

RITUAL, TEXT, AND THE FORMATION OF THE
CANON: HISTORICAL TRANSITIONS OF *WEN*
IN EARLY CHINA

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I. Historicizing *wen*

The word *wen* 文, in Xu Shen's 許慎 (c. 55-c. 149) *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 defined as "criss-cross pattern" (*cuohua* 錯畫),¹ has been ruminated upon numerous times during the last two millennia, and it is still under sophisticated deliberation wherever students of traditional Chinese culture and literature meet. This phenomenon is in itself remarkable, revealing the genuine depth of a word that in its significance is rivalled by only a few others, like *dao* 道 or *qi* 氣. Such profound words, in this respect comparable to *logos* or *pneuma* in the West, embody almost universal significance through their originally most concrete meanings, relating physical matter, human activity, and cosmological order to one another. For *wen*, we hear of the different "patterns" of Heaven, Earth, and Man, and it is *wen* that mediates between these three, at least in analogical thinking.² But at the same time, even a word like *wen*, together with whatever meaning can be proposed for it, is not located beyond the realms of general cultural history; in its usage, it is a genuinely historical phenomenon, changing with times and therefore remaining continuously meaningful in subsequent ages and to different social orders. *Wen*

¹ See *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注, Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1815) comm. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1981 [reprint of the Jingyun lou 經韻樓 ed., 1815], 9A.20a).—I wish to thank Professors David R. Knechtges, William G. Boltz, Lothar von Falkenhausen, Michael Nylan, and Pierre-Étienne Will for their most helpful comments and corrections.

² A still valuable investigation into the various semantic levels of *wen* is Tse-tung Chow, "Ancient Chinese Views on Literature, the *Tao* and Their Relationship," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 1 (1979): 1-29.

is neither static nor universal; strenuous claims on its unwavering continuity beyond the realities of social and intellectual processes never escape the aporetic nature of any suprahistorical concept, i.e., being itself a child of its times and hence historically confined.

The inexhaustible efficacy of a word like *wen* may therefore be found not in its supposed timeless truth, but, on the contrary, in its basic openness which allows it to absorb different meanings according to different circumstances, in other words, to change historically. Instead of adding either to the traditional autochthonous Chinese constructs of cosmology and poetics or to modern Western semiotic theories gone East, the present essay is therefore intended to historicize the "concept" of *wen* through one of its crucial stages, namely, when the written text rose to its enduring status of being the highest expression of Chinese culture, or, to phrase it more succinctly, when the idea of Chinese culture (*wen*) collapsed into that of written text (*wen*). At the same time, it is my hope that certain phenomena bearing the designation *wen* gain sharper contours not only through the historical perspective but also as significant elements of early Chinese cultural and political history.

I will not deal here with the very origins of the term *wen*, nor with its earliest occurrences, but enter its history when this is already centuries old. At this stage—in Warring States and then Qin and Han times—*wen* becomes heavily laden with cosmological meaning and related to a great variety of changing and accumulating cultural practices; and beyond denoting specific phenomena, the term may carry the general meaning of something like "cultural accomplishment," as is reflected in its ongoing use in posthumous epithets. How is, then, such a general meaning related to the various concrete meanings of the same word? One attempt to answer this question has been to propose that we are actually dealing with different words here, albeit homophonous and written with the same graph;³ a valuable hypothesis that certainly deserves further attention.

³ Analyzing the use of *wen* in epithets in Zhou times, especially in posthumous designations (*shi* 諡) of deceased ancestors, Lothar von Falkenhausen, following Arthur Waley, has proposed to separate the more general meaning of *wen*, as it is used in posthumous designations, from the more concrete "pattern." He carefully avoids to assign any particular meaning to the former, using "accomplished" only as a stop gap translation. See his "The Concept of *Wen* in the Ancient Chinese Ancestral Cult," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (CLEAR) 18 (1996): 1-22.

In the present essay, however, I will not address the issue on the level of the word. Instead of evacuating the more general—essentially untranslatable—meaning of *wen* into a word of its own, I assume that it actually is related to one or more of its specific meanings. This hypothesis bears radically historical implications: the general notion of *wen*, I propose, flexibly comprises concrete meanings according to their particular status in the whole system of cultural expression at a given time. Consequently, the word *wen*, when applied in a general sense, may refer preeminently to a peculiar phenomenon of *wen* only at a moment when this phenomenon is regarded as the foremost expression of "cultural accomplishment," current in and confined to an identifiable social framework, i.e., historical context. As an example, the general *wen*, as it appears in posthumous names, can refer to a person's literary or philosophical excellence only when the written word is elevated to be the privileged medium and expression of individual perfection. This was not the case with the Western Han emperor Liu Heng 劉恆 who became venerated as the Han emperor Wendi 文帝 (r. 180-157 B.C.); but it certainly was with the classicist genealogical enshrinement of literati and philosophers in later imperial China.⁴ Yet, even then, the uniformity of designations like *wenzhong gong* 文忠公 or *wen gong* 文公 as honorific posthumous titles seems to blur meaningful differences in the understanding and evaluation of *wen* through subsequent phases and contexts of later imperial intellectual history.⁵

⁴ I use the terms "classicism" and "classicist" in their ideological sense, where "classicism" denotes the conscious evocation of a model from the past to be juxtaposed to the supposedly degenerated and deficient practice of the present. In many instances, "classicist" (both the adjective and the noun) is the best translation of *ru* 儒; see Michael Nylan, "A Problematic Model: The Han 'Orthodox Synthesis,' Then and Now," in *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Confucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Kai-wing Chow, On-cho Ng, and John B. Henderson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 17-56. Following Nylan, I avoid the term "Confucian."

⁵ On the enshrinement, see Thomas A. Wilson, *The Genealogy of the Way: The Construction and Uses of the Confucian Tradition in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). Eminent examples of Tang and Song times include Han Yu 韓愈 (768-825, posthumously Han wen gong 韓文公), Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072, Ouyang wenzhong gong 歐陽文忠公), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101, Su wenzhong gong 蘇文忠公), Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086, Wang wen gong 王文公), and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200, Zhu wen gong 朱文公). Although to a certain extent sharing concerns and ideals when referring back to antiquity, these men cherished very different notions of *wen* and of its relation to *dao* 道.

Aiming at a historical understanding of *wen*, we need to identify shifts of relative status among the various forms of cultural practice. Especially for Eastern Zhou times, this indirect procedure is the only promising way since many of the numerous instances of *wen* in pre-imperial texts are general enough to allow all kinds of speculations across a broad range of cultural phenomena. Again for pragmatic reasons, I suggest to work retrospectively, setting out from early Eastern Han times and looking back from there—as Eastern Han writers actually did when they tried to legitimize the cultural accomplishments (*wen*) of their own times primarily in terms of “literary writings.” Certainly, *wen* had been related to writing early in Zhou times; yet the social context, function, and status of the written text was fundamentally different in the fourth century B.C. compared to the second century A.D.—as again a fourth century B.C. “philosophical” writing has to be distinguished in both function and nature from a ninth century B.C. ancestral temple hymn or inscription.

In the course of the Eastern Zhou, “writing” had assumed a great variety of forms, including charts (*tu* 圖) and inscriptions,⁶ but it still was but one aspect of *wen*, and certainly not the central one. The situation had changed by Eastern Han times, however: now *wen*, beyond the universally applicable “criss-cross pattern,” predominantly meant “writing” and “writings,” “script” and “scriptures,” and in particular the written composition as an emblem of civil achievement.⁷ Moreover, at this time the all-encompassing word *wen* had been differentiated into a number of compounds,

⁶ Note that these forms attach additional aesthetical dimensions to the text not intrinsic to its meaning or wording. They also do not necessarily corroborate intrinsic textual features; in the case of a bronze inscription, for example, the textual arrangement on the material carrier is usually incongruent with the internal textual structure of rhyme and meter. For the complex relations between the “internal” and “external” textual organization—including cases of texts divided and spread over a number of different material carriers, or texts being repeated in their entirety on various carriers—see my *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2000), pp. 119-125.

⁷ This meaning was by then enriched by a cosmological dimension in which the notion of “writing” (*wen*) was constructed as based on the natural patterns (*wen*) of Heaven and Earth; see Xu Shen's postface (*xu* 叙) to his *Shuowen jiezi* (*Shuowen jiezi zhu* 15A.1a-2a), together with the discussion by William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994), pp. 134-38.

denoting chosen aspects of the general notion: one may think of *wenxue* 文學, *wencai* 文采,⁸ *wenzhang* 文章, *wenci* 文辭, and others. Of these, the word *wenzhang* is probably the one that most concretely refers to “writing” and “writings,” and to trace the history of this more narrowly defined word may therefore allow us to delineate with relative accuracy the historical process through which the general notion of *wen* became gradually satiated with its particular aspect of “written text.”

What also makes *wenzhang* an ideal starting point for this analysis is that the term itself figured prominently in the discourse on culture long before referring specifically to the written text. By comparison, the term *wenci* (“patterned phrases”) may be less significant for our considerations than it would appear at first glance, because it narrowly refers to the art of verbal expression—i.e., rhetoric in both senses of embellishment and persuasion—from early times on, including both the oral and the written modes of expression.⁹

The other term most pertinent to the issue of *wen* is, of course, *wenxue*. The locus classicus for *wenxue* is a relatively late passage in the *Lunyu* 論語¹⁰ where Confucius's disciples are individually recognized with respect to their abilities in the fields of “virtuous conduct” (*dexing* 德行), “speech” (*yanyu* 言語), “matters of government” (*zhengshi* 政事), and, finally, “*wen* learning” (*wenxue*). Here, the term *wenxue* defies any straightforward translation; Arthur Waley's rendering as “culture and learning,” also adopted by D.C. Lau, is probably not a lucky choice: on the one hand, the construction of two entities, “culture” and “learning,” does not fit the

⁸ Beyond its general meaning of “patterned ornament,” *wencai* was used in particular for embroidered textiles (with 文綵 = 文采, for both writings see *Shiji* 史記 [10 vols., Peking: Zhonghua shuju 21982] 129.3265 and 129.3274) and to denote the patterns of music (probably melodies, complementary to the rhythmic structure [*jiezou* 節奏]); for the latter see the *Liji* 禮記 chapter “Records of Music” (“Yueji” 樂記) in *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* ed.) 38.307b, 309a (and compare the *Shiji* “Book on Music” [“Yueshu” 樂書] 24.1208, 1215).

⁹ In the *Thirteen Canonical Books* (*Shisan jing* 十三經) of the classicist tradition, *wenci* appears altogether six times; all these passages are in relatively late narratives of the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳; see *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* ed.) [Xiang 25] 36.283a, 283c, [Xiang 27] 38.293c, [Zhao 13] 46.369c, [Zhao 26] 52.413a (twice). All instances refer to oral speech; it seems that in its early usages, *wenci* primarily referred to oral presentation and only gradually was applied to the written text in early imperial times.

¹⁰ *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 (*Shisan jing zhushu* ed.) [11.3] 11.42b. On the stratification of this text, see below.

pattern of the other three binomial phrases, which all denote only a single accomplishment. Moreover, "culture" is devoid of any concrete meaning and, as such, is also out of place when compared to the other terms.

In Warring States times, *wenxue* is clearly related to textual learning, a meaning that may even apply for the *Lunyu* passage in question, since Confucius, like later Mencius and Xunzi, already drew lessons from two exemplary texts, the *Songs* (the later *Shijing* 詩經) and the *Documents* (the later *Shangshu* 尚書).¹¹ Later, in the Han imperial bureaucracy, officials were frequently appointed to high positions because of their *wenxue*, referring to their acquaintance with the textual heritage, in particular the gradually emerging state-sponsored canon which provided the knowledge of model cases to draw upon for political, ritual, and legal decisions.¹² *Wenxue* was the domain of the *ru* 儒 scholars and was regarded as their genuine learning (*rushu* 儒術, also *jingshu* 經術).¹³ It is this semantic stability of the term *wenxue* in Warring States and early imperial times¹⁴ that makes it appear less fruitful for our analysis of cultural changes. Nevertheless, in our discussion of *wenzhang* we will have to come back to *wenxue* and to the eventual association of both terms in late Western Han times.

II. What is *wenzhang*?

In the first lines of the preface to his "Rhapsody on the two capitals" ("Liang du fu" 兩都賦), Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), the most accomplished writer of his time,¹⁵ recalls the revival of literature

¹¹ See John B. Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 33.

¹² See, e.g., *Shiji* 28.1384 (parallel 12.452).

¹³ The terms *rushu* and *jingshu* appear to be almost synonymous, with *rushu* probably encompassing a broader range of learning. The usage of both terms in the *Shiji* (*rushu*: eleven times; *jingshu*: eight times) and in the *Hanshu* 漢書 (12 vols., Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1987) (*rushu* sixteen times; *jingshu* forty times) indicates that *rushu* was gradually replaced by *jingshu* after the mid-Western Han. This development matches my argument below that during the Han, the scholars of traditional learning developed from ritual to textual experts.

¹⁴ See Kōzen Hiroshi 興膳宏, "'Bungaku' to 'bunshō'" [文學]と[文章], in *Satō Kyōgen hakase shōju kinen Tōyōgaku ronshū* 佐藤區玄博士頌壽記念東洋學論集 (Kyōto: Hōyū shoten, 1990), pp. 3-4.

¹⁵ On Ban Gu, see David R. Knechtges, "To Praise the Han: The Eastern

under the Western Han (202 B.C.-A.D. 9), centuries after "the sounds of the *Eulogia* had ceased" and "the *Songs* no longer flourished".¹⁶

When the Great Han was consolidated in its initial years, [the emperor], day after day, did not get enough leisure.¹⁷ Reaching the eras of [emperors] Wu and Xuan,¹⁸ they venerated the offices of ritual and examined the *wenzhang*.¹⁹ Within [the palace] they set up the institutions of the Bronze Horse [Gate] and the Stone Canal [Pavilion];²⁰ outside [the palace] they initiated the task of harmonizing the pitch pipes in the Office of Music.²¹

Capital *Fu* of Pan Ku and His Contemporaries," in *Thought and Law in Qin and Han China: Studies Dedicated to Anthony Hulsewé on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Wilt L. Idema and Erik Zürcher (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), pp. 118-39.

¹⁶ Ban Gu locates the decline of the royal sacrificial hymns (*song* 頌), and of the *Shijing* songs in general, after the reigns of the early Western Zhou kings Cheng 成 (1042/35-1006 B.C.) and Kang 康 (1005/3-978) (dates after Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History: Inscribed Bronze Vessels* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991], p. xix). Kings Cheng and Kang are eulogized together in *Mao shi* 毛詩 # 274; see *Mao shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* ed.) 19-2.321c.

¹⁷ I follow Yan Shigu's 顏師古 (581-645) commentary in *Hanshu* 1B.81, where Ban Gu uses the same wording to describe the restless efforts of Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. 206/2-195 B.C.) after founding the dynasty. As Professor Knechtges has noticed, the line implies that Gaozu "had no time for cultural matters." See Knechtges, transl., *Wen xuan: Selections of Refined Literature* (to date 3 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982-96), 1:92, n. 4. Statements like these by Ban Gu have defined our view of the Han cultural situation prior to Han Wudi 漢武帝 (r. 141-87 B.C.). I have argued elsewhere that this traditional understanding needs to be re-examined; see my *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer: Literatur und Ritual in der politischen Repräsentation von der Han-Zeit bis zu den Sechs Dynastien* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997), pp. 144-59, and *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang*, chapter 5.

¹⁸ Han Xuandi 漢宣帝 ruled 74-49 B.C.

¹⁹ The phrase *kao wenzhang* 考文章 appears in a similar context in Ban Gu's *Hanshu* 80.3324, and also in the *Liji* (*Liji zhengyi* 34.278c), where Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) explains *wenzhang* as "the rules of ritual" (*lifa* 禮法), and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) glosses *kao* 考 as *jiao* 校 ("to compare"), with the extended meaning of "to examine."

²⁰ The Bronze Horse Gate (Jinma men 金馬門) was the place where scholars "in attendance" awaited their appointment to a position in the imperial bureaucracy; the Stone Canal Pavilion (Shiqu ge 石渠閣) was the name of the imperial library; see Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 1:92-94, n. 6.

²¹ (*Liu chen zhu* 大臣注) *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Sibu congkan* ed.) 1.1b-2a. The Office of Music (Yuefu 樂府) was mainly concerned with providing musical pieces and hymns for the state sacrifices; its head under Han Wudi was Li Yannian 李延年 (c. 140-87 B.C.), who received the newly invented title of Commandant for Harmonizing the Pitch Pipes (*xielü duwei* 協律都尉). See my *Die Hymnen der chinesischen*

大漢初定，日不暇給。至於武宣之世，乃崇禮官考文章。內設金馬石渠之署，外興樂府協律之事。

The text goes on to mention some of Han Wudi's state sacrificial hymns as well as the auspicious omens that became employed as heraldic reign devices from his times on, and then turns to the literary compositions of the Han. After mentioning the great Western Han scholar-officials and *fu* 賦 authors, Ban Gu uses the term *wenzhang* again:

The pieces that were presented to the throne were more than a thousand, and henceforth, the *wenzhang* of the Great Han were brilliant and equal in style to those of the Three Dynasties [Xia, Shang, and Zhou].²²

蓋奏御者千有餘篇，而後大漢之文章炳焉，與三代同風。

What is *wenzhang* in these two passages of Ban Gu's preface? What were the *wenzhang* of the Han, matched by Ban Gu with the ritual institutions? What were the *wenzhang* of the Three Dynasties? What could the historian, poet, and scholar Ban Gu have seen as the common cultural accomplishment of both the Three Dynasties and the Western Han? In the *Thirteen Canonical Books*, the term *wenzhang* appears altogether ten times: twice in the *Lunyu*, twice in the *Zuo zhuan*, and six times in the *Liji*; in addition, the "Minor Preface(s)" ("Xiao xu" 小序) of the *Songs*, dating from the Han, employs *wenzhang* twice, in the introductions to Odes # 55 ("Qi yu" 淇奥) and # 255 ("Dang" 蕩).

In the passages of the *Lunyu*—both of them probably belong-

schen Staatsopfer, pp. 59-61 (with references to the relevant recent scholarship). Since about the fourth/third century B.C., the regulation of the pitch pipes was a crucial undertaking to adjust the state ritual music to cosmic harmony; see *ibid.*, pp. 41-50. By Han times, this regulation occupied the very center of an idealized ritual administration of the world, being closely related to the calendar and serving as the basis for all other systems of measurements; see *Hanshu* 21A.966-70; cf. also Joseph Needham and Kenneth Girdwood Robinson, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 4: *Physics and Physical Technology, Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 199-202, and Kenneth DeWoskin, "Early Chinese Music and the Origins of Aesthetic Terminology," in *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 188-94. The cosmological significance of music is reflected in the very sequence of the ten *Hanshu* "Monographs" (*zhi* 志) which epitomize the administrative essence of the empire: the first is the "Monograph on Pitch Pipes and Calendar" ("Lülü zhi" 律曆志), the second is the "Monograph on Ritual and Music" ("Liyue zhi" 禮樂志), which also contains the texts of the sacrificial hymns.

²² *Wen xuan* 1.3b.

ing to the early strata of the text²³—*wenzhang* seems to denote Confucius's personal appearance:

Zigong said: The Master's patterned appearance (*wenzhang*) can be known, but what the Master says about human nature and the Way of Heaven cannot be known.²⁴

子貢曰：夫子之文章可得而聞也。夫子之言性與天道，不可得而聞也。

The Master said: Great indeed was Yao acting as a ruler! How lofty, lofty—it is Heaven that is great; it was Yao who modelled himself upon it! How vast, vast—so that the common people could not give a name to this! How lofty, lofty he was in his accomplishments and merits! How lucid he was in his patterned appearance (*wenzhang*)!²⁵

子曰：大哉堯之為君也。巍巍乎唯天為大，唯堯則之。蕩蕩乎民無能名焉。巍巍乎其有成功也，煥乎其有文章。

The first passage closely parallels two other famous sections of the *Lunyu*:

When the Master was in danger in Kuang, he said: "With King Wen dead, are the figured patterns (*wen*) not here? If Heaven had wanted these figured patterns to be destroyed, those who died later would not have been able to be in accordance with these figured patterns. Since Heaven has not wanted these figured patterns to be destroyed, what can the people of Kuang do to me?"²⁶

²³ Steven Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 26, summarizes the discussion as follows: "We can distinguish four strata. First, a group of five 'core chapters' composed of chapters 3-7 is probably the earliest material. Second, four chapters—1, 2, 8, and 9—seem to have been added at a later date around the core chapters but contain many early materials. Chapters 10 through 15 seem to constitute another, still later layer, and the last five chapters, 16 through 20, are marked by linguistic criteria as latest of all." The two passages with *wenzhang* are from chapters 5 and 8; the passage in chapter 8, with Confucius himself speaking, may belong to the earlier materials.

²⁴ *Lunyu zhushu* [5.13] 5.18a. He Yan 何晏 (190-249) glosses the passage as follows: "Zhang 章 is clearly shining (*ming* 明). The patterned embellishment (*wencai* 文彩), manifest and appearing, can be followed by the ear and the eye."

²⁵ *Lunyu zhushu* [8.20] 8.31b. He Yan glosses the final phrase 煥乎其有文章 as follows: "Huan 煥 is clearly shining (*ming* 明). The figured patterns (*wen* 文) he had established and the regulations he had conferred are again manifest and shining."

²⁶ *Lunyu zhushu* [9.5] 9.34a. Peter Bol has made this passage the starting point for his important study, *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in Tang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), translating *si wen* 斯文 as "This Culture of Ours." This translation certainly reflects the significance of the term in Tang and Song times but I am not sure whether it should

子畏於匡，曰：文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與於斯文也。天之未喪斯文也，匡人如予何？

The Master said: "I wish not to speak." Zigong said: "If the Master does not speak, what do we lesser ones have to transmit?" The Master said: "Does Heaven speak? The four seasons take their course from it, the hundred beings are born from it—does Heaven speak?"²⁷

子曰：予欲無言。子貢曰：子如不言，則小子何述焉？子曰：天何言哉？四時行焉，百物生焉，天何言哉？

Michael Puett has pointed to these two passages in his analysis of the notions of creation and transmission in the Warring States; both express the idea of a transmission not of doctrinal statements but of outward patterns of speech and action: "What can be transmitted, in other words, is patterned behavior: true transmission, Confucius is claiming, is not through words but rather through replicating the patterns that were initially found in Heaven."²⁸ It is in this perspective that I propose to understand the first *Lunyu* passage on *wenzhang* quoted above: rather than providing arguments about the fundamental issues of Heaven and Man, the Master presents himself as a model of superior ritual form. Again, he does not commend a certain doctrine issued by Yao, but the lucidity of his appearance.

apply to the early *Lunyu* passage in its original context: other usages of *wen* and its most closely related term *wenzhang* seem to indicate more concrete meanings, especially of ritual practice, rather than a general idea of "culture." Again, the cosmological significance of *wen* as a figured, transfiguring, and all-embracing force, which was established in texts like the *Shuowen jiezi* postface (see above) and the first chapter ("Yuan dao" 原道) of Liu Xie's 劉勰 (c. 467-c. 522) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, and was fully developed by Tang times, cannot be projected too far into Zhou times, or too deep into the Eastern Zhou discourse on culture and cosmos. Judged on the basis of our available sources, the cosmological notion of *wen* as writing was not a relevant issue in pre-imperial and early imperial times. A similar problem of historical contextualization arises with the use of the term *wenzhang*. In a step beyond my argument below that its meaning of "literary compositions" is not valid for any time before the late Western Han, I would suggest that earlier, more "material" understandings of *wenzhang* remained significant even in the intellectual discussions of later ages; at least the learned Tang and Song commentators of the traditional canon were always cautious not to conflate the contemporary "literary composition" with the *wenzhang* of pre-imperial times.

²⁷ *Lunyu zhushu* [17.19] 17.70a.

²⁸ Michael Puett, "Nature and Artifice: Debates in Late Warring States China concerning the Creation of Culture," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57 (1997): 479.

The two passages in the *Zuo zhuan* employ *wenzhang* in the context of military and political ritual. Here, *wenzhang* are forms of emblematic value, that is, again, clear signs; the early commentaries gloss these concretely as "guidons and pennants" (*jingqi* 旌旗) attached to the war (and ritual) chariots:

Every three years, [the ruler, in a military maneuver, leads out] the military forces and aligns them; he leads them in and rearranges the battalions. They return [to the ancestral temple] and perform the [ritual of] drinking to the correct limit. [All this, the ruler does] in order to count the army's possessions. They show forth guidons and pennants (*wenzhang*), clarify noble and base, distinguish ranks and array, and follow the order of young and old. [All this] is to practice the majestic demeanor.²⁹

三年而治兵。入而振旅，歸而飲至，以數軍實。昭文章，明貴賤，辨等列，順少長。習威儀也。

[The state of Jin] has merits that are not neglected and has achievements that are recorded. It has been invested with territory and fields, mollified with ritual vessels and instruments, distinguished with chariots and vestments, and illuminated with guidons and pennants (*wenzhang*).³⁰

夫有勳而不廢，有績而載。奉之以土田，撫之彝器，旌之以車服，明之以文章。

In the *Liji*, *wenzhang* appears on the level of normative ritual form:

Establishing the measures of weight, length, and capacity, examining the refined forms (*wenzhang*), adjusting the commencement of the year and the month, changing the colors of the [ritual] vestments, discriminating the banners and pennants, altering vessels and weapons, and distinguishing the clothing—these are matters [in sagely rulership] that can be changed in accordance with the people.³¹

立權度量，考文章，改正朔，易服色，殊徽號，異器械，別衣服：此其所得與民變革者也。

²⁹ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* [Yin 5] 3.25a-b. The translation follows the early commentaries by Du Yu 杜預 (222-284) and Kong Yingda. I translate *lū* 旅 as "battalion" and *jun* 軍 as "army" according to Zheng Xuan's commentary to *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Zhouli zhushu* 周禮注疏 [Shisan jing zhushu ed.] 11.73a: a *lū* consisted of 500 men (with five *lū* forming one *shi* 師 ["regiment"]), a *jun*, the largest military unit, of 12,500. According to *Guanzi* 管子 (Dai Wang 戴望, *Guanzi jiaozheng* 管子校正, *Zhuzi jicheng* ed.) 8.123, however, a *lū* in the state of Qi 齊 had 2,000 men. In general, the relatively common pairing of terms like *lū*, *shi*, and *jun* usually operates as a synecdoche, indicating the entire body of troops.

³⁰ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* [Zhao 15] 47.376a.

³¹ *Liji zhengyi* 34.278c.

The square *fu* and round *gui* vessels, the sacrificial stands and the plates; the stipulated measures and the refined forms (*wenzhang*)—these are the instruments of ritual.³²

簠簋俎豆，制度文章，禮之器也。

Above, the *ru* scholar does not act as an official to the Son of Heaven; below, he does not serve the feudal lords. He is cautiously still and venerates generosity. He is strong and resolute to deal with [the improper behavior of] others. He broadens his learning in order to know the proper duties. He keeps himself close to the refined form (*wenzhang*), polishing and smoothing the edges and angles [of his behavior].³³

儒有上不臣天子，下不事諸侯。慎靜而尚寬。強毅以與人。博學以知服。近文章，砥厲廉隅。

In the other three passages of the *Liji*, the term *wenzhang* is—according to the early commentaries—a compound denoting two different textile patterns for ritual use: *wen* is explained as the pattern of azure and red, *zhang* as one of red and white.³⁴ Whether or not we accept this rather specific explanation, in these passages—as well as in many other texts, as we shall see—*wenzhang* clearly refers to some kind of textile ornament.

Finally, there are two appearances of *wenzhang* in the so-called “Minor Preface(s)” to poems of the *Shijing*, written during the Han dynasty:³⁵

“Qi yu” praises the virtuous power of Duke Wu [of Wei]. He had refined form (*wenzhang*); again, he could listen to corrections and admonitions. By ritual, he restrained himself.³⁶

淇奥，美武公之德也。有文章，又能聽其規諫。以禮自防。

³² *Liji zhengyi* 37.302b. In this passage, the early commentaries remain silent on *wenzhang*. My translation as “refined forms” is derived from its seemingly complementary nature to the “stipulated measures” (*zhidu* 制度).

³³ *Liji zhengyi* 59.443a.

³⁴ *Liji zhengyi* 16.143a, 48.370b, and 50.383a. The other two patterns, conventionally mentioned together with *wen* and *zhang*, are *fu* 黼 (white and black) and *fu* 黻 (black and azure). Martin J. Powers, “The Figure in the Carpet: Reflections on the Discourse of Ornament in Zhou China,” *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 223, notes on the binomial form *fufu*: “[I]t would appear that, by mid-Warring States times, the term often served simply as metonymy for any sumptuous counter-change pattern, i.e., a pattern in which figure and ground are reversible.”

³⁵ On the complex problem of identifying and dating the different parts of the Mao preface, see Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 90-115.

³⁶ *Mao shi zhengyi* [# 55] 3-2.52c.

King Li was without the Way. The world under Heaven is vast, vast; [but King Li] was without the control-line and net and without the refined form (*wenzhang*) [of political order].³⁷

厲王無道。天下蕩蕩，無綱紀文章。

The two preface passages to Odes # 55 and # 255 use the word *wenzhang* in the same sense, denoting—parallel to the “control-line and net” (*gangji* 綱紀)—some abstract key instrument of good rule.

In sum, the occurrence of the word *wenzhang* in the *Thirteen Canonical Books* allows several conclusions. First, the term does not occur in the oldest parts of the transmitted texts, that is, the early strata of the *Shangshu* or the *Shijing*; the earliest, actually rather late, instances may well be those in the *Lunyu*. Second, the single text where *wenzhang* appears most frequently is a ritual canon, the *Liji*; note that this also applies for the broader term *wen*, which is uniquely recurrent in the *Liji* chapter “Records of Music,” always denoting the *appearance* of ritual (musical) form.³⁸ And, finally, there is no instance where *wenzhang* can be reasonably interpreted in any sense as “literature” or “writings.” Instead, the term seems to comprise the following meanings:

- a) the refined personal outward appearance of a scholar (*Lunyu*, *Liji*);
- b) the refined personal appearance of a ruler or some abstract qualities of good rule (*Lunyu*, *Shijing* preface);
- c) military/ritual insignia (*Zuo zhuan*);
- d) normative ritual forms and standards (*Liji*);
- e) textile patterns on ritual vestments (*Liji*).

This set of meanings for *wenzhang* can be traced throughout Warring States writings. In the *Xunzi* 荀子—the text that is most intensively centered around the conceptualization of traditional ritual and its application to social order—the term appears no less than fourteen times: as textile patterns (seven times), the refined appearance of the sage (three times), insignia of rank (two times), and, more generally, ritual forms (two times).³⁹ In

³⁷ *Mao shi zhengyi* [# 255] 18-1.284c.

³⁸ In contrast, and complementary, to *wen* denoting the outward pattern, *li* 理 would refer to the inner structure, as in a piece of jade; see *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 1A.30b-31a.

³⁹ Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (*Zhuji jicheng* ed.) 3.53, 3.60, 4.84, 6.116, 6.117, 6.121, 7.141, 8.156, 8.157, 13.231, 13.239, 14.257, 18.317, 20.362.

the *Han Feizi* 韓非子, which is in many respects indebted to the *Xunzi*, *wenzhang* denotes ritual form, the accomplishment of the sage, and refined ritual embellishments of material objects.⁴⁰ In the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, it again refers once to crafted ornaments and in another passage to the patterned brilliance in the speeches of a wandering persuader (*youshi* 游士).⁴¹ In the *Mozi* 墨子, the term appears only once (pejoratively) in the context of ritual ornament related to musical performance.⁴² In the *Guanzi* 管子 as well as in the *Guoyu* 國語, the term refers to textile ornament.⁴³ In the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, likewise, *wenzhang* appears three times each to denote visual, including textile, patterns or insignia.⁴⁴ In the *Zhangguo ce* 戰國策, it refers to the general system of laws and regulations.⁴⁵

In sum, throughout all major Eastern Zhou texts (the *Zhangguo ce* stories tentatively included) that contain the term *wenzhang*, there is not a single instance in which it can be read unambiguously as “literary composition” or as directly denoting texts or even words at all. The phrase *yan you wenzhang* 言有文章 in the *Yanzi chunqiu*, also as *yan wei wenzhang* 言為文章 in the Han compilations *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 and *Huainan zi* 淮南子,⁴⁶ is informative here: *wenzhang* is not the words themselves, but a quality of both order and brilliance that distinguishes them from other, ordinary verbal expressions. Wherever the term *wenzhang* means something concrete—that is, beyond a “refined” or “patterned” appearance in general—in Warring States writings, it relates to

⁴⁰ Wang Xianshen 王先慎, *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解 (*Zhuzi jicheng* ed.) 3.49, 6.96, 6.108.

⁴¹ Zhang Chunyi 張純一, *Yanzi chunqiu jiaozhu* 晏子春秋校注 (*Zhuzi jicheng* ed.) 2.52, 5.146. In the second passage, the text notes that the persuader's way of speaking had patterned brilliance (*yan you wenzhang* 言有文章) and that his learning/techniques (*shu* 術) had orderly structure (*tiaoli* 條理).

⁴² Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi jiangou* 墨子間詁 (*Zhuzi jicheng* ed.) 8.155.

⁴³ *Guanzi jiaozheng* 1.10; *Guoyu* (*Sibu congkan* ed.) 2.10a; for an interpretation of the *Guoyu* passage see Powers, “The Figure in the Carpet,” pp. 216-17.

⁴⁴ Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (*Zhuzi jicheng* ed.) 1.16, 8.141, 10.160; *Lüshi chunqiu* (*Zhuzi jicheng* ed.) 6.54, 10.98, 14.138.

⁴⁵ He Jianzhang 何建章, *Zhangguo ce zhushi* 戰國策注釋 (3 vols., Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 1:74.

⁴⁶ Wang Pinzhen 王聘珍, *Da Dai Liji jiegou* 大戴禮記解詁 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1983) 5.94; Xu Shen 許慎/Gao You 高誘, *Huainan honglie jie* 淮南鴻烈解 (*Sibu congkan* ed.) 9.1a, 20.10a; cf. also a memorial from very late Western Han times in *Hanshu* 67.2920.

ritual forms (including a well-ordered way of speaking), and in particular to textile ornament and military/ritual insignia on pennants and blazons.

In this set of meanings, the perfected outward appearance is nothing superficial: “The presence of the sage's inner power manifests itself in external signs, which can be seen in the forms (*wen* 文) and outward signs that others recognize. The ritual objects of rulers were intended to display the excellence of their inner power. This could be seen in the ornaments of distinction on a ruler's robes, in the tinkling of the bells of his chariot, and in the heavenly bodies displayed on his flags and standards.”⁴⁷ Here, we are not in the mediated world of ideological doctrines and their rhetorical formulations but confronted with the immediate aesthetic expression of ritualized political representation: “[C]eremonial ornament was not simply ‘ornament’—rather, it was the means by which the allocation of resources and prerogatives was expressed, enforced, and discussed. The apportionment of good food and the music proper to each was, theoretically, in direct proportion to the character, merit and *de* of the various nobility.”⁴⁸

In this overall context of Eastern Zhou material culture, *wenzhang* is the word for *correct* and *appropriate* ornament: we hear of the *wenzhang* of the sage, of the scholar, or of the perfect ritual order. As such, *wenzhang* does not merely denote marks of distinction but bears already emblematic significance: in this abstraction, “to have *wenzhang*,” now in a general sense of ritual demeanor, distinguishes by itself the model person.⁴⁹ Although the broader term *wen* can mean the pattern of writing in early texts, having reviewed all cases of concrete and unambiguous meanings of the more narrow term *wenzhang* we find no support to read it as (spoken or written) “literary text.” Furthermore, the emblem-

⁴⁷ John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* (3 vols., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988-94), 1:304, n. 55.

⁴⁸ Powers, “The Figure in the Carpet,” p. 218.

⁴⁹ This common assumption is indirectly confirmed even by its rejection, e.g., in the pejorative use of *wenzhang* in *Han Feizi* 3.49 where the proliferation of *wenzhang* among the latter sages is presented as inferior to the utmost simplicity of Yao 堯. The passage is but one reflection of the critical dichotomy between substantial simplicity (*zhi* 質) and ornamental structure (*wen* 文), pervasive in Eastern Zhou and Qin-Han discussions on ritual. In subsequent ages the problem became translated into the rhetoric of literary values, programmatic in Tang and Song statements on *guwen* (“ancient style literature”).

atic character of the notion of *wenzhang* itself, clearly derived from its concrete denotations of ritual emblems, seems to require to read the more ambiguous passages that employ *wenzhang*, e.g., those of the *Lunyu*, in a somewhat abstract sense within the same semantic horizon. There is no indication that “the *wenzhang* of Confucius” that “can be known” could have anything to do with speech or writing—despite the fact that the great ritual specialist of the Tang dynasty and *Hanshu* commentator Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645) understands *wenzhang* here as the writings attributed to Confucius, i.e., those “of the kind of the ‘Xici’ 繫辭 and ‘Wenyan’ 文言 [commentaries to the *Yijing*] and of the *Chunqiu* 春秋.”⁵⁰ It is this kind of retrospective reasoning by later scholar-officials that we have to surmount in order to reconstruct the earlier meanings of words in their own historical context.

The texts of the second century B.C.—again as far as they include the term *wenzhang*—also use the term entirely within its earlier range of meanings:⁵¹ these are Jia Yi’s 賈誼 (200-168 B.C.) *Xin shu* 新書,⁵² Lu Jia’s 陸賈 (c. 228-c. 140 B.C.) *Xin yu* 新語,⁵³ the sacrificial hymn cycle of the “Anshi fangzhong ge” 安世房中歌 of around 200 B.C.,⁵⁴ the *Han shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳,⁵⁵ the *Da Dai Liji*,⁵⁶ and the *Huainan zi*.⁵⁷

The next major text to consider is Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (c. 145-c. 86 B.C.) *Shiji*. Here, *wenzhang* occurs in eight passages—most of which are not Sima Qian’s own words but quotations from earlier texts or later interpolations into the *Shiji*. One instance of a quotation is the *Lunyu* passage on “the *wenzhang* of Confucius.”⁵⁸ In another passage, the *Shiji* includes the famous letter that the Qin chancellor Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 B.C.) wrote in prison, using *wenzhang* in the same sense of normative ritual form, re-

⁵⁰ See Yan Shigu’s commentary in *Hanshu* 75.3195.

⁵¹ To the following list, one could also add Sima Xiangru’s 司馬相如 (179-117 B.C.) *Changmen fu* 長門賦 (*Wen xuan* 16.13a) and, purportedly earlier, the pseudo-Song Yu’s 宋玉 (c. 290-223 B.C.) *Shennü fu* 神女賦 (*Wen xuan* 19.9a), but these works are most probably not authentic and are of an uncertain date.

⁵² *Xin shu* (*Congshu jicheng* ed.) 1.13, 6.64.

⁵³ *Xin yu* (*Zhuxi jicheng* ed.) 1.1, 7.12.

⁵⁴ *Hanshu* 22.1049; see my *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer*, pp. 100-73, esp. pp. 132-34.

⁵⁵ *Han shi waizhuan* (*Sibu congkan* ed.) 5.1a.

⁵⁶ *Da Dai Liji jiegou* 1.12, 5.94.

⁵⁷ *Huainan honglie jie* 1.12b, 1.14b, 2.2b, 2.7b, 5.7a, 8.9a, 9.1a, 9.10b, 11.15a, 20.10a.

⁵⁸ *Shiji* 47.1941.

lated to the correct weights and measures, in which the term appears in the *Liji*.⁵⁹ In two passages of the “Book on Ritual” (“Lishu” 禮書), the term refers to textile ornament, as it did in the *Xunzi* and *Liji*.⁶⁰ The “Book on Music” (“Yueshu” 樂書) includes the *Liji* passage where *wenzhang* denotes the “instruments of ritual.”⁶¹ Both “books,” however, belong to the famous “lost ten chapters” of the *Shiji*, that is, they are later replacements of the original text: the “Book on Music” is almost entirely a reproduction—with some minor rearrangements of the text—of the *Liji* “Records of Music” (“Yueji”), whereas the “Book on Ritual” draws on a variety of sources, in particular from the *Liji* and *Xunzi*. It is impossible to date these chapters precisely; the only safe *terminus ante quem* is the early fifth century A.D.⁶²

Another of the “lost chapters,” the “Hereditary Houses of the Three Princes” (“San wang shi jia” 三王世家),⁶³ includes *wenzhang* in an appended passage that is attributed to the supposed compiler of this chapter, Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (c. 105-c. 30 B.C.). Here, in a narrative placed in the reign of Emperor Zhao 昭 (r. 87-74 B.C.), the ritual specialist Gonghu Manyi 公戶滿意⁶⁴ claims to “draw upon the comprehensive principles of past and present, the great rituals of the state, and *wenzhang* that approached classical correctness.”⁶⁵ This passage is closely parallel to a memorial

⁵⁹ *Shiji* 87.2561.

⁶⁰ *Shiji* 23.1158, 1161; the second passage is modelled on *Xunzi* 13.231.

⁶¹ *Shiji* 24.1189, cf. *Liji zhengyi* 37.302b.

⁶² See Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, “Taishi gong shu wangpian kao” 太史公書亡篇考, in *Yu Jiaxi lunxue ji* 余嘉錫論學集 (2 vols., Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1963), 1:38-49; Qiu Qionsun 丘瓊孫, *Lidai yuezhi lüzhi jiaoshi* 歷代樂志律志校釋 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1964), pp. 1-12; and my “A Note on the Authenticity and Ideology of *Shih-chi* 24, ‘The Book on Music,’” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119 (1999): 673-77.

⁶³ See Yu Jiaxi, “Taishi gong shu wangpian kao,” 1:58-65.

⁶⁴ The erudite Gonghu, a specialist probably of the *Yili* 儀禮, is mentioned in the *Shiji* only twice (60.2118, 121.3126), and in the *Hanshu* only once (88.3614). He nevertheless seems to have occupied the high position of a Grand Palace Grandee (*taizhong dafu* 太中大夫), that is, a personal adviser to the emperor; see the *Hanshu* passage and Sima Zhen’s 司馬貞 (eighth century) commentary in *Shiji* 60.2119.

⁶⁵ *Shiji* 60.2118. The translation of *wenzhang er ya* 文章爾雅 as “*wenzhang* that approach classical correctness” is tentative. *Er ya* can either mean “approach classical correctness” or, possibly, “to cause to draw near classical correctness”; the same applies for the following quotation. Moreover, in the present passage *wenzhang er ya* may be separated from the previous phrases and would then refer directly to Gonghu: “His *wenzhang* approach classical correctness / draw one near classical correctness.”

by the chancellor Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (200-121 B.C.) on the official promotion of *ru* scholars:

Your servant has respectfully investigated the edicts, laws, and commands that have been sent down—they illuminate the demarcations of Heaven and Man and comprehend the principles of past and present. Their *wenzhang* approach classical correctness, their phrases of instruction are deep and profound, their bounty is manifest in great beauty.⁶⁶

臣謹案詔書律令下者，明天人分際，通古今之義。文章爾雅，訓辭深厚，恩施其美。

The context of *wenzhang* in these two passages is still ritual and rulership, like in some passages of the *Liji*, and if the term would refer now to (written?) verbal expression, then it should denote a rather particular form, contents, and function of *ritualized* expression, maybe monitory writings that could be considered as a means of good rule. In this case, the patterns of normative ritual form were now extended to include official writings.

Altogether, the *Shiji* shows no instance of *wenzhang* in the sense of "literature" beyond the most narrowly defined spheres of ritual and rulership—with one significant exception which is a much later addition: chapter 112, the "Biographies of the Lord of Pingjin and Zhufu Yan" ("Pingjin hou Zhufu liezhuan" 平津侯主父列傳), includes an appendix by the *Hanshu* compiler Ban Gu in which he enumerates the outstanding scholars and officials of the Western Han who have excelled in various domains; listing the scholars in a sequence of these domains, the text also mentions the category of *wenzhang*: "As for *wenzhang*, there are Sima Qian and [Sima] Xiangru." In addition, Ban Gu notes a few lines later that "Liu Xiang 劉向 [79-8 B.C.] and Wang Bao 王褒 [d. 61 B.C.] became prominent through *wenzhang*."⁶⁷ This passage marks a fundamental shift: the term *wenzhang*, clearly meaning "(court) literary writings" here, is transferred from the sphere of ritual order to that of, however officially functional and ritualized, writings.

What kind of a development does this shift imply? Are we confronted with a simple semantic change of a word, or does this change bear deeper significance, representing the transfer of what was embodied in the sensual order of ritual to the domain of literary writing? In other words, does this shift point to a new

⁶⁶ *Shiji* 121.3119; cf. also *Hanshu* 88.3594.

⁶⁷ *Shiji* 112.2965; see also *Wen xuan* 49.2b, 3b.

status of the literary text,⁶⁸ absorbing and replacing to some extent the genuine ritual act as the most significant expression of good rule and thereby representing some overall transformation of the immediate ritual expression into a textually mediated one? What kind of "literature" is under discussion here, and should the designation *wenzhang* indeed be reserved for specific types of writings, e.g., of particular ritual significance? What is the relation between old *wenzhang* (meaning ritual demeanor and political order) and new *wenzhang* (meaning the literary text), given the fact that Ban Gu uses the word in both senses, although mostly in the new one?⁶⁹ And finally: can we date the semantic shift in the word *wenzhang* more precisely, relating it to some overruling phenomena of Han cultural and intellectual history? To approach these questions we have to look at the criticism of *wenzhang* as ritual ornament on the basis of the emerging ritual canon.

III. Ritual canon versus ritual practice

A number of texts indicate that the shift in the meaning of *wenzhang* is indeed a late Western/early Eastern Han phenomenon, i.e., relatively recent in Ban Gu's times. The earliest instance of *wenzhang* meaning the written text that I have been able to locate is, surprisingly enough, in Huan Kuan's 桓寬 (first century B.C.) *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論, the account of a court debate of 81 B.C. concerned with the political and economic policies of the day. Here, in one of altogether three instances the term denotes written legal statutes or articles, in other words, a corpus of texts that are as far removed from any notion of *belles lettres* as we can imagine.⁷⁰ By contrast to this apparently unique case, the *Hanshu*, in addition to some earlier quotations of memorials and other

⁶⁸ If not noted otherwise, I always use terms like "literature," "literary writings," etc. in the broadest sense, including, for example, official panegyrics, memorials, and other forms of functional texts.

⁶⁹ In the *Hanshu*, Ban Gu uses *wenzhang* a number of times in the sense of "literary writings" (see *Hanshu* 28B.1645, 30.1701, 58.2628, 58.2634, 87B.3557, 87B.3583, 99B.4046) but only twice in the earlier sense of ritual order (6.212, 25B.1270); the passages quoted above from his preface to the "Liang du fu" seem to balance the two meanings (see the discussion below).

⁷⁰ *Yantie lun* (*Zhuzi jicheng* ed.), [paragraph 55] 56. In two other instances—p. 5 [paragraph 3] and p. 30 [26]—*wenzhang* is used in the established meanings of textile ornament and visible patterns.

primary texts,⁷¹ contains one edict by Emperor Xuan from 55 B.C.⁷² and three memorials to Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 33-7 B.C.)⁷³ that all use *wenzhang* within its earlier range of meanings.

The single original Western Han document in the *Hanshu* that contains the term in the sense of literary writings (or even texts in general) is Yang Xiong's 揚雄 (53 B.C.-A.D. 18) preface to his *Changyang fu* 長楊賦.⁷⁴ Again in his *Fayan* 法言, he notes that Confucius's disciples were not sufficient in producing *wenzhang*, which here refers obviously to written texts;⁷⁵ in another passage of the same work he lists the *Songs* and the *Documents* among a sage's features of outward ritual demeanor.⁷⁶

A contemporary to Yang Xiong, the textual erudite and imperial bibliographer Liu Xiang, employs *wenzhang* in his *Shui yuan* 說苑⁷⁷ altogether six times, of which only one instance can be understood as "writing": here, the text notes that the "men of resolve" (*zhishi* 志士) have been reciting the *wenzhang* of Confucius's *Chunqiu*.⁷⁸ Most interesting, four of the five other passages include *wenzhang* in a negative sense similar to its earlier

⁷¹ See *Hanshu* 56.2510, 64B.2809, 88.3594, together with the *Lunyu* quotations in 75.3194, 88.3589, 100B.4235, and the passage in the "Anshi fangzhong ge" from around 200 B.C. in *Hanshu* 22.1049.

⁷² *Hanshu* 8.267.

⁷³ *Hanshu* 25B.1256, 67.2920, 80.3324.

⁷⁴ *Hanshu* 87B.3557, see also *Wen xuan* 9.2a. This text was probably composed in 10 B.C.; see David R. Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.-A.D. 18)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 115.

⁷⁵ See Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶, *Fayan yishu* 法言義疏 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1968) 16.2a.

⁷⁶ *Fayan yishu* 12.6b-7a. In *Fayan yishu* 14.15a, he includes "embellished phrases" (*wenci* 文辭) among the outward attributes (*biao* 表) of a sage.

⁷⁷ Although most Western and Chinese scholars pronounce and transcribe the title as *Shuo yuan*, I follow the practice of Japanese scholars who read it as *Zei'en* (*Shui yuan*), not *Setsu'en* (*Shuo yuan*). The implied reason is that the book actually contains a great number of dialogues and "persuasions" (*shui*), typical of Warring States times as we know from the *Zhanguo ce* (also edited by Liu Xiang). On the question of *shuo* and *shui* see my "Persuasion" or "Treatise"?—The prose genres *shui* 說 and *shuo* 說 in the light of the *Guwenci leizuan* 古文辭類纂 of 1779," in *Ad Seres et Tungusos: Festschrift für Martin Gimm*, ed. Lutz Bieg, Erling von Mende, and Martina Siebert (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), pp. 221-43.

⁷⁸ *Shui yuan* (*Sibu congkan* ed.) 5.2a. The other passages are 2.3a, 8.9b, 20.7b, 20.9b, 20.13a. Of course, this passage cannot serve to explain pre-Han occurrences of the term *wenzhang*, e.g., in the *Lunyu*.

appearance in *Mozi* and *Han Feizi*, i.e., as a brilliant yet superficial or even deceitful pattern of material ornament or speech.⁷⁹

Kuang Heng 匡衡 (chancellor 36-30 B.C.) used the term in this same negative meaning in his famous memorial of 32 B.C., when he proposed to abolish the densely ornamented purple *Taiyi* 太一 altar in Ganquan 甘泉, claiming that its *wenzhang* and various features of embellishment "cannot take their model from antiquity." From Kuang Heng's memorial it is clear that the ritual structures of Emperor Wu's reign were still in use at this time:⁸⁰

At the purple altar of the Great [Unity] sacrificial site at Ganquan, the passages in the eight corners represent [the spirits of] the eight directions. The altars of the Five Thearchs encircle it below, and again there are the altars of the manifold spirits. According to the *Shangshu*, there is the principle of sacrificing to the Six Venerated Ones, offering the sacrifice from the distance to the mountains and rivers, and sacrificing all around to the manifold spirits.⁸¹ [But] the purple altar has the decoration of patterned ornament (*wenzhang*), of multicolored carvings, and of the white-black and black-azure counterchange patterns (*fufu*); moreover, it has nephrite and female musicians; its stone altars and shrines for the immortals, buried carriages with simurgh-bells, red horses and strong foals, and [wooden] figures of dragon steeds [all] cannot find their models in antiquity. According to the principle of the burnt offerings to the thearchs at the suburban altar that Your Subject has learned, one [simply] sweeps the ground and sacrifices—this is venerating substantial simplicity.⁸² One sings [based on the pitch standard] *dalu* and dances "Cloud Gate" ("Yunmen") to await the heavenly spirits; one sings [based on the pitch standard] *taicou* and dances "Encompassing Pond" ("Xianchi") to await the earthly spirits.⁸³ For the sacrificial victim one uses a calf, for the seat brushwood and straw, for the vessels earthenware and gourd, in all these following the nature of Heaven and Earth, cherishing sincerity and venerating substantial simplicity.⁸⁴ One does not dare to elaborate on the patterns (*wen*). One believes that the merits and virtuous power of the heavenly and earthly spirits are of utmost greatness, and even if one embellished [the paraphernalia to their] refined and minute

⁷⁹ *Shui yuan* 2.3a, 20.7b, 20.9b, 20.13a.

⁸⁰ From Yang Xiong's autobiography in *Hanshu* 87A.3534-35 we know that these structures were actually used as late as around 11 B.C. (the probable composition date of Yang Xiong's "Ganquan fu" 甘泉賦), after the sacrificial sites at Ganquan had been temporarily abandoned between 31 and 16 B.C.; on these issues, see Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody*, pp. 44-45.

⁸¹ See *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* ed.) 3.14b, parallel *Shiji* 28.1355, *Hanshu* 25A.1191.

⁸² See *Liji zhengyi* 26.225b; also the discussion of the Qin *ru* scholars in *Shiji* 28.1366, *Hanshu* 25A.1201.

⁸³ See *Zhouli zhushu* 22.150c-151b.

⁸⁴ See *Liji zhengyi* 26.224b, *passim*, as well as *Shiji* 28.1366, *Hanshu* 25A.1201.

[details] and prepared numerous goods, it would still not suffice to repay their merits. Only utmost sincerity can do this, and therefore one venerates substantial simplicity and does not provide ornament, in order to display the virtuous power of Heaven. As for all the artificial adornment of the purple altar and the likes of female musicians, red horses and strong foals, dragon steeds and stone altars, it is appropriate to abandon them.⁸⁵

甘泉泰畤紫壇，八觚宣通象八方。五帝壇周環其下，又有群神之壇。以尚書禋六宗，望山川，徧群神之義。紫壇有文章采鑣黼之飾及玉，女樂；石壇，僊人祠，瘞鷲路，駢駒，寓龍馬不能得其象於古。臣聞郊柴饗帝之義，搔地而祭，上質也。歌大呂舞雲門以娛天神，歌太簇舞咸池以娛地祇。其牲用犢，其席藁藉，其器陶匏，皆因天地之性，貴誠上質，不敢修其文也。以為神祇功德至大，雖修精微而備庶物，猶不足以報功。唯至誠為可，故上質不飾，以章天德。紫壇偽飾，女樂，鷲路，駢駒，龍馬，石壇之屬，宜皆勿修。

This memorial is largely based on quotations from the *Shangshu* and from what are now the received versions of the *Liji* and *Zhouli*, although only the former is explicitly mentioned, the references to the ritual texts being only implicit. Such difference probably reflects the status of these texts: whereas the *Shangshu* had long been venerated as a canonical text, the *Zhouli* (or *Zhouguan* 周官), although certainly of pre-Han origins,⁸⁶ did not rise into prominence until the final years of the Western Han, after it had been rediscovered by the imperial bibliographer—and successor to his father Liu Xiang—Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. A.D. 23) and promoted by Wang Mang 王莽 (45 B.C.-A.D. 23).⁸⁷ The received text of the *Liji*, allegedly edited by Liu Xiang, was probably not compiled until about A.D. 100 and did not become recognized as a distinct canonical work until late Eastern Han times (through Zheng Xuan's commentary). The final compilation of the "book" *Liji* notwithstanding, its various (and largely heterogenous) parts must have gradually accumulated from the late Warring States

⁸⁵ *Hanshu* 25B.1256. For an account of the ritual reforms under Emperor Cheng see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict in Han China, 104 BC to AD 9* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 154-92.

⁸⁶ See Bernhard Karlgren, "The Early History of the Chou Li and Tso Chuan Texts," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 3 (1931): 1-59, and William G. Boltz, "Chou li," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China/The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993), pp. 24-32.

⁸⁷ See *Hanshu* 99A.4069.

onwards and were frequently quoted in early Han official writings.⁸⁸ That Kuang Heng would not cite the book titles *Zhouli* and *Liji* does not necessarily diminish the actual authority of his references; on the contrary, they may—at least in part—have been common property among the scholar-officials of his times, albeit still in a stage of textual fluidity. Such "fluid texts," to be sure, are already "texts," that is to say demarcated entities of distinctive meaning, and as such can be recognized, respected, and transmitted. What distinguishes them from works of canonical status is the fact that they are not yet "closed"; they are still open to subtractions, additions, emendations and all other ways of textual continuation and editing; in other words, to *actualization*.⁸⁹ Yen-zen Tsai has noted that still in Eastern Han times, the *Liji*, in contrast to the *Yili*—the official ritual canon during the Western Han—and *Zhouli*, was regarded not as belonging to the canon (*jing* 經) proper, but as a collection of expository writings on ritual that served as a complement to, or teaching tradition (*zhuan* 傳) of,

⁸⁸ For a brief summary on the ritual texts in Han scholarship see Michael Nylan, "The Chin wen/Ku wen Controversy in Han Times," *T'oung Pao* 80 (1994): 99-101, 129-30; for the *Liji* see also Jeffrey K. Riegel, "Li chi," in *Early Chinese Texts*, pp. 293-97. Nanbu Hidehiko 南部英彦, "Zen-Kandai no seishō jōsō nado ni mieru rei no jiku no yinyō ni tsuite: Zen-Kandai ni okeru keijutsu shugi no ichi sokumen" 前漢代の制詔・上奏等に見える禮の辭句の引用について：前漢代における經術主義の一面, *Shūkan Tōyōgaku* 集刊東洋學 77 (1997): 1-21, who also accepts a date around A.D. 100 for the compilation of the *Liji*, has traced individual passages or chapters of its text through Western Han edicts and memorials. Moreover, the excavated "Ziyi" 繡衣 manuscript from Guodian 郭店 shows that individual chapters of the *Liji* can indeed—in one version or another—date back from Warring States times.

⁸⁹ On the formation of the traditional Chinese canon, and a comparison to other scriptural traditions, see Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary*. In addition to Henderson, substantial contributions to the issue of the canon from a cross-cultural perspective are Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992), pp. 103-129, and the collection *Kanon und Zensur*, ed. Aleida and Jan Assmann (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987). For a discussion of the multidimensional concept of the canon, both works provide excellent theoretical and historical foundations that could profoundly enrich our understanding of the Chinese canonical tradition, beyond the mere accounts of names and data. Complementary to Henderson's chapters 4 and 5, the Assmanns' "Kanon und Zensur als kultursoziologische Kategorien" in *Kanon und Zensur*, pp. 7-46, gives a complex account on the interdependent phenomena of canon, censorship, and commentary.

the *jing*.⁹⁰ These freely applicable texts served Kuang Heng's purpose since they not only accompanied the canon, but indeed actualized its significance for the project of ritual reforms around 32 B.C.: where the canon requires to be fixed "to the single iota"⁹¹ and becomes therefore more and more removed from reality, it is the commentary that relates the elevated and increasingly unintelligible canonical truth to the current times.⁹² Although initially only on the periphery of the ritual canon, the fluid expository texts of the *Liji* bridged the distance to the fixed canonical texts of the *Shangshu* and the *Yili* and in this function were valuable to Kuang Heng's argument.

With the chancellor's memorial we are at the core of the late Western Han ritual classicism that was launched directly against imperial ritual splendor as it had been inherited from the times of Emperor Wu. As the latter had purportedly designed his system of cosmological state sacrifices on the model provided by writings (*shu* 書) and charts (*tu* 圖) handed down from the reign of the Yellow Emperor,⁹³ the later criticism and partial reform of this system was in turn based on the texts of the gradually emerging state-sponsored canon. In both cases, changes of ritual practice were grounded in references to a textual canon, however imaginary; yet we are dealing with canons of very different qualities: the writings and charts associated with the Yellow Emperor represented a tradition of secret knowledge and were introduced to the emperor personally by individual "masters of methods" (*fangshi* 方士, often labelled "magicians") from the old state of Qi 齊. Different from the writings cherished by the *ru* scholars—under Emperor Wu the clearly defeated rivals of the *fangshi* in the court struggle for imperial favor and ritual competence—

⁹⁰ Yen-zen Tsai, "Ching and Chuan: Towards Defining the Confucian Scriptures in Han China (206 BCE-220 CE)" (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 1992), p. 319.

⁹¹ The earliest instance of this famous "canon formula," to the effect that nothing should be subtracted from nor added to the work, as we know it from the Deuteronomy, may be found in a Babylonian colophon; see Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, pp. 103-6.

⁹² See Jan Assmann, "Text und Kommentar: Einführung," in *Text und Kommentar*, ed. Jan Assmann and Burkhard Gladigow (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1995), pp. 9-33.

⁹³ Both the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices and the design for the "Hall of Light" (*mingtang* 明堂) at Mt. Tai were traced to the Yellow Emperor; see *Shiji* 28.1393 (parallel *Shiji* 12.467, *Hanshu* 25A.1227-28) and 28.1401 (parallel *Shiji* 612.480-81, *Hanshu* 25B.1243).

these texts were apparently not open to commentary or public disputation, and they do not seem to have constituted a scriptural tradition.

And, when Kuang Heng marshalled passages from the ritual texts and the *Shangshu* against the inherited ritual *wenzhang* of Emperor Wu, he operated on the basis of a canon that was fundamentally alien to the state rituals of that ruler: as he correctly observed, Wudi's system of cosmic sacrifices, including the worship of the heavenly deity Taiyi and the five cosmic thearchs (*wu di* 五帝) at Ganquan, the worship of the earth deity Houtu 后土 at Fenyin, the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices and the erection of the Hall of Light at the foot of Mt. Tai, had no support from those traditional texts that were promoted by the late Western Han classicists:⁹⁴ the nineteen "Hymns for the suburban sacrifice" ("Jiaosi ge" 郊祀歌), dating from between 113 and 94 B.C., include almost no references to passages from the *Five Canons* (*Wu Jing* 五經: *Yi* 易, *Shu* 書, *Shi* 詩, *Li* 禮, and *Chunqiu* 春秋) for which Emperor Wu allegedly had established official teaching chairs in 136 B.C.;⁹⁵ moreover, in both contents and form these texts differ radically from their most natural model, the traditional *Shijing* hymns.⁹⁶ From this perspective, and again by comparison with the two preceding cycles of imperial eulogies—the imperial stele inscriptions of the First Qin Emperor (Qin Shihuangdi 秦始皇帝, r. as emperor 221-210 B.C.) and Han Gaozu's "Anshi fangzhong

⁹⁴ I am unable to follow Robert P. Kramers, "The development of Confucian schools," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. I: *The Ch'in and Han Empires*, 221 B.C.-A.D. 220, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 755, who claims that Han Wudi, relying on the *ru* scholars at court, reinstated "the main rituals harking back to the founders of Chou." The opposite was the case, at least with respect to the state sacrifices which are by far the most important: neither did Wudi rely on the traditional scholars in re-organizing these rituals, nor did he refer to the Western Zhou.

⁹⁵ On the establishment of the chairs for the *Five Canons* in 136 B.C. we do not find a word in the *Shiji*; the *Hanshu* includes nothing but three laconic statements (*Hanshu* 6.159, 19A.726, 88.3620), without providing any details. Beyond these brief passages, we have no evidence for the appointment of the "erudites of the *Five Canons*" (*Wu Jing boshi* 五經博士) under Emperor Wu. In addition, one should note that even the term *Wu Jing* does not appear in the *Shiji*, except once in the "Book on Music," which was incorporated into Sima Qian's original work only later (see above).

⁹⁶ The "Jiaosi ge" are preserved in *Hanshu* 22.1052-70; for a translation and study of these texts and their underlying ritual system see my *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer*, pp. 174-303.

ge"—the "Jiaosi ge" reflect nothing less than a self-conscious turn away from the established norms of ritual expression.⁹⁷ Should it be possible, then, that for whatever reason the assumed official state ideology was indeed excluded from the most solemn texts of official imperial representation?

To solve this enigma—an issue crucial for our entire understanding of Western Han political culture—one may be inclined to follow Fukui Shigemasa 福井重雅, who in a string of meticulously researched articles has questioned the historical reality of the notion of the *Five Canons*, of the appointment of official erudites, and of the overarching establishment of *ru* learning as the imperial state ideology under Emperor Wu.⁹⁸ According to Fukui, the designation *Five Canons* cannot be traced back to a date prior to 51 B.C., when Emperor Xuan summoned the erudites to discuss the *Five Canons* in the Shiqu 石渠 palace pavilion;⁹⁹ the *Hanshu* account about the establishment of the *Wu Jing*

⁹⁷ For the stele inscriptions see my *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang*; for the "Anshi fangzhong ge" see my *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer*, pp. 100-173. In a self-referential gesture, text 8 of the "Jiaosi ge" explicitly praises the "new tones" (*xinyin* 新音) of the state sacrifices; see *Hanshu* 22.1058. Note that not only Han Wudi's ritual texts are at odds with the established understanding of early Chinese imperial intellectual and political history. Both the Qin imperial inscriptions and the ancestral hymns from the outset of the Han dynasty—divided from one another by about a decade—compellingly disqualify the common view that in Qin and early Han times the texts of the traditional canon, in particular the *Shijing* and *Shangshu*, had been burned and suppressed (under the Qin), or at least were despised and unavailable (under the early Han). The ritual hymns and inscriptions of early imperial China, which tend to be completely ignored in historical scholarship, suggest a revision of common wisdom; see my *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang*, 154-96. Such wisdom, to the effect that *ru* learning was rescued by Emperor Wu from the Qin and early Han suppression was defined by later generations of Han historians and scholars who did not write without their own political interest or obligations. It is not surprising to find Sima Qian's or Ban Gu's narratives fundamentally biased, creating meaningful visions of history that were instrumental to their own times.

⁹⁸ See his "Rikukei · rikugei to gokei: Kandai ni okeru gokei no seiritsu" 六經六藝と五經: 漢代における五經の成立, *Chūgoku shigaku* 中國史學 4 (1994): 139-64; "Shin Kan jidai ni okeru hakase seido no tenkai: Gokei hakase no secchi o meguru gigi sairon" 奏漢時代における博士制度の展開: 五經博士の設置をめぐる疑義再論, *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 東洋史研究 54 (1995): 1-31; "Tō Chujo no taisaku no kisoteki kenkyū" 董仲舒の對策の基礎的研究, *Shigaku zasshi* 史學雜誌 106 (1997): 157-204.

⁹⁹ See *Hanshu* 8.272. Note also that in this passage the term *Wu Jing* does not appear in the quotation of the original edict but only in Ban Gu's narrative paraphrase. As Fukui points out, the earliest occurrence of the term in any

boshi 五經博士 at the court of Emperor Wu should therefore be regarded as a later interpolation, either by Ban Gu or by his sources.

One does not need to follow Fukui in this last conclusion; more relevant, however, is his observation that even if we are ready to accept the scarce *Hanshu* notes on the *Wu Jing boshi* as trustworthy, we are still dealing with a phenomenon of marginal, if any, historical significance: there is no evidence that the erudites of the *Five Canons*, and with them the *Canons* themselves, played any role in the rulership and representation of Emperor Wu. This is not to deny that the texts of the *Five Canons* were available to, and studied by, individual scholars, some of them serving as high officials;¹⁰⁰ but the availability or even prominence of certain texts is still different from their exclusive instrumentalization as an official ideology. While our historical sources do not fail to mention that the elevation of the *Five Canons* under Emperor Wu was accompanied by the censorship of competing texts and doctrines,¹⁰¹ it is primarily with Emperor Cheng that we see the classicist pressure on rivalling ideologies emerging with full force.¹⁰²

known original text is probably that in Yang Xiong's *Fayan*, that is, again decades later. The *Fayan* indeed refers repeatedly to the *Wu Jing* as the normative canon (see, e.g., *Fayan yishu* 10.2b-3a), while on the other hand denigrating several of the famous Warring States philosophers (as in *Fayan yishu* 11.25a).

¹⁰⁰ For substantial recent accounts of Han canonical learning, incorporating the full scope of traditional Chinese and modern scholarship, see Yen-zen Tsai, "Ching and chuan," Hans van Ess, *Politik und Gelehrsamkeit in der Zeit der Han (202 v.Chr.-220 n.Chr.): Die Alttext/Neutext-Kontroverse* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), and Michael Nylan, "The *Chin Wen/Ku Wen* Controversy in Han Times." Studies like those by Fukui and Nylan (who questions the reality of a strong "old text" versus "new text" controversy in Han times) demonstrate how often we rely on common assumptions without being able to verify them. A number of these unquestioned assumptions form the backbone of Yen-zen Tsai's study (which nevertheless is in many respects a valuable contribution), where, for example, the terms *Liu Yi* 六藝 ("Six Arts") and *Wu Jing* are anachronistically conflated, even referring to early Han times. Wherever Tsai uses the unclear wording "the Six Arts or Five Scriptures"—and this happens frequently—the sources include only the former term; the addition "or Five Scriptures" is Tsai's own conjecture and cannot stand up to precise analysis.

¹⁰¹ See *Hanshu* 6.212, 88.3593.

¹⁰² While in other respects rather traditional, Wang Baoxuan 王葆琰, *Xi Han jingxue yuanliu* 西漢經學源流 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1994), pp. 108-27, provides a clear assessment of this issue. By comparison, Tang Zhiyun 湯志鈞 et al., *Xi Han jingxue yu zhengzhi* 西漢經學與政治 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1994), pp. 13-19, offers nothing but another simplistic reiteration of conventional wisdom.

Fukui's skepticism about the elevation of classicist learning under Wudi is corroborated by the harsh attacks that from late Western Han times were launched retrospectively against this emperor's state ritual and its music. The passage from the *Hanshu* immediately following the cycle of the "Jiaosi ge," which seems to include fragments of a memorial written between 32 and 7 B.C.,¹⁰³ accuses the Emperor of having discarded orthodox music, of having used musical pieces that were not "correct sounds" (*yasheng* 雅聲) for the suburban and temple sacrifices, and, worst of all, of having spread the lascivious "sounds of Zheng" (*Zheng sheng* 鄭聲) throughout the court—which was understood as the definite emblem of the ruler's moral degeneration and as announcing the imminent downfall of the state.¹⁰⁴ Few, if any, criticism could have been more fundamental, more authoritative, and more devastating, since nothing was more detested as a deep violation of traditional ritual values than the "sounds of Zheng." Confucius himself, speaking in two of the later passages of the *Lunyu*, had once and for all exposed the disastrous effects of the "sounds of Zheng":

Yan Yuan asked how to govern a state. The Master said: "Enact the calendar of the Xia, ride in the carriage of the Yin, and wear the ceremonial hat of the Zhou. For music, there is the 'Shao' dance. Abandon the sounds of Zheng and keep at distance eloquent flatterers; the sounds of Zheng are lascivious, and eloquent flatterers are dangerous."¹⁰⁵

顏淵問為邦。子曰：行夏之時，乘殷之輅，服周之冕，樂則韶舞。放鄭聲，遠佞人。鄭聲淫，佞人殆。

¹⁰³ See *Hanshu* 22.1070-71. The passage speaks of "today's poems and songs for the Han [sacrifices of the] suburban altars and ancestral temple" and mentions the Office of Music in charge of them. The office was abolished in 7 B.C., which would therefore be the logical *terminus ante quem* for this textual fragment. 32 B.C. refers again to Kuang Heng and his followers, who are the fountain of all the following criticism of Emperor Wu's ritual system.

¹⁰⁴ Since Warring States times, "sounds of Zheng," "sounds of Zheng and Wei" (*Zheng Wei zhi sheng* 鄭衛之聲), "new sounds" or "tones" (*xinsheng* 新聲 or *xinyin* 新音), "lascivious sounds" (*yinsheng* 淫聲), or "sounds of a perishing state" (*wangguo zhi sheng* 亡國之聲) were all synonymous designations for the depraved "new" against the noble "old music" (*guyue* 古樂). For a discussion of this key issue of cultural discourse in ancient China, see Jean-Pierre Diény, *Aux origines de la poésie classique en Chine: étude sur la poésie lyrique à l'époque des Han* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 17-40; Kurihara Keisuke 栗原圭介, *Chūgoku kodai gakuron no kentō* 中國古代樂論の研究 (Tokyo: Daitō bunka daigaku, 1978), pp. 63-70.

¹⁰⁵ *Lunyu zhushu* [15.11] 15.61b.

The Master said: "I detest how the purple encroaches upon the crimson. I detest how the sounds of Zheng bring confusion to the correct music. I detest how sharp tongues overthrow the state and the families."¹⁰⁶

子曰：惡紫之奪朱也，惡鄭聲之亂雅樂也，惡立口之覆邦家者。

Despite many centuries of debate there is no conclusion on the actual nature of the "sounds of Zheng" in Eastern Zhou times, if we reject the conflation of Confucius's concern with *music* and the Mao 毛 interpretation of the "Zheng feng" 鄭風 *texts* during Han times as overtly anachronistic. By the end of the Western Han, however, the "sounds of Zheng" and the notion of "correct music" had long turned from musical realities into rhetorical formulae, epitomizing the paradigms of cultural achievement and degeneration.¹⁰⁷ When the late Western Han critics of Emperor Wu exploited a rhetoric that referred to the venerated and idealized music of the past, they accused him of having violated the ritual and musical ideals of antiquity as they were preserved in the traditional canon.

Probably predating the fragmentary *Hanshu* memorial, Kuang Heng, again in 32 B.C., had made another concrete effort to improve the state ritual music in the spirit of high antiquity. Concerned with the texts of Emperor Wu's sacrificial hymns for the suburban altars—which therefore must have been still in use under Emperor Cheng—the chancellor proposed two textual changes: in text seven of the "Jiaosi ge" he asked to change the line "The simurgh carriage [glitters with] dragon scales" (*luanlu*

¹⁰⁶ *Lunyu zhushu* [17.18] 17.69c.

¹⁰⁷ Both the archaeological record (see Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993]) and the transmitted Eastern Zhou texts provide evidence that music served as the emblem of cultural achievement well into Warring States times. According to a passage from the *Zuo zhuan* (*Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* [Xiang 29] 39.304a-305c)—to quote just one of the most famous examples—during his visit to Lu 魯 Prince Ji Zha 季札 from Wu 吳 listened to the music of the various states and immediately judged their political condition and destiny. The rulers of high antiquity were accompanied by their music master, not by their *poeta laureatus*, as in later imperial times: in the same way as Shun 舜 personally appointed Kui 夔 in this capacity (see *Shangshu zhengyi* 3.19b-20a), so the last ruler of the Shang, the tyrant Zhou 紂, had his music master compose—of course—"new sounds" and "sounds of a perishing state" (see *Han Feizi jiji* 3.42-45, *Shiji* 3.105). Within the same context of music as the emblem of culture, the fundamental attack against *ru* ritualism in *Mozi* (*Mozi jiangou* 8.155-62) is launched under the notion "Rejecting Music" ("Fei yue" 非樂).

longlin 鸞路龍鱗) into “[We] choose the accomplishment of blessings” (*juan xuan xiu cheng* 涓選休成); in text eight he wanted to replace the line “The axe-patterned embroideries are spread out in circles” (*fu xiu zhou zhang* 黼繡周張) with “Respectfully [We] follow the old statutes” (*su ruo jiu dian* 肅若舊典).¹⁰⁸ These two changes, totalling eight characters in the complete text of the prestigious state sacrificial hymns, illustrate succinctly the overall program of late Western Han ritual classicism, according to which the dynasty’s legitimacy depended upon its conformity with the venerated past. In both cases, abstract notions of good rulership are substituted for ritual ornament, that is, the genuine *wenzhang* of immediate aesthetic expression.¹⁰⁹ In the second phrase, moreover, the term *jiu dian* 舊典 (“old statutes”) means either “the old canonical texts” in general or, more concretely, certain ritual rules preserved in them. In any case, it was again the written canon that furnished the basis for Kuang Heng’s intervention: its texts, containing the ritual models of high antiquity, were now truly canonical in the sense of providing authoritative norms against which the present ritual practice could—and must—be judged. With the words of the sages, believed to be faithfully preserved in the written canon, ritual practice was confronted with an absolute standard that could be invoked and commented on, but not negotiated. Revising those descriptive parts of the sacrificial hymns that eulogized the ritual ornament, Kuang Heng proposed to discard the ornamental structures of both the actual ritual setting and its self-referential verbal description.¹¹⁰

Although Liu Xiang opposed some of the sacrificial reforms initiated by Kuang Heng,¹¹¹ claiming that the emperor should not abolish the sacred sites that had been established and worshipped by his ancestors, he also belonged to the group of scholars who

¹⁰⁸ *Hanshu* 22.1057-58; for annotated translations and discussions of the two hymns see my *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer*, pp. 210-23.

¹⁰⁹ Note that “axe-pattern” (*fu* 黼) is the first word in the conventional sequence *fufu wen zhang* 黼黻文章 that is glossed as denoting the four textual patterns of distinct colors (see the remarks on *wenzhang* in the *Liji* above). The “axe-pattern” is the one in “white and black.”

¹¹⁰ For the self-referential nature of early Chinese ritualism, as it is expressed in hymns and other performance texts, see my *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch’in Shih-huang*, pp. 140-47, and my “*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of ‘*Chu ci*’ (Thorny Caltrop),” forthcoming in *Early China* 25 (2000).

¹¹¹ *Hanshu* 25B.1258-59, see also Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 176-77.

were critical of imperial extravagance and of the display of ritual magnificence.¹¹² As the foremost scholar to redefine and secure the traditional canon, as editor of important pre-Han works and as imperial bibliographer,¹¹³ Liu Xiang, more than any other scholar in his time, imagined the inherited culture as resting solidly on the authoritative canon of the written word, rather than on ostentatious ritual demeanor. It may therefore be more than merely coincidental that the first mention of *wenzhang* as referring to a particular text—the *Chunqiu*—should be found in Liu’s *Shui yuan*, side by side with a preponderantly critical view of *wenzhang* as ornamental display. The turn to the written canon, which corroborated the rejection of ritual ornament as now “mere ornament,” was instrumental for the redefinition of the term *wenzhang*.

Around the year 50, Ban Gu’s father, the distinguished scholar-official Ban Biao 班彪 (3-54), presented a memorial on the education of the Heir Apparent. In this early Eastern Han document the new meaning of *wenzhang* as “classicist writing” emerges with relative clarity, although the original bonds to ritual practice are by no means cut off:

When the Han had risen, the Great Ancestor [i.e., Emperor Wen, r. 180-157 B.C.] ordered Chao Guo [200-154 B.C.] to instruct the Heir Apparent about the rules and methods [of good order]; Jia Yi taught the *Songs* and the *Documents* to the Prince of Liang. The Middle Ancestor [i.e., Emperor Xuan] also commanded men such as Liu Xiang, Wang Bao, Xiao Wangzhi [c. 110-47 B.C.], and Zhou Kan [fl. 46 B.C.] to raise and tutor [those] in the Eastern Palace¹¹⁴ and below through *wenzhang* and *ru* learning; there was none who did not venerate and choose these men, and so [the Heir Apparent and the other princes] turned into vessels of virtuous power. Today, although the August Heir Apparent and the princes [already] knot their hair¹¹⁵ and learn and inquire, cultivate and practice ritual and music, the instructors are not yet equal to the worthy and talented [of old], and their offices are mostly lacking the old canonical texts.¹¹⁶ It is appropriate to select broadly from the famous *ru* scholars and from those who have forceful dignity and accumulated brilliance and who comprehend the matters of gov-

¹¹² See his long memorial in *Hanshu* 36.1950-57.

¹¹³ On his duties, methods, and achievements as imperial bibliographer, see *Hanshu* 30.1701 and Piet van der Loon, “On the transmission of Kuan-tzu,” *T’oung Pao* 41 (1952): 358-66.

¹¹⁴ The Eastern Palace is the palace of the Heir Apparent.

¹¹⁵ Indicating that they have reached adult age.

¹¹⁶ Here, *jiu dian* 舊典 (“old statutes”) unambiguously refers to the Confucian canon.

ernment, to make them Grand Tutors of the Heir Apparent, and to establish offices [of education] in the Eastern Palace and the various princedoms.¹¹⁷

漢興，太宗使鼂錯導太子以法術。賈誼教梁王以詩書。及至中宗，亦令劉向，王褒，蕭望之，周堪之徒，以文章儒學保訓東宮以下。莫不崇簡其人，就成德器。今皇太子諸王雖結髮學問，修習禮樂，而傅相未值賢才，宮屬多闕舊典。宜博選名儒有威重明通政事者，以為太子太傅，東宮及諸王國備置官屬。

This memorial, here quoted only in part, mentions some of the key elements of cultural and intellectual change in late Western and early Eastern Han times: the existence of a corpus of "ancient canonical writings" upon which to base the study of ritual and music, the stress on classicist learning and its related *wenzhang*, the genealogy of Han traditional scholarship, and the existence of a class of scholars that was well versed in the canonized writings. Interestingly enough, the genealogy of classicist scholars stops with Liu Xiang, and Ban Biao claims that *ru* learning has yet to be implemented and its institutions to be established in order to educate the princes of the recently restored dynasty. In this respect, the year 50 still belongs to a stage of transition.

The instrumentalization of the traditional canon as an absolute basis of ritual practice and, necessarily related, the conscious rejection of ostentatious ritual ornament, again loom large in Ban Gu's vision of the recent past of the Han and in his ritual program for his own days. Ban Gu not only criticized the state sacrificial music of Emperor Wu as improper and vulgar,¹¹⁸ he also praised the Eastern Han capital Luoyang, and by extension the Eastern Han rulership, for being in accord with the principles of moderation described in the canonical ritual works, and therefore superior to the lavish splendor of the Western Han capital Chang'an.¹¹⁹

Not directly related to the classicist impulse that figures prominently in the writings of Kuang Heng, Liu Xiang, Yang Xiong, and Ban Gu, but contemporary to the latter, is Wang Chong's 王充 (27-97?) *Lun heng* 論衡, where the term *wenzhang* appears

¹¹⁷ Fan Ye 範曄, *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 ([with the monographs compiled by Sima Biao 司馬彪], 12 vols., Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1987) 40A.1328.

¹¹⁸ See the criticism included in *Hanshu* 22.1070-71, as mentioned above.

¹¹⁹ See Knechtges, "To Praise the Han: The Eastern Capital *Fu* of Pan Ku and His Contemporaries."

sixteen times, in most cases unspecifically relating to written texts.¹²⁰ In the two passages where he uses the term with respect to certain textual corpora, Wang Chong mentions the *wenzhang* of the "literary *ru* scholars" (*wen ru*)¹²¹ and the *wenzhang* of the Han dynasty; for the latter, he enumerates Lu Jia, Sima Qian, Liu Xiang, and Yang Xiong¹²²—all of them being traditional scholars and officials. Among these, Yang Xiong, who like Liu Xiang worked as an imperial librarian, was the most outspoken ritual classicist and critic of both material splendor and literary ornament.¹²³

Wenzhang, we may conclude at this point, are not just any kind of texts; they are those official writings that were, first, concerned with public affairs and, second, associated with scholars of traditional textual learning. The writers who were actively, though always implicitly, proposing this shift from ritual to textual demeanor and who then became regarded as the major representatives of *wenzhang* in its new sense were all traditional scholars and statesmen; their compositions—historical writings (Sima Qian), political and moral discourses (Lu Jia, Liu Xiang, Yang Xiong), and panegyric pieces of imperial representation (Sima Xiangru, as mentioned by Ban Gu)¹²⁴—are what was now understood as

¹²⁰ Huang Hui 黃暉, *Lun heng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋 (4 vols., Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938), 1:241, 2:552, 2:580, 2:585, 2:615, 2:616, 3:718, 3:727, 3:733, 3:780, 3:812, 3:863, 3:867, and 4:1145. The passages denoting non-literary "patterns" are 2:552 (textile), 3:718 (colorful appearance of phoenix and unicorn), 3:727 (phoenix), 3:733 (phoenix), 3:780, 3:812, and 3:863.

¹²¹ *Lun heng jiaoshi*, 2:585.

¹²² *Lun heng jiaoshi*, 4:1145.

¹²³ See *Hanshu* 87A.3534-35 and *Wen xuan* 8.20a-22a. In his views on literature Yang Xiong also developed a decidedly classicist and utilitarian position, rejecting literary ornament for its own sake and consciously employing archaic formulations. See Franklin M. Doeringer, "Yang Hsiung and His Formulation of a Classicism" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1971), esp. ch. 4, pp. 119-79. Some of his most outspoken statements against superficial ritual and literary ornament may be found in chapter 2 of his *Fayan* ("Wuzi" 吾子 [chapters 3 and 4 in *Fayan yishu*]; for a translation see David R. Knechtges, "Exemplary Sayings, Chapter 2," in *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor Mair [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], pp. 530-33). In the same text, he once notes that "writings that are not [within the domain of the] canonical texts are not writings. Speech that is not [within the domain of the] canonical texts is not speech" (*Fayan yishu* 8.6a.). For Yang Xiong's position as a collator in the imperial library see *Hanshu* 87B.354, Doeringer, pp. 198-201.

¹²⁴ Although none of Sima Xiangru's *fu* 賦 was officially commissioned, it is clear that Ban Gu regards Sima's great epideictic rhapsodies as "officially" rep-

wenzhang. Considering the meaning of *wenzhang* as “official writings” in late Western and then Eastern Han times together with its relation to classicist learning, we can understand the semantic shift of the term in a new perspective: as the truth and authority of the canon had eventually absorbed and transformed the power of ritual practice into the mastership of texts, *wenzhang*—the appropriate appearance—was found less in sensual emblems and increasingly in correct writings that were based on canonical learning: *wenxue*, in the Han sense of the word. If we follow the texts which have been transmitted to us, the gradual dissociation of the term *wenzhang* from ritual demeanor and its parallel affiliation with *wenxue* can therefore be dated relatively precisely: it was initiated in the last decades of the Western Han and accomplished in the second half of the first century A.D., at the latest. *Wenxue* and *wenzhang* have eventually become two complementary terms, the first referring to the input of textual learning and the second to the output of textual production. The *ru* followers, originally choreographers of the rites¹²⁵ and reciters of the canon, have eventually turned into scholars of the text.

Having discussed the issues of genuine “*ru* learning” (*rushu*) or canonical learning (*wenxue* or *jingshu*), of the formation of the canon, of the establishment of the imperial library, and of the role of men like Yang Xiong, Kuang Heng, Liu Xiang, Liu Xin and others at the end of the Western Han and during the Wang Mang interregnum,¹²⁶ we cannot ignore a possibly related phe-

representative compositions; on the somewhat problematic status of Sima’s works, see below. In this context, one may also think of Sima’s “Treatise on the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices” (“*Feng shan wen*” 封禪文, see *Wen xuan* 48.1a-9a), which includes a long eulogy (*song* 頌) in praise of the Han dynasty. According to tradition, Sima had composed the “*Feng shan wen*” on his deathbed.

¹²⁵ Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), calls the early *ru* followers “Masters of the Dance.”

¹²⁶ Although he “became a victim of historiography and was reduced from Son of Heaven to usurper” (Hans Bielenstein, “Wang Mang, the restoration of the Han Dynasty, and Later Han,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 1, p. 223), Wang Mang’s efforts to promote classicist scholarship and its canon (see *Hanshu* 12.359, 99A.4069) can hardly be overstated. Presenting his rulership, semi-official at first and later official, as a revival of the Western Zhou, he initially attracted scholars like Yang Xiong and Liu Xin as officials and panegyrists. For summaries of his political classicism see Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 286-306, Doeringer, “Yang Hsiung and His Formulation of a Classicism,” pp. 180-89, and Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty* (3 vols., Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1938-55), 3: 56-57, 103-6.

nomenon, albeit of questionable historicity—the so-called “old text/new text” (*guwen* 古文/*jinwen* 今文) controversy.¹²⁷

Michael Loewe has seen the reforms of the state sacrifices after 32 B.C. as part of the *guwen* (“old text”) intellectual and political agenda in late Western Han times, linking *jinwen* (“new text”) scholarship with what he calls the political “modernists” (represented in the policy of Han Wudi), and *guwen* learning with the “reformists” (represented in the later opposition to Wudi’s political legacy).¹²⁸ More recently, Hans van Ess, explicitly taking issue with Loewe’s conclusions, has proposed the exactly opposite view, identifying *guwen* positions as “modernist” politics and those based on *jinwen* as “reformist,” in particular with respect to questions of state ritual.¹²⁹ Based on an analysis of the fragments of Xu Shen’s *Wujing yiyi* 五經異義, this rather surprising turn is again problematic; however Xu Shen may have (re)constructed and emphasized these categories, they lead to numerous contradictions, due in particular to the strenuous procedure of assigning individual scholars or officials to one of the two camps. For example, labelling Kuang Heng a “new text” proponent¹³⁰ is either wrong or completely meaningless in view of the fact that, for a number of his arguments, among them the criticism of the elaborate *wenzhang* of the Taiyi altar, he draws heavily on the so-called “old text classic” *Zhou li*. Michael Nylan, after a careful investigation into the question of what *guwen* and *jinwen* might actually have meant in Han times, has convincingly marshalled a string of similar problems; as a result, she has questioned the historical reality of a fundamental “old text”/“new text” debate during Han times.¹³¹

Indeed, it does not seem fruitful to force any particular politi-

¹²⁷ Of course this is not the place to discuss or even introduce the large amount of Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholarship on the development of the traditional canon, or even on the “old text/new text” issue. The above-mentioned studies by van Ess, Nylan, and Tsai may serve as guides to the relevant material.

¹²⁸ See his *Crisis and Conflict*, pp. 165-66.

¹²⁹ See van Ess, *Politik und Gelehrsamkeit*, pp. 71, 182-244.

¹³⁰ See van Ess, *Politik und Gelehrsamkeit*, p. 207.

¹³¹ See her “The *Chin Wen/Ku Wen* Controversy in Han Times.” By contrast, van Ess insists on the significance of an “old text”/“new text” controversy; see his “The Old Text/New Text Controversy: Has the 20th Century Got It Wrong?,” *T’oung Pao* 80 (1994): 146-70, and “The Apocryphal Texts of the Han Dynasty and the Old Text/New Text Controversy,” *T’oung Pao* 85 (1999): 29-64.

cal debate or intellectual development of late Western Han times into the literary corset of an assumed overarching *guwen/jinwen* dichotomy. Even if we concede some historical reality to this conflict, evaluated on the basis of the meager and contradictory evidence in Western and early Eastern Han sources its actual significance is by no means clear. There is also no particular reason to subordinate Kuang Heng's and others' aggressive criticism of the inherited state sacrifices and sacrificial music to an "old text/new text" disputation only because Xu Shen, writing more than a century later, aimed to systematize all kinds of political issues along these lines—an undertaking that closely paralleled his compilation of the *Shuowen jiezi*, by which he intended to "render the interpretation of the classics doubt-free, thereby putting the full force of their cumulative and sanctified wisdom at the service of the Han government in its very immediate objective of enforcing order in all areas of human activity through a dominant central authority."¹³² Moreover, the debate on ritual was already concerned with the ideological horizon of rulership and therefore was by itself of the highest priority in late Western Han times. Certainly, the newly promoted *guwen* writings provided some useful arguments here, but the overall criticism of inherited practice was not exclusively confined to texts of either *guwen* or *jinwen* provenance. It should also be noted that the *Liji*, by far the most ideological text on ritual and music, cannot be classified as either *guwen* or *jinwen* in the Western Han context, since, as noted above, it was simply not recognized as a "closed" canonical work in its own right until late Eastern Han times. Even the "Records of Music"—in this context the most important chapter of the *Liji*—is of an uncertain date and, in 30 B.C., of an uncertain status; despite the traditional *Hanshu* account that it was compiled by Prince Xian of Hejian 河間獻王 (r. 155-129 B.C.), the younger brother of Emperor Wu, there is good reason to date this text, or at least significant parts of it, more or less from the days of Kuang Heng's reform initiative.¹³³

¹³² Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 151, with further reference to Roy Andrew Miller, "Problems in the Study of Shuo Wen Chieh Tzu" (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1953), pp. 27ff. Xu Shen's *Wujing yiyi* may lead to the question of whether the assumed late Western Han "old text/new text controversy" could actually have been a projection of mid-Eastern Han times—a first projection, furnishing the basis for further, secondary projections by late Qing scholars.

¹³³ On Prince Xian of Hejian as the "Yueji" compiler (together with Master

Even though the assumed "old text/new text controversy" did not dominate the court debates of the late Western Han, the emergence of texts that were called "old" versions of the canonical books, or which were partly written in "old characters," is a significant phenomenon of undoubted historicity that testifies to a new consciousness of the issue (or crisis) of textual reliability. The awareness of different textual versions was primarily based on their availability, which was made possible by the new institution of the imperial library and its necessary demand not just for texts, but for an ordering of texts. This quest for textual order informed Emperor Cheng's command to collect the books from all over the empire in 26 B.C., his appointment of Liu Xiang to work as collator and editor of the numerous bundles of disordered or duplicated bamboo strips and silk scrolls,¹³⁴ and the compilation of the imperial catalogue.

The discovery of ever more different versions of the same texts was only the logical consequence of these efforts, as we are coming to understand from the increasing numbers of excavated

Mao 毛), see *Hanshu* 30.1712. According to this passage, the "Yueji" was later edited by Liu Xiang. For the most aggressive paragraph of the text—the "Wei Wen hou zhang" 魏文侯章 (*Liji zhengyi* 38.310a-39.313c)—in particular I would doubt a composition substantially prior to Liu Xiang's times. (The inclusion of the "Yueji" in the *Shiji* "Yueshu" does not constitute a *terminus ante quem*, since the "Yueshu," as noted above, is certainly not original but of a later date.) Although the Marquis Wen of Wei (Wei Wen hou) ruled from 427 to 387 B.C., there is no earlier version of this "Yueji" section, for example in the *Xunzi* chapter "Yuelun" 樂論 to which the "Yueji" is in many passages indebted. In a uniquely strong tone, the "Wei Wen hou" paragraph condemns the "new" or "excessive tones" (*ni yin* 濇音) that should be excluded from the state sacrifices. Given the polemical sharpness of this section, which by far exceeds all earlier discussions on "old" and "new" music (see above), one must raise the question of the historical target for this attack. The only candidate in sight would be, of course, Emperor Wu, but his sacrificial music was not established before 114/113 B.C. (see *Hanshu* 22.1045; according to *Hanshu* 25A.1232 and *Shiji* 28.1396 [repeated in *Shiji* 12.472], the state sacrifices were still without music as late as in 111 B.C.), i.e., almost two decades after the death of Prince Xian! With respect to the *guwen/jinwen* issue it is noteworthy that Prince Xian is recognized as a collector of "old writings in ancient script from pre-Qin times" (*guwen xian Qin jiu shu* 古文先秦舊書) only in the *Hanshu* (53.2410), but not in the *Shiji*.

¹³⁴ The collection of the books and Liu Xiang's work in the imperial library are mentioned together in *Hanshu* 10.310 and 30.1701. See also the above-mentioned article by van der Loon. Despite all the scandals in the later part of his reign, Emperor Cheng is credited with having been fond of the canonical books already as a youth: see *Hanshu* 10.301.

manuscripts. By the time of Emperor Cheng, the still "fluid" nature of most of the pre-imperial texts had created major concerns among the scholars and high officials of the state, including the emperor himself and erudites like Liu Xiang. The bare fact that, in general, the newly excavated pre-imperial and early Han manuscripts do not bear a title, or even chapter designations, is telling in this respect: as we know for a number of the transmitted texts, it was Liu Xiang who identified individual works, fixed their titles, ordered and named the chapters, and therefore divided the stream of writings into distinctive and self-contained entities.¹³⁵ In addition to the ritual debates, and closely related to them, the fixation of the written heritage, in particular of the canon, was the supreme task of the day, and the "old text/new text controversy" may have been just one aspect of it, no more, since in late Western Han times textual scholarship encompassed a much wider range of writings than the few texts for which an "old text" version was both available and considered as significantly different. The enterprise to close the canon and to reconstruct it as a self-contained unity is evident from a shift within canonical scholarship: whereas earlier during the Western Han erudites had specialized in only one particular canonical text, it was with scholars like Liu Xiang and Yang Xiong that a new comprehensive vision of the canon as a perfect unity arose to replace fragmentary scholarship. This effort to make the canon an all-encompassing storage of cultural identity and the ideological foundation of the empire became further refined and was eventually accomplished during the course of the Eastern Han.¹³⁶

I would like to suggest, in short, that the very process of textual fixation and canon building was probably more important than all the individual political issues that Xu Shen retrospectively tied up with different textual versions. In comparison to the crucial issues of defining the canon, and thus redefining the cultural basis of the empire, the fact that we barely have unambiguous traces of an "old text/new text controversy" in its alleged late Western Han context in all probability testifies to its relative insignificance at this historical moment (its retrospective significance is another problem, of course). The paucity of authentic sources must also account for the obvious contradictions of Xu

¹³⁵ Besides van der Loon's study on the editing of the *Guanzi*, a good case has been provided for the *Xunzi*; see Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 1:105-10.

¹³⁶ See Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary*, pp. 41-50.

Shen's efforts, as we saw in the case of Kuang Heng. Kuang's ritual reforms of 32 B.C., to return to our initial case, are based not on particular versions or readings of the canonical texts, but on the very discovery of the authority of the "closed" canon itself. Kuang Heng's memorials represent the irrevocable transition from ritual continuity to textual coherence—a process, incidentally, that shows clear parallels to the Mediterranean cultures of antiquity.¹³⁷

IV. From the ritual canon to the genres of literature

Having identified the critical shift from ritual to textual *wenzhang*, we are now better prepared to follow the argument in Ban Gu's preface to his "Liang du fu," which so far we have quoted only briefly. A more complete quotation of this programmatic document will demonstrate how Ban Gu, by subtle rhetorical moves, introduces the traditional significance of the term *wenzhang* and transforms it into its new meaning and context of "classicist writing".¹³⁸

Someone has said: "The rhapsody (*fu*) is a class of the ancient songs." In the past, after Kings Cheng and Kang had passed away, the sounds of the *Eulogia* ceased; after the royal blessings had been exhausted, the *Songs* no longer flourished. When the Great Han was consolidated in its initial years, [the emperor], day after day, did not get enough leisure. When the eras of [the emperors] Wu and Xuan were reached, they venerated the offices of ritual and examined the *wenzhang*. Within [the palace] they set up the institutions of the Bronze Horse [Gate] and the Stone Canal [Pavilion]; outside [the palace] they initiated the task of harmonizing the pitch pipes in the Office of Music. [This was] to raise up what had been abandoned, to continue what had been cut off, and to give glistening color to the vast achievements.

¹³⁷ See Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, pp. 87-103. My notion of a "transition from ritual continuity to textual coherence" is an attempt towards a more precise description of what Assmann calls the "transition from ritual to textual coherence."

¹³⁸ Apart from some minor changes, I have little to add to the elegant translation of the preface by Professor Knechtges. Given the prominence and availability of his standard work, there is also no need to repeat his meticulous annotations here; see Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 1:93-97. In the following, I quote the full preface except its final paragraph, where Ban Gu turns from the general discussion to his subject proper, the Han capitals.

Therefore, the multitudes were joyful and pleased, and auspicious omens were especially abundant. The [sacrificial] songs "White Unicorn," "Red Geese," "Mushroom Chamber," and "Precious Tripod" were presented at the suburban altars and in the ancestral temple.¹³⁹ The omens of the spirit birds, the five phoenixes, the sweet dew, and the yellow dragon were employed as yearly designations [to name reign periods].

Hence, officials who attended [the emperor because of their skill with] words and phrases, like Sima Xiangru, Yuqiu Shouwang, Dongfang Shuo, Mei Gao, Wang Bao, and Liu Xiang day and night discussed and pondered, and daily and monthly presented and offered [their opinions]; while the high dignitaries and distinguished ministers, like those of the ranks of the Grandee Secretary Ni Kuan, the Grand Master of Ceremonies Kong Cang, the Grand Palace Grandee Dong Zhongshu, the Superintendent of the Imperial Clan Liu De, and the Grand Tutor of the Heir Apparent Xiao Wangzhi, from time to time composed [writings] on a specific occasion. Some [wrote] to express the feelings of their subordinates and to convey indirect criticism and advice; some [wrote] to spread their superior's virtuous power and to fulfill loyalty and piety. Observing and obeying, elevating and exalting, they made themselves known to posterity, and [their works] were second only to the *Elegantiae* and *Eulogia*.

Therefore, in the era of Filial [Emperor] Cheng, one evaluated and catalogued them; there were about more than a thousand pieces that had been presented and approved by the emperor. After this, the *wenzhang* of the Great Han were brilliant and equal in style with those of the Three Dynasties [Xia, Shang, and Zhou].

Moreover, the Way experiences decline and glory; learning encompasses the coarse and the refined. Those who in accordance with [the changes of] the times establish their virtuous power do not change their standards because of being far from or near to [their model]. Therefore, Gaoyao sang of Yu [i.e., Shun], and Xi Si praised Lu. Both were acknowledged and collected by Confucius and arranged among the *Songs* and the *Documents*; their principle was one and the same. Observe it in high antiquity, then it was like that; examine it in the house of Han, and it is again like this.¹⁴⁰

或曰：賦者古詩之流也。昔成康沒而頌聲寢，王澤竭而詩不作。大漢初定，日不暇給。至於武宣之世，乃崇禮官考文章。內設金馬石渠之署，外興樂府協律之事。以興廢繼絕潤色鴻業。是以眾庶說豫，福應尤盛。白麟赤雁芝房寶鼎之歌薦於郊廟。神雀五鳳甘露黃龍之瑞以為年紀。故言語侍從之臣若司馬相如，虞丘壽王，東方朔，枚皋，王褒，劉向之屬朝夕論思，日月獻納。而公卿大臣御史大夫倪寬，太常孔臧，太中大夫董仲舒，宗正劉德，太子太傅蕭望之等時時間作。或以杼下情而通諷諭，

¹³⁹ On the question of where these hymns on auspicious omens from the time of Emperor Wu were presented, see my *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer*, pp. 174-75; for annotated translations and discussions of these four hymns see *ibid.*, pp. 248-60, 272-79.

¹⁴⁰ *Wen xuan* 1.1a-3b.

或以宣上德而盡忠孝。雍容揄揚著於後嗣抑，亦雅頌之亞也。故孝成之世論而錄之；蓋奏御者千有餘篇。而後大漢之文章炳焉與三代同風。且夫道有夷隆，學有蠱密。因時而建德者不以遠近易則。故皋陶歌虞，奚斯頌魯。同見采於孔氏列於詩書。其義一也。稽之上古則如彼；考之漢室又如此。

After this general introduction, Ban Gu closes his preface by presenting his concrete motivation to write his Rhapsody on the two capitals: juxtaposing the dazzling brilliance of the Western Han capital Chang'an with the well-balanced "rules and measures" (*fadu* 法度) of the Eastern Han capital Luoyang. The argumentative points of the preface that concern us here may be listed as follows:

- the present literary writings have evolved from the ancient *Shijing* songs;
- the rise of *wenzhang* during the Western Han is related to the re-emergence of ritual and to the institutions of the appointment hall of the scholars, of the imperial library, of the literary genre of the *fu*, and of the Office of Music, the latter being in charge of the pitch pipes;
- auspicious omens, interpreted as a cosmic reaction to good rulership, are matched with sacrificial hymns and reign designations, i.e., emblematic literary expression;
- officials who were particularly skilled in verbal expression, as well as the high dignitaries of the state, served the emperor by offering criticism and advice, and their words are again compared to the ancient *Shijing* songs;
- these pieces of official writing—most prominently, the more than one thousand *fu* that are recorded in the "Epitome of Songs and Rhapsodies" ("Shi fu lue" 詩賦略) section of the *Hanshu* "Monograph on Arts and Letters" ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志)—were collected and catalogued, and they are again compared to the *wenzhang* of the dynasties of high antiquity;
- present-day literary composition follows the same principles as in antiquity;
- the new, well-measured order, based on the codified and transmitted standards of antiquity, should replace recent ritual splendor.

These statements match what we have observed with respect to the semantical shift of the term *wenzhang* and its underlying cultural changes: the Han writers of *wenzhang* are the *ru* officials and

literati; their works are directly serving the state, and, since around 26 B.C.,¹⁴¹ they have been collected and catalogued by Liu Xiang, Liu Xin, and also Yang Xiong in the imperial library. Moreover, written parts of the tradition, which are supposed to have been authentically transmitted through the ages, are now identified as the *wenzhang* of high antiquity and are available as immediate models for the present. At the same time, what had been the material side of *wenzhang*—the ritual splendor of the Western Han—is replaced by a well-measured order that is purportedly based on the transmitted standards of antiquity, i.e., the rules and measures outlined in the books of the ritual canon edited and preserved in the imperial library.

The rhetorical means by which Ban Gu indicates a connection between the *wenzhang* of antiquity and those of his own times are subtle: the two passages that include the term do not explicitly define it as “writing” but instead keep it in a careful balance between its traditional and its new meaning. On the one hand, Ban Gu employs traditional phraseology (as in *kao wenzhang* 考文章, parallel to the *Liji*) and speaks of the *wenzhang* of the Three Dynasties in the same way as Confucius spoke of the *wenzhang* of Yao. On the other hand, he parallels these notions with the official literary production of the Western and Eastern Han, including ritual texts: the identity of *wenzhang* past and present is implicitly suggested. And indeed, with respect to their medium they are now identical: thanks to the meticulous canonical scholarship (*wenxue*) under Emperor Cheng, which has transformed the memory and imagination of antiquity into the reality of a written canon, the ritual norms (*wenzhang*) of the Three Dynasties are now at hand—collected, edited and stored in the imperial library, side by side with the *wenzhang* of the present. Whatever a classicist official may look for as the standards of antiquity, he will find it in the written form of the canon, as edited by his fellow officials.

The *Hou Hanshu* includes a string of passages that are pertinent to the nature of *wenzhang* in Ban Gu's days. For example, during the successful campaign of the Eastern Han General Dou Xian 竇憲 (d. 92) against the northern Xiongnu in 89, Ban Gu and Fu Yi 傅毅 (c. 35-c. 90) were “put in charge of writings” (*dian wen-*

¹⁴¹ This is the date when Emperor Cheng gave the order to collect the books from all parts of the empire for the imperial library, where Liu Xiang worked as the chief collator; see *Hanshu* 10.310, 30.1701.

zhang 典文章) in the general's military “tent office” (*mufu* 幕府).¹⁴² In the course of the same campaign, Ban Gu was ordered to commemorate the great victory in a stone stele inscription erected on Mt. Yanran 燕然 in modern Mongolia.¹⁴³ Again, we see the major *ru* literati being involved, and we see what kind of writings they commonly produced as *wenzhang*: eulogies (*song* 頌), inscriptions (*ming* 銘), rhapsodies (*fu* 賦), songs (*shi* 詩), threnodies (*lei* 誄), congratulations (*zhuwen* 祝文), discourses (*lun* 論), memoranda (*ji* 記), memorials (*zou* 奏), letters (*shu* 書), etc.¹⁴⁴—in short, writings that predominantly served either panegyric purposes or contributed to the political discussion.

The text that is generally celebrated as the first theoretical discussion of Chinese literature, Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187-226) “Lun wen” 論文 (“Discourse on Literature”), which was part of his otherwise lost *Dian lun* 典論 (*Canonical discourses*), includes an enumeration of altogether eight genres of literature, presented in four pairs: *zou yi* 奏議 (“memorials and discussions”), *shu lun* 書論 (“letters and discourses”), *ming lei* 銘誄 (“inscriptions and threnodies”), *shi fu* 詩賦 (“poems and rhapsodies”).¹⁴⁵ And although in his “Wen fu” 文賦 (“Rhapsody on Literature”) Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303) changed the order and hierarchy of genres, he did not deviate substantially from the earlier scheme, listing the genres *shi* 詩 (“poems”), *fu* 賦 (“rhapsodies”), *bei* 碑 (“epitaphs”), *lei* 誄 (“threnodies”), *ming* 銘 (“inscriptions”), *zhen* 箴 (“admonitions”), *song* 頌 (“eulogies”), *lun* 論 (“discourses”), *zou* 奏 (“memorials”), and *shui* 說 (“persuasions”).¹⁴⁶ Still at the core of the subsequent Six Dynasties

¹⁴² *Hou Hanshu* 23.819. For information on the campaign and its aftermath, see *Hou Hanshu* 4.168-69, 23.814-20. Both Ban Gu and Fu Yi were on General Dou's staff (see *Hou Hanshu* 80A.2613). Fu Yi, as a scholar second in reputation only to Ban Gu, was writing within the same ideological horizon of ritual classicism as Ban Gu; see Knechtges, “To Praise the Han,” pp. 131-35, and for Fu's biography, *Hou Hanshu* 80A.2610-13.

¹⁴³ For the inscription text see *Hou Hanshu* 23.815-17.

¹⁴⁴ This enumeration comprises the genres that are typically mentioned in the *Hou Hanshu* biographies of the major literati of the first century. See for example, *Hou Hanshu* 40A.1329 (Ban Biao) and 80A.2613 (Fu Yi) and the whole chapter 80, dedicated to the “Garden of Literature” (“Wenyuan liezhuan” 文苑列傳) of Eastern Han times. The best English summary of Han and Six Dynasties literary genres and their theory may be found in Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 1:2-4, 21-52.

¹⁴⁵ *Wen xuan* 52.9a.

¹⁴⁶ *Wen xuan* 17.6a-b.

orderings of literature, like the comprehensive systems of Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong* and Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501-531) *Wenxuan*, these genres reflect the reality of *wenzhang* in early Eastern Han times.¹⁴⁷

When Cao Pi calls *wenzhang* "the great undertaking in managing the state" (*wenzhang jing guo zhi daye* 文章經國之大業),¹⁴⁸ he does not metaphorically elevate the status of literature but refers to the body of writings that served the needs of the government in practical matters (the discursive genres) and symbolic representation (the panegyric genres). By Eastern Han times, the primary means and expression of good rulership was the literary *wenzhang*. When declaring this principle, Cao Pi may or may not have thought of an earlier formula concerning the basis of the state in the *Zuo zhuan*: "The great affairs of the state reside in the temple sacrifices and in the war sacrifices."¹⁴⁹ But the juxtaposition of both statements immediately illuminates the fundamentally different perception of government after the gradual institutionalization of literary writing for official purposes had taken place. Cao Pi's view of the political significance of literature, together with his enumeration of genres, was, as Burton Watson pointed out many years ago,¹⁵⁰ completely within the scope of Eastern Han thinking. Wang Chong, for example, dedicated a whole section, entitled "Xu song" 須頌, to the necessity of eulogizing the state,¹⁵¹ claiming that "when the emperors and kings of old established their vast virtuous power, they needed ministers of grand writing skill to praise and eulogize, to record and document; the vast virtuous power would then become brilliant, and

ten thousand generations would hear of it," and that "if the dragon is without clouds and rain, it cannot join Heaven; the men of grand writing skill are the clouds and rain of the state."¹⁵²

Of course, political eulogy was anything but new in late Western Han times; politico-religious eulogies are probably the earliest form among known Chinese texts that may be called literary writings on the basis of their poetic structure. The "Zhou song" 周頌 section of the transmitted *Shijing* is regarded as the oldest part of the whole anthology, probably including pieces from the eleventh and tenth centuries B.C.; even when appearing as historical records, the contemporary bronze inscriptions were almost by definition texts composed to glorify one's ancestors and to present oneself as their legitimate descendant. Yet, not only does the word *wenzhang* appear only centuries later, even then it is never applied to the *ya* 雅 or *song* 頌: the historical continuity of political eulogy since the early Zhou is not reflected in a coherent terminology. Although, according to Ban Gu, the later eulogy followed the very tradition of the *ya* and the *song*, it was very different in nature from what had been inherited from the Western Zhou, the last of the illustrious dynasties of high antiquity. The difference was not on the textual level: one could, and did, model any number of new hymns or inscriptions on the respective patterns of the *Shijing*. It was on the level of the significance of the text relative to its embedding performance: both the early Zhou and the later imperial eulogies were performance texts and were composed to harmonize with music by poetic features like rhyme, meter, the use of onomatopoeia, etc. in ritual celebrations of religious nature. While strikingly different from the eulogies of imperial times, the *texts* of the *Shijing* hymns were only secondary to their *performance* through music and dance.¹⁵³ Even

¹⁵² *Lun heng jiaoshi* 3:847, 854.

¹⁵³ As Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, pp. 28-51, has pointed out, centuries before their final canonization the *Songs* appear to be treated as an element of ritual music in the earliest parts of the *Lunyu*, as texts to be recited or chanted in a later stratum of the received text, and as texts to be studied and discussed only in the very latest sections of the transmitted text. Still in the *Zuo zhuan*, the practice of "reciting the *Songs*" (*fu shi* 賦詩) was intended to emphasize their emblematic qualities as ideal musical pieces, without presenting any particular moral reading of their texts. The significance of the *Songs*, it seems, was moved step by step from the musical to the textual level: "As the teaching of the Odes was becoming institutionalized in the Confucian schools, the music that had been the *raison d'être* of the Odes was falling out of use, leaving behind the Odes as texts and texts only" (Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, p. 49).

¹⁴⁷ The single exception is the genre of the "persuasion" (*shui* 說; on this pronunciation see the phonetic gloss in *Wen xuan* 17.6a), which was only retrospectively discussed. It was a genre basically confined to Warring States and early Han times and definitely not continued into the Eastern Han; see my "Persuasion' or 'Treatise'—The prose genres *shui* 說 and *shuo* 說 in the light of the *Guwenzi leizuan* 古文辭類纂 of 1779."

¹⁴⁸ *Wen xuan* 52.9b. For a translation and discussion of the "Lun wen" see Donald Holzman, "Literary Criticism in the Early Third Century A.D.," *Asiatische Studien* 28 (1974): 113-49, esp. pp. 127-36.

¹⁴⁹ *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* [Cheng 13] 27.209b. I follow Shaughnessy's translation in his "Military Histories of Early China: A Review Article," *Early China* 21 (1996): 159.

¹⁵⁰ See his "Literary Theory in the Eastern Han," in *Yoshikawa hakase taikyū kinen Chūgoku bungaku ronshū* 吉川博士退休紀念中國文學論集 [Studies in Chinese Literature Dedicated to Dr. Yoshikawa Kōjirō on His Sixty-fifth Birthday], ed. Ogawa Tamaki 小川環樹 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1968), p. 13.

¹⁵¹ *Lun heng jiaoshi* 3:847-58.

a text as late as the "Great Preface" ("Da xu" 大序) to the *Shijing*, dating probably from the Eastern Han, still acknowledges this primacy of the outward form with respect to the Zhou eulogy:

The eulogies praise the outward appearance of flourishing virtuous power, in order to announce its accomplishments and merits towards the spirits.¹⁵⁴

頌者，美盛德之形容，以其成功告於神明者也。

If this passage—with *song* ("eulogy") cognate to *rong* 容 ("appearance")¹⁵⁵—defines the eulogy primarily as a dance performance, then we have to recognize an ironic phenomenon: the ritual hymns of the *Shijing*, orchestrated with solemn music and measured dances, belonged indeed to the ritual *wenzhang* of their time when they created a synaesthetic experience that not only represented but constituted and iteratively reaffirmed good rulership. By contrast, when Han writers referred to their own eulogies as *wenzhang*, both the nature of the eulogy and the notion of *wenzhang* had been developed from the performative to the textual level of expression. It is only by misinterpreting both the Zhou eulogy and the Zhou *wenzhang* that we can create an apparent continuity of cultural expression from high antiquity to imperial times. Despite all efforts to project the significance of the written literary text back into early Western Zhou times,¹⁵⁶ it is most probably a phenomenon that did not become forceful until the late Western Han: its Eastern Han retrospective application to earlier eras tells us more about the status of literature, accompanied by a particular view of the past, after ca. 30 B.C., than about pre-imperial cultural realities. There simply was no discussion on literary writing as "the great undertaking in managing the state" before the days of Liu Xiang and Yang Xiong.

The process by which the literary text rose to its status as the main emblem of culture was gradual, and it was eventually accomplished by mid-Eastern Han times, just before paper became

¹⁵⁴ *Mao shi zhengyi* 1-1.4c.

¹⁵⁵ Following Ruan Yuan's 阮元 (1764-1849) widely accepted analysis; see his "Yanjing shiji" 羣經室集, in *Qing jingjie* 清經解 (ed. Ruan Yuan, reprint [together with the continuation *Qing jingjie xubian* 清經解續編] in 12 vols., Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1988), 1068.249b-250a. See also my *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang*, pp. 143-44.

¹⁵⁶ Cao Pi sees the primary cultural achievements of the early Zhou rulers King Wen 文王 (r. 1099/56-1050 B.C.) and the Duke of Zhou 周公 (r. 1042-1036 B.C.) in their writings; see *Wen xuan* 52.9b.

widely available in China.¹⁵⁷ In addition to such factors as the criticism of material ritualism, the fixation of the canon, the institutionalization of scholarly erudition in the form of official chairs, the founding of the imperial library, and the appointment of collators of the imperial collection, one should also consider an increasingly broad literary public that was no longer centered only on the imperial court or on one of the princely courts. The circulation of writings between individual scholars—a process of communication that must have been still essentially public, not private—can be first documented in the correspondence between Liu Xin and Yang Xiong concerning Yang's dialect dictionary *Fangyan* 方言.¹⁵⁸ Beyond the significance of their very existence, the letters also provide us with most valuable insights into the status of the literary text at the very end of the Western Han.¹⁵⁹ Yang Xiong mentions that his earliest writings included a eulogy (*song* 頌) and three inscriptions (*ming* 銘), in other words, the typical panegyric *wenzhang* of the day, and that they all had been recited (*song* 誦) to Emperor Cheng.¹⁶⁰ This means that besides the rhapsodies,¹⁶¹ other works of official literary writings,

¹⁵⁷ According to literary and archaeological evidence, paper was known already during Western Han times but it was certainly not widespread. If not its inventor, Cai Lun 蔡倫 (d. 121) still is credited with important improvements of paper in China, as it appears from the memorial that he presented to the emperor in A.D. 105 (see *Hou Hanshu* 78.2513). It seems that paper became increasingly popular and widespread only towards late Eastern Han times; see Eva Yuen-Wah Chung, "A Study of the *Shu* (Letters) of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Washington, 1982), pp. 207-25, Qian Cunxun 錢存訓 [Tsien Tsuen-hsui], *Yinshua faming qian de Zhongguo shu he wenzi jilu* 印刷發明前的中國書和文字紀錄 (Peking: Yinshua gongye, 1988), pp. 90-96, Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 5: *Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Part 1: Paper and Printing* (by Tsien Tsuen-Hsui) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 38-47.

¹⁵⁸ If the two letters are authentic—and there are good reasons to believe so—they were "the first extant examples in Chinese literature of correspondence between two literary figures"; see David R. Knechtges, "The Liu Hsin/Yang Hsiung Correspondence on the *Fang Yen*," *Monumenta Serica* 33 (1977/78): 310. For the two letters, see Qian Yi 錢鏗, *Fangyan jianshu* 方言箋疏 (2 vols., Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1984), 13.49a-56a.

¹⁵⁹ Knechtges, "The Liu Hsin/Yang Hsiung Correspondence on the *Fang Yen*," pp. 319-22, dates the letters around A.D. 7 but also suggests that they have been edited later in Eastern Han times.

¹⁶⁰ *Fangyan jianshu* 13.53a.

¹⁶¹ See *Hanshu* 30.1755, where the rhapsody (*fu* 賦) is defined by its mode of presentation: "To recite (*song* 誦) without singing is called *fu*." The statement

in particular panegyric pieces, were still being publicly recited, i.e., ritually performed. Yet at the same time, the Liu Xin/Yang Xiong correspondence by itself seems to testify to the act of individual reading.

Liu Xin again mentions several points that are pertinent to our discussion above: Emperor Cheng's concern with the canon of ancient writings, the role of philological erudites to establish its correct readings, and the need of catalogues and dictionaries.¹⁶² In short, Liu Xin substantiates his request of a copy of the *Fangyan* for the imperial library, most elegantly declined by Yang Xiong, by the same arguments that led Xu Shen, almost a century later, to compile the *Shuowen jiezi*.

Finally, we may turn again to Yang Xiong for evidence of the new status of the literary text, in this case the rhapsody. Although Yang greatly admired the earlier *poeta laureatus* in the *fu* genre, Sima Xiangru, with whom he had much in common—the two writers can be rightfully called the unsurpassed virtuosi of the genre, both were originally from the old state of Shu 蜀, and both stuttered—he eventually moved to the conclusion that the *fu* was useless for the purpose of influencing the ruler and was not something that a mature man should pursue.¹⁶³ According to Yang Xiong, and also to Ban Gu,¹⁶⁴ Sima Xiangru had presented the “Daren fu” 大人賦¹⁶⁵ as an indirect admonition to Emperor Wu; but the emperor was ignorant enough to take the piece as a plain eulogy. This portrayal of a ruler obsessed with and blinded by superficial ornament—be it literary or ritual—is of course another variant of the typical image through which late Western/early Eastern Han classicists of Kuang Heng's caliber envisioned Han Wudi. But although Yang Xiong's understanding of the “Daren fu” has become commonplace, we are still listening to Yang Xiong (and to Ban Gu) here, not to Sima Xiangru himself, and we are perhaps taken in by a fallacy: Yang Xiong saw his own

goes back to Liu Xin's library catalogue “Qi lue” 七略 (“Seven Epitomes”, an abbreviated version of his father's original work “Bie lu” 別錄), that became again in its turn shortened and incorporated into the *Hanshu* “Monograph on Arts and Letters.”

¹⁶² *Fangyan jianshu* 13.50b-51b.

¹⁶³ See *Hanshu* 87B.3575 and *Fayan yishu* 3.1a-4b, translated by Knechtges, see above.

¹⁶⁴ For Ban Gu's remarks on Sima Xiangru see *Hanshu* 30.1756 and 57B.2609.

¹⁶⁵ See *Shiji* 117.3056-62, *Hanshu* 57B.2592-2600.

literary efforts towards his ruler parallel to Sima Xiangru's towards Han Wudi; but none of Sima's *fu* were commissioned by the emperor, while all of Yang's in fact were. Again, unlike later writers, the *fu* composers at Emperor Wu's court were not respected as political advisors and distinguished officials but served primarily as entertainers and panegyrists. The *fu* of Yang Xiong and Ban Gu may have added to their authors' reputation and may in turn have gained significance—especially in Ban Gu's case—from their official status; by contrast, Sima Xiangru's *fu* writing had no relation to office and political influence. And although the significantly different nature of Sima Xiangru's and Yang Xiong's *fu* may not as such invalidate Yang's judgement, it disqualifies Yang's static view (or perhaps only rhetoric?) of Western Han literary practice.¹⁶⁶

Moreover, the picture of Emperor Wu as a naive autocrat misrepresents the organization of his court, which, according to all our sources, was filled with both literary entertainers and political advisors; at least some of them, we might expect, would have been clever enough to understand Sima Xiangru's indirect message and to convey it to the emperor. Do we all, following Yang Xiong, see something that none of them saw? Or are we staring at the age of Wudi through the late Western Han classicist's glasses? Whatever the case may be, the contradictions in Yang Xiong's explanation of Sima Xiangru's literary practice are still valuable to us: they inform us, once more, that by the distance of a century, the status and purpose of the literary text had changed significantly.

¹⁶⁶ For a fuller treatment of this complex issue, see my “To Recite Without Singing ...”: The Western Han *Fu* as Text and Performance,” forthcoming, a first version of which was presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 22-25, 2001.