or at least his initial draft for his son's later revision. See Zhao Shengjun 赵生群, "Sima Tan zuoshi kaoshu" 司马谈作史考述, in *Shiji wenxianxue conggao* 史记文献 学丛稿 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 2000), 69–88.

[66] *Shiji* 130.3285–3322; reproduced in *Hanshu* 30:2707–39 with comments by Ban Gu

these so-called facts are subject to varying degrees of credence. In point of fact, Sima Qian was born some seventy Chinese *li* south of Mount Longmen in the hamlet of Zhichuan 芝川鎮, Hancheng 韓 城 縣 prefecture, Shanxi Province. Furthermore, he may have truly occupied himself in "plowing and pasturing," but this depiction was also a conventional trope indicating the time before one takes up office; the device was probably used here to play up the salopian charm of his childhood setting, reminiscent of certain poems of the English classicist A. E. Housman (1859–1936) describing his homeland and the idyllic boyhood he spent there. Given Sima Qian's mastery of classical learning, he must have been a precocious and assiduous student, even if he did spend some time outdoors, leading a serene lifestyle as herd boy and plowboy in a bucolic setting.[67]

As to his studies during this period, Wang Guowei 王 國 維 (1877–1927) reasonably posits that, before Sima Qian accompanied his father to the capital when his father assumed office, he "certainly had already been instructed in the works of 'elementary learning' with a teacher in his village school hence at ten years of age he was able to recite ancient texts" 必已就閭里書師受小學書，故十歲而能誦古文.[68] This assumption is based, of course, on Wang's knowledge of Han educational practice, not any particular historical evidence. It was at the capital that Sima Qian studied the *Documents* with Kong Anguo 孔安國 (ca. 156–ca.74 BC) and either studied with Dong Zhongshu or heard him lecture on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.[69] Zhang Dake argues that Sima Qian had already mastered these texts before arriving in the capital, implied by the seemingly smug phraseology of the original that Wang Guowei's paraphrase glosses over: "At ten years of age he then recited ancient texts" 年十歲則誦古文, the use of the conditional *ze* 則 implying a degree of pride at his own precocity. His learning was based initially on a local village teacher and later on his rich family tradition of scholarship (*jiaxue* 家學).[70] It is this family tradition that I feel gave him his ecumenical approach to the classics, since he did not owe allegiance to any particular master, whether Dong Zhongshu or Kong Anguo. For instance, in his

[67] According to the annotations of Zhang Dake 張大可, *Shiji quanben xinzhu* 史记全本新注 (Xi'an: San- Qin Chubanshe, 1990), 4:2134.

[68] Wang Guowei, "Taishigong xingnian kao" 太史公行年考, in *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2004), 1:481–514, p. 484.

[69] Yu Qijun 余其濬 (Trever McKay) isolates four other informal teachers in addition to Kong Anguo and Dong Zhongshu, from whom Sima Qian learned through personal visits or interviews: a Confucian scholar, one Master Zhou 周生; a source for data on the Xiongnu Tian Ren 田仁 (d. 91 BC); the knight- errant Guo Jie 郭 解 ; and General Li Guang 李 廣 (d. 119 BC). See Yu's *Sima Qian shishi qiushi jingsheng tanwei* 司馬遷實事求是精神探微 (PhD diss., National Taiwan University, 2014), 134–140.

[70] Zhang Dake, *Sima Qian pingzhuan* 司马迁评传 (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue Chubanshe, 1994), 31. Chapter 3 of this work details Sima Qian's family tradition of scholarship.

portrayal of the Zhou period, he follows *Zuo's Commentary* for historical narrative but utilizes *Gongyang's Commentary* for political and moral interpretations, and he adopts both Old Text and New Text stances for the *Documents*. [71] For this reason, I endorse Zhang Dake's reading of Sima Qian's educational path as most plausible. Incidentally, I follow Wang Guowei in his explanation of *guwen* 古文 in this context as "ancient writings," meaning texts written in the Great Seal or other pre-Qin reform scripts, not the so-called Old Text school of classical exegesis.[72] Hsŭ Fu-kuan 徐復觀 (Xu Fuguan, 1904–1982) rather reads the term *guwen* as ancient scripts, meaning regional styles of calligraphy in use in individual states before the writing was unified under the Qin, rather than the texts written in such scripts.[73]

Next, Sima Qian's autobiographical "Self-Postface" devotes much space to detailing the remarkable range of his travels. Zhang Dake asserts that Sima Qian's extensive travels are what qualified him to investigate all aspects of Chinese society, an assertion easily believed.[74] Zhang divides Sima Qian's travels into three stages: First was what Zhang terms the "grand tour" of two or three years' duration that Sima Qian took when he was twenty. A detailed look at the "Self-Postface" follows:

> When he was twenty he traveled around the Jiang and Huai rivers, and ascended to Kuaiji, probed the Cavern of Yu, peered around Jiuyi, and floated down the Yuan and Xiang. To the north he crossed the Wen and Si [in Shandong], studied and investigated in the capitals of Qi and Lu, and inspected the residual customs of Confucius and the regional archery rites at Zou and Yi. He was in straights in Bo, Xue, and Pengcheng, and passed through Liang and Chu on his way back. Thereupon he served as Court Gentleman of the Interior.
>
> 二十而南游江、淮，上會稽，探禹穴，闚九疑，浮於沅、湘；北涉汶、泗，講業齊、魯之都，觀孔子之遺風，鄉射鄒、嶧；戹困鄱、薛、彭城，過梁、楚以歸。於是遷 仕為郎中。[75]

Second, Sima Qian "was sent westward on an expedition, travelling south of Ba and Shu. To the south he plundered Jiong, Zuo, and Kunming. He returned and reported" 奉使西徵巴、蜀以南，南略邛、笮、昆明，還報命.[76] This expedition took fifteen months.[77] Third, he accompanied Emperor Wu for thirty years on his imperial trips.[78] The necessity of travel on official business provided him the opportunity to observe many of the sites and scenes where the great events in both ancient and recent Chinese history had occurred, to gather local legends and eye-witness accounts, and to study at the centers of Confucian classicism in Qi and Lu.

The next section of his biography records Sima Tan's deathbed scene as he enjoins his son to continue his work of history. His death was brought on by the deep and debilitating resentment he felt at being left out of the retinue of Emperor Wu when he toured Shandong to inaugurate the *feng* 封 ritual on Mount Tai:

> After I die, I am sure you will be the Grand Scribe. When you become the Grand Scribe, do not forget what I have intended to edit and write. Moreover, filial love begins with the serving of one's parents, next goes with the serving of one's lord, and ends with the establishment of oneself and making one's name known to posterity, thereby distinguishing one's parents. This is the greatest kind of filial love.
>
> 余死，汝必為太史；為太史，無忘吾所欲論著矣。且夫孝始於事親，中於事君，終於立身。揚名於後世，以顯父母，此孝之大者。[79]

After detailing the sad corruption of the royal way and the slow decline of the rites and music with the Zhou court's removal to Loyang in 771 BC, Sima Tan narrated Confucius's attempt to save the age through his editorial work on the classics in order to provide moral models worthy of emulation. Tan continues with the chaos of the internecine fighting among the feudal princes after the death of Confucius and the loss of historical records during the Warring States period up to the rise of the house of Han:

> "Now Han has arisen and the lands within the seas are ruled under one. I have been the Grand Scribe yet failed to compile and record [the stories] of those enlightened rulers and worthy lords, the faithful vassals and righteous men, neglecting the civilized endeavors of the world. I am extremely uneasy about this. This you should contemplate!" Sima Qian bowed his head, wept, and said: "This young man is not clever, but with your permission, he shall compile all the old traditions which you, his ancestor, have delineated and would not venture to be remiss.
>
> 今漢興，海內一統，明主賢君忠臣死義之士，余為太史而弗論載，廢天下之史文， 余甚懼焉，汝其念哉！遷俯首流涕曰：小子不敏，請悉論先人所次舊聞，弗敢闕。[80]

[71] Sima Qian's ecumenical approach to each of the Five Classics is analyzed with persuasive depth of detail in Chen Tongsheng 陳桐生, *Rujia jingzhuan wenhua yu Shiji* 儒家經傳文化與史記 (Taipei: Hongye Wenhua 洪葉文化, 2002).
[72] Wang, "*Shiji* suowei guwen shuo" 史記所謂古文說, in *Guantang jilin*, 1:307–312.
[73] Hsu, *Liang Han sixiangshi*, 3:309.
[74] Zhang, *Sima Qian pingzhuan*, 41.
[75] *Shiji* 130.3293.
[76] *Shiji* 130.3293.
[77] *Shiji* 130.3293.
[78] Zhang, *Sima Qian pingzhuan*, 41. See pages 42–43 for a list of 10 representative citations from the *Shiji* detailing specific trips and sites visited.
[79] *Shiji* 130.3295; William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., trans., *The Grand Scribe's Records*, 7 vols. to date (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995–2016), 1:ix, translating the parallel text of *Hanshu* 30.2715–16.
[80] *Shiji* 130.3295.

The Sima Qian's motivations that are revealed in this account include filial piety, the injunction to continue his father's work, and the need for exemplar historiography—an imperative seemingly latent in most ancient Chinese literature— to reveal the moral lessons of the past through the lives of great historical worthies. Another, even more powerful, inducement is revealed in a later passage and is derived from another quote from his lamented father:

> His Honor the Grand Scribe said, "My father once stated, 'Confucius arose five hundred years after the death of the Duke of Zhou. It has also been five hundred years since the death of Confucius up to the present. Is this now the juncture during which one may connect and clarify the ages, correct the *Changes* and its commentaries, continue the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and ground the *Poems*, *Documents*, *Rites* and *Music*?' My intent lies in this, my intent lies in this! How can this lowly one dare to neglect this work?"
>
> 太史公曰：先人有言：自周公卒五百歲而有孔子。孔子卒後至於今五百歲，有能紹明世，正易傳，繼春秋，本詩書禮樂之際？意在斯乎！意在斯乎！小子何敢讓焉。[81]

Ranking himself among the sages who appear every five hundred years may seem to be the highest hubris on the part of Sima Qian, but it has always been the burden of classicists over the ages to actualize their latent moral potentials to perfect themselves through scholarship and state service and strive towards sagehood. If that is unattainable, then worthiness; if not that, then at least gentility. For Sima Qian, striving for sagehood was one means to redeem his hero Confucius, and to complete Confucius's Heaven-ordained mission in his stead. Assuredly, it was also a natural extension of his discipleship at a distance, the so-called "private cultivation" (*sishu* 私淑) through emulation at a distance. The career of Confucius is ultimately reconfirmed by the classicist-cum-historian Sima Qian, who unites both roles in the endeavor to perfect himself inwardly and save the age outwardly.

Three years after his father's death, Sima Qian assumed the former's office and continued work on the family historical project, taking some ten years. His work stopped, for a time at least, when he incurred imperial displeasure by defending General Li Ling 李陵, who had surrendered to Xiongnu tribesmen. Offered the choice between death or castration, he chose the latter in order to fulfill his father's dying wish.[82]

3.5.2. The Historian's Records and Classical Scholarship

Sima Qian's work, *The Historian's Records* 史記, is divided into five generic divisions: First come twelve "basic chronicles" (*benji* 本紀), generally rendered "basic annals," which present the chronological narrative of the reigns of the earliest Chinese rulers—from legendary sage kings to the sovereign who employed Sima Qian, Emperor Wu. Next are ten "annual tables" (*nianbiao* 年表), which present the facts of historical worthies in tabular form. Third is the section of eight "treatises" (*shu* 書), topical monographs of specialized interest. Fourth are thirty annals devoted to "hereditary houses" (*shijia* 世家), memoirs on the founding figures of noble lineages and the course of development of their kingdoms and feudatories. Last are seventy "connected" or "great traditions" (*liezhuan* 列傳), transmitted stories or folklore on individuals, biographies of varying degrees of veracity, sometimes paired with a like-minded soul or an unfortunate confrere who shares a similar fate. The pairing of the Daoist sages Laozi and Zhuangzi are an example of the former, and the matched banished ministers Qu Yuan and Jia Yi are examples of the latter. Several collective biographies treat a class of individuals, such as "Harsh Officials," "Flatterers and Sycophants," "Comedians and Jesters," "Confucius's Disciples," and, of most concern to us, "Grove of Confucians." Some of these "Great Traditions" treat foreign peoples in annalistic form, revealing cultural, ethnological, and military information, and tracing the course of political leadership of these so-called "barbarian" peoples from their innocuous rises to their full-throated threats to Chinese security. While some of these genres existed previous to Sima Qian, he was the first to weld all five into one organic treatment of history, and he elevated the writing of history from the spare recording of dates and events in dry chronological lists into extended records of complex historical causation, refinement of character portrayal, and sophistication of narrative art. As such, his work is a triumph of literature as well as history.[83]

The provenance of Sima Qian's grand work is obviously historical, due both to his family tradition and his office at court, "Prefect of the Grand Scribe" (*taishiling* 太史令), a post he inherited from his father. Yet Sima Qian's purport in connection to classical scholarship is less obvious. The importance of his masterpiece for classical scholarship is not limited to the historical background and extended narrative it provides, the titles and portions of texts it preserves, the interpretive slant it places on quotations from the classics, or the biographies of

[81] *Shiji* 130.3296.

[82] See the treatment by Nienhauser, *Grand Scribe's Records*, 1:x–xi.

[83] Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). Chapter 2 explains and interprets the five-part structure of the book. Burton Watson offers a straightforward introduction to Sima Qian and his work as a historian in *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958). Stephen Durrant focuses rather on the literary and rhetorical features of the work in *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). For further evaluations of the literary form and value of the *Historian's Records*, see Li Changzhi 李長之, *Sima Qian zhi renge yu fengge* 司馬遷之人格與風格 (1995; rpt. Taipei: Liren, 2008), chapter 9; Zhou Xianmin 周先民, *Sima Qian de shizhuan wenxue shijie* 司馬遷的史傳文學世界 (Taipei: Wenjin, 1995); and Wu Ruyu 吳汝煜, *Shijilungao* 史記論稿 (Jiangsu: Jiangsu Jiaoyu Chubanseh, 1986).

classicists it presents.[84] The remainder of this section is devoted to making the case for this classical connection.

First is the title. The title *Shiji* literally means "historian's records." Burton Watson's partial translation takes the English title of *Records of the Grand Historian*.[85] William H. Nienhauser Jr. and his committee of collaborators, who are attempting to produce the first complete English translation, have adopted a more literal title: *The Grand Scribe's Records*. Neither Watson nor Nienhauser et al. discuss the ramifications of this title, nor do they mention that it evolved over time from an earlier, more suggestive one. Qian Mu 錢 穆 (1895–1990) reviews the evidence and concludes that the earliest title of Sima Qian's work was *His Honor the Grand Scribe* 太 史 公 , taken from his office, plus an honorific "His Honor" (a felicitous phrasing of Nienhauser), a title which was expanded into *The Writings of His Honor the Grand Scribe* 太史公書.[86] Other Han-period names for this work in common use are identified by Zhang Shunhui:

> In discussing this book, Han dynasty scholars merely called it *The Records of His Honor the Grand Historian*; some called it *The Book of the Grand Historian*, some called it *The Commentary of His Honor the Grand Historian*, some directly called it *His Honor the Historian*, but nobody called it *The Historian's Records*. . . . Later ages abbreviated the four [Chinese words] in the title of *Records of His Honor the Grand Historian* into the shortened title in two words of *Historian's Records*. This was rather late. Ever since the early Tang when it was entitled *Historian's Records*, it has been more than one thousand years up to the present.
>
> 漢代學者，談到這部書，但稱太史公記，或稱太史公書，或稱 太史公傳，或直稱史公，而沒有人稱它為史記。後世省約太史公記四字的名稱，成為史記二字的簡稱。這却也很晚。從唐初學者修隨書經籍志以史記標題以來，到現在千多年了。[87]

The obvious inference to be derived from this nomenclature is that the work should be classified among the early masters, the so-called "Hundred Masters" 百家 whose works take the name of their authors, such as *Master Huainan* 淮南子 or *Han Fei* 韓非, and whose intent is to transmit the Way of antiquity, whether

[84] A general, though useful, introduction to Sima Qian as classicist is Liu Jiahe 刘家和, "*Shiji* yu Handai jingxue" 史记与汉代经学, in *Shiji yanjiu*, 2:298–321.

[85] Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

[86] Qian, "Taishigong kaoshi" 太史公考释, in *Zhongguo xueshu sixiangshi luncong* 中国学术思想史论丛, 8 vols. (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2009), 3:22–34.

[87] Zhang Shunhui, "Lun *Shiji*" 論史記, in Wang Guowei 王國維 et al. eds., *Sima Qian: qiren ji qishu* 司馬遷：其人與其書 (Chang'an: Chang'an Chubanshe, 1985), 126–49; p. 128.

Confucian, Daoist, Legalist, or whatever.[88] Besides, the word "record" is often applied to comments on the classics, even formal commentaries, as it often referred to the written transcriptions of oral explanations by one's master.[89] The present name, *pace* Zhang Shunhui, seems to have become widespread only during the reign of Emperor Huan 桓帝 (r. 132–168).[90]

Other indicators of his history's close connection to classical scholarship are revealed in Sima Qian's "Self-Postface", the desire to supplement the texts of the classics to redress lacunae in treatment and to present a unified interpretation: "In all, it is in 130 chapters and 526,500 characters; the preface is brief. It serves to gather omissions to supplement the classics and to form the expositions of a single master. Herein it correlates the differing traditions on the Six Classics and coordinates the miscellaneous words of the hundred masters" 凡百三十篇，五十二萬六千五百字，為《太史公書》。序略，以拾遺補藝，成一家之言，厥協六經異傳，整齊百家雜語.[91] Here, at least, Sima Qian does not express any rationale for composing his work other than engaging in classical scholarship and founding his own exegetical or hermeneutic school. Of course, his self-identification with the classicists and masters comes on the heels of describing the "wills" or moral intents of each of his 130 chapters— intents that are designed to isolate and promulgate the ethical lessons to be derived through his work of overt and conscious exemplar historiography. If Dong Zhongshu were the grand universalizing synthesizer of thought for the new realm, Sima Qian was the grand universalizing synthesizer of classical scholarship. The question is, naturally, whether his work of synthesis was directed toward the political realm or the moral way of men. This question will be addressed in the next section when I analyze the narratology of his collective biography of classicists.

This fundamental connection to classical scholarship is expressly indicated in Sima Qian's "Self-Postface" in a particularly revealing passage that commences the "connected traditions" section with the first biography, that of Bo Yi 伯 夷 (chapter 61): "Scholars possessing the broadest of [historical] records and [other] written works still use the *Six Arts* [i.e., the classics] to determine which of them are faithful records" 夫學者載籍極博，猶考信於六藝.[92] The

[88] See Li Jixiang 李紀祥, "*Shiji* zhi 'jiayan' yu 'shishu' xingzhilun" 史記之家言與史書性質論, in *Shiji wulun* 史記五論 (Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe, 2007), 93–125. Yu, *Sima Qian shishi qiushi jingsheng tanwei*, 220–22, discusses Sima Qian as a member of the masters category from the point of view of the context and purport of his work.

[89] Witness *Hanshu* 30.1717, which notes an anthology of "records" made by numerous disciples of Confucius concerning the rites, under title of *Records in 131 Chapters* 記百三十一篇. The *Liji* 禮記, literally *Records of Ritualists*, should thus be viewed, in terms of genre, as a commentary.

[90] Chen Zhi 陳直, "Taishigong shuming kao" 太史公書名考 in Wang et al. eds., *Sima Qian: qiren ji qishu*, 187–95.

[91] *Shiji* 130.3319–20.

[92] *Shiji* 61.2121; trans. Nienhauser, *Grand Scribe's Records*, 7:1.

meaning seems to be that the veracity of historical records should be verified by the classics; this is the traditional understanding. But in an article published in 1995, historian Zhu Benyuan argues that, based on historical factors and the type of exemplar historiography employed by Sima Qian, this line should rather be read with a switched emphasis. I retranslate this passage to accommodate this interpretation: "As for scholars, what is recorded in records is vast and broad, but [the morality of such events] should be determined and verified by the Six Classics." In other words, the classics should function as commentaries to verify the moral applications of historical works, even while the history composed by Sima Qian can supplement some moral lessons lacking in the classics.[93]

On the level of language, the close work Sima Qian made of the *Documents* in portraying early history was that of a textual exegete, not a historian. He literally transcribed most of six separate chapters, updating the archaic language of the original by modernizing attenuated spellings and normalizing out-of-date diction. This effort at textual criticism is within the purview of a classicist, or at least a critically minded translator—certainly not that of a single-minded historian. His transcriptions help modern students of the text of the *Documents* to choose between competing textual variants and to understand obscure passages. Such is the importance of this work in this regard that scholar Jin Zhaozi declines to include these six chapters in his modern study and annotated translation of this classic since Sima Qian had already effectively "modernized" them. These chapters include "Yaodian" 堯典, "Yugong" 禹貢, "Hongfan" 洪範, "Jinteng" 金縢, "Gaoyoumo" 皋陶謨, and "Mushi" 牧師.[94]

Examples of the value of Sima Qian's transcriptions of the *Esteemed Documents* to textual criticism are clearly apparent in a comparative examination of the texts of these chapters. It is more economical, however, to utilize the exhaustive commentary of Liu Qiyu 劉起釪 (1917–2012), who puts all these textual variants in a wide context of historical commentators. Liu, in filial fashion, credits this work to his teacher Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980), but Liu's multivolume study is the culmination of a lifetime of dedication to the text of this classic.[95] Liu makes good use of Sima Qian's transcriptions to first determine the text of the *Esteemed Documents* and then to elucidate it.

All of the following instances are treated at length in Liu's exhaustive exegesis on the "Canon of Yao" 堯典, which occupies seventy-five percent of volume 1 of Liu's study. In the phrase "[Yao] harmonized and united the [feudal princes within] the ten thousand feudatories" 協和萬邦, Sima Qian expresses it as "[Yao] joined and united [the feudal princes in] the ten thousand states" 合和萬國. In reading *xie* 協 as *he* 合, Sima Qian is translating according to the meaning of a gloss, not translating the original word. This is a common strategy of Sima Qian in his translation of this text. Another strategy is to transcribe a difficult orthography into a more simple reading. For instance, for the line "Whoever is able to perform like this I will elevate and employ him" 疇咨若時登庸, Sima Qian defines the difficult term *chou* 疇, translating it along with an attached meaningless particle as "whoever is able" 誰可, and provides a paraphrase rather than a translation: "Who is able to accord with these matters?" 誰可順此事, eliding the part about offering elevation and employment. Another strategy is to gloss over ancient distinctions that were no longer valid in the language of the Western Han, such as the difference between "family name, surname" (*xing* 姓) and "clan name" (*shi* 氏); while such generalized treatment may have effaced traditional technical distinctions, it made for smoother reading. Another strategy is to adopt an understandable homonym for an unintelligible one, such as in the line "The people begin to disperse; and birds and beasts breed and copulate" 厥民析，鳥獸孳尾.[96] Sima Qian reads *ziwei* 孳尾 as *ziwei* 字微, an emendation that actually obscures more than it clarifies.[97] These examples illustrate Sima Qian's deft handling of texts as he translated old Chinese into the Han-period idiom and its updated orthography—something that, to our modern compartmentalized view of specialization, few self-respecting historians would deign to do.

Apart from Sima Qian's transcription of six chapters from the *Documents*, off-hand quotes of isolated passages from throughout the text appear in his history that reveal his understanding of this classic.[98] Two examples from the "Harangue at Bi" 費誓 follow, both from the same passage cited by Sima Qian which severely abbreviates the original and alters the reading at two points. I modify Legge's translation according to Sima Qian's editing:

> After Boqin assumed the throne, such peoples as the Guan and Cai revolted, and the Huai and Xu Barbarians both also rose up in revolt. Thereupon, Boqin led an army to attack them at Xi [=Bi], and composed the Harangue at Xi [=Bi], which stated: "Display your buff coats and

[93] Zhu Benyuan 朱本源, "Shishi Sima Qian 'kaoxin yu "Liuyi"' shuo de zhendi" 試釋司馬遷考信于六藝說真諦, in *Shiji yanjiu*, 2:322–41.

[94] Jin Zhaozi 金兆梓, *Shangshu quanyi* 尚書詮譯 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2010), "Chuban shuoming" 出版說明.

[95] Gu and Liu, *Shangshu jiaoshi yiyun*

[96] Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, 3:19.

[97] In an analysis that covers the entire text of the *Shangshu* and how Sima Qian utilized it linguistically, Gu Guoshun isolates the following six types of linguistic tampering: copying the original wording, paraphrasing, glossing, translating, rewriting, and expanding through adding comments. See Gu Guoshun 古國順, *Shiji shu Shangshu yanjiu* 史記述尚書研究 (Taipei: Wen, Shi, Zhe, 1985), 3–15.

[98] Sima Qian's citations from the *Shangshu* may be easily traced by consulting Chan Hung Kan 陳雄根 and Ho Che Wah 何志華, eds. *Citations from the* Shangshu *to be Found in Pre-Han and Han Texts. Xianqin Liang Han jingji yin Shangshu ziliao huibian* 先秦兩漢經籍引尚書資料彙編. Chant Series. (Hong Kong: Institute of Chinse Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2003).

helmets; presume not to have any of them but in perfect order. And do not presume to injure any of the animals (so let loose). When the horses or cattle are seeking one another, or when your followers, male or female, abscond, presume not to leave the ranks to pursue them. But let them be carefully returned."

伯禽即位之後，有管、蔡等反也，淮夷、徐戎亦并興反。於是伯禽率師伐之於肸， 作肸誓，曰：陳爾甲胄，無敢不善。無敢傷牿。馬牛其風，臣妾逋逃，勿敢越逐， 敬復之。[99]

The first change made by Sima Qian is to simplify the archaic language of the original into a bland approximation: for the original wording—"Artfully string together your body armor and helmets" 善敹乃甲胄—he replaces the archaic graph of *liao* 敹 , "to string or sew together" (Zheng Xuan 鄭 玄 [127–200]) or "to select" (Xu Shen 許慎 [58–147]) with "display." Second, Sima Qian disambiguates the word *zhi* 祗, which means either "reverentially" if taken at face value or "only" if regarded as a loan graph. He disambiguates the orthography by adopting another word, *jing* 敬 , "reverentially," in its place; this type of orthographic ambiguity is the bane of modern readers. Incidentally, the orthography of 祗/衹 has been used as a loan graph for words more commonly written as 坻 *chi*, "hillock," 氐 , *di*, "foundation," 疻 *qi*, "sick," 砥 *di* "whetstone," and the like.[100] Anciently, these words were all homophones.

Finally, Sima Qian's role as classicist is perhaps most clearly revealed when his stance on interpreting the classics is considered. This issue would assuredly never arise were he acting merely as a dispassionate historian occupied solely with cobbling together disparate written sources to compose a connected historical narrative. Arguments as to his allegiance to, say, the Old Text *Documents* over the New Text school, or his patronage of Huang-Lao Daoism over Confucian classicism, bespeak his concern for the message of his classical sources over mere textual criticism and translation.[101] The ultimate aim of his work in classical

[99] *Shiji* 33.1524; Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, 3:622–24.

[100] See Zong Fubang 宗福邦, Shen Shinao 神世鏕, and Xiao Haibo 蕭海波 eds. *Guxun huizuan* 故訓匯纂 (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2004), 1596; Wang Haigen 王 海 根 ed., *Gudai Hanyu tongjiazi dazidian* 古代漢語通假字大字典 (Fuzhou: Fujian Renmin Chubanshe, 2006), 626, 628.

[101] On the former issue, see Chen Tongsheng 陈桐生, *Shiji yu Jinguwen jingxue* 史记与今古文经学(Xi'an: Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe, 1995). On the latter, see Fu Yihui 傅 以 辉 , "*Shiji xian Huang-Lao hou Liujing bian*" 史记先黄老后六经辩, in Ju Lindong, ed., *Shiji yanjiu*, 2:221–22; Cheng Minzao 程锦造, "Sima Qian chongshang Daojia shuo" 司马迁崇尚道家说, in Ju Lindong, ed., *Shiji yanjiu*, 2:223–37; and Wang Shumin 王 叔 岷 , "Sima Qian yu Huanglao—jinian Shengu Gangbo Xiansheng bashiliu danchen yanjianggao" 司马迁与黄老—纪念沈故刚伯先生八十六诞辰演讲稿, in Ju Lindong, ed., *Shiji yanjiu*, 2:238–47.

scholarship is revealed in Sima Qian's summative formula of his great work, as already noted previously: "Herein it correlates the differing traditions on the Six Classics, and coordinates the miscellaneous words of the hundred masters"; and his particular orientation is revealed in the historical allusion he employs to conclude his work, "which will be placed in a famous mountain, with a copy to be kept in the capital, where they shall await sagacious gentlemen of posterity" 藏之名山，副在京師，俟後世聖人君子,[102] an allusion deriving from the Gongyang school of exegesis on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

One of the works by gifted modern scholar Chen Tongsheng is devoted expressly to explaining how Sima Qian conceived of this formula of correlating the classics, coordinating the hundred masters, and illustrating how the *Historian's Records* relates to the canonized classics of Han.[103] In his preface, Chen explains the very basis of this history in classical scholarship:

As for this great work of culture, today many read it from the angle of literature or history. But, as for both father and son, their focal point was possibly more so placed on the aspect of scholarship. Furthermore, when first starting on the composition of the *Historian's Records*, both father and son oriented their historical work toward continuing Confucius's *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

對史記這部文化巨著，今天的人們多從文學或史學角度解讀。但從司馬談、司馬遷父子來說，他們的著眼點可能更多地是放在學術方面。還在剛剛開始著手史記著述的時候，司馬父子就將自己的史書定位在上繼孔子春秋之上。[104]

A final addendum on Sima Qian's profile as a classicist is to note that Ban Gu's father, the historian Ban Biao 班 彪 (3–54), includes in his "General Remarks on Historiography" 略 論 certain aspersions against some perceived failings of the *Historian's Records*. These include critiques of Sima Qian's use of the classics and misplaced emphasis of his stance toward classical interpretation:

That which Sima Qian recorded from the first year of the Han to the time of Wudi [Emperor Wu], from whence it discontinues, is the basis of his merit. But when he extracted from the classics, gleaned from biographies, and divided the affairs of the schools of thought, much of what he did was quite imprecise and not equal to his original sources. He devoted himself to hearing much and recording a broad history to accomplish his merit, but his disquisitions were shallow and incidental. His discussion of techniques and learning valorize Huang-Lao and slight the Five Classics Nevertheless, he was skilled at narration and the order of events in his records is reasonable. His discussions are not flowery

[102] *Shiji* 130.3320; trans. Nienhauser, *Grand Scribe's Records*, 1:xi.

[103] Chen Tongsheng, *Rujia jingzhuan wenhua yu Shiji*, i.

[104] Chen Tongsheng, *Rujia jingzhuan wenhua yu Shiji*, i.

and their substance is not crude, and the pattern and substance of his writing are balanced. Overall, these are the talents of a fine historian. If Sima Qian had only been made to rely on the model words of the Five Classics and to agree with what the sagely men considered to be right and wrong, his intentions would not have been far from success.

遷之所記，從漢元至武以絕，則其功也。至於採經摭傳，分散百家之事，甚多疏略， 不如其本，務欲以多聞廣載為功，論議淺而不篤。其論術學，則崇黃老而薄五 經。……然善述序事理，辯而不華，質而不野，文質相稱，蓋良史之才也。誠令 遷依五經之法言，同聖人之是非，意亦庶幾矣。[105]

Ban Gu incorporated much of this essay in his appraisal of the biography of Sima Qian that he authored, with the following important difference: instead of portraying Sima Qian as targeting the "hundred masters" like his father had done (in the above bland translation of "divided the affairs of the schools of thought"), a natural extension of his work as a classicist, Ban Gu merely wrote "the various masters" (*zhujia* 諸 家), thus helping to obscure this classical connection.[106]

3.5.3 The "Grove of Confucians"

Sima Qian's treatment of classical scholars of the early Western Han dynasty is the subject of chapter 121 of his *Historian's Records.* It is officially titled "The Connected Traditions of the Grove of Confucians" 儒林列傳. Ban Gu's *Hanshu* chapter 88, the title slightly shortened to "Traditions of the Grove of Confucians" 儒林 傳 , repeats the narrative in fleshed-out form and continues it past the reign of Emperor Wu until the close of the dynasty. A wide gulf in the degree of density of detail and narratological approach separates the two accounts. Here I examine the portrayal of early Confucian masters according to Sima Qian.

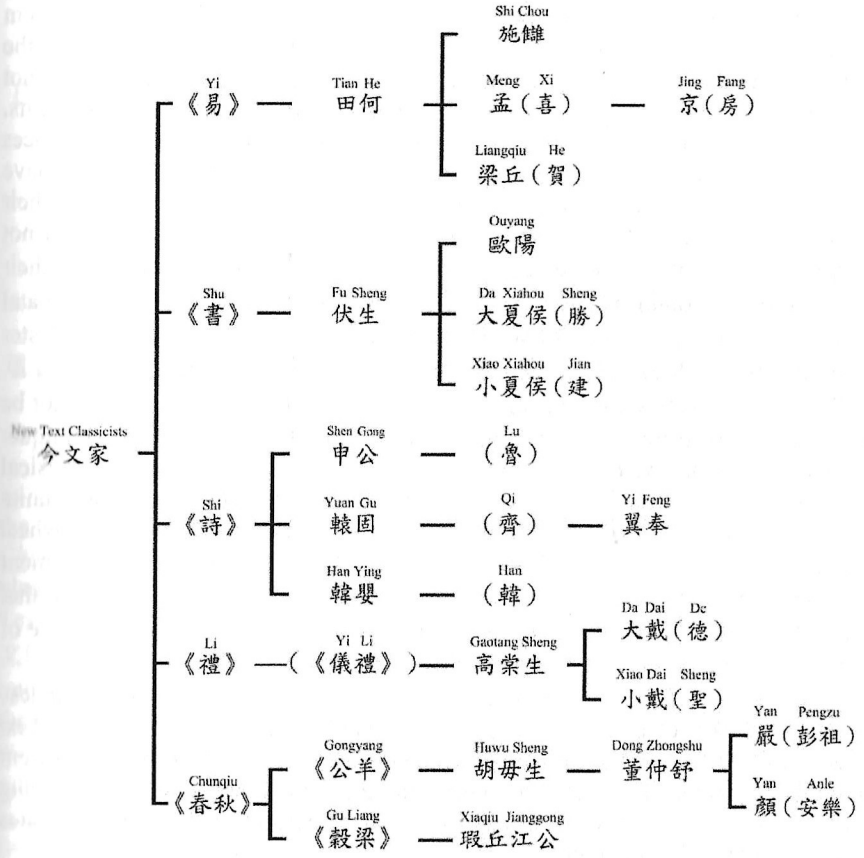
Of all the schemata devised over the centuries to present the founding lineages of Confucian masters in the early Western Han, the one Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (1868– 1936) constructed is most accessible, because it is limited to the account of Sima Qian, without any admixture of Ban Gu's later supplemental material, and thus does not try to encompass the entire Western Han. He does draw some information from other sources not in Sima's "Grove of Confucians" collective biography, but at least he limits himself to the first few generations of masters and disciples. Table 1 is Zhang's tabular presentation of the early New Text masters' lineages, as brief as they are. Note that the *Changes* Master Tian He had three disciples and one second- generation disciple. For the *Documents*, Master Fu also had three disciples. For the *Poems*, three masters are identified: Sire Shen of Lu, Han Ying, and Yuan Gu of Qi, who had one disciple. For the

[105] *Hou Hanshu* 40a.1325; Anthony E. Clark, trans., *Ban Gu's History of Early China* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 200.

[106] *Hanshu* 62.2737.

Rites, Master Gaotang had two disciples, Greater and Lesser Dai. And for the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, Master Huwu had one disciple, Dong Zhongshu, and two of his second-generation disciples are identified in the Gongyang tradition; for the Guliang tradition, one master, Jiaqiu Jianggong, is identified. In all, twenty-one classicists are identified: eight masters, ten disciples, and three second-generation disciples. This hardly forms a developed scholastic pedigree.

Table 1. New Text Masters during the Early Han[107]



Sima's full narrative is spare of details; more often than not, it excludes the facts of immediate teachers, places of study, subjects of specialization, and often bureaucratic appointments. I recently composed a narratological study of the facts of classicism preserved by Sima Qian in this chapter and how they are presented

[107] Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, *Guoxue jiangyi* 國學講義 (Beijing: Haichao Chubanshe, 2007), 17; Zhang Taiyan, *Guoxue rumen* 國學入門 (Xiangtan: Xiangtan Daxue Chubanshe, 2010), 38.

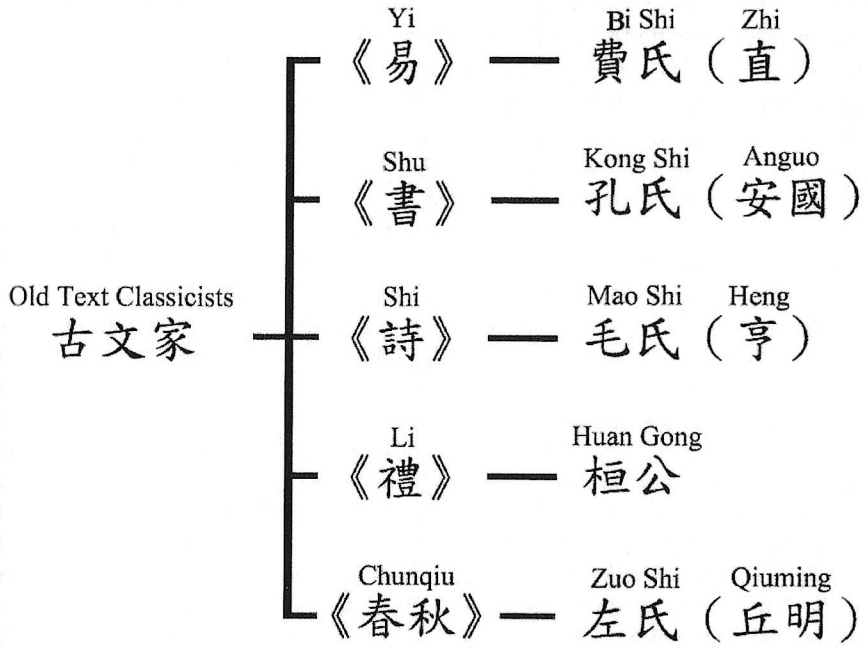
in his narrative which reveal the following numbers and statistics: sixty-two classicists are mentioned, with seven of them reduplicated, for a total of fifty-five separate classicists. Roughly half of these, thirty in all, are associated with specific homelands. Of these fifty-five masters, thirty-nine of them have their immediate teachers identifies, and twenty-eight offices are isolated for twenty-seven classicists. Of subjects of study, the *Poems* are mentioned sixteen times, the *Documents* seven times, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* six times. The *Changes* receive two mentions, and only one each for the *Rites* and the *Gongyang* and *Guliang* commentaries. Out of fifty-five classicists, only thirty-three of them are directly associated with specializing in a particular classic. It is true that the remaining twenty-nine can be connected to a tradition of study, but they are not credited with any particular mastery or noteworthy scholarly achievements. Statistically speaking, 48 percent of the classicists have their birthplaces identified; 63 percent have their immediate masters identified; 45 percent have their offices identified; and only 27 percent are supplied with names beyond their surnames. On two of these general points, Ban Biao criticizes Sima Qian for not supplying the "styles and literary names" (*zihao* 字號) of notables or their "prefectures or counties" (*junxian* 郡縣).[108] Even worse is the omission of natal places and names, the latter of which yields such mysterious masters as Master Yuangu 轅固生, Master Fu 伏生, Master Huwu 胡毋生, and Master Ouyang 歐陽生. Whether such omissions are deliberate or due to a lack of data cannot be ascertained, but it marks one characteristic of Sima Qian's narrative technique: the use of the nullity, or as we may frame it, "the use of what has no physical existence," as illustrated in chapter 11 of the *Daodejing*: "The thirty spokes unite in the one nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle), that the use of the wheel depends" 三十輻，共一轂，當其無，有車之用. Let us rephrase this sentiment to reflect one of Sima Qian's narrative techniques: "It is in what is lacking that we find the use of his hermeneutics" 當其無，有詮之用![109] The significance of why Sima Qian omitted certain facts will be discussed shortly.

The schema for Old Text masters devised by Zhang Binglin is still less populated. It is not based on Sima Qian but created by Zhang as a foil to New Text masters. Only one master per classic is identified, which includes one who went unnoticed by Sima Qian and one commentarial tradition, Mr. Zuo, on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. And these last two masters date from the Warring States period, not the Western Han.

[108] *Hou-Hanshu* 40a.1327.

[109] Han Dawei 韓大偉 (David B. Honey), "*Shiji* 'Rulin liezhuan' xushifa chutan" 史记儒林列传叙事法初探. *Zhongguo Jingxue* 中国经学 12 (2014): 164–88.

Table 2. Old Text Masters of the Early Han[110]



Concerning the mysterious Mr. Fei, Ban Gu records that "Liu Xiang collated the versions of Shi, Meng, and Liangqiu against the Old Text Classic of the *Changes* stored in the imperial holdings; some versions had lost the wording 'no blame.' Of all these versions, only that of Mr. Bi was similar to the Old Text version." 劉向以 中古文易經校施孟梁。或脫去無咎。經唯費氏經與古文同.[111] The monograph on bibliography in the *History of Sui* records the transmission history of Mr. Bi's version, commencing with its beginning: "During the early Han, there was also Bi Zhi, who transmitted the *Changes*. His version was entirely in ancient characters and was entitled *Old Text Changes* Hence Bi's school circulated among the people but was not able to be established" 漢初又有

[110] Zhang, *Guoxue jiangyi*, 18; *Guoxue rumen*, 40. For traditional attempts to formulate pedigrees of classical masters, see Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730–1797), *Chuanjingbiao* 傳經表 (CSJC ed.), Jiao Yuanxi 焦袁熹, (1661–1736), *Rulinpu* 儒林譜 (CSJC ed.), and, most exhaustively, Zhu Muxie 朱睦㮮 (1518–1587), *Shoujingtu* 授經圖 (CSJC ed.). Modern reconstructions of such filiation flow charts include Tjoe Som Tjan, *Po Hu T'ung: The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1949), Tables I–VIII inserted between pages 86 and 88, and Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo jingxueshi de jichu* 中國經學史的基礎 (Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, 2004), 83–86.

[111] *Hanshu* 30.1704.

東萊費直傳易，其本皆古字，號曰古文易。故有費氏之學行於人間，而未得立.[112] This convenient ellipsis elides the names of three classical masters through whom the text reached the Eastern Han and eventually the hands of Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166), Zheng Xuan, and Xun Shuang 荀爽(128–190), and then on to the Wei dynasty and both Wang Su 王 肅 (195–256) and Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249). It was with the commentaries of all of these distinguished classicists that the school of Bi flourished in the form of Zheng Xuan's learning, until it gave way during the Sui to the scholastic version of Wang Bi, the popularity of which eclipsed that of Zheng Xuan's commentary almost to the point of extinction. But it must be recalled that Wang Bi was himself ultimately based on the textual tradition, if not the commentary, of Mr. Bi.[113]

Given such paucity of facts concerning both intellectual orientations, New Text and Old Text, Sima Qian cannot possibly be striving to narrate the story of early and contemporary Confucian masters. Something beyond historical truth must be the goal here, something that can possibly be revealed by a narratological examination of the intent of his "Grove of Confucians" portrayal of Confucian classicists. Two recent studies set the stage for a new look at the purport of Sima Qian's narrative. Co-authors Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michale Nylan posit that before the time of Emperor Wu, no full-fledged intellectual lineages existed, and Sima Qian's intent was to praise the attainments of both Confucians and Daoists of the Huang-Lao strain in the sphere of private scholarship as exemplars to follow, something that Sima Qian's contemporary Confucians were sorely lacking.[114] Liang Cai 蔡 良 also notes the lack of the crucial facts of classicism in Sima Qian's narrative and concludes that Sima Qian had no obvious intent to either venerate Confucianism or to trace scholastic lineages; the fact that Ban Gu did supply much of this missing data was due to his attempt to bolster the Confucian school by fabricating these missing links.[115] Furthermore, in a new book, Liang Cai advances the novel theory that the Confucians during the reign of Emperor Wu were a powerless minority, and only after the infamous witchcraft scandal of 91–87 BC did the resultant restructuring of power afford Confucians the opening to grasp the reigns of ideological orthodoxy, establish a school, and enshrine its ideology at the foundation of power.[116] The narratological study of the present author mentioned above reaches the same conclusion: that the intent

[112] *Suishu* 32.912.

[113] All of these transmissions are noted at *Suishu* 32.912.

[114] Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michale Nylan, "Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China," *T'oung Pao* 89 (2003): 59–99.

[115] Liang Cai, "Excavating the Genealogy of Classical Studies in the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–8 C.E.)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131 (2011): 371–94.

[116] Liang Cai, *Witchcraft and the Rise of the First Confucian Empire* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014).

of Sima Qian in composing his narrative lies not in supporting Confucianism, in presenting a coherent picture of the training and accomplishments of classicists, or in the transmission of classical learning from master to disciples. Rather, his intent is to promote a historian's self-justification, a critique of the age, and his support for private scholarship over official scholarship, the former motivated by learning for its own sake and its moral utility, the latter motivated by the hope of financial gain and personal fame.

Let me translate the summary conclusion of my previously mentioned study to reveal the narrative purposes of Sima Qian's sparse recording of the facts which concern classical scholarship during the early and mid-Western Han:

> Sima Qian's "Connected Traditions of the Grove of Confucians" certainly treats all the various matters of classical scholarship, but it does not detail the avenues of master-disciple transmission; his intention assuredly does not lie in clarifying the paths of transmission of the Six Classics; even less does it lie in venerating Confucianism. His aim most likely lies in censuring His Highness for restricting the autonomy of classical masters by assuming a false Confucian countenance and by expanding the path toward bureaucratic office through learning. Superficially speaking, establishing the Erudites for the Five Classics seems to be the ultimate act in the veneration of Confucianism. Yet, viewing it on a deeper level, establishing erudites is a means of incorporating classicists within the circles of officially sanctioned scholarship and is also one aspect of the canonization of the Five Classics, which is itself a scheme to restrict them.
>
> Sima Qian's compilation of his great work sprung from his private scholarship. Compiling this work was entirely commensurate with his father's dying wish that he "evaluate enlightened rulers and record worthy lords, loyal ministers and scholars who remain steadfast in the face of death." I am afraid that, according to the Grand Historian's lofty evaluation, Emperor Wu was not an "enlightened ruler or worthy lord," neither were Confucians who held office in that age "loyal ministers and scholars who remain steadfast in the face of death." Even though those who directly remonstrated with the throne and supported the Way were petty Confucians of the time who were unequal to the task, the great classical masters in this chapter were all completely qualified, served as role models, and matched his father's dying wish. His compilation of the *Historian's Records* was actually indebted to those sages and worthies who composed out of moral outrage: "These persons were all full of frustration and resentment, who could not put the Way into action, hence they narrated the past in order to consider the future;" they were also critics of the age. All in all, in the appended evaluation to this chapter, Sima Qian did not mention the matter of lines of transmission between classical masters and disciples, but merely states that "between the reigns of Jianyuan [145–135 BC] and Yuanshou [134–129 BC], literary

> compositions were spectacular. I composed the 'Connected Traditions of the Grove of Confucians,' chapter 61 [of this category]." His narratological viewpoint obviously is connected with this gap in coverage for the sake of criticizing Emperor Wu; this conclusion is not even worth refuting. The significance of his narratology is to justify himself via the merit of great classicists of the early Han and the early period of the reign of Emperor Wu and to promote private scholarship while repressing bureaucratic scholarship; these conclusions are probably accurate and incontrovertible![117]

It is what Sima Qian leaves out as much as what he includes that allows us to reach these conclusions, thus illustrating "the use of what has no physical existence."

3.6. Conclusions

Both Dong Zhongshu and Sima Qian have become honored exemplars, even archetypes, of Confucian political philosophy and Confucian-based moral historiography. Today such reputations are well entrenched and taken as accepted articles of faith, with no need for further consideration; they are part of the ironclad assumptions that govern our worldview of ancient China. The intellectual underpinnings of Chinese imperialism are almost entirely based on the merit of Dong Zhongshu; the format, purport, and literary style of traditional Chinese historical writing are almost entirely the creation of Sima Qian. Yet both needed generations to pass before being granted such high intellectual honors. It took until the following century before Dong Zhongshu's synthesis of Confucian thought based on *Gongyang* hermeneutics was enshrined as orthodoxy. This happened formally at the White Tiger Hall concordance that was convened in 79 AD by Emperor Zhang 章帝 (r. 75–88).[118] Ban Gu took notes at the proceedings and compiled the official record of the results. For Sima Qian, the course of his great work's rise out of obscurity was slow, and it was not completed until the imperially sanctioned animus against private scholarship during the Eastern Han ran its course and the work was able to circulate more widely.[119] Despite the delay in recognition, both eminent founders set the courses of their respective disciplines on paths that would run true (with various admixtures and adjustments along the way), paths which classicists, politicians, philosophers, and historians would follow until the modern age.

[117] Han Dawei (David B. Honey), "*Shiji 'Rulin liezhuan'* xushifa chutan," 188.
[118] Huang Pumin 黃朴民, *Tian ren heyi: Dong Zhongshu yu Liang Han Ruxue sichao yanjiu* 天人合一：董仲舒与两汉思潮研究 (Changsha: Yu-Lu shushe, 2013). See especially pages 209–233 for the influence of the Baihutong conference confirming the orthodoxy of Dong Zhongshu's thought.
[119] On this process, see Lü Shihao, *Cong* Shiji *dao* Hanshu

Chapter Four

Textual Criticism in the Western Han: Recovery and Reconstitution

Xun Yue 荀 悅 (148–209), an eleventh-generation descendant of Xunzi, was an experienced literatus. At imperial command, he compiled a redaction of the *History of Han* called the *Chronicles of Han* 漢 紀 in thirty chapters, modeled after *Mr. Zuo's Commentary*. He also composed a series of essays on political and cultural themes, called *Extended Reflections* 申鑒. In this work, he perceptively comments on the exigencies of textual scholarship and the problems of dealing with malleable and unstable bamboo manuscripts that had been handed down from antiquity. His insights provide a welcome entre into this chapter, and are excerpted as follows:

> Confucius composed the classics, which were originally in a single form, undoubtedly so. Old and Modern school texts are different, but both camps claim their versions are the true and original classics. The understanding of the former masters of the Old and Modern is unified, undoubtedly so. But the interpretations of different lineages and various theories diverge; still, they all claim to be either associated with Old or Modern texts. Confucius lived in the distant past and was not detailed in his exegesis. Anciently, the former masters disappeared without exception—who were able to succeed them?
>
> With the extinction of learning under the Qin, documents were hidden up in the walls of houses, and the understanding of the classics was cut off at both court and countryside. Reaching the rise of the Han, scattered texts were collected and obscure doctrine reconstituted, but no systematic learning remained. Some writing was faded or effaced; some language was from various regions; and some texts emerged at different times. Sometimes the first impressions of scholars were erroneous; up and coming scholars inherited them and went even further afield. Therefore, a single source turned into ten currents, heavenly water flowed back on itself, and disputers rose up in profusion. Holding to one text does not guarantee complete accuracy, but when comparing and evaluating several, there is certain to be value in such an examination.
>
> 仲尼作經，本一而已，古今文不同，而皆自謂真本經；古今先師，義一而已，異家 別說不同，而皆自謂古今。仲尼邈而靡質，昔