

**On the Criteria and Methods for “Discerning Inauthenticity”  
In the Context of Early Chinese Texts**

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**Abstract**

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This thesis encompasses discussions regarding the various aspects of Chinese *bianwei* 辨偽 studies (“Discerning Inauthenticity Studies”). The first chapter delves into the notion of *inauthenticity*, distinguishing an *inauthentic* text from a *literary forgery* in the context of early Chinese texts. It explicitly states that, in this context, the criteria for discerning inauthenticity should exclude consideration of authorship, since the notion of authorship itself might be described as irrelevant in that time period. Besides authorship, the argument based on the notion “additions and interpolations” (*fuyi* 附益) needs to be removed from the criteria for authenticating early Chinese texts, since this notion does not apply to those early texts of compositional nature. The next section discusses editorial efforts that have been applied to early texts during their two millennia of transmission. Since editorial efforts might be treated by later generations of scholars as evidence to suggest that the texts are forgeries, it is of great importance for us to be aware that a large quantity of pre-modern Chinese texts have undergone long periods of fluidity, and any individual who was involved in the history of a text’s transmission might have had his or

her impact on the text. The last section of the first chapter touches on possible motives for literary forgeries and inauthentic early texts.

The second chapter revisits previous scholarship that has been contributed to *bianwei* studies. It first traces back to *bianwei* studies before its systemization. Then, it re-examines and evaluates the criteria for “discerning inauthenticity” that were first summarized by Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602) and later supplemented and elaborated in Liang Qichao’s 梁啟超 (1873-1929) work. The following section recapitulates the advocacy of utilizing both transmitted literature and archaeologically recovered materials, known as the “Two-fold evidential approach” (*erchong zhengju fa* 二重證據法), as well as addressing several pertinent issues, including viewing unearthed non-literary artifacts and excavated manuscripts as two equally important kinds of evidence, and the importance of scrutinizing the contextual information of excavated manuscripts.

The third chapter begins with a brief summary of the present situation of unprovenanced manuscripts. Since unprovenanced manuscripts are not the discoveries of standard archaeological excavations, this type of material in general lacks external evidence. It is possible that some bits and pieces of information about unprovenanced manuscripts can be recollected so as to form “quasi-external” evidence. Still, this type of evidence is considered by some scholars to be speculative, and cannot completely compensate for the lack of external evidence in authenticating unprovenanced manuscripts. Next, special attention is given to the scientific analyses that have been conducted on unprovenanced manuscript samples. This section contributes to answering the question of whether scientific analyses’ results are reliable and effective in determining the authenticity of unprovenanced manuscripts. The following section

discusses the question of whether one could rely on comparing the physical properties of an unprovenienced manuscript sample to those of a scientifically excavated manuscript sample, in order to determine the authenticity of said unprovenienced manuscripts. The discussion in the last section of the third chapter suggests that measuring the water content contained in unprovenienced manuscript samples might be a viable criterion to help determine the authenticity of the manuscripts, but the fundamental problem of whether or not the physical properties of the entire set of manuscripts can be represented by that single sample still remains.

*For my parents*

*With love and gratitude*

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## I. Introduction

### I. 1. Preliminaries

Chinese *bianwei* 辨偽 scholarship (“Discerning Inauthenticity Studies”) was first systemized in the writings of several Ming 明 and Qing 清 philologists, which are represented by Song Lian’s 宋濂 (1310-1381) *Zhuzi bian* 諸子辯, Hu Yinglin’s 胡應麟 (1551-1602) *Sibu zheng’e* 四部證訛, and Yao Jiheng’s 姚際恆 (1647-?) *Gujin weishu kao* 古今偽書考.<sup>1</sup> But the *bianwei* tradition can be traced all the way back to the Han 漢 dynasty when scholars such as the father and son, Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 B.C.E.) and Liu Xin 劉歆 (c. 50 B.C.E. -23 C.E.), endeavored to sort out massive numbers of early texts preserved in the imperial library. Although the two works of these scholars, Liu Xiang’s *Bie lu* 別錄 and Liu Xin’s *Qi lue* 七略, were already lost after the Tang 唐 dynasty, the “substance” of what has been preserved in Ban Gu’s 班固 (32-92) “Yiwen zhi” of the *Han shu* 漢書藝文志, enables one to perceive some preliminary considerations of what later became *bianwei* concepts.<sup>2</sup> For instance, in regard to a text titled *Yi yin shuo* 伊尹說, the “Yiwen zhi” notes:

“*Yi yin shuo*, twenty-seven *pian*. Its wording is shallow and superficial, and it seems to be [incorrectly] ascribed to [Yi yin].”

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<sup>1</sup> See *Gushu bianwei sizhong*. Besides the aforementioned three studies of works of doubtful authenticity, it also includes Cui Shu’s 崔述 (1740-1816) *Kaoxin lu tiyao* 考信錄提要.

<sup>2</sup> The *Han shu* was authored by Ban Gu. However, its “Yiwen zhi” is derived almost entirely from the *Qi lue* by Liu Xin, a work that is largely an abridgment of Liu Xiang’s *Bie lu*. In its preface, Ban Gu indicates that the “Yiwen zhi” has preserved the essentials of *Qi lue* that were selected by him. See *Han shu*, 30.1701, and Gao Luming 1997, 72.

伊尹說二十七篇其語淺薄似依託也。<sup>3</sup>

Similar kinds of questions about texts, such as when a text was written (or compiled), who the author is, how reliable the text's content is, and whether a text is a forgery, were then constantly raised and debated. Although the way that scholars understand the notion of *bianwei* has gone through numerous changes since the Eastern Han 東漢, the tradition itself continues today when a huge amount of manuscripts were discovered after being concealed for nearly two millennia.

One of a few peculiar features that distinguish archeologically discovered texts from their transmitted counterpart is their writing support, which allows the manuscripts to be examined by modern techniques such as radiocarbon dating. Nonetheless, regarding its content, the text preserved in a manuscript carries as many similar textual characteristics as a traditional transmitted text does. In other words, where the issue of authenticity is concerned, a manuscript will call for the same kind of investigation that a transmitted text conventionally calls for because of its nature of being a text. For this reason, examining previous *bianwei* scholarship on transmitted texts will allow us to discern how many, and to what extent, already established criteria and methods can be applied to manuscripts.

The first chapter will attempt to explain and clarify some basic notions that are pertinent to the current discussion of “Discerning Inauthenticity Studies.” The second chapter will revisit both pre-modern and modern scholarship on *bianwei* studies that

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<sup>3</sup> *Han shu*, 30.1744. Here the smaller sized Chinese line corresponds to the part of annotation in the “Yiwen zhi” in the *zhonghua shuju* 中華書局 edition. The English translation of the annotation is also in a smaller size in order to contrast to the translation of the main text.

exclusively deal with transmitted texts, with a focus on evaluating the validity and effectiveness of the criteria and methods that were employed. The third chapter will focus on the new methods that have emerged with the emergence of archaeologically discovered manuscripts since the twentieth century, paying special attention to the role that scientific analyses and material evidence have played in the ongoing debates over the issue of authenticity of unprovenanced manuscripts.

It is necessary to determine the temporal scope of the texts that will be handled in the discussion. Scholars in the field of early China studies would typically describe their time period as being from earliest times down through the end of the Han dynasty in 220 C.E.<sup>4</sup> In Loewe 1993, Michael Loewe and other editors decided to include only those texts that reached their present form before the end of the Han dynasty.<sup>5</sup> Yet, in the case of the current discussion, the texts, either transmitted or excavated, that fall into the category of “early Chinese texts” only range from those of the era of bamboo slips from the tomb of Zeng hou Yi 曾侯乙 (ca. 433 B.C.E.), to those of the time when the “Yiwen zhi” was finalized.<sup>6</sup>

This decision excludes inscriptions that were carved on turtle plastrons and bovid scapulae (conventionally known as Oracle-Bone Inscriptions, “OBI”) or that were cast on bronze vessels (conventionally known as Bronze Inscriptions, “BI”) due to their own peculiar characteristics. As a convention, the OBI and BI are frequently discussed as two

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<sup>4</sup> For example, this how the journal *Early China* prescribes the timespan of the period.

<sup>5</sup> Loewe 1993, x.

<sup>6</sup> Hubei sheng bowuguan 1980, 2.

individual subjects. But more importantly, unlike bamboo and silk manuscripts that were widely produced and circulated since the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.E.), neither the OBI writings nor the BI writings find any counterpart in transmitted literature.<sup>7</sup> Hence, with regard to the issue of authenticity, the writings in OBI and BI, and early Chinese texts (as defined in current discussion), ought to be treated as three separate matters.

The compilation of the “Yiwen zhi,” on the other hand, signifies the result of Han scholars’ rumination on the texts that were previously produced and circulated. This earliest extant bibliographical catalogue of Chinese texts, as already mentioned, also reflects the debut of *bianwei* concepts to a certain extent. Being a bibliographical catalogue, the information about the texts and their author(s) that it carries reminds us of the Han scholars’ awareness of authorship, which was previously unseen until its

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<sup>7</sup> Although the names of the Shang 商 kings seen in the OBI correspond to the records in the “Yin benji” 殷本紀 and the “San dai shi biao” 三代世表 of the *Shi ji* 史記, with regard to the text, the OBI writing finds no counterpart in transmitted literature. As for the BI, the claim is not necessarily true because of two potential exceptions. In the first case, scholars have found similarity between the language of the “Wenhou zhi ming” 文侯之命 chapter of the *Shang shu* 尚書 and that of the bronze inscriptions on the “Mao gong ding” 毛公鼎. The vessel and the inscriptions are generally regarded as authentic, although there are some debates over these issues. See a brief summary of the similarity between the language in the “Wenhou zhi ming” and that of the inscriptions on the “Mao gong ding” in Shaughnessy 1992, 75-76. In the second case, not only the general form of the bronze inscriptions on the “Bin (or Sui) gong xu” 鬲公盨 is comparable to some chapters of the *Shu jing*, especially to the “Yu gong” 禹貢 chapter, “but its wording is often identical to wording in various such chapters and other classical texts,” see Shaughnessy 2007. Similar to the “Mao gong ding,” the authenticity of “Bin (or Sui) gong xu” has been debated as well. For a more detailed discussion on the inscriptions and other relevant issues, see Li Ling 2002 and 2003.

emergence roughly at the time of Sima Qian 司馬遷 (?-86 B.C.E.).<sup>8</sup> This issue of authorship in the context of early Chinese texts will also be separately addressed below.

## I. 2. Inauthenticity, and its notion in the context of early Chinese texts

The term *inauthentic* is employed, perhaps arbitrarily, in the current discussion in order to describe a text that is *not* authentic, although it is not a word that would normally be expected, as might its other synonyms such as *forged*, *forgery*, or *fake*. This is because the sense conveyed by a word such as *forged*, *forgery*, or *fake* sometimes appears to be misleading. The second edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) provides nine different, though often related, usages of the verb *forge*, among which the fifth is the most applicable to the current discussion:

*forge*: ‘To make (something) in fraudulent imitation of something else; to make or devise (something spurious) in order to pass it off as genuine.’<sup>9</sup>

As a comparison, the most applicable definitions of the words *authentic* and *genuine* in the same dictionary read:

*authentic*: ‘Really proceeding from its reputed source or author; of undisputed origin, genuine. (Opposed to counterfeit, forged, apocryphal.)’<sup>10</sup>

*genuine*: ‘Really proceeding from its reputed source or author; not spurious; = AUTHENTIC.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The awareness of authorship by the Han scholars will be discussed later in section I. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*, VI: 69. The entry of *forgery* is on the same page of this dictionary, which is understood as a noun form of the verb *forge*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 796.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, VI: 456.

These definitions suggest that the words *authentic* and *genuine* can be used interchangeably; and it seems the OED agrees with the idea that *forged* (as an attributive usage of the verb *forge*) is semantically opposed to *authentic*.<sup>12</sup> Yet, *forged* connotes an additional sense of intentionally producing the fraudulent imitation of the genuine piece. As the antonym of *authentic*, *inauthentic* does not necessarily imply this meaning. A text is *inauthentic* because it does not emanate from its reputed source or author; yet, this text is not a *forged* one since it is not necessarily made in fraudulent imitation of something else, nor it was intended to be passed off as genuine.

In addition, the notion of *inauthenticity* in the context of early Chinese texts is different from something that is referred to as a *forgery* in one's day-to-day life. Unlike buying or selling a fake luxury-brand watch in a flea market, authenticating an early Chinese text should not be oversimplified as an all-or-nothing dichotomy.<sup>13</sup> This point shall be illustrated in the well-known case of the *Guanzi* 管子.

All the three Ming and Qing *bianwei* works mentioned in the introduction (Song Lian's *Zhuji bian*, Hu Yinglin's *Sibu zheng'e*, and Yao Jiheng's *Gujin weishu kao*) have categorized the *Guanzi* as a "forged text" (*weishu* 偽書). According to the *Zhuji bian*, one of the reasons that such a judgment was reached is due to the *Guanzi*'s incorrectly attributed authorship. During the Han, the *Guanzi* was attributed to Guan Zhong 管仲 (d.

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<sup>12</sup> There was an attempt to establish a distinction between *authentic* and *genuine* but such a distinction was not recognized now, *ibid.*, VI: 456.

<sup>13</sup> The OED defines *fake* as 'spurious, counterfeit,' see *ibid.*, V: 681; it defines *counterfeit* as 'to make (anything) in fraudulent imitation of something else; to make or devise (something spurious) and pass it off as genuine; to forge' see *ibid.*, III: 1027. These definitions suggest *fake*, *counterfeit*, and *forged* can be used interchangeably in this context.

645 B.C.E.), the reformer of the State of Qi 齊, e.g., the “Yiwen zhi” attributes the eighty-six *pian* 篇 of the *Guanzi* 管子 to Guan Yiwu 管夷吾; later, this attribution became the object of suspicions by its commentators.<sup>14</sup> The early *Guanzi* commentator Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217-278) wrote “more than half the *Guanzi* has been added by later aficionados. This mentions things that happened after the death of Guan Zhong” 管仲之書過半是後之好事者所加乃說管仲死後事. This statement was repeated by many others, including Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200).<sup>15</sup> Now, almost everyone is willing to concede that this text was not written by Guan Zhong. Instead, it presents the work of different men writing at different times.

With regard to its date, modern scholarship on the *Guanzi* tends to agree with the argument that the text reached its present form under Liu Xiang’s effort of compiling them together in about 26 B.C.E.<sup>16</sup> Luo Genze 羅根澤 (1900-1960) has examined each chapter of the text for internal evidence, and he concludes that none of the *Guanzi* chapters predates the Warring States period.<sup>17</sup> Allyn Rickett found Luo’s method was

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<sup>14</sup> *Han shu*, 30.1729. Yiwu was Guan Zhong’s given name, whereas Zhong was his courtesy name. The characters *guan* 筧 and *guan* 管 were pronounced identically according to the commentator Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645), hence the two are interchangeable. For a summary on the attribution of the *Guanzi* during the Han time and the earliest references to the text, see Rickett 1985, 5-7.

<sup>15</sup> Luo Genze 1931, 3-6.

<sup>16</sup> Rickett 1993, 244-251. The issue of transmission of the received *Guanzi* has been meticulously studied in van der Loon 1952, 357-393.

<sup>17</sup> Luo Genze 1931, 7-11.

sound although he sometimes has reservations about Luo's conclusions. In Rickett's opinion, the core of the received *Guanzi* originated with the Jixia 稷下 academy about 302 B.C.E., and additional materials were gradually added until it was finally completed by Liu Xiang.<sup>18</sup>

The study of its date indicates that the transmitted *Guanzi* is most likely a received version of a genuine Han compilation. It was accused of being a forged text because it was *not* “really proceeding from its reputed author,” i.e., Guan Zhong. Yet, the *Guanzi* text seems not to be “a fraudulent imitation of something else,” and that Liu Xiang made it “in order to pass it off as genuine” remains an unjustifiable accusation until any sound evidence can be found for that claim. In other words, by following the definition from the OED, the *Guanzi* is an *inauthentic* text but not a *forged* text. In the Jewish religious text tradition, this kind of false ascribed writings are called pseudepigrapha. Anthony Grafton argues that pseudepigrapha should not be called forgeries since the practice of making such writings did not imply an intention to deceive (although they sometimes do), which is in accordance with the notion of *inauthentic*.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the intention, and the motivation of the forger(s) are crucial to this discussion as well, which will also be separately addressed below.

The case of the *Guanzi* bears further significance in terms of those criteria that were applied: if the date, instead of the authorship, is the only criterion for authenticating a text, the existing evidence suffices to prove that the *Guanzi* is not a forged early

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<sup>18</sup> Rickett 1985, 14-16.

<sup>19</sup> Grafton 1990, 6; 24.

Chinese text. This suggests that whether a text is authentic or not lies in how the notion of inauthenticity is understood, and what criteria are applied in authenticating the text.

### I. 3. Attributing early Chinese texts

In both the Chinese and Western traditions, authorship appears to be one of the key elements that may not be disregarded in determining authenticity or inauthenticity of a text. Examining authorship is seen as an indispensable constituent in *bianwei* studies, as well as in modern literary criticism. In his 1969 speech “What is an author?” Michel Foucault noted, “... the manner in which literary criticism once defined the author – or, rather, constructed the figure of the author beginning with existing texts and discourses – is directly derived from the manner in which Christian tradition authenticated (or rejected) the texts at its disposal.”<sup>20</sup> Modern literary criticism and the Western Christian tradition afford the notion of authorship manifold meanings. But will those meanings be applicable to the exercise of authenticating an early Chinese text? A concise examination on how authorship hitherto has been conceptualized by critics may provide a workable foundation for its application to the issue of authenticity. Regardless of its content or its length, any piece of writing must have been written by someone, be it a million-word novel or a ten-word shopping list, but this someone does not necessarily exist as the author of his or her writing. Narrowly defined, an author denotes the creator and the owner of a piece of work that was intellectually composed in any type of genre. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is known as the author of *Hamlet*, whereas Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1715-1763) is known as the author of *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢. The name that normally appears under the title on the front cover of a book in modern practice denotes the author

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<sup>20</sup> Foucault 1979, 150.

of that book, and sometimes there is more than one author. Here, then, comes a question: if we take such a narrowly defined notion of author, does/do the name(s) that is/are associated with a certain work, as identified in the “Yiwen zhi,” denote the author(s) of that particular work?

Before answering this question, there are four author-related terms, namely, *zuozhe* 作者, *shuzhe* 述者, *zhuanren* 撰人, and *zhuzhe* 著者, that call for an examination. Li Ling 李零 has attempted to explain the difference among these four terms since all of them are pertinent to the question of how the notion of author, narrowly defined, might be conceptualized in the context of early Chinese texts.<sup>21</sup> A *zuozhe* is the one who initiated and established a school of discourse, whereas his disciples, who recorded and transmitted their master’s (*zi* 子) teachings, are regarded as the *shuzhe*. The classic example, “transmitting but not creating” 述而不作, indicates that the distinction between *transmitting* and *creating* was recognized already at least prior to the compiling of the *Lun yu* 論語.<sup>22</sup> The term *shuzhe* was later replaced by the term *zhuanren*, which was frequently used in the “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 of the *Sui shu* 隋書. Those who were referred to as the *zhuan ren* were traditionally associated with duties such as selecting, editing, and compiling texts. Yet, the one who composed a piece on his or her own can be referred to as *zhuanren*, too. Similar to the *zhuanren*, the *zhuzhe* is also a later term, which was used to refer to the one who writes or authors one or multiple texts. It appears that only the

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<sup>21</sup> Li Ling 2004, 195-196.

<sup>22</sup> In this particular case, Confucius (ca. 551-479 B.C.E.) recognizes himself as the one who transmits but not creates the discourses, see *Lun yu*, 7.25c. For a brief discussion of the textual history of the *Lun yu*, see Cheng 1993, 314-315.

*zhuanren* and the *zhuzhe* of the four terms, to a certain extent, match the narrowly defined Western sense of author. In the case of the “Yiwen zhi,” the name(s) that is/are associated with a certain work, does/do not fall into the categories of *zhuanren* and *zhuzhe* because these two are later terms, and their meanings had been established as early as the time of the “Yiwen Zhi” (ca. 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.). To interpret the names that appeared in the “Yiwen zhi” entries either as the author, or as the *zhuanren* or *zhuzhe* of a certain text makes an anachronistic mistake. Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 (1884-1955) astutely pointed out that “the ancient texts do not identify their *zhuan ren*” 古書不題撰人.<sup>23</sup> The majority of titles as recorded in the “Yiwen zhi” are distinguished by surnames, which were intended to identify the works of various schools and branches of a school, instead of denoting author(s). For instance, a typical entry from the “Yiwen zhi” reads:

“*Zengzi*, eighteen *pian*. Shen is the personal name of this Master Zeng, who was Confucius’s disciple.”  
曾子十八篇名參孔子弟子.<sup>24</sup>

The annotation (in smaller sized characters) incorporated in the main text of the “Yiwen zhi” was not necessarily meant for identifying Zeng Shen 曾參 (505-435 B.C.E.) as the author of the work; rather, it serves the function of supplementing the biographical information of the person whose surname appeared in the title. The main text, together

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<sup>23</sup> Yu Jiaxi 1940, 183-187. In general, Yu refers the *gushu* 古書 (the ancient texts) to the ancient texts from the Zhou dynasty to the Qin dynasty (*zhou qin gushu* 周秦古書).

<sup>24</sup> *Han shu*, 30.1724.

with Ban Gu's annotation, might also have implied that the discourse recorded in this particular text had originated from Zeng Shen.<sup>25</sup>

This practice of not indicating the *zhuanren*, as demonstrated in transmitted literature, again finds its confirmation in archaeological evidence. So far, of all the manuscripts that can be dated prior to the time of the “Yiwen zhi,” not a single one has preserved a name to denote a certain *zhuanren*, be it an author, a writer, a compiler, an editor, or even a scribe. Therefore, as Martin Kern has commented, “While we can never rule out the possibility that the next manuscript will show us exactly that, it is now safe to say that we already have a large enough body of texts to conclude that in general, the notion of authorship was not a concern in the composition, circulation, and reception of texts in early China.”<sup>26</sup> Certainly, the complexity of the notion of authorship in the Western Han should never be overlooked, nor be oversimplified. Kern's conclusion, as quoted above, is not meant to deny the emergence of the realization of authorship during the reigning period of Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (Liu Che 劉徹, 156-87 B.C.E.; r. 141-87). This realization of authorship is reflected in various biographies of literati in the *Shi ji* 史記, in which the title of a text and its alleged creator are frequently juxtaposed. For example, the *Shi ji* tells its readers that Qu Yuan 屈原 (340?-278 B.C.E.) “was full of melancholy and gloomy thoughts, thus he composed the ‘Li sao’” 故憂愁幽思而作離騷,

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<sup>25</sup> This was argued in detail in Yu Jiayi 2004, 200-209. Li Ling endorses this view, too, see Li Ling 2004, 195.

<sup>26</sup> Ke Mading 2016, 34.

or “Qu Yuan was banished, and then he composed the ‘Li sao’” 屈原放逐著離騷.<sup>27</sup>

Nonetheless, the historical progress, from the absence of any record or notion of an author before Sima Qian, to the gradual move toward recognition of authorship during the reign of Emperor Wu, and eventually to the construction of authorship in the *Shi ji* is a separate subject matter that the current discussion is not intended to explore.<sup>28</sup>

By contrast, the notion of author is conceptualized quite differently in a broad sense. Foucault uses the term *author-function* to describe the author as a function of discourse. In the same 1969 speech, he discussed the issue of whether or not a text requires or is assigned an author.<sup>29</sup> For instance, an instructional manual of a microwave oven does not have an identified author, nor does a menu; a modern vehicle-purchasing contract usually has two or sometimes more signers who agreed to the terms written on it, but not multiple authors. A private letter usually has a signer but not an author; yet, when the letter is displayed in public for a propagandistic or educational purpose, or other kinds of reasons, an “author” label will consequently be conferred on the letter’s original signer. A letter with a very high literary fame from the Western Han 西漢, “Bao Ren Shaoqing

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<sup>27</sup> *Shi ji*, 84.2484; 130.3298.

<sup>28</sup> The notion of authorship before the *Shi ji* can possibly be described as “vague” or even “irrelevant.” It is in the *Shi ji* that one encounters a variety of consciously or unconsciously documented writings about authors (as narrowly defined). In Ke Mading 2016, Kern has extensively examined the question of authorship in the *Shi ji*. He attempts to demonstrate how the *Shi ji* created the images of authors of other earlier texts, and how through these particular personas it developed the very idea of authorship. For another informative survey of authors mentioned in the *Shi ji*, see Vankeerberghen, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Foucault 1979, 147-148.

shu” 報任少卿書, written by Sima Qian in reply to Ren An 任安 (d. ca. 91 B.C.E.; although Ren’s original letter did not survive), can sufficiently illustrate this point.<sup>30</sup> Shall Sima Qian be regarded as the author of the letter, or merely as a signer? Perhaps, whoever is familiar with classical Chinese literature will reject such a claim that Sima is not the author of this letter. But at the time when he just finished his letter to Ren An, was Sima Qian expecting the letter to be publicly displayed, and later to be taught by school instructors as educational material? “By writing a private letter (*epistula familiaris*) in its strict sense, the author excludes the public. The purpose of writing would therefore be restricted exclusively to the communication between Sima Qian and Ren An.”<sup>31</sup>

A writing that has an author is a writing that needs to be interpreted from a perspective that includes several facets such as the writer’s biographical information and personal motivation, and social and historical context. In other words, an authored writing is something that only makes sense because of its association with the person(s) who wrote it. It is precisely because it has no space for an individual identity that a manual, a menu, or a contract does not have an author. By contrast, Sima Qian’s

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<sup>30</sup> The letter is preserved in two early texts, one in the *Han Shu* biography of Sima Qian, and the other in the *Wen xuan* 文選, see *Han shu*, 54.1456; and *Wen xuan*, 1854-66. This letter is not preserved in the *Shi ji*, but it does show passages which, in regard to the content, re-phrase ideas expressed more formally in the postface (“Taishi gong zixu”) to the *Shi ji*, see *Shi ji*, 130.3285-3322. The issue of authorship of the letter to Ren An letter has been examined in detail in a recent book, Durrant et al. 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Führer 1997, 175. In his note to this quoted line, Bernard Führer says “tradition has it, that some highly ambiguous passages of the text point to this conclusion.”

historical context, known from various sources, helps to distinguish his letter to Ren An from the “non-authored” private letters of his contemporaries.

The *author-function* does not affect all discourse in a universal way. As noted by Foucault, in Western civilization, some texts have not required attribution to an author. “There was a time when the texts we today call ‘literary’ (narratives, stories, epics, tragedies, comedies) were accepted, put into circulation, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author, their anonymity caused no difficulties since their ancientness, whether real or imagined, was regarded as a sufficient guarantee of their status.”<sup>32</sup> This statement might be applicable to a considerable number of early Chinese texts, which are comparable to the Western “literary” texts in genre, content, or theme. For instance, a group of five poems in the “Da ya” 大雅 section of *Shi jing* 詩經 constitutes the substance of an epic, which narrates the legendary origin and the early history of the Zhou 周 people.<sup>33</sup> Wang Ching-hsien 王靖獻 has even proposed to call this group the *Weniad* so as to echo the Greek epic name *Iliad*.<sup>34</sup> The anonymity of the *Weniad* does not hamper the readers’ comprehension of its content and theme, nor deprive it of its status in literary history. The nature of its ancientness and classicality permits the absence of *author-function* in the *Weniad*.

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<sup>32</sup> Foucault 1979, 149.

<sup>33</sup> The five poems are *Ode* 236 (“Da ming” 大明), 237 (“Mian” 綿), 241 (“Huang yi” 皇矣), 245 (“Sheng min” 生民), and 250 (“Gong liu” 公劉) in the traditional order. This order can be found in Hung 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Wang Ching-hsien 1976.

How effectively, then, will the consideration of authorship serve as a criterion for authenticating an early Chinese text? Evidently the narrowly defined author is a vague and problematic notion in early China, and one sees no reason to include it in the discussion of discerning inauthenticity. As for the *author-function*, indeed one could apply it to early Chinese texts so as to interpret the individual identity displayed in those texts. Yet, the approach seems to be irrelevant to *bianwei* studies; besides, the *author-function* does not pertain to a considerable number of early Chinese texts because of their ancientness and classicality. In consequence, the consideration of authorship can be eliminated from the criteria for discerning inauthenticity since it is neither effective nor applicable.<sup>35</sup> This has already been proposed by Bernhard Karlgren (1889-1978) in 1929.<sup>36</sup> In his opinion, a later editor's incorrect identification or description of an author provides no solid reason to take the text as a forged one. Therefore, he argues that a criterion of "falsely attributed authorship" should be eliminated.

#### **I. 4. Criteria for authenticating a text and the compositional nature of early Chinese texts**

In the context of early Chinese texts, then, what criteria are indispensable for authenticating a text, if the consideration of authorship is eliminated? Zheng Liangshu 鄭良樹 concludes that all the traditional Chinese *bianwei* scholars advocate that one ought to consider three facets of a text, the author(s), the date, and additions or interpolations

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<sup>35</sup> Still, the notion of authorship in early China itself is an important and intriguing question, to which at least two monographs (Lewis 1999 and Beecroft 2010) and one doctoral dissertation (Zhang Hanmo 2012) have been exclusively devoted.

<sup>36</sup> Karlgren 1929, 167.

(*fuyi* 附益), although their criteria may vary in particular cases.<sup>37</sup> In the view of traditional Chinese scholars, if any of the following three points is detected in a target text, one can confidently determine that the text is a forgery:

- 1) The purported author is not the real author;
- 2) The claimed date cannot match the real date;
- 3) Any type of additions or interpolations is detected.

The first criterion can be disregarded immediately inasmuch as the consideration of author and authorship is neither effective nor applicable in the context of early Chinese text as previously discussed. The second and the third criteria in fact are two correlated issues, both of which shall be taken into consideration simultaneously. In contrast to the practice of identifying the author(s) of an early Chinese text, in which context the notion of author itself could possibly be a pseudo-proposition, the date of that particular text is worth investigating, and is likely to be deduced. Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819) is perhaps the first *bianwei* scholar who commented in detail on the problem of dating a number of early texts. For example, in his “Bian *Liezi*” 辯列子, Liu discussed his suspicion of the date of the transmitted text of *Liezi* 列子, and of its purported author Lie

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<sup>37</sup> Zheng Liangshu 1990, 246. Traditional Chinese *bianwei* scholars may refer to those who had contributed works to the field of *bianwei* studies prior to the Republic era. Scholars who were active in *bianwei* studies during the Republic era had distinguished themselves from their predecessors for the following reasons: 1) new archeological discoveries, such as the OBI materials, gave rise to new theories, e.g., Wang Guowei’s 王國維 (1877-1927) “Two-fold evidential approach” (*erchong zhengju fa* 二重證據法); 2) the nature of early Chinese texts began to be recognized by the field, such as the discussion in Yu Jiaxi’s *Gushu tongli*; 3) Western scholarship was also introduced to *bianwei* studies, such as the method of grammatical analysis that was advocated by Bernhard Karlgren, see Karlgren 1929, 165-183.

Yukou 列禦寇 (fl. ca. 400 B.C.E.).<sup>38</sup> Such inquiries about the date of the *Liezi* have increased among both Chinese and Western scholars since the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> In 1961, by examining linguistic evidence of data found in the received *Liezi*, such as grammatical particles and personal pronouns, and by examining wording and content found in other early texts that share comparable lines and passages with the received *Liezi*, A. C. Graham (1919-1991) firmly concludes that the transmitted *Liezi* was compiled some time after the year of 285 as a “deliberate forgery.”<sup>40</sup> Zheng Liangshu has also extensively studied on the date and composition of the *Liezi*, and dated the first six passages in the “Tang wen” 湯問 chapter to the time between the late Warring States and the early Western Han.<sup>41</sup>

Li Ling has termed the investigation in the date of early texts as *gushu niandai xue* 古書年代學 (“Study of the Chronology of Ancient Chinese Texts”), by which he suggests that the term *bianwei* should ideally be renamed, based on the practice that a

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<sup>38</sup> *Liu Zongyuan ji*, 106-108.

<sup>39</sup> As represented by the opinion of Ma Xulun 馬敘倫 (1885-1970), Chinese scholars considered that the extant version of the *Liezi* can be dated to the third or fourth century, whereas in the view of Western scholars, such as that of Henri Maspero (1883-1945), Arthur Waley (1889-1966), and Karlgren, they “continued to include *Liehtzyy* among the pre-Han source.” This controversy over the date of the *Liezi* was summarized in Graham 1961, 139-144.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>41</sup> Zheng Liangshu 2001, 90-194.

*bianwei* scholar has actually conducted.<sup>42</sup> In their practices of authenticating texts, the very first project undertaken by numerous Ming, Qing, and Republic era *bianwei* scholars was to date the target texts. But these pre-modern scholars frequently committed a logical fallacy in dating texts:

- 1) They presuppose that the rough date of an early text, together with the probable identity of its author, can be inferred on the basis of its content;
- 2) If they can prove that the real author matches the purported one, then this will suffice to claim that the target text is an authentic piece;
- 3) If the text is proved to be authentic, then the inferred date of the text will be regard as the correct one;
- 4) If all of the previous steps of reasoning are justified, then the date of each individual chapter of the text should be in accordance with that of the whole text.<sup>43</sup>

One of the crucial points not recognized by these pre-modern *bianwei* scholars is the compositional nature of early Chinese texts. When discussing about the transmitted early texts that have manuscript counterparts, William Boltz writes, “the transmitted texts will typically show themselves to be constructed out of individual textual units of about a ‘paragraph’ in length,” where he describes these textual units as “building blocks.”<sup>44</sup> Boltz demonstrates that the production of texts in the pre-Han and early Han time “could have consisted as much in the (re)assembling and (re)ordering of the building-block

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<sup>42</sup> Li Ling 1988, 105. Zheng Liangshu uses a similar term *guji shidai kao* 古籍時代考 (“Investigation of the Chronology of Ancient Chinese Texts”) to refer to such kind of investigation, see Zheng Liangshu 2001, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Li Ling 1988, 105.

<sup>44</sup> Boltz 2005, 58.

passages as in the actual composing of new material.”<sup>45</sup> The aforementioned modern Chinese scholars, i.e., Yu Jiaxi, Zheng Liangshu, and Li Ling, have also recognized the compositional nature of early texts, although their conclusions were phrased differently. Now this compositional nature is generally accepted by other Chinese scholars who work on early texts, and can be briefly concluded as follow:<sup>46</sup>

- 1) Most (if not all) early Chinese texts were circulated in the form of an individual paragraph, either titled or untitled (supported by archaeological evidence).
- 2) A text of multiple chapters is usually a compilation of individual textual units with various origins.
- 3) The exact constituents of those texts of multiple chapters were not stabilized at one time or during that era, i.e., the texts had kept the fluidity.

It is precisely because of this compositional nature of early texts that the question of “whether or not the real date of an early text matches its claimed date” becomes almost unanswerable since this requires that one treats A) the compilation date of a text, and B) the creation date of each individual chapter of this text as two separate subject matters. When one investigates the real date (as opposed to the claimed date) of a text, the way that the question is framed does not specify which one of the two dates (A and B) it is that one is investigating. For this reason, the second main criterion of the traditional Chinese *bianwei* scholarship, i.e., “the claimed date cannot match the real date,” appears to be problematic, too.

The compilation date of a text might be traceable (such as in the cases of the *Guanzi* and the *Liezi*), whereas the creation date of an individual passage that later

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>46</sup> See Yu Jiaxi 1940, 200-209; Zheng Liangshu 1986, I-IV, 13-17; Li Ling 1988, 110-112.

becomes a part of larger text, in most cases, is almost impossible to be accurately pinned down. The best scenario might be to determine when an individual passage started to circulate. Even in his study of the “Tang wen” chapter of the *Liezi*, Zheng Liangshu was only able to determine that the creation date of the whole chapter was roughly between the late Warring States and the early Western Han, and he is fully aware that this chapter consists of several passages that were individually circulated before they were collected in the “Tang wen.”<sup>47</sup> For the purpose of *bianwei* studies, if we agree that the act of producing a text in early China is analogous to the act of selecting and assembling passages from a reservoir of preexisting materials, we inevitably need to take into consideration the question of when each of those “building blocks” was created, circulated, and transmitted. As a result, the quest of authenticating a text changes from dating a text to dating each compositional unit that a text consists of.

The complexity of the compositional nature of early Chinese texts is not limited to the issue of dating early texts; it also brings about problems with the use of terms such as “additions or interpolations” (*fuyi* 附益). By using such a term, it presupposes the existence of an “original core” of an early text at a certain time point from the Warring States period through the early Han. Additions or interpolations to the “original core” were seen as proof of the early texts being forgeries in the view of traditional *bianwei* scholarship. By contrast, modern scholars treat them as largely inevitable, given how early texts took shape. That is to say, the “original core” was later either added to or interpolated into by different hands, and at different times, until it reached its current form as recorded in the “Yiwen zhi” (if in fact it is included in the “Yiwen zhi” entries at

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<sup>47</sup> Zheng Liangshu 2001, 127.

all). Paul Fischer refers to this kind of accretion theory as “presumptive urtext description”; yet, he argues that such descriptions may not accurately reflect the cases of most early Masters texts (*zishu* 子書). In contrast to the urtext description, Fischer uses the “polymorphous text paradigm” to describe the development of Masters texts and Classics (*jingshu* 經書), whereby these texts are “conceived as fluid entities variously constructed from related but disparate pericopes circulating independently or in diverse editions.”<sup>48</sup> Either using the term “polymorphous text” or using the term “compositional text” as Boltz does, it seems, in Fischer’s view, that the fundamental difference between the polymorphous text paradigm and the urtext theory lies in the way which a received text first took shape.

In the aforementioned example of dating the received text of *Liezi*, Graham attempts to demonstrate that a core part of the “original” *Liezi* must have existed, which received later addition and revision, and eventually became the text in its present form. Although, as Graham has argued, the received *Liezi* and the one mentioned by Liu Xiang in his *Liezi xinshu mulu* 列子新書目錄 (and in the “Yiwen zhi”) might not be the same.<sup>49</sup> This type of application of “accretion to the urtext” theory is also seen in the studies of the textual history of the received *Zhuangzi* 莊子, which is exemplified in Graham’s and

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Fischer 2009, 1-3.

<sup>49</sup> *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen*, 333b-334a. Graham suspects that the *Liezi* of the *Han shu* bibliography disappeared at an early date, and around 285, someone composed a new *Liezi* modeled on Liu Xiang’s account of the original. Not only had this forger incorporated extensive passages from pre-Han and Western Han works down to the period of Liu Xiang, he had also prepared chapters to fit Liu Xiang’s description and worked in examples of the irregular characters mentioned in Liu Xiang’s report. See Graham 1961, 197.

Harold Roth's efforts to sort out 33 chapters of the received *Zhuangzi* into several groups by identifying their respective source text.<sup>50</sup> Roth has even proposed a hypothetical theory of the early textual history of the *Zhuangzi*: "in about 250 B.C., the text consisted of the material now found in the 'inner chapters' and most – if not all – of the 'school of Chuang Tzu' material found in chapters 17-22."<sup>51</sup> Of these studies, only Graham's investigation into the textual history of the *Zhuangzi* is mentioned by Fischer, and is considered by him as an example of inaccurately describing how early Chinese texts were created because of the application of "a modified urtext theory."<sup>52</sup>

But polymorphous text paradigm and urtext theory does not need to be compatible, since it is not impossible that the latter can also accurately describe the process of an early text taking its shape. In addition, it appears to me, with regard to the way that the term urtext is conceptualized, Fischer's urtext differs from Graham's (and Roth's, although the latter two have not used such a term). Fischer's urtext seems to describe an already completed or an integrated text, e.g., a finished book in modern sense, whereas Graham's and Roth's description of the core part (not the "original core") refers to the main passage(s), e.g., the seven "inner chapters" (*neipian* 内篇) in the case of the *Zhuangzi*, which later became one of the many sections of a larger work. Fischer's objection to urtext theory is not wrong; the compositional nature of early texts (or polymorphous text paradigm) especially has gained general consensus as mentioned

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<sup>50</sup> Graham 1979, 459-501; Roth 1991, 77-128; and Roth 2003, 181-219.

<sup>51</sup> Roth 2003, 213.

<sup>52</sup> Fischer 2009, 1-2.

above. Graham's and Roth's approach do not contradict this theory, either; they have explored the question of following what kind of underlying rationale the main passage(s) were grouped together with other "building blocks" – they are usually but not always bound by the similarity of theme, topic, thought, content – and how the main passage(s) and other "building blocks" were eventually put together to constitute a larger work. In other words, both Graham and Roth recognize no "original core" (Fischer's *urtext*) existed before the main passage(s) and other "building blocks" received their final revision in the hands of the Han editors.

The recognition and acceptance of the compositional nature led modern scholars to reassess "presumptive *urtext* description" as being the only path by which early texts took shape. But, more importantly, it also reminds us that the third of the traditional Chinese *bianwei* scholars' criteria, which neglects the possibility of composite text, and treats a text as a forgery if any type of additions or interpolations are detected, shall be removed from the criteria of authenticating the early texts, just as the consideration of authorship was removed in our previous discussion.

### **I. 5. Editorial efforts**

The fluidity of early Chinese texts is not restricted only to their formative stage. It can be reasonably conjectured that, during two millennia of the transmission, changes, alterations, and omissions – ranging from few characters to passage-long textual units – were deliberately made because of editorial bias, let alone those inadvertent mistakes such as scribal errors in copying manuscripts or wrongly selected types in printing due to graphical similarity among different characters. These changes made to the texts were sometimes intended to hide or distort certain content or information. But, in other cases,

the changes could also be an endeavor by a scholar from a later generation to rediscover the “real” knowledge from the previous misunderstanding, or to “correct errors” made by mindless copyists. For a considerable number of early texts, the oftentimes enigmatic history of their transmission could be comparable to the fate of some of Tao Yuanming’s 陶淵明 (365?-427) poems. By discussing the celebrated Song 宋 scholar Su Shi’s 蘇軾 (1037-1101) attempt of showing what kind of person Su’s beloved Eastern Jin 東晉 poet Tao Yuanming “really” was, Tian Xiaofei tries to demonstrate that Su Shi’s very understanding of Tao “could have come only from those imperfect manuscript copies of his (Tao’s) works, passed on to Su Shi by many generations of scribes, editors, and compliers. In order to arrive at the true, uncorrupted image of the beloved earlier poet, Su Shi would have to make corrections to those ‘bad’ manuscript copies.”<sup>53</sup> Although the case of Su Shi’s reworking of manuscript copies of Tao’s poetry bears no direct relation to the study of the early texts, it suffices to serve as a reminder that the early Chinese texts might have endured similar treatment during their transmission. Together with Tian Xiaofei’s book, two other studies on medieval Chinese manuscripts and manuscript culture by Christopher Nugent, and by Ding Xiang Warner, respectively, may shed some light on our understanding of the editorial efforts that were applied to the early texts.<sup>54</sup>

In her study on the textual problems of Wang Tong’s 王通 (ca. 584-617) *Zhongshuo* 中說, Ding Xiang Warner points out that, although throughout the history of *bianwei* scholarship the debate over the authenticity of *Zhongshuo* has never lost its

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<sup>53</sup> Tian Xiaofei 2005, 5.

<sup>54</sup> Nugent 2010; also Warner 2014.

fervor, scholars on both sides of this debate have oversimplified the problem by treating the received text either as the genuine work of Wang Tong's or as a forgery by someone else. What they have overlooked is, as Warner writes, "the received text [*Zhongshuo*]...does not reflect a one-time composition or corruption by a single individual or even a single group of contemporaries, as has been supposed previously, but rather a gradual process of accumulative editorial interventions."<sup>55</sup> Acknowledging such fluidity in its textual history enables Warner to account for the *Zhongshuo*'s textual features: "not as layers corresponding to discrete stages of its transformation in time, but as strands appealing to the interests of different constituencies among the *Zhongshuo*'s various readers, copyists, and editors."<sup>56</sup> Here the theoretical underpinning adopted by Warner is no longer the theory that "the business of textual criticism is to produce a text as close as possible to the original (*constitution textus*)" by working backwards from extant materials to recreate an author's intended version of the texts, as initiated and represented by Karl Lachmann (1793-1851) and other "Lachmannian";<sup>57</sup> instead, she aligns herself with the perspective of modern textual theorists, who recognize that "texts are not merely vehicles of an author's original writings but (quoting Boyd) 'social

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>57</sup> Maas 1958, 1.

documents whose variance is thoroughly grounded in modes of re-production, dissemination, and interpretive practice.”<sup>58</sup>

Warner’s description of those different individuals who engaged with an imagined Wang Tong was termed by Nugent as “collaborative authorship.”<sup>59</sup> He argues that collaborative authorship was the norm for literati of the Tang dynasty, though he does not specifically mention the case of Wang Tong’s *Zhongshuo*. In Nugent’s view, the works of Tang literati had embarked a similar path as the *Zhongshuo* did: at the very moment when the poem or any other kinds of literary writings left the hands of their author(s), the author(s) lost their control over the work. Readers, editors, compilers, and scribes all contributed to the emergence of a received text.<sup>60</sup> A similar conclusion is reached by Tian Xiaofei in her study of the manuscript culture in the Southern and Northern dynasties 南北朝 as well, as she writes: “to the degree that they were engaged in the production of manuscript copies by copying, editing, altering, and revising, we are no longer talking about the readers’ reception of a stable text, but about the readers’ dynamic participation in the very process of creating a text that is essentially protean.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Warner 2014, 9. Here Warner refers the modern textual theorists to scholars such as Jerome McGann, D.F. McKenzie, D.C. Greetham, and David Lorenzo Boyd. See *ibid.*, n.18; the bibliographical information of pertinent works are also provided.

<sup>59</sup> Nugent 2010, 13-14. In fact, the notion “collaborative authorship” mentioned in Nugent’s book originally comes from Susan Cherniack’s article “Book Culture and Textual Transmission in Sung China,” in which the same notion was described by Cherniack as being capable of characterizing traditional Chinese textual transmission, see Cherniack 1994, 5-18.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>61</sup> Tian Xiaofei 2005, 8.

The textual problem of Tao Yuanming's poetry, of the *Zhongshuo*, and of some other literary pieces of the Tang as identified by Tian, Warner, and Nugent never stands alone in the book history of China. It might not be unreasonable to surmise that early Chinese texts in large numbers have undergone long periods of fluidity as these writings have. Every single individual who was involved in the history of transmission might have had his or her impact on the text before its stabilization, no matter whether these impacts were driven either by honorable intention or by venal motivation. Moreover, even if a text was circulated in a relatively stabilized condition, it may have undergone editorial efforts in its later transmission as well. Such phenomena can be observed in those deliberate alterations done by the compilers of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, which were made into the text of a Ming edition *Chonggu wenjue* 崇古文訣.

The *Chonggu wenjue* is a collection of over two hundred literary essays that contains pieces composed by literati from the Qin down to the Southern Song 南宋. This collection was compiled and annotated on by a Southern Song scholar named Lou Fang 樓昉 (fl. 1193). Except for its inclusion in the *Siku quanshu*, the *Chonggu wenjue* has always been circulated and transmitted on its own, and has never been included in other *congshu* 叢書 type collections.<sup>62</sup> According to Zhang Zhihua's 張智華 study, the received texts of the *Chonggu wenjue* can be categorized into three "lineages" (*xitong* 系統), i.e., 5 *juan* 卷, 20 *juan*, and 35 *juan*, and the *Siku quanshu* edition of the *Chonggu*

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<sup>62</sup> Regarding the information of editions of the *Chonggu wenjue*, see Zhang Zhihua 2001.

*wenjue* belongs to the 35 *juan* “lineage.”<sup>63</sup> After almost 900 years of transmission since its first compilation, unfortunately, now the *Siku quanshu* edition has become the one most frequently used and most widely known. This might be due to the fact that all of other received editions are now treated as rare books (*shanben* 善本) and preserved in the special collection of various libraries.<sup>64</sup> The Gest Collection of the East Asia Library in Princeton University holds two 35 *juan* Ming dynasty-printed editions (*ming keben* 明刻本) of the *Chonggu wenjue*, which are titled *Xinkan Yuzhai xiansheng biao zhu Chonggu wenjue sanshiwu juan* 新刊迂齋先生標註崇古文訣三十五卷 (hereafter *Xinkan P*), and *Yuzhai xiansheng biao zhu Chonggu wenjue sanshiwu juan* 迂齋先生標註崇古文訣三十五卷, respectively.<sup>65</sup> Although both of them belong to Zhang Zhihua’s 35 *juan* “lineage,” the latter one is surmised to have been published by Wang Hongjian 王鴻漸 (1462-?), whereas the *Xinkan P*’s subtitle indicates that it was collated and published by Wu

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<sup>63</sup> Wei Qianqian 尉倩倩 disagrees with Zhang’s conclusion by suggesting the existence of a 10 *juan* “lineage” in the Southern Song. But she does not provide any reference for her claim, see Wei Qianqian 2015, 134.

<sup>64</sup> Most of these rare books are preserved in libraries in Mainland China. But libraries in Taiwan, Japan, and United States hold some rare editions too, see Shen Jin 1999, 542-543. It seems that neither Zhang Zhihua nor Wei Qianqian is aware of the existence of those editions preserved in Japan and United States.

<sup>65</sup> For all the photos of the *Xinkan P* that are used in this study, I am grateful to Ms. Luo Yiyi 羅奕奕 (Princeton University), who helped to borrow this particular copy of the text from the Gest Collection and to take all the photos.

Bangzhen 吳邦楨 (fl. 1553) and his brother Wu Bangjie 吳邦杰 (n.d.).<sup>66</sup> It is the *Xinkan* P that has aroused our special attention, since multiple cases of alteration and deletion can be clearly observed in its text (see Figure 1). According to Qu Wanli 屈萬里, the compilers of the *Siku quanshu* are believed to be responsible for these changes, and this *Xinkan* P might have once had served as the master copy (*diben* 底本) of the *Siku quanshu* edition.<sup>67</sup> In order to better understand, from the *Xinkan* P to the received *Siku quanshu* edition, 1) what characters were changed, and 2) possibly, why these particular characters were changed, it calls for a character-by-character comparison between these two editions.

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<sup>66</sup> The subtitle reads “Collated and corrected by the junior scholar Wu Bangzhen and Wu Bangjie of Songling” 松陵後學吳邦楨吳邦杰校正. Qu Wanli 1975, 494-495.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Yet, it is worth including another Ming dynasty-printed copy of the *Chonggu wenjue* to the comparison. This one, titled *Xinkan Yuzhai xiansheng biao zhu Chonggu wenjue sanshiwu juan* as well, is preserved in the Harvard-Yenching Library in Harvard University (hereafter *Xinkan H*).<sup>68</sup> Its same subtitle as the *Xinkan P*'s also affords us the information that it was collated and published by the Wu brothers.<sup>69</sup> A page-to-page comparison between the *Xinkan P* and *Xinkan H* (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) suggests that,

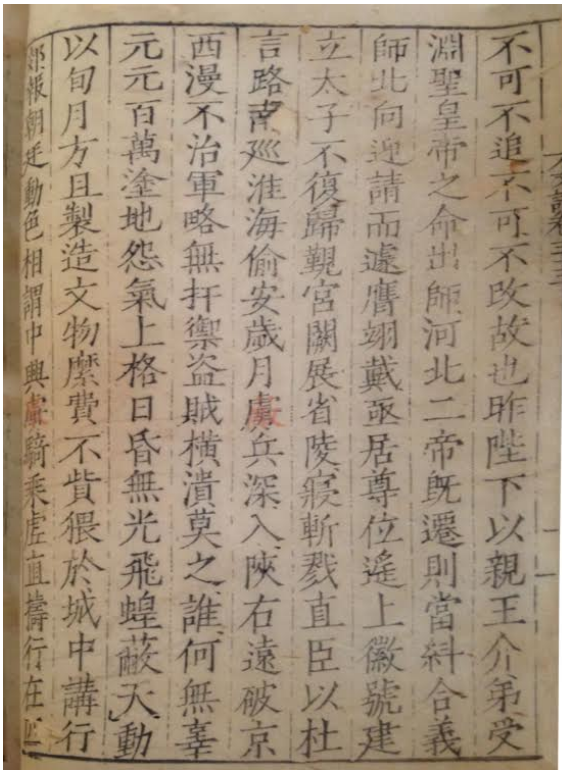


Figure 1, *Xinkan P*, 1b;

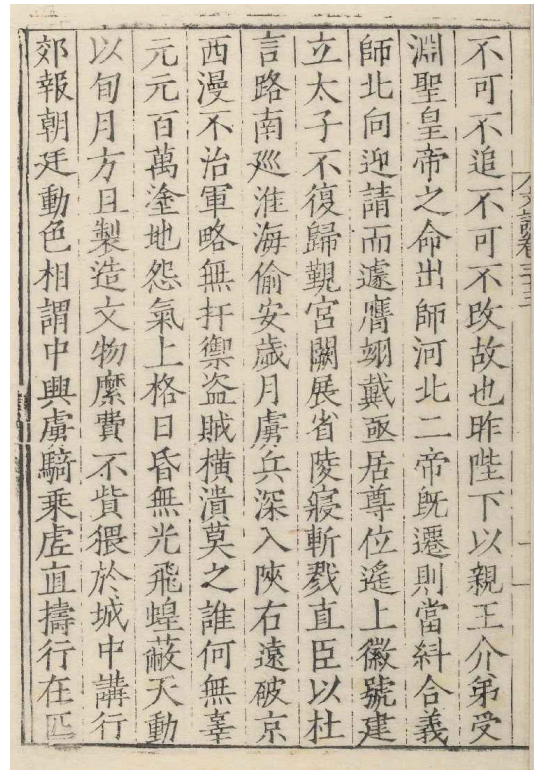


Figure 2, *Xinkan H*, 1b;

<sup>68</sup> All the photos of the *Xinkan H* were professionally scanned and uploaded to the website of the Chinese Text Project, which can be accessed at: <http://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=94196>.

<sup>69</sup> Shen Jin 1999, 542.

besides the changes visible in the former, each page of these two copies is identical with regard to their content. On the basis of this result, along with Zhang Zhihua's study of the editions and *juan* "lineages" of the *Chonggu wenjue*, it will not be unreasonable to infer that the *Xinkan P* and *Xinkan H* are two copies of the same print, while the latter remained untouched by the later editors.<sup>70</sup>

Based on my examination of *juan* 33 of the *Xinkan P*, *Xinkan H*, and the *Siku quanshu* edition, the changes made to the text can be categorized into four types:<sup>71</sup>

- (I) Alteration of character(s);
- (II) Deletion of characters(s);
- (III) Filling in a blank portion that is supposed to have character(s);
- (IV) Rewriting stroke(s) on unclear (but still recognizable) character(s).

These four types of changes were used for three possible purposes:

- 1) To replace words with negative connotations with more neutral words;
- 2) To correct mistakenly used character(s) on the basis of the compilers' judgment, without altering the meaning;
- 3) To make unclear character(s) more legible, and to provide missing character(s).

Except for the fourth type of change, which was exclusively aimed at making unclear parts of the text legible in order to help the text to be read more easily, all the other types of changes had all been used by *Siku quanshu* editors to replace the wording seen in the

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<sup>70</sup> Zhang Zhihua 2001, 125-126.

<sup>71</sup> The *Siku quanshu* edition used here was printed by Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan 台灣商務印書館 in 1976, which is a photoreprint of the Wenyuan ge 文淵閣 copy.

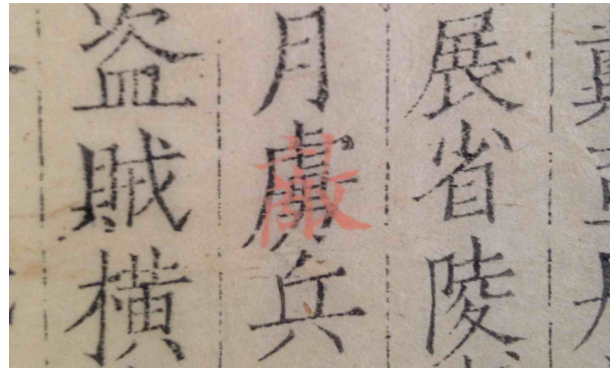
*Xinkan* P that is unfriendly to the Jurchen ethnic group. All the examples (excluding repeated ones) of changes that were made for such a purpose are listed as follows:

Example Number	<i>Xinkan</i> H, <i>juan</i> 33	<i>Xinkan</i> P, <i>juan</i> 33	<i>Siku quanshu</i> edition, <i>juan</i> 33
1	虜, 1b, ‘outlanders’	虜 > 敵, 1b, I	敵, 1b, ‘enemy’
2	賊, 3b, ‘bandit’	賊 > 人, 3b, I	人, 3b, ‘people’
3	貪狄, 5b, ‘greedy barbarians’	敵人, 5b, II & III	敵人, 5b, ‘enemy’
4	北狄, 5b, ‘northern barbarians’	契丹, 5b, II & III	契丹, 5b, ‘Khitan’
5	酋虜, 8b, ‘leader of outlanders’	酋虜 > 首虜, 8b, I	首級, 8b, ‘human head’
6	胡虜, 12b, ‘barbarians’	群雄, 12b, II & III	群雄, 13a, ‘various powerful entities’
7	讎虜, 15a, ‘hostile barbarians’	讎虜 > 敵人, 15a, I	敵人, 15a, ‘enemy’
8	夷狄, 16a, ‘crude barbarians’	敵國, 16a, II & III	敵國, 16a, ‘enemy state’
9	虜, 20b, ‘barbarians’	遠, 20b, II & III	遠, 20b, ‘distant’
10	虜, 22b, ‘barbarians’	虜 > 恥, 22b, I	恥, 23a, ‘humiliation’
11	胡, 23b, ‘barbarians’	胡 > 拜, 23b, I	拜, 23b, ‘to bow’
12	虜, 23b, ‘barbarians’	Blank, 23b, II	敵, 23b, ‘enemy’
13	夷狄, 23b, ‘crude barbarians’	Blank, 23b, II	敵國, 23b, ‘enemy state’

In example 1, in the *Xinkan* H, *juan* 33 column, 虜 indicates that it is the character 虜 that appears on the respective copy, whereas the following 1b indicates that the character can be found on page 1b. The English translation in quotation marks reflects my conjecture of possibly how the *Siku quanshu* editors would conceptualize the word

represented by the character 虜. In our current case, the word *lū* 虜 might be understood as ‘outlanders.’<sup>72</sup> The same format was applied to the content in the *Siku quanshu* edition, *juan* 33 column.

In the *Xinkan P*, *juan* 33 column, 虜 > 敵 indicates that the character 虜 was altered to the character 敵, and the change is in fact still visible on the *Xinkan P* copy (see Figure 3). The following 1b in the same cell shows the page number, whereas the Roman numeral I shows that the current change belongs to the first of the previously discussed four types of changes. In *juan* 33 of the *Xinkan P*, there are two ways of altering a character: either writing the new character directly on top of the original one (in red or black ink), or writing the new character (in red ink) next to the original one (with a red dot marked on the original character, e.g., example 11, see Figure 4).



**Figure 3, example1, *Xinkan P*, 1b;**

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<sup>72</sup> Kroll 2015 was consulted for all the English translations.

委將相曰君王尚且畏避何以責我守城民心  
為虛邑必曰君王尚且畏避何以責我守城民心  
觀此安能久忍而無變亂若不望風胡跪以事  
必將推賢擇能以自保治陳勝吳廣因民不忍  
已劉項乘之秦遂滅亡者蓋本於此古人稱中興  
之治者曰撥亂世反之正秦不正而甚亂漢高祖

為虛邑必曰君王尚且畏避何以責我守城民心  
觀此安能久忍而無變亂若不望風胡跪以事夷  
狄必將推賢擇能以自保治陳勝吳廣因民不忍  
而劉項乘之秦遂滅亡者蓋本於此古人稱中興  
之治者曰撥亂世反之正秦不正而甚亂漢高祖

Figure 4, example 11, 12, and 13, same part of the text on page 23b of the *Xinkan P* (left), and of the *Xinkan H* (right);

Sometimes characters on the *Xinkan P* were erased by using certain techniques,

leaving a blank on the page. Even without the comparison to the other two copies, this deletion is still discernable on the *Xinkan* P. The blank will either be left as it is (e.g., example 12, Figure 4), or be filled with new characters (e.g., example 3, Figure 5). Apparently, these new characters are handwritten forms, which can be distinguished without difficulty from other printed characters on the page. In either case, readers are able to know what deleted characters were thanks to the *Xinkan* H.

With regard to its content, the essay preserved in this *juan* 33 is Hu Yin's 胡寅 (1098-1156) petition "Shang huangdi wanyan shu" 上皇帝萬言書, which was submitted to Emperor Gaozong 高宗 of the Southern Song (Zhao Gou 趙構, 1107-1187; r. 1127-1162) in the year of 1129.<sup>73</sup> One of the central themes

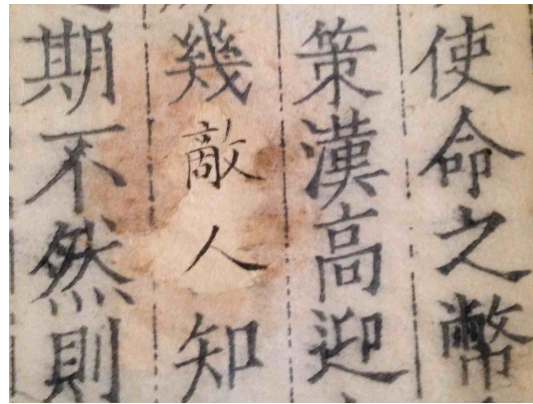


Figure 5, example 3, *Xinkan* P, 5b;

of Hu's petition is to urge Emperor Gaozong to launch military campaigns against the Jurchen Jin 金 empire in order to recover the territory lost to the latter. As a member of the Han group (*hanren* 漢人), it would not be odd to find that Hu Yin refers to the Jurchen people by using the pejorative terms listed in the table above. About six centuries later, the group of the scholars who compiled the *Siku quanshu*, undertook the task of editing and collating the collected books under the supervision of the Qing ruling house, who viewed itself as the successor of the Jin.<sup>74</sup> As might be expected, the current imperial

<sup>73</sup> *Song shi*, 435.12916.

<sup>74</sup> *Qing shi gao*, 1.1.

family would not tolerate any derogatory epithets referring to their alleged ancestor, the Jurchen people. Consequently, such wording was replaced, mostly by synonyms without negative connotations, in the process of compiling the *Siku quanshu*.<sup>75</sup>

Scholars and readers of the present time will frequently turn to the *Siku quanshu* if they are seeking a standard edition of a certain pre-modern work. Especially for those who have never been trained in textual studies, or those who are not aware of the differences among various editions, the *Siku quanshu* edition of their target text might even be considered the only standard one. In the case of the *Chonggu wenjue*, since all of the previously individually circulated and transmitted editions are now rare books and “concealed” in special collections, the *Siku quanshu* edition is the most easily accessible.<sup>76</sup> These popular or even preferred editions frequently bear the changes that were made either intentionally or inadvertently during their sometimes hundreds of years of transmission, which might have already influenced the reception of the text among later generations.<sup>77</sup> These changes, most of which remain undetectable in the received editions, might be revealed when a manuscript version is discovered. Even the changes

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<sup>75</sup> It seems the changes that were made to the *juan 33* of the *Chonggu wenjue*, were executed at different time, and by multiple editors of the *Siku quanshu*. Because no unified standard can be observed while the same type of changes were made; and more importantly, at least two different sets of handwritten characters that were intended for altering the original printed characters can be found, which have distinct features in regard to their own graphic form.

<sup>76</sup> The exception is that the *Xinkan* H on the Chinese Text Project can easily be accessed by general public without any cost.

<sup>77</sup> For example, thanks to the manuscript version, scholars are now aware that the received text of the *Laozi* 老子 that now accompanies Wang Bi's 王弼 (226-249) commentary cannot be regarded as the *Laozi* that Wang Bi himself had seen and commented on. See Boltz 1985.

that can be discerned in the transmitted printed copies, such as the ones in the *Chonggu wenju* as discussed above, might not be significant enough to contemporary scholars and readers who are more concerned about content, such as themes, rather than the nuance of the wording. Nevertheless, the aforementioned case of the changes observed in the *Xinkan P* can serve as a reminder to the scholars that any so-called standard edition or preferred edition of early Chinese texts could have gone through a similar editorial process as well, and one could anticipate that the concealed and distorted information in these texts might be revealed one day when more previously unseen materials become available.

## I. 6. Motives

In the preceding discussion (I. 3), the term *pseudepigrapha* was borrowed from the Jewish religious text tradition to describe those early Chinese texts that were falsely ascribed to one or multiple authors. Using terminology that evolved from an alien culture to describe the phenomena seen in the context of early Chinese text might be considered unnecessary, but Western scholarship on *pseudepigrapha* and literary forgery may help us delve into the nature and possible motives of the inauthentic texts that appeared in early China. In his 1971 Presidential Address at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Bruce M. Metzger made a clear distinction between the definitions of *pseudepigrapha* and literary forgery:

“A **literary forgery** is essentially a piece of work created or modified with the intention to deceive. Accordingly, not all **pseudepigrapha** (that is, works wrongly attributed to authors) are to be regarded as forgeries. In the case of genuine forgery (if the oxymoron may be permitted) the attribution must be made with the calculated attempt to deceive. This consideration excludes from the category of literary forgeries both the copy made in good faith for purposes of study and the large class of writings that, in the course of their descent from antiquity, have become associated with the name of some classical author or

Father of the Church.”<sup>78</sup>

Similar to Metzger’s definition, the entry for *literary forgery* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* reads, “a piece of work created or modified with an intention to deceive,” whereas the entry for *pseudepigrapha* in the OED reads, “books or writings bearing a false title, or ascribed to another than the true author.”<sup>79</sup> These two definitions remind us that deceitful intention is the fundamental disparity that distinguishes pseudepigraphic works from literary forgeries. Moreover, despite the fact that neither Metzger nor the *Encyclopædia Britannica* offers a definitive description for “a piece of work,” it is not unreasonable to assume this piece of work is a literary work, since the given context is literary forgery. As for the word *literary* in the term *literary forgery*, it shall be perceived in its broadest terms to refer to any written texts. In his speech, Metzger then went on to share his opinion about some of the chief motives that prompted the production of literary forgeries and pseudepigrapha in the ancient past of the western world.<sup>80</sup> In my opinion, the majority of motives summarized by Metzger appear to be comparable with some of the possible motives of the inauthentic texts that appeared in early China. Though, one has to admit that, it is often difficult to detect, let alone to pinpoint what motives gave rise to inauthentic texts. The following chart is a revised list of the motives from

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<sup>78</sup> Metzger 1972, 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, XIV: 104-5; also *The Oxford English Dictionary*, XII: 740.

<sup>80</sup> Metzger 1972, 5-12.

Metzger's summary, all of which might be applicable to the discussion of both literary forgeries and inauthentic texts in early China:<sup>81</sup>

Motives for literary forgery:

- 1) One of the most common motives in the production of literary forgeries has been the desire for financial gain.
- 2) Literary forgeries were perpetrated in the interest of securing greater credence for certain doctrines and claims. Spurious works have been produced to exalt or denigrate some religions, parties, or races.
- 3) Literary forgery is a convenient method of launching vitriolic attacks or attempting to mold public opinion, and, occasionally, a literary fraud was motivated by pure malice.
- 4) Literary forgeries were produced as hoaxes.

Motives for pseudepigrapha (inauthentic texts in the case of early China)

- 1) Speeches that ancient historians, Greek as well as Roman, were accustomed to put into the mouths of their *dramatis personae*. These are either wholly fictitious or at best but a reflex of what was, in the writer's knowledge or belief, actually said upon certain occasions. A significant number of comparable cases will easily be found in those early Chinese texts that haven been falsely attributed to ancient sages or famed philosophers.
- 2) Love and respect are often the motives that prompted the production of pseudonymous works, especially writings by the disciples of a certain school that have been frequently attributed to the masters and teachers of that school.
- 3) Diffidence has often been a prime motive, which has led writers to issue works under assumed names. A similar kind of motive is modesty, which, whether real or alleged, has occasionally been regarded as an incentive in the production of pseudepigraphic works.
- 4) Various fortuitous and mechanical accidents of copying account for the origin of several pseudepigrapha.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.; also Haywood 1987, 8-9. Also see Zhang Xincheng 1939, 1: 4, for a brief summary of potential causes of producing literary forgeries (*zuowei zhi yuanyin* 作偽之原因).

For both literary forgeries and pseudepigrapha, Metzger has also cautioned us that “various compositions were attributed to important figures of antiquity. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between deliberate forgery and convenient assignment of anonymous works to authors under whose influence they were written.”<sup>82</sup> One ought to be aware that the motives listed above are never meant to be all-encompassing, since motives are complex phenomena, often unrecoverable, and nearly always mixed. In addition, unlike many of the examples raised in Metzger 1972, Haywood 1987, and Grafton 1990, in which cases the evidence had been recovered by later generations of scholars so as to allow an inquiry into the motives of either literary forgeries or pseudepigraphic works, the study of early Chinese texts routinely suffer from a lack of contextual information about the person(s) who composed, compiled, edited or revised the text. Moreover, the notion of authorship itself in early China might be described as irrelevant, since the narrowly defined author is a vague and problematic notion in that context, while the approach of *author-function* does not pertain to a considerable number of early Chinese texts because of their ancientness and classicality.<sup>83</sup> Even if one could surmise or deduce the motive of an alleged forger, for instance, in spite of the general consensus that the so-called transmitted “Old Text” documents of the *Shang shu* (*Guwen Shang shu* 古文尚書) are forgeries by Mei Ze 梅賾 (fl. 4<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.), Mei’s real motive cannot be sufficiently explained.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Metzger 1972, 10.

<sup>83</sup> See the detailed discussion in section I. 3.

<sup>84</sup> For the discussion about the *Guwen Shang shu*, see Shaughnessy 1993, 384-385; also Nylan 1995; also Nylan 2001, 120-167.

## II. Methods and arguments for authenticating transmitted texts

### II. 1. Methods and arguments

In the first chapter I examined the criteria for authenticating early Chinese texts. All traditional Chinese *bianwei* scholars advocated that one ought to consider three aspects of a text, the author(s), the date, and additions or interpolations, when authenticating a text.<sup>85</sup> Then, by what means have those scholars approached the three aspects of the early texts? What kind of reasons have they offered to justify their conclusions? In this chapter I will conduct a concise survey of the methods and arguments that have been used in connection with authenticating transmitted texts.

Paul Fischer has examined the contributions of seventeen pre-modern and modern scholars, whose works are directly relevant to the evolution of what Fischer calls “Authentication studies” (*bianwei xue* 辨偽學) methodology.<sup>86</sup> Since his article has already presented a rather comprehensive picture of the development of *bianwei* studies, recapitulating the entire history of this field of study would be redundant; instead, in this chapter I will focus on the way that methods and arguments are conceptualized. The former refers to a system of methods used in authenticating a text, whereas the latter refers to a reason or a set of reasons given by a *bianwei* scholar to justify his conclusion. Therefore, conducting a grammatical analysis of an early text, as proposed by Bernhard Karlgren, is a method, whereas using this method of grammatical analysis to demonstrate that the grammatical system of a text has certain peculiarities, which could not easily be

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<sup>85</sup> Zheng Liangshu 1990, 246.

<sup>86</sup> Fischer 2009, 1-43.

imagined and imitated by a forger of later times, is an argument.<sup>87</sup> In his article, Fischer does not discuss the *bianwei* methods in detail, but he does provide a summary of the arguments that have been used previously. He concludes that these arguments can usually take one of the following seven forms:

- 1) “anachronism,” whereby the text records a thing or event that existed or happened after the death of the attributed author;
- 2) “unworthiness,” whereby some or all of the content is deemed unbecoming the attributed author;
- 3) “incongruity,” whereby a portion of the text is adjudged inconsistent with another portion of the same text;
- 4) “quotational disparity,” whereby a passage in the received text does not match its quotation in another text; this argument includes “quotational absence” and “quotational variance”;
- 5) “precedence,” whereby a previously established idea or phrase is used without attribution; this argument includes “quotational precedence” and “intellectual precedence”
- 6) “sudden appearance,” whereby a text attributed to a certain time period does not appear in the historical record until much later.
- 7) “not matching a description,” whereby the work in question does not match a description given it in another work.<sup>88</sup>

In order to encompass some other frequently used arguments, in my view, two new categories might be added to Fischer’s original seven:

- 8) “falsely attributed authorship,” whereby the text in question has been falsely attributed to someone;<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See Karlgren 1929, 176-183.

<sup>88</sup> These seven forms of arguments were quoted from Fischer 2009, 4.

<sup>89</sup> See Fischer 2009, 3. Fischer has indeed mentioned this type of argument, but he takes it as a consideration of the type that an inauthentic text belongs to, instead of being an argument. His categories for inauthentic texts are:

9) “previously proven to be forged,” whereby the text in question had already been proven to be forged by previous scholarship; or the text in question comprises passage(s) from previously proven forged texts.

This rather thorough list itself is only meant to encapsulate the typical categories of arguments. It does not suggest that either Fischer or the current chapter has approved the validity and effectiveness of all the arguments of which the list consists. The following discussion will make use of such a list to ascertain whether the arguments raised in previous *bianwei* scholarship can be revised or supplemented. Moreover, I also hope to sketch a succinct outline of the frequently used methods, since Fischer’s article in some cases falls short in separating the methods from the arguments. During this process, special attention will be drawn to the “theoreticians” who have contributed to *bianwei* methods and arguments. Conversely, the “practitioners” and their monographs that examine the authenticity of specific early texts will not be scrutinized here. Although quite a few Qing philologists and Republican era *Gushi bian* 古史辨 (“School of Doubting Antiquity”) scholars gained their great reputations through investigations of various early texts, such as Yan Ruoqu 閻若璩 (1636-1704) and his influential work on the “Old Text” documents of the *Shang shu*, *Shang shu guwen shuzheng* 尚書古文疏證, the current discussion has no intention of evaluating their conclusions. Undoubtedly,

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1) “ascribed text,” wherein the name of a person who is not the real author has been arrogated to the text, usually to lend prestige;

2) “multiple-author text,” wherein only one author is traditionally acknowledged but textual criticism reveals the hands of other authors;

3) “redacted text,” wherein an author relies wholly or mostly on sources of which he is not the author.

sometimes the theoreticians” and “practitioner” happen to be the same person. For instance, the Ming dynasty *bianwei* scholar Hu Yinglin was renowned for both his systematically methodological approach to authentication and his rigorous examination of specific texts; it is the former that will be examined in this chapter.<sup>90</sup> Ultimately, I hope the careful consideration of the methods and arguments that have been used in the discussion of transmitted texts can find its application in the course of authenticating excavated texts.

## II. 2. *Bianwei* studies before systemization

As mentioned in the first chapter, it is a common practice to trace the *bianwei* tradition all the way back to Han times, particularly to the “Yiwen zhi” of the *Han shu*, in which the “substance” of Liu Xiang’s *Bie lu* and Liu Xin’s *Qi lüe* has been preserved. But the initial stage of *bianwei* studies can be viewed as a byproduct of either the “Study of Catalogues” (*mulu xue* 目錄學), or the hermeneutic tradition of the Masters texts and Classics. For the latter, it was not an uncommon practice during this time for commentators of the Masters texts and Classics to say something about a work’s authenticity in their commentaries. For instance, Ma Rong’s 馬融 (99-166) suspicion of the “Tai shi” 泰誓 chapter of the *Shang shu* being an incomplete reconstruction, or a fabrication, has been articulated in his *Shang shu zhuan xu* 尚書傳序.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Both of which can be found in Hu Yinglin’s *Sibu zheng’e*, 28-76.

<sup>91</sup> Fischer 2009, 10-11; also Zheng Liangshu 1986, 69-70.

The brief annotations incorporated in the entries of the “Yiwen zhi” do not seem to be meant to serve the purpose of text authentication. This can be seen in the following entry:

“*Yi yin shuo*, twenty-seven *pian*. Its wording is shallow and superficial, and it seems to be [incorrectly] ascribed to [Yi yin].”  
伊尹說二十七篇其語淺薄似依託也。<sup>92</sup>

Whoever wrote this annotation (most likely, Liu Xiang) noticed the peculiar wording of the *Yi yin shuo* and commented on it. Yet, to claim that annotation’s writer’s intention was to authenticate the text of *Yi yin shuo* would be a stretch. It appears that the way in which an entry and its annotation were organized in the “Yiwen zhi” is comparable to that of a modern-day annotated bibliography, which frequently reflects the annotator’s critical thinking. The brief annotation, “its wording is shallow and superficial, and it seems to be [incorrectly] ascribed to [X]” 其語淺薄似依託也, can be viewed as a *bianwei* argument. According to Fischer’s list, this one belongs to the category of “argument from unworthiness.” The content of the *Yi yin shuo* was deemed unbecoming the conventionally recognized author in the view of the annotation’s writer.

Although the number of *bianwei* arguments was quite limited during Han times, other examples are not rarely found in the “Yiwen zhi.” For example, a type of argument that has been frequently used was “anachronism.” The following entry offers a good example:

“*Da Yu*, thirty-seven *pian*. Traditionally said to be composed by Yu, its writing appears to be the words of later generations.”  
大令三十七篇傳言禹所作其文似後世語。<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Han shu*, 30.1744.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.1740.

This argument points out that the words of the text does not fit its contemporaneous sayings; hence the language recorded in this text arose after the death of the alleged author.

In several other “Yiwen zhi” entries we find instances of annotation using either “unworthiness” or “anachronism” to argue against the authenticity of a text.<sup>94</sup> From Han through Tang, certainly there were a few more different arguments used in the writings in which the *bianwei* concepts can be observed. Yet, this period sees no scholar who either used a variety of arguments within one work systematically to analyze the issue of the authenticity of a text, or to reflect upon the validity and effectiveness of the methods used in the arguments. This might be due to the fact that the *bianwei* methodology had not yet divorced itself from being an appendage of the “Study of Catalogues,” or of the hermeneutic tradition of the Masters texts and Classics. Writings devoted exclusively to examining the authenticity of texts did not emerge until the time of Liu Zongyuan, who, in a series of essays, examined seven purportedly pre-Qin Masters texts: the *Liezi*, *Wenzi* 文子, *Lun yu*, *Guiguzi* 鬼谷子, *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, *Kangcangzi* 亢倉子, and *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子.<sup>95</sup> Liu’s works touched on issues that are pertinent to the date, author, and nature of the text. Yet, it was not until the Ming dynasty that the *bianwei* discourse became a full-fledged and relatively independent field of study, and writings that aimed to reflect on the *bianwei* methods and arguments finally arrived. This systemization of

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<sup>94</sup> Zheng Liangshu 1986, 1-2.

<sup>95</sup> *Liu Zongyuan ji*, 4.107-116.

*bianwei* studies is conventionally viewed as represented by the writings of two Ming scholars, i.e., Song Lian's *Zhuzi bian* and Hu Yinglin's *Sibu zheng'e*.<sup>96</sup>

### II. 3. Methods and arguments: from Hu Yinglin to Liang Qichao

As traditionally recognized, the two major contributions made by Hu Yinglin's *Sibu zheng'e* are categorizing forged texts (*weishu* 偽書) to twenty-one "situations" (*qingzhuang* 情狀), and providing the guidelines for how to analyze these texts.<sup>97</sup>

Unfortunately, Hu's list of twenty-one "situations" does not distinguish between types of forged texts, criteria for authentication, forgers' motives, in what way forged texts were made, or arguments for authentication, which makes the list somewhat of a hodgepodge.<sup>98</sup> This might be due to the fact that systematically laying out the methods and arguments that can be used to discern forged texts was never Hu's intention. Instead, as described by Peter Bol, "Hu is alert to all the various ways in which books might not be what they were claimed to be, by accident or intention." As a consequence, Hu saw the needs to sort out the claims that those books make, and to assess what claims can be counted on as real.<sup>99</sup>

It is Hu's second contribution, the guidelines for authenticating texts, that has gained much currency among later generations of scholars. His guidelines consist of the following eight steps:

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<sup>96</sup> Zheng Liangshu 1986, 78-81.

<sup>97</sup> *Sibu zheng'e*, 29-30.

<sup>98</sup> Fischer has written translations and brief explanations for the listed twenty-one "situations." See Fischer 2009, 16-18.

<sup>99</sup> See the discussion in Bol 2006, 125.

“In all cases, the way to examine a forged text is to:  
凡覈偽書之道，

1) examine it against the *Qi lie* to scrutinize its source;  
覈之七略以觀其源；

2) examine it against the various traditional catalogues to scrutinize its lineage;  
覈之群志以觀其緒；

3) examine it against contemporaneous phraseology to scrutinize its compatibility with it;  
覈之並世之言以觀其稱；

4) examine it against phraseology of different ages to scrutinize how it is quoted;  
覈之異世之言以觀其述；

5) examine its pattern of writing to scrutinize its style;  
覈之文以觀其體；

6) examine its recorded events to scrutinize its date;  
覈之事以觀其時；

7) examine its purported author to scrutinize to whom it is ascribed;  
覈之撰者以觀其託；

8) examine its commentators to scrutinize the people who have commented on it;  
覈之傳者以觀其人；

(if) these eight steps have been examined, then there will be no concealed matters concerning ancient and contemporary false texts.  
覈茲八者而古今贗籍亡隱情矣。

These eight rather straightforward steps actually encompass the two most crucial points of *bianwei* methods. The first two and last two of Hu’s steps essentially emphasize the necessity of investigating the textual history of a target text, whereas the remaining steps call for a meticulous examination of the various aspects of the text’s content. After about three hundred years, Hu’s eight steps were quoted by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) in his *Gushu zhenwei ji qi niandai* 古書真偽及其年代, in which he reformulated them

under his two “systems” (*xitong* 系統):<sup>100</sup> discerning forged texts on the basis of transmitted accounts, and discerning forged texts on the basis of the content of texts.<sup>101</sup> In addition to Hu’s contribution, Liang expanded the list by adding more step-by-step guidelines, as well as offering additional arguments. These arguments also include all twelve “research criteria” (*yanjiu biao zhun* 研究標準) for *bianwei* studies that Liang himself had proposed in another influential work published in 1921, the *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa* 中國歷史研究法.<sup>102</sup> Since Fischer provides a translation and discussion of the twelve “research criteria” from Liang’s earlier work, but only briefly mentions the proposals from Liang’s later work, the methods and arguments raised in Liang 1927 will be translated as follows (methods are marked with [M], whereas arguments are marked with [A]):<sup>103</sup>

**I. Discerning forged texts on the basis of transmitted accounts.**

從就傳授統緒上辨別。[M]

1) If not recorded in traditional catalogues, it is a forged work or at least suspect;  
從舊志不著錄，而定其偽或可疑；[A]

2) If only recorded in earlier catalogues but not in later catalogues, it is a forged work or at least suspect;  
從前誌著錄，後誌已佚，而定其偽或可疑；[A]

3) If the *juan* numbers or *pian* numbers in the received edition is different from that recorded in traditional catalogues, it is a forged work or at least suspect;

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<sup>100</sup> In 1927, Liang gave a lecture under the same title. His students then collected their notes of this lecture, and published them as a book. See Liang Qichao 1927, 1.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>102</sup> Liang Qichao 1921, 84-88.

<sup>103</sup> Fischer 2009, 21-22.

從今本與舊志所說之卷數篇數不同，而定其偽或可疑； [A]

4) If traditional catalogues do not record the text's author's name, then the later named ascription is false;

從舊志無著者姓名，而定後人所題姓名為偽； [A]

5) If a text was recognized as forged by traditional catalogues or commentators, then their judgment shall be trusted;

從舊志或注家已明言是為偽書，而信其說； [A]

6) If someone of a later time claims that a text appeared at a certain time but the people of that time did not know about the text, then the text is a forged work;

後人謂某書出現於某時而彼時人未見此書，可斷其為偽； [A]

7) If any problems had already been noticed when the text first appeared, or the text had already been proven to be forged, then this text cannot be recognized as authentic;

書初出現時已生問題，或有人證明為偽造，則不能信其真； [A]

8) If the text comes from an dubious source, then it is a forged work.

從書之來歷曖昧不明，而定其偽。 [A]

## **II. Discerning forged texts on the basis of the content of texts. [M]**

從就文義內容上辨別。

1) Discerning forged texts on the basis of incongruity of words and expressions.

从字句罅漏处辨別。 [M]

A) Discerning forged texts on the basis of incongruity of appellations:

從人的稱謂上辨別： [M]

a) If a text quotes someone, then this text could not have been composed by the person quoted; if a text was composed by someone, then this text will not quote this person's words;  
書中引述某人語，則必非某人作，若書是某人作，必無某某曰之詞； [A]

b) If a text mentions someone with a posthumous title who lived at a time later than the time of this text's purported author, then it can be inferred that the text was not composed by its purported author;  
書中稱謚的人出於作者之後，可知是書非作者自著； [A]

c) If a text mentions someone from X dynasty, but the text uses taboos for emperors of Y dynasty, then it can be known that the text was composed during Y dynasty.

說甲朝人之書，卻避乙朝皇帝之諱，可知一定是乙朝人作的。  
[A]

B) Discerning forged texts on the basis of usage of names, including names of people, locations, and dynasties that appeared later than the text:  
用後代的人名地名朝代名：[M]

a) Using names of people of later times;  
用後代人名；[M]

b) Using of geographical names of later times;  
用後代地名；[M]

c) Using names of dynasties of later times.  
用後代朝代名。[M]

C) Discerning forged texts on the basis of historical events or legal and social systems of later times:  
用後代的事實或法制；[M]

a) Discerning forged texts on basis of historical events of later times:  
用後代的事實：[M]

a) Events are obviously of later times;  
事實顯然在後的；[A]

b) If predicted events match later historical events, then it reveals that the record of the predicted event was fabricated;  
預言將來的事，顯露偽蹟的；[A]

c) Falsify historical events.  
偽造事實的。[A]

b) Discerning forged texts on the basis of legal and social systems of later times.  
用後代的法制。[M]

2) Discerning forged texts by locating plagiarism of earlier texts:  
從抄襲舊文處辨別：[M]

A) A text was made by accumulating earlier texts:  
古代書聚斂而成：[A]

a) The entire text has plagiarized other texts;

全篇抄自他書的； [A]

b) A portion of the text has plagiarized other texts.  
一部份抄自他書的。 [A]

B) A text was intended to be a forged text that has plagiarized earlier texts.  
專心作偽的書，剽竊前文的。 [A]

C) A purported earlier text has plagiarized a later text. The former must  
have appeared later than the latter.  
已見晚出的書而剿襲的。 [A]

3) Discerning forged texts on the basis of missing passages:  
從佚文上辨別： [M]

A) When a text is known to have many missing passages, but the received  
edition of the text is complete, then the received edition is forged.  
從前已說是佚文，現在反有全部的書，可知書是假冒的。 [A]

B) Before text X was lost, text Y quoted passages from X, but the received  
edition of X does not contain the quoted passages. It can be inferred that  
the received edition of X is forged.  
在甲書未佚之前，乙書有引用，而甲書今本卻無乙書所引之文，可知  
今本為偽。 [A]

4) Discerning forged texts on the basis of various aspects of the writing:  
從文章上辨別： [M]

A) Nouns and proper substantives;  
名詞； [M]

B) Literary style.  
文體； [M]

C) Grammar.  
文法； [M]

D) Chinese historical phonology.  
音韻。 [M]

5) Discerning forged texts on the basis of ideas:  
從思想上辨別： [M]

A) Discerning forged texts on the basis of various schools of thought and  
their transmission;

從思想系統及傳授家法辨別； [M]

B) Discerning forged texts on the basis of the correlation between an idea and its pertinent time;

從思想系統與時代的關係辨別； [M]

C) Discerning forged texts on the basis of the correlation between an idea and its pertinent terminology;

從專門術語與思想的關係辨別； [M]

D) Discerning forged texts on the basis of plagiarism of ideas of later times.

從襲用後代學說辨別。 [M]<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps this is one of the most comprehensive lists for both *bianwei* methods and arguments. The two “systems” have essentially inherited the framework of Hu Yinglin’s guidelines. Liang organizes his list by laying out methods first, and offering detailed arguments under some of his methods. In this way, he is able to illustrate how this result of applying a certain method to a text in question should be interpreted. Two years after Liang’s speech, Bernhard Karlgren also published an article to summarize and evaluate the arguments used by the traditional Chinese *bianwei* scholars.<sup>105</sup> It appears that Karlgren was unaware of Liang’s comprehensive list of methods and arguments, but Karlgren’s opinion on a great deal of previous *bianwei* scholarship is also applicable to the arguments that Liang offered. Thus, the following examination of Liang’s two

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<sup>104</sup> Liang Qichao 1927, 39-58.

<sup>105</sup> See Karlgren 1929.

“systems” will include Karlgren’s opinion when pertinent, although Karlgren’s article itself will not be discussed here in detail.<sup>106</sup>

Under Liang Qichao’s first “system” of “discerning forged texts on the basis of transmitted accounts,” all eight items are arguments. Arguments 1, 2, 3, and 7 belong to Fischer’s category of “not matching a description”; the fourth argument belongs to the category of “falsely attributed authorship”; the fifth and eighth belong to the category of “previously proven to be forged”; and the sixth argument belongs to the category of “sudden appearance.” Yet, in practice, will each individual argument suffice to determine either authenticity or inauthenticity? The answer is no. For example, the first argument, “if not recorded in traditional catalogues, it is a forged work or at least suspect,” gives too much credit to the traditional catalogues for being the most reliable reference. Numerous examples from excavated Warring States manuscripts, such as the Chu silk manuscripts from Zidanku in Changsha 長沙子彈庫楚帛書, as well as the “Li song” 李頌 and “Lan fu” 蘭賦 from Shanghai Museum manuscripts, indicate that there was a considerable number of early texts that were not recorded in the “Yiwen zhi,” and in other later catalogues. Liang certainly should not be blamed for not recognizing this fact, since these manuscripts were discovered long after his own time. As for the second argument, “if only recorded in earlier catalogues but not in later catalogues, it is a forged work or at least suspect,” Zheng Liangshu argues that the study of *Gongsun Longzi*’s 公孫龍子 transmission history can serve as counterevidence to refute the accusation of the text

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<sup>106</sup> In addition to evaluating the previous scholarship, Karlgren’s main goal was to advocate applying grammatical analysis to the early texts. Fischer provides a brief summary of Karlgren’s treatment of traditional Chinese *bianwei* scholarship. See Fischer 2009, 26-27.

being a forged work, and to explain the discrepancy of the records between the “Yiwen zhi” and the “Jingji zhi.”<sup>107</sup> Zheng then goes on to argue that the case of *Gongsun longzi*’s transmission history might in fact refute arguments 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8 of Liang’s first system. In addition, as suggested by Liao Mingchun 廖名春, examples from unearthed materials can even be used to refute all the arguments besides the fourth and seventh.<sup>108</sup>

Nevertheless, this counterevidence is not meant to be an indication that all the arguments should be abandoned. This simply reminds us that these arguments are not flawless and ought to be applied with caution. If the title of an early text is not seen in the “Yiwen zhi,” instead of hastily making a judgment, one might consult with other accounts that supplement traditional catalogues, such as Yao Zhenzong’s 姚振宗 (1842-1906) *Han shu Yiwenzhi tiaoli* 漢書藝文志條理. More importantly, investigating the textual history of a target text has always been one of the most critical approaches in dealing with the early texts. The arguments under Liang’s first “system” need to be revised, but this does not mean that the approach of investigating textual history should be questioned or abandoned.

There are five methods under Liang’s second “system” of “discerning forged texts on the basis of the content of texts.” The second method, “discerning forged texts by locating plagiarism of earlier texts,” needs to be dismissed. The phenomenon of early Chinese texts sharing passages with similar or identical wording, meaning, and ideas can

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<sup>107</sup> Zheng Liangshu 1986, 143-147.

<sup>108</sup> Liao Mingchun 2005, 92-99.

be explained by the compositional nature of these texts, which cannot and should not be oversimplified as one text plagiarizing another. As mentioned in the first chapter, this compositional nature was not widely recognized by scholars of the Republican era, including Liang Qichao, hence it is not a surprise that Liang would include “plagiarism of earlier texts” in his system.

The first method under the second “system” proposes that one should examine any incongruity of words and expressions so as to authenticate the target texts. As suggested in the three subcategories of this method, such incongruity can be located through comparison of 1) appellations, 2) people’s names, geographical names, and dynastic names, and 3) historical events or legal and social systems. These methods are by and large well-reasoned and seem to be highly effective when used in practice. Yet there is one issue with the first argument under the first subcategory, which claims that “if a text quotes someone, then this text could not be composed by the person quoted; if a text was composed by someone, then this text will not quote this person’s words.” The English translation itself may sound fallacious, since a work in the modern era would never be considered a forgery if its author quotes their own words from another book. This argument can only be understood by looking at the examples that Liang Qichao provides: in short, Liang was trying to demonstrate that the “Xi ci” 繫辭 proper of the *Zhou Yi* 周易 was not authored by Confucius, and the *Xiao jing* 孝經 was not authored by Zeng Shen, since one can find the phrase *zi yue* 子曰 in the former and the phrase *Zeng zi* 曾子 in the latter. If these two texts were written by their purported author, why would they use the honorific title “zi 子” to address themselves when quoting themselves,

which contradicts tradition?<sup>109</sup> Such phenomena imply that in both cases the purported author is not the real one. Nonetheless, Liang's examples merely lead one to question the authorship of these two texts, not their authenticity. As discussed in the first chapter, consideration of authorship should not be included in the criteria for authenticating early Chinese texts; hence, to claim that these two texts have been falsely attributed is acceptable, but Liang's argument does not suffice the accusation of these two texts being forgeries.

The third method under the second "system" is "discerning forged texts on the basis of missing passages," which is generally considered an important and useful method. The examples provided in support of the first argument, "when a text is known to have many missing passages, but the received edition of the text is complete, then the received edition is forged," seems to be convincing. For example, since it was noted that some portion of the "Old Text" documents of the *Shang shu* were lost after the time of Ma Rong and Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), the seeming completeness of the received edition of this text appears to be quite questionable.<sup>110</sup> The second argument gives consideration to the passages from an early text that are quoted in other texts. If the received edition of this early text lacks such passages, the authenticity of this early text will be deemed dubious. This argument was in fact discussed by Karlgren as well, who agreed that the "Tai shi" chapter of the *Shang shu* is a forged text because the passages

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<sup>109</sup> Liang Qichao 1927, 43.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

from it, which are preserved in other early texts, are not found in the received edition.<sup>111</sup> Yet, on the same grounds, Karlgren noted that some people, including himself, did not treat the *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 as a forgery.<sup>112</sup> In spite of previous scholarly efforts dealing with these two arguments, one can never rule out the possibility that the next excavated manuscript may prove both arguments false if any of the so-called “missing passages” were to be found in the unearthed early Chinese materials. This kind of hypothesis could be justified when the materials become available, especially considering how the previous knowledge of many early Chinese texts has been reshaped after the emergence of newly discovered manuscripts in recent decades. In sum, both arguments under the third method are applicable in some cases, but they cannot be considered conclusive.

The fourth method under the second “system” calls for the investigation of the following four aspects of the text: 1) nouns and proper substantives, 2) literary style, 3) grammar, and 4) Chinese historical phonology. Liang’s examples of nouns and proper nouns are book titles and people’s names, which make the investigation of the first aspect similar to examining the incongruity of words and expressions. As for the third and fourth aspects, it is generally considered that examining the phonological and grammatical features of early texts is a sound and reasonable way to date them. As concluded by Karlgren, “the grammatical system of a text has certain peculiarities, which give it a character of its own, peculiarities that could not have been imagined and imitated by a forger of later times.” The same thing can also be said about the phonological

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<sup>111</sup> Karlgren 1929, 166.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

system of Old Chinese. Still, it is necessary to be aware of exceptions that violate the aforementioned rules and the reasons for these exceptions. In 1960, Sergey Yakhontov published an article on his “rounded vowel” hypothesis, in which he attempts to explain why the phonological system in one early text differs from another:

“And so in the rhymes of the first millennium B.C. sources which we have examined, syllables with rounded and unrounded vowels in the presence of initial dental consonants (and to some extent of other types) were clearly differentiated. It is true that in some other texts this is not observed. In the Ch’u tz’u, in two parts of the Chuang tsu (wai p’ien and tsa p’ien), and also perhaps in the Tso chuan, and in the different parts of the Lun yü, rounded and unrounded syllables rhyme with one another completely freely. Whether this is to be explained by a difference in dialect, or whether it depends on the time of the composition of the various sources, or whether there are some other reasons, remains for the time an open question.”<sup>113</sup>

Although the article is unrelated to *bianwei* studies, Yakhontov’s explanation touches upon the complexity of the reasons that might cause the differences in phonological systems. In other words, if the examination of an early text’s phonological or grammatical features yields a result that does not conform with a regulation or rule that has been observed from conducting the same kind of analysis on other early texts, before one can confidently assert that the text is spurious, other possible explanations, such as dialectical influence on the text, or revision on or interpolation to the text during its transmission, ought to be considered.

The second aspect, literary style, is the most problematic of the four. The underlying rationale is that characteristics of literary style are usually distinct from era to era. Such a distinction can be used as a basis to date texts. Yet, unlike grammatical and phonological features, literary style could be much easier to imitate. Although Liang

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<sup>113</sup> Yakhontov 1960/1970, 61-62.

claims that any imitations can be identified by those who are experienced and have sharp eyes, the reasoning itself is subjective and border-line arbitrary. Karlgren argues that such a method should be disregarded because "...it is not sufficient to give vent to an arbitrary personal impression; one has to show which peculiarities of style are decisive."<sup>114</sup>

The last method under Liang's second "system" advocates that special attention needs to be paid to the ideas conveyed in the early texts. This will require one to explore the correlation between an idea and its 1) transmission, 2) pertinent time, 3) pertinent terminology, and 4) plagiarism of ideas of later times. The third method is similar to examining the incongruity of words and expressions; any argument that employs the other three methods can be categorized as "intellectual precedence."<sup>115</sup> According to Liang, the idea of juxtaposing *ren* 仁 ("humaneness") and *yi* 義 ("rightness") in the *Mengzi* 孟子 must be viewed as the intellectual property of this text; hence any texts using this idea must be dated after the *Mengzi*.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, Liang argues that, whenever reliable sources for the origin and development of an idea are available, they can be used as the basis for determining whether plagiarism of this idea exists somewhere else, or whether the idea conveyed in a text contradicts the idea that is traditionally regarded to be associated with this text's purported author.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Karlgren 1929, 167.

<sup>115</sup> Fischer assigns the fourth one to the charge of "plagiarism," see Fischer 2009, 23.

<sup>116</sup> Liang Qichao 1927, 56.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54.

There are two major issues with these arguments. First, it is not an easy task to prove who or which school in early China was the first to put forward an original idea. Instead, the same idea that was circulating at a given time might not be limited to one school but could be employed by various different schools. As argued by Fischer, one needs to prove that the ideas being borrowed, “are indeed earlier and that what is being ‘stolen’ actually belonged to the prior author, or that that the two authors could not have independently come up with similar opinions.”<sup>118</sup> The second issue is a logical fallacy, whereby Liang overlooked the likelihood that the idea of a person or a school would always remain unchanged. The method of tracing the line of transmission of an idea for authenticating the early texts was objected to by Hu Shih 胡適 (1891-1962), who once used such a method himself but later discarded it:

“The thread of thought is not something easily tangible and traceable... The strangest thing is that even the thought of an individual can often be inconsistent and cannot be traced along any pre-determined thread. More than ten years ago, I had occasion to remark that there should not be in the *Lao tzü* 老子 such remarks as ‘Heaven and Earth conspire to send Sweet Dew 甘露,’ because such thoughts ‘do not fit with Lao tzü’s philosophy!’ ...But these last ten years or so I have become more worldly-wise and realize that things are not so simple... Once we have understood this simple age-old fact, we should be more prudent in using the thread of thought as a method of demonstration. If it is not easy to trace the thread of thought in one individual, how difficult it must be to determine the proper sequence of periods by means of the thread of thought?”<sup>119</sup>

Hu’s words expertly express the problematic nature of relying on thoughts and ideas to discern forged texts; hence the last method of Liang’s second system shall be disregarded.

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<sup>118</sup> Fischer 2009, 14.

<sup>119</sup> Hu Shih 1933/1937, 378-379.

#### II. 4. Pertinence of excavated materials to *bianwei* studies

Around the same time that Liang Qichao's *Gushu zhenwei ji qi niandai* was published, two other things pertinent to *bianwei* studies attracted scholarly attention, namely, inquiry into the general textual history of early Chinese texts, and the advocacy of application of excavated materials to the study of transmitted literature. The former was represented by Yu Jiaxi's *Gushu tongli*, in which he examined multiple issues related to early texts, including their falsely attributed authorship, their compilation and circulation, interpolations and additions made to them, and the convention of not bearing a title. Yu's work has greatly influenced succeeding Chinese textual scholars, inspiring them to contemplate the nature of early texts, and setting them free from the stereotypical view of the "authentic or forgery" dichotomy. These modern scholars' reflection on authorship and on the nature of early texts have already been discussed in the fourth and fifth sections of the first chapter.

The previous analysis of Liang Qichao's *bianwei* arguments has already demonstrated that excavated manuscripts could play a significant role in the methodology for authenticating transmitted texts. Utilizing both transmitted literature and archaeologically recovered materials is known as the "Two-fold evidential approach" (*erchong zhengju fa* 二重證據法). This was first proposed in 1924 by Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927), who was interested in using archaeology to support the credibility of the traditional account.<sup>120</sup> Although neither Liang Qichao nor the *Weishu tongkao*'s 偽書通考 author, Zhang Xincheng 張心澄 (b. 1887), incorporated it into the framework of

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<sup>120</sup> Sun Dunheng 1991, 146.

their *bianwei* methodology, the “Two-fold evidential approach” has been continuously applied in practice. Its influence has been carried on to shape Chinese *bianwei* scholarship from the Republican era to the current times, including the works of scholars who aim to challenge the credibility of the traditional account, such as the *Gushi bian* scholars, and those who oppose a blind doubt of antiquity (*yigu* 疑古), such as represented by Li Xueqin 李學勤.<sup>121</sup> About a century later, the “Two-fold evidential approach” is still considered one of the fundamentals of authentication studies, on which basis Li Xueqin has advocated the “Three-fold evidential approach” (*sanchong zhengjufa* 三重證據法).<sup>122</sup> First proposed by Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤 in 1982 for the purpose of archaeological research, this approach views unearthed non-literary artifacts and excavated manuscripts as two equally important kinds of evidence.<sup>123</sup> In order to demonstrate the significance and connection between unearthed non-literary artifacts and transmitted literature, Li provides an example about a kind of decorative bronze fish, which was found in several Warring States tombs. The archaeologically recovered artifacts match the description of bronze fish seen in the *Yi li* 儀禮 and its commentary by Zheng Xuan.<sup>124</sup> Li therefore argues that, since the burial culture observed in the Warring States period tombs correlates with the record in the *Yi li*, the credibility of the text can then be assumed.

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<sup>121</sup> For the former, see Gu Jiegang 1926; for the later, see Li Xueqin 1999, 12.

<sup>122</sup> Li Xueqin 1994, 3-8.

<sup>123</sup> Jao Tsung-i 1993, 19-22; also Li Xueqin 1994, 3-8.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. For the discussion about the bronze fish, see Zhang Changshou 1992, 49-52.

The approach of relating scientifically excavated non-literary artifacts to the accounts preserved in the early texts is indeed valuable, and may greatly enhance our understanding of both the records of early texts and the artifacts themselves. But if a discrepancy between transmitted literature and archaeological discovery is encountered, in what way should this discrepancy be understood? Does this discrepancy hamper the credibility of the transmitted account, or even lead us to challenge the authenticity of the transmitted account? In his article on the widely divergent interpretations about the silk banner discovered from Mawangdui tomb no. 1, Silbergeld has warned archaeologists and historians to exercise considerable caution in their application of early texts to excavated materials.<sup>125</sup> His cautionary note can conversely be applied to textual critics, too. Silbergeld recognizes that some of the materials excavated in Mawangdui tomb no. 1 have, in some regards, lent credibility to transmitted literature; on the other hand, some other discoveries in the same tomb present major discrepancies with transmitted texts, particularly with the *Yi li*, *Zhou li* 周禮, and *Li ji* 禮記. To account for the discrepancies, he suggests that the aforementioned transmitted literature was prescriptive rather than descriptive, and actual practice does not necessarily have to match the written prescription.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, Silbergeld doubts that written literature, or literature alone, without other factors such as artistic convention and inspiration, would necessarily be the sources of the unearthed artifacts.<sup>127</sup> In short, Silbergeld's article serves as a useful

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<sup>125</sup> Silbergeld 1993, 86.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 83.

caution for textual critics, who ought to be cautious in the application of unearthed non-literary artifacts to *bianwei* studies.

This reminder cautiously to utilize unearthed non-literary artifacts by no means diminishes the importance of these objects in authentication studies. On the contrary, it calls for more attention to be drawn to their materiality, not only for artifacts that bear no writing, but also for excavated manuscripts, which frequently have been appreciated only for the written information that they contain. This is because both the script on manuscripts and their writing support (usually bamboo and silk) are physical objects, and should be treated as such. This point might appear obvious, but it does need to be reiterated since the materiality of manuscripts is often ignored, while scripts on manuscripts have long been treated as pure texts. A similar view has also been clearly articulated by Lothar von Falkenhausen:

“At the outset of any discussion of the Zhou bronze inscriptions, it must be understood that they were inscribed on ritual vessels, implements, and tuned bells, which were placed in lineage temples. The vessels and implements were to be displayed on an altar and used for sacrificing foodstuffs to the ancestors, and ritual music was played on the bells during these sacrifices. In order to understand the full meaning of a bronze inscription, therefore, we must consider it in conjunction with the use of the inscribed medium.”<sup>128</sup>

Although von Falkenhausen’s emphasis is on the ritual context of the bronze inscriptions, the message he delivers is appropriate for the Warring States bamboo and silk manuscripts as well. The context of bamboo manuscripts, including but not limited to their shapes and measurements, notches (*qikou* 契口) and binding cords (*biansheng* 編繩), verso lines (*jianbei huaxian* 簡背劃綫) and positions of joints, and layout of scripts and other signs, requires meticulous examination. If the manuscripts were scientifically

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<sup>128</sup> von Falkenhausen 1993, 146.

excavated, then it would be necessary to obtain information about how and where they were placed in the tomb, in what condition they had been preserved, and the correlation between the records on the manuscripts and other objects discovered in the tomb. Such investigations on the contextual information of manuscripts, in the same manner as utilizing unearthed non-literary artifacts, will benefit the inquiry into transmitted texts' credibility and authenticity.

### III. Methods for authenticating transmitted unprovenienced manuscripts

#### III. 1. Unprovenienced manuscripts

The focus of discussion in this chapter will shift onto unearthed materials, particularly bamboo and wood manuscripts of uncertain archaeological context, date and even authenticity. The last two decades since the mid-1990s have witnessed a rise in unprovenienced manuscripts, looted from ancient tombs and offered for sale on antique markets outside mainland China.<sup>129</sup> The acquisition of such manuscripts began with the Shanghai Museum's purchase of approximately 1700 bamboo slips in 1994.<sup>130</sup> According to hitherto published information, six institutes in mainland China, aside from the Shanghai Museum, i.e., Yuelu Academy (2007), Tsinghua University (2008), Zhejiang University (2009), Peking University (2009 Han manuscripts, 2010 Qin manuscripts), and Anhui University (2015), have acquired unprovenienced manuscripts.<sup>131</sup> The Chinese University of Hong Kong has also acquired 259 bamboo slips and wood tablets over the

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<sup>129</sup> According to Mackenzie 2010, “provenience” is the information about an object's ‘findspot’ – in the case of an archaeological object, provenience refers to the place where it was excavated, by whom, and in what circumstances.” By contrast, “provenance” refers to the history of ownership of an object.” Therefore, *unprovenienced* manuscripts refer to those with such information being not known to or hidden from the public. This type of manuscripts is referred to as *unprovenanced* manuscripts in Staack 2016. The former term is preferred and will be used in the current discussion.

<sup>130</sup> Initially, approximately 1200 bamboo slips (including fragments) were purchased in May of 1994 by the museum. Another 497 slips were donated to the museum later in the same year. See Ma Chengyuan 2001, 1-4.

<sup>131</sup> The parenthesized number shows the year of acquisition.

course of the years.<sup>132</sup> But the manuscripts in the Chinese University's collection were purchased from different sources at different times, unlike other unprovenanced manuscripts that are usually acquired by the respective institute at one time from one source.

The acquisition of these manuscripts immediately created new research topics, especially because they have provided scholars with both previously unseen material, as well as material that consists of counterparts of transmitted texts.<sup>133</sup> Suspicion concerning the authenticity of unprovenanced manuscripts has occasionally been raised. Most notable is the debate over the authenticity of the manuscripts acquired by Tsinghua University and by Zhejiang University.<sup>134</sup> Some scholars have advocated refraining from

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<sup>132</sup> Chen Songchang 2001, 4-10; also Pian Yuqian, and Duan Shu'an 2006, 476-477.

<sup>133</sup> For example, the received *Zhouyi* 周易 finds its counterpart in the Shanghai Museum manuscripts, whereas the four *Chu ci*-like (*chuci lei* 楚辭類) pieces from the same Shanghai Museum manuscripts, “Li song” 李頌, “Lan fu” 蘭賦, “You huang jiang qi” 有皇將起, and “Liuli” 鷓鴣, were previously unknown in transmitted literature. See Ma Chengyuan 2003, and Cao Jinyan 2010, 59-62. The title of each respective piece was given by the editorial group.

<sup>134</sup> In the case of the Tsinghua manuscripts, Jiang Guanghui 姜廣輝 and Fang Delin 房德臨 have separately published several articles to question their authenticity, see Jiang Guanghui 2013, 2014 and Fang Delin 2013, 2014. In the case of the Zhejiang University manuscripts, in regard to their authenticity, the debate between Cao Jinyan 曹錦炎, the editor of the *Zhangjiang daxue cang Zhanguo Chu jian* 浙江大學藏戰國楚簡, and the skeptic Xing Wen 邢文 were published in the *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 and *Nanfang zhoumo* 南方周末 newspapers, see Cao Jinyan 2012b, 2012c, and Xing Wen 2012a, 2012b, and 2012c; In addition, a monograph by Japanese scholars Asano Yūichi 淺野裕一 and Ozawa Kenji 小沢賢二, and an unpublished master thesis by Chen Yan 陳燕, are dedicated to the issue of paleography in the Zhejiang University manuscripts, see Asano and Ozawa 2013, and Chen Yan 2014. Certainly, this list is not exhaustively: there are

engaging in research on unprovenienced manuscripts, although this is not chiefly because of the doubtful authenticity of the manuscripts but because of a concern that the popularity of studying this type of materials may cause more tomb-robbing activities.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of scholars have chosen not to exclude unprovenienced manuscripts from their work, while remaining more or less conscious of the possible problems this might cause.<sup>136</sup>

Due to their lack of archaeological context, bamboo and wood manuscripts that were not excavated in a controlled condition from archeological sites do require rigorous authentication with proper methods; otherwise, any further research will be built upon a false foundation if the manuscripts were later found to be forgeries. Unlike transmitted texts, where an *inauthentic* text can be distinguished from a *forged* text because by definition the former was neither made in fraudulent imitation of something else nor intended to be passed off as genuine; no such distinction between *inauthentic* and *forged* exists in unprovenienced manuscripts. There is no such thing as an *inauthentic* manuscript (based on the definition of *inauthentic* given in the first chapter of this thesis), since if a manuscript is not deemed authentic, then it can only be a forgery. For example, all thirteen examples of questionable bamboo and wood manuscripts mentioned in Hu Pingsheng's 胡平生 article "Lun jianbo bianwei yu liushi jianbo qiangjiu" 論簡帛辨偽

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more writings concerning the authenticity of the manuscripts acquired by the three institutes that have been and will be published.

<sup>135</sup> Goldin 2013.

<sup>136</sup> Giele 2010, 114-116.

與流失簡帛搶救, fall into the category of forgery.<sup>137</sup> When archaeological context is missing, what kind of evidence can be used to either support or dispute the authenticity of any given manuscript? It appears that the article by Hu Pingsheng might be the only Chinese study dedicated explicitly to the subject of methodology for authenticating unprovenienced manuscripts.<sup>138</sup> Fortunately, as pointed out by Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚, scholars have gained first-hand experience in dealing with both scientifically excavated and unprovenienced manuscripts for more than two decades, since the acquisition of the Shanghai Museum manuscripts in 1994. Hence, one could anticipate additional methodological reflections on authenticating unprovenienced manuscript in the near future.<sup>139</sup> On the basis of the study by Hu Pingsheng, as well as the case studies on the authenticity of the manuscripts that were acquired by Tsinghua University, Zhejiang University, and Peking University, the following discussion will concentrate on scrutinizing the material evidence that has hitherto been employed during the course of manuscript studies. The discussion will pay special attention to scientific analyses that have been conducted on unprovenienced manuscript samples, since no major scholarly work has been devoted to this subject matter besides the study done by Ōnishi Katsuya

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<sup>137</sup> Hu Pingsheng 2010, 76-85.

<sup>138</sup> Ōnishi Katsuya 大西克也 also published an article that deals with various issues pertinent to the authenticity of unprovenienced manuscripts, see Ōnishi 2015.

<sup>139</sup> This point was articulated by Zhu Fenghan in his lecture “Beijing daxue cang Qin Han jiandu yanjiu de xin shouhuo” 北京大學藏秦漢簡牘研究的新收穫 at Peking University in August 2016.

大西克也。<sup>140</sup> In addition, the issue of how the evidence has been interpreted and understood will also be taken into consideration.

### **III. 2. Evidence**

The evidence can be roughly categorized into two types, textual and material, and the same evidence can be both textual and material. For example, sequential numbers are generally regarded as a textual feature since they are essentially a type of writing that can be observed on manuscripts. Yet, one presumed function of sequential numbers was to prevent the slips from being arranged in the wrong order during the process of binding slips together. Undoubtedly sequential numbers could have served more purposes, which will be discussed in detail in its designated section. But, with regard to the purpose of keeping multiple slips in the correct order, sequential numbers should also be regarded as a type of material evidence. It should also be noted that the current chapter aims solely to weigh the pros and cons of the evidence for authentication that has hitherto been either used extensively in practice or just overlooked. I hope such an investigation will help to distinguish well-founded and sound reasoning from the sloppy and impressionistic, which might eventually afford us some rudimentary guidelines for authenticating unprovenanced manuscripts. Nevertheless, I am not in a position actually to judge the authenticity of any specific manuscript, and the discussion herein is by no means intended to do so.

#### **III. 2. 1. Quasi-external evidence**

Both material and textual evidence belong to the category of internal evidence. By contrast, factors such as information concerning where the manuscripts were originally

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<sup>140</sup> See Ōnishi 2015.

situated in an archaeological site, or what kind of treatment the manuscripts received during their initial discovery and during their acquisition by respective institutes fall into the category of external evidence. If a manuscript is indeed a forgery, then information about when, where, or how it was forged will be counted as external evidence, too. In this regard, it can probably be said that no internal evidence can completely compensate for the lack of external evidence in the practice of authenticating unprovenanced manuscripts. We can only hope that the pertinent external evidence of unprovenanced manuscripts currently hidden from the public will become available at some point.

Aside from hoping something may or may not happen, there is the possibility that certain information about the objects that were not scientifically excavated can be retrieved. The scholarly efforts to recover the quasi-archaeological provenance of the Chu silk manuscripts from Zidanku in Changsha might serve as a good example to demonstrate that in some cases partial external evidence can be attained. Although the Chu silk manuscript was first looted from a Warring States tomb in Changsha in 1942, evidence gathered in a variety of circumstances and sources since the 1970s has shed light on its initial excavation and transfer to the United States in 1946 together with other silk manuscripts fragments found in the same lacquered basket in the tomb. The silk manuscript has been preserved in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C. since its purchase by Arthur M. Sackler (1913-1987) in 1965, and in the 1990s it was eventually reunited with those fragments and the lacquered basket.<sup>141</sup> This modern “transmission history” of the Chu silk manuscripts reminds the academic world to be more attentive to any “quasi-external evidence” that might be discerned for other

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<sup>141</sup> For the detailed survey of the fate of the Chu silk manuscripts, see Li Ling 1998. 227-236.

unprovenienced manuscripts. In reality, perhaps information on unprovenienced manuscripts' journey from their initial discovery through their acquisition by respective institutes (assuming they were indeed looted from ancient tombs but not forged) is unlikely to be revealed to the public; still, one can endeavor to examine other constituents that were acquired together with the manuscripts so as to seek for their possible connection. These constituents, such as the silk manuscript fragments and the lacquered basket in the case of the Chu silk manuscripts, are as important as the manuscripts. Together they can form a kind of quasi-external evidence, which may provide information to supplement the lack of archaeological context.

As pointed out by Thies Staack, “every ancient tomb in China that yielded manuscripts since the 1950s represents a micro cosmos, which was usually carefully mapped by archaeologists.”<sup>142</sup> Each individual micro cosmos comprises the details on the exact position of manuscripts slips at the time of excavation and of the correlation between manuscripts and other objects that were yielded at the same site. It might seem impossible fully to depict the micro cosmos of unprovenienced manuscripts, but it might at least be partially restored by relying on quasi-external evidence. This point can be illustrated in the following example of the Qin manuscripts acquired by Peking University in 2010.

Upon acquiring the Qin manuscripts, it was noticed by scholars at Peking University that the bundles of slips appeared to have largely remained in much the same position as they were at the time of excavation. Accordingly, they conducted a so-called “indoor excavation” (*shinei fajue* 室內發掘) of the manuscripts, which essentially

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<sup>142</sup> Staack 2016, 17.

applied the standard procedures that are employed in traditional scientific field excavation (*tianye fajue* 田野發掘).<sup>143</sup> After unwrapping the first layer of black plastic film (*suliao mo* 塑料膜) and the second layer of transparent saran wrap (*baoxian mo* 保鮮膜), it was found that the bamboo and wood manuscripts were covered by mud and immersed in glyoxal (see Figure 6).<sup>144</sup> Besides the manuscripts, two other types of objects were also found in the same package:



**Figure 6**

1) a group of 61 bamboo counting rods (*zhuchou* 竹籌, six of them in fragments), a wooden die (*mutou* 木骰), a wooden goblet (*mugu* 木觚), an adze-shaped billet (*benzhuang mukuai* 鑄狀木塊, usage unknown);

2) The remains of a bamboo basket (*zhusi* 竹筥, presumably used to hold the manuscripts), remains of a bamboo tube (*zhutong* 竹筒, presumably used to hold the bamboo counting rods), hemp binding strings (both intact and damaged), a damaged wooden board (*muban* 木板, thought to be either a support board or part of the coffin), traces of silk products, husks of plant seeds, cinnabar (*chensha* 辰砂), and samples of parasites' eggs on the binding strings.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>143</sup> See Beijing daxue chutu wenxian jianjiu suo 2012a for the detailed report.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 32. Figure 6 was taken from ibid., 34, *tu si* 圖四. Glyoxal (*yi er quan* 乙二醛) is an organic compound with the chemical formula OCHCHO, which can be used to help preserve excavated manuscript during their transfer.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 39-43.

The first type of object, together with the manuscripts, enables the scholars to surmise the pertinent historical, social, and cultural context of the occupant of the tomb. On the other hand, by applying scientific analysis to the second type of object including utilizing special devices to examine their physical nature, more hidden information can be revealed.<sup>146</sup> According to the “excavation report,” through analyzing the sample of the eggs, the scholars were able to determine which species the parasite belong to. They then cross-referenced the result with the known geographical distribution of this particular species. Since there are several cases where the same kind of parasite eggs were found in tombs situated in Jiangnan Plain 江漢平原, it was surmised that one of the Warring States tombs in this area had yielded this entire set of objects.<sup>147</sup>

In addition to identifying the type and number of objects, there are at least two types of correlations that can be observed through the “indoor excavation”: 1) the relative position of various types of objects to each other (as seen in Figure 6), and 2) the relative position of each individual slip that may belong to the same manuscript roll. In theory, the former may play a significant role in determining how many discrete manuscript rolls there are, whereas the latter may facilitate reconstructing the sequence of slips within the same manuscript roll. As seen in Figure 7, the photo was taken from a quasi cross-section perspective, which displays the relative position of all the slips to each other.<sup>148</sup> The editors have numbered each slip in an x-y pattern, with x standing for which manuscript

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 41-43.

<sup>147</sup> For the detail discussion, see *ibid.*, 43.

<sup>148</sup> Figure 7 was taken from Beijing daxue chutu wenxian jianjiu suo 2012a, 35, *tu jiu* 圖九.

roll the slip belongs to, and y standing for the serial number of the slip in one manuscript roll. For example, a slip numbered 6-1 indicates that this slip is the first that has been assigned by the editors to the sixth manuscript roll.



**Figure 7**

It is standard procedure for any excavation reports of archeological sites that were excavated in a controlled condition to include detailed drawings and diagrams, which usually display the slips in their position at the time of excavation from a cross-section perspective. Although they are the byproducts of the process of mapping the micro cosmos of the archaeological sites, they enable scholars to 1) examine the relative position of all slips to each other, and 2) to infer how the slips were folded or rolled up at the time of burial, both of which are demonstrated by Thies Staack in his study on the manuscripts that were scientifically excavated from Mawangdui tombs no. 1 and no. 3,

and Shuihudi 睡虎地 tomb no. 11.<sup>149</sup> Further, this kind of information may be better used, in contrast to other evidence such as content of the text or style of the script, to determine if one manuscript roll comprises multiple texts or if the slips should be attributed to multiple discrete manuscript rolls. For unprovenienced manuscripts, if quasi-external evidence is available and could be meticulously recorded and analyzed, one could then examine the correlation among various goods and the relative position of all slips that may belong to the same manuscript roll. The result of such a study might provide useful information in determining the authenticity of the manuscripts.

As much as the potential significance of quasi-external evidence can be articulated, it is not uncommon for some scholars to remain skeptical about this type of evidence. As argued by Ōnishi Katsuya, since unprovenienced manuscripts were not the discoveries of standard archaeological excavations, their primitive condition has already been lost. Even for the Qin manuscripts mentioned in the above example, which were acquired by Peking University in a possible original state and have undergone the process of “indoor excavation,” the scholarly circle cannot be so sure about whether all the constituents in the plastic film were originally included or were added later.<sup>150</sup> By quoting Cao Jinyan’s 曹錦炎 words in his preface of the *Zhejiang daxue cang Zhanguo Chu jian* 浙江大學藏戰國楚簡, Ōnishi suggests that even the person who was in charge of the acquisition had to confess that he did not know whether or not the manuscripts and other

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<sup>149</sup> Staack 2016, 18-24. For the discussions on how unprovenienced manuscripts might be situated in tombs (whether the manuscripts were rolled up or folded), see Jia Lianxiang 2015, 224-231; also Sun Peiyang 2010, 23-36; also Xiao Yunxiao 2015.

<sup>150</sup> Ōnishi 2015, 7-8.

constituents were originally kept in the lacquer box.<sup>151</sup> Unless the provenance of the manuscripts and other goods is revealed to the public, scholars such as Ōnishi will still consider quasi-external evidence to be speculative.<sup>152</sup>

### III. 2. 2. Writing support

Writing support refers to physical material that bears the text of manuscripts. Archaeological evidence that can be dated to early China suggests that there were various types of materials that were utilized as writing support during that time, including but not limited to bronze, pottery, jade, stone, bamboo, wood, and silk. Bamboo and wood are the two major types of writing support that have hitherto been acquired in the cases of unprovenienced manuscripts. Once the manuscripts arrived at their respective institutes, they underwent standard cleaning and preservation procedure. During this process, the physical properties of the manuscripts' writing support, including measurements, shape, and color, were carefully recorded. Apart from that, scientific examinations were commonly applied to the writing support to analyze its physical properties and date. The information on the physical properties and the result of the scientific examinations are

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. In his preface, Cao Jinyan says that “although the bamboo slips were kept in the colored lacquer box at the time of acquiring, since they had been perturbed by human activities and lost their primal condition, whether or not the slips were originally placed in the lacquer box cannot be known” 這批竹簡入藏時雖然還保存在原來的彩繪漆篋中，但由於已經經過人為的擾動，其原始狀態已遭破壞，原來是否皆放置篋中已不可知。See Cao Jinyan 2012a, “Qianyan” 前言, 1.

<sup>152</sup> Ōnishi does reckon that scholars will certainly benefit from the detailed information provided in the “indoor excavation” report on the Qin manuscripts preserved in Peking University. See Ōnishi 2015, 10-11.

regarded as indispensable in determining the authenticity of unprovenanced manuscripts, and will be discussed in the following sections.

### III. 2. 2. 1. Radiocarbon dating

One of the most debated kinds of information about an ancient object is its date. In archaeology, radiocarbon dating (also known as carbon dating or carbon-14 dating) serves as the standard tool for determining the age of an object containing organic material. This method is based on the fact that plants on earth constantly acquire

表一 北大藏秦简牍加速器质谱<sup>14</sup>C 测年鉴定表

Lab 编号	样品	样品原编号	<sup>14</sup> C 年代 (BP)	树轮校正后年代 (BC)	
				1σ (68.2%)	2σ (95.4%)
BA091484	竹简	C-14	2345 ± 35	490BC (11.2%) 460BC 450BC (3.7%) 430BC 420BC (53.3%) 380BC	540BC (95.4%) 360BC

**Figure 8**

radioactive carbon dioxide from the atmosphere via photosynthesis. When a plant dies, it stops exchanging carbon with the atmosphere, and from that point onwards the amount of <sup>14</sup>C (carbon-14) the plant contains begins to decrease as the <sup>14</sup>C undergoes radioactive decay. Therefore, measuring the proportion of <sup>14</sup>C in a sample from a dead plant (usually via Accelerator mass spectrometry, hereafter AMS), such as a bamboo sample in our case, will provide the pertinent information that can be used to calculate when the plant died. Yet, the calculation is based on the assumption that the proportion of <sup>14</sup>C in the atmosphere remains unchanged from past to present. In reality, the proportion of <sup>14</sup>C in the atmosphere has not been constant historically; hence, the result of the calculation (uncalibrated <sup>14</sup>C dates) has to be corrected by using data from other sources. This is usually done by using calibration curves, which convert a measurement of <sup>14</sup>C in a sample into an estimated calendar date.

In general, uncalibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates are presented with a range of one standard deviation (usually represented by the Greek letter sigma as  $1\sigma$ ) on either side of the mean. For example, the radiocarbon date of the bamboo sample from the Qin manuscripts acquired by Peking University is  $2345 \pm 35$  BP, at  $1\sigma$  confidence (see Figure 8).<sup>153</sup> BP stands for “before present,” referring to a reference date of 1950. After conversion, the calendar date is  $395 \pm 35$  B.C.E., at  $1\sigma$  confidence.

On the other hand, calibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates are presented with the range of calendar dates and confidence levels. In the case of the same bamboo sample from the Qin manuscripts, at  $1\sigma$  confidence, the probability for the calendar date ranging from 490 B.C.E. to 460 B.C.E. is 11.2%, from 450 B.C.E. to 430 B.C.E. is 3.7%, and from 420 B.C.E. to 380 B.C.E. is 53.3%. When these probabilities are added up, the total probability is 68.2%, which is the confidence level represented by a date range of  $1\sigma$ . In contrast, a date range of  $2\sigma$  represents 95.4% confidence level, and the calendar date for the same bamboo sample ranges from 540 B.C.E. to 360 B.C.E.

In standard radiocarbon dating, the curve used to calibrate the result should be the latest available IntCal curve, and calibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates should also identify any programs, such as OxCal, used to perform the calibration.<sup>154</sup> In their report, the editors of the Qin manuscripts from Peking University identify that the curve is IntCal04 and the version of OxCal program is v3.1.0.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Figure 7 was taken from Beijing daxue chutu wenxian jianjiu suo 2012a, 42, *biao yi* 表一.

<sup>154</sup> As of February 2017, the latest available curve is IntCal13, and the latest version of OxCal is v4.2.4. See <https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/oxcal/OxCal.html>.

<sup>155</sup> Beijing daxue chutu wenxian jianjiu suo 2012a, 41.

In general, when reporting the result of radiocarbon dating, those institutes that have acquired unprovenanced manuscripts do faithfully present details about uncalibrated date, calibrated date along with 1 $\sigma$  and 2 $\sigma$  confidence, the curve, and program. But the way these results have conventionally been understood and interpreted is not free of problems. For example, according to Cao Jinyan's preface of the *Zhejiang daxue cang Zhanguo Chu jian*, the manuscripts acquired by Zhejiang University can be dated to "roughly around 340 B.C.E." 約在公元前 340 年前後.<sup>156</sup> This statement is based on the radiocarbon dating of the bamboo sample from the manuscripts. The report of the radiocarbon dating has been provided in the appendix of the same book, in which it indicates the uncalibrated <sup>14</sup>C date of the bamboo sample is 2255 ± 30 BP.<sup>157</sup> Two issues can immediately be noticed. First, the correct reading of the date reported by the radiocarbon dating should be 340 ± 30 B.C.E., and using the expression "roughly around" 約在...前後 is vague and imprecise. Second, 2255 ± 30 BP is an uncalibrated <sup>14</sup>C date, which means its probability is only 68.2%. In other words, the probability that the true date of the bamboo sample being measured lies outside the range of dates (2255 ± 30 BP) is 31.8%. In fact, as pointed out by Ōnishi Katsuya, the probability that the date lies in a range of "roughly around 340 B.C.E." is extremely low.<sup>158</sup> By applying the calibration

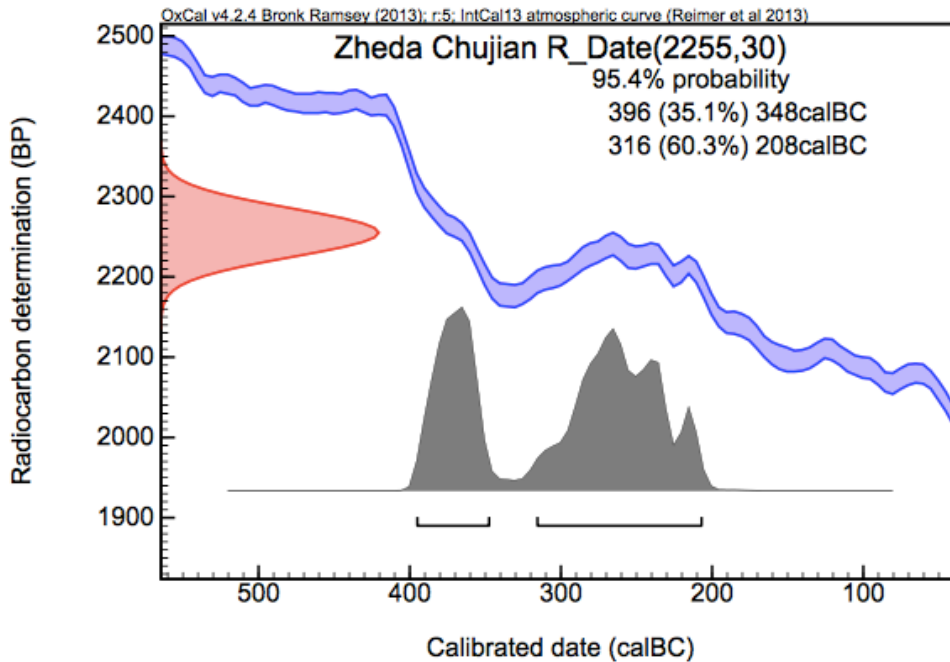
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<sup>156</sup> Cao Jinyan 2012a, "Qianyan," 1.

<sup>157</sup> Cao Jinyan 2012a, 191. In fact, the radiocarbon dating report provided in Cao Jinyan 2012a does include the calibrated date with 1 $\sigma$  and 2 $\sigma$  confidence, but I found its result (measured in 2009) appears to be rather suspicious since it is exactly the same as the radiocarbon dating result of the bamboo sample provided by Tsinghua University (measured in 2008). The detailed radiocarbon dating report on the later can be found in Jia Lianxiang 2015, 59.

<sup>158</sup> Ōnishi 2015, 6-7.

curve IntCal13 to the uncalibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  date  $2255 \pm 30$  BP, and running the program OxCal is v4.2.4, the result reached by Ōnishi is displayed as the chart in Figure 9.<sup>159</sup>



**Figure 9**

In the chart, “396 (35.1%) 348calBC” means a calibrated date for which the true date lies between 396 B.C.E. and 348 B.C.E., with the probability of 35.1%, whereas “316 (60.3%) 208calBC” means a calibrated date for which the true date lies between 316 B.C.E. and 208 B.C.E., with the probability of 60.3%. When the two probabilities are added up, the total probability is 95.4%, which is the confidence level represented by a date range of 26 (two standard deviations). Such a result suggests that the probability that the true date lies outside the range of dates (from 396 B.C.E. to 348 B.C.E., and from 316 B.C.E. to 208 B.C.E.)

<sup>159</sup> By applying the same curve and using the same program on <https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/oxcal/OxCal.html>, I was able to reproduce a chart that is identical to Ōnishi’s original. See the original chart in Ōnishi 2015, 7, *tu san* 圖三.

displayed in the chart is only 4.6%. In other words, with regard to the bamboo sample from the manuscripts acquired by Zhejiang University, the probability of its true calendar date being “roughly around 340 B.C.E.” does not exceed 4.6%.

The above-cited example reminds us that the results of radiocarbon dating need to be correctly understood. Although, the confidence level is routinely given in the report of radiocarbon dating, when discussing the date of the manuscripts in narrative, there seems to be a tendency for scholars to only mention the uncalibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  date of the manuscripts; the 68.2% probability has always been neglected, let alone the calibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  date. It is not surprising that uncalibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates are favored in contrast to calibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates. The former presents its result in a more straightforward way, while the latter requires additional explanation in order to be comprehended. Yet, radiocarbon dating is a scientific method, which requires its users to understand the mechanism that makes it function, as well as its reliability and any possible flaws. Ideally, any details about radiocarbon dating should be faithfully presented not only in the report from the laboratory, but also in any further studies, and they should not be interpreted improperly or freely because of someone’s preference.

Another crucial issue with radiocarbon dating concerns the sample that has been used for measurement. There are two major considerations: 1) whether the sample has been contaminated, and 2) the true relationship between the sample and other objects that were acquired at the same time. The former will be discussed first.

When using radiocarbon dating to measure the date of a sample, any addition to the sample of carbon from a different age will cause the measured date to be inaccurate. The principal rule is simple: contamination with modern carbon causes a sample to

contain more  $^{14}\text{C}$  than it originally did, and to appear to be younger than it really is, whereas contamination with old carbon, with no remaining  $^{14}\text{C}$ , causes a sample to appear to be older.

According to its radiocarbon dating report (Figure 8 above), after calibration, the true date for the bamboo sample lies between 540 B.C.E. and 360 B.C.E., with the confidence level given as 2 $\sigma$  (95.4% probability). Unfortunately, this result is inconsistent with the editor's inference about the date of the manuscripts. The manuscripts bear two calendrical texts (categorized as "Zhiri" 質日 text by the editors), with one recording the calendar in 216 B.C.E. and the other recording the calendar in 214 B.C.E.<sup>160</sup> Besides, on all the manuscripts acquired by Peking University, the majority of writing was written in Qin clerical script (*qinli* 秦隸), with a small portion done in a style similar to seal script (*zhuanshu* 篆書).<sup>161</sup> Based on this evidence, the editors infer that the manuscripts can be dated to the reign of Qin's first emperor (Ying Zheng 嬴政, 247 - 210 B.C.E.), between 220 B.C.E. and 210 B.C.E., a range of dates that is at least 140 years later than the range yielded by radiocarbon dating.<sup>162</sup> Regarding the discrepancy, the editors speculate its cause to be contamination:

"The manuscripts had been long immersed in glyoxal ( $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ ), and were severely contaminated by it. Moreover, to completely separate the manuscripts from the glyoxal is extremely difficult. Therefore, the [radiocarbon] measured date is older [than it really is]."

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<sup>160</sup> Beijing daxue chutu wenxian jianjiu suo 2012b, 65.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

由於簡牘長時間為乙二醛浸泡，受污染較嚴重，且乙二醛極難完全去除，因此造成測年數據偏老。<sup>163</sup>

Glyoxal is usually manufactured from petroleum, which does not contain  $^{14}\text{C}$ .<sup>164</sup> When the bamboo sample has been contaminated by glyoxal, according to the aforementioned rule, the measured date of the bamboo sample appears to be older since there is no remaining  $^{14}\text{C}$  in glyoxal. Given this fact, Ônishi wonders whether the Shanghai Museum manuscripts, just like the Qin manuscripts discussed above, had also been contaminated by any petroleum products for the purpose of preservation during the manuscripts' circulation on the antique market.<sup>165</sup> If it is the case, then there is a possibility that the measured date of the Shanghai Museum manuscripts may be older than the real date. This speculation cannot be proven true or false due to the insufficiency of information provided.<sup>166</sup>

In fact, among the institutes that have acquired unprovenanced manuscripts, the editors from Peking University are the only editorial group that clearly identify glyoxal as having been used to preserve the Qin manuscripts, as well as the Han manuscripts, before they were physically acquired by the university.<sup>167</sup> The editors from Tsinghua University

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<sup>163</sup> Beijing daxue chutu wenxian jianjiu suo 2012a, 41.

<sup>164</sup> Ônishi 2015, 18-19, n.12.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>166</sup> In the preface of Ma Chengyuan 2001, the editors only mention that the manuscripts bundles were covered by “mud and water” (*nishui* 泥水) when arrived at Shanghai Museum, without specifying what kinds chemical composition of the water. See Ma Chengyuan 2001, “Qianyan,” 1.

<sup>167</sup> Beijing daxue chutu wenxian jianjiu suo 2014, “Qianyan,” 1-2.

do mention that “the water in which the manuscripts were immersed has some chemical substance that is not ideal for preserving the manuscripts” 浸簡的水中又有不利於保存的化學物質, but specifically what kind of chemical composition was in the water has not been clarified.<sup>168</sup> Considering the possibility that chemical contamination may affect the result of radiocarbon dating, it would be ideal for the respective institutes to analyze the chemical composition of the liquid in which the unprovenanced manuscripts were preserved upon acquisition, and to release the pertinent information in their publications. This type of information should be also regarded as an inevitable constituent of the quasi-external evidence.

The second issue to consider concerning samples used in radiocarbon dating is the true relationship between the sample and the other objects that were acquired at the same time. Although manuscripts are frequently acquired together with other objects, the relationship between the manuscript sample and the other objects can readily be determined, since their provenance remains unknown to the public. For example, as mentioned previously, although the manuscripts and other objects were in the same lacquer box when they arrived at Zhejiang University, Cao Jinyan says he does not know whether or not they were originally kept together.<sup>169</sup> Given such limited information, one cannot eliminate the possibility that the manuscripts and other objects may have come from various different sources and were later grouped together and stored in the lacquer box.

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<sup>168</sup> Qinghua daxue chutu wenxian yanjiu yu baohu zhongxin 2010, “Qianyan,” 2.

<sup>169</sup> See Cao Jinyan 2012a, “Qianyan,” 1.

For unprovenienced manuscripts, apart from the relationship between the sample and other non-manuscript objects, the true relationship between the bamboo and wooden slips that bear writing, and the samples used for radiocarbon dating also calls for investigation. The reason why the date of scientifically excavated manuscripts can be inferred on the basis of a measured date of one sample lies in the fact that the physical properties of the entire set of manuscripts can be well represented by that single sample. This is not necessarily the case for unprovenienced manuscripts. Since bamboo and wooden slips that bear writing are conventionally viewed as being much more important than those without writing, samples used in radiocarbon dating or any other types of examinations for physical properties are always those without writing.<sup>170</sup> If the manuscripts and other objects acquired by Zhejiang University could come from various different sources, why assume that the multiple slips come from the same source? Even if a bamboo sample from a set of unprovenienced manuscripts can be dated to the Warring States period, and the result of other examinations also suggests that the physical properties of this sample match that of the bamboo of the same time, the best conclusion that can be reached is that the sample does indeed come from bamboo from the Warring States period. Due to the unknown provenance of the manuscripts, it is not guaranteed that the physical properties of the sample can represent that of all the other manuscript slips. Therein lies the fundamental flaw of conducting any type of scientific analysis on unprovenienced manuscripts.

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<sup>170</sup> For example, Zhao Guifang 趙桂芳, a specialist on cleaning and preserving bamboo and wooden slips, states that “no matter what kinds of methods can be used to preserve the bamboo or wooden slips, preserving the writing on these slips is always of the most importance” 不管採用何種保護方法，保護簡牘上的字蹟要放在首位。See Zhao Guifang 2006, 62.

If the physical properties of a bamboo slip with writing cannot be represented by that of the bamboo sample used in radiocarbon dating, why not use the former for dating purposes? The answer is simple: because a sample has to be destroyed during the process of radiocarbon dating. Besides, cutting off the unwritten portion from a slip with writing so as to measure it via AMS is also impractical. In quoting Yoshida 2005, Ônishi suggests that AMS needs at least 1mg of carbon for measurement and that 44mg of bamboo can yield 3mg of carbon.<sup>171</sup> According to Xing Yitian 刑義田, the measurements of the twelve samples from the Juyan Han manuscripts 居延漢簡 indicate that the weight of an individual bamboo slip can range from 1.59mg to 5.03mg, and the average weight is 2.616mg.<sup>172</sup> In addition, in his book, Jia Lianxiang 賈連翔 provides a report on examining the water content of the bamboo samples from the manuscripts preserved in Tsinghua University. It indicates that, after drying the three bamboo samples which once contained at least eight times more water than modern bamboo does, they weigh 9.3mg, 6.7mg, and 4.3mg, respectively.<sup>173</sup> These data suggest that, if 3mg of carbon are needed for radiocarbon dating, a considerable amount of bamboo samples has to be destroyed to

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<sup>171</sup> See Ônishi 2015, 7; also Yoshida 2005, 243, 251, 252.

<sup>172</sup> Juyan Han manuscripts refer to the Han manuscripts that were scientifically excavated in the Juyan area in the 1930s, and are currently preserved in Academia Sinica in Taipei. In 2005, Xing Yitian and his colleagues measured the weight of a number of bamboo and wooden slips. See the measurements of the first twelve bamboo samples in Xing Yitian 2011, 4-5.

<sup>173</sup> Jia Lianxiang 2015, 61-62.

fulfill the requirement. Considering the insufficient weight of the unwritten portion of a slip, the idea of using it for radiocarbon dating does not seem to be sensible.<sup>174</sup>

Moreover, even if we assume that the unwritten portion of a slip that bears writing can be dated to the Warring States period, the possibility still exists that the writing on the slip might have been scribed by a modern forger. This naturally leads to the question of whether the ink on the slip can be dated. Up to the present, only the scholars from Shanghai Museum, Zhejiang University, and Peking University have mentioned the analysis of ink in their pertinent publications. The “indoor excavation” report of the Qin manuscripts preserved in Peking University does provide the results of an SEM (scanning electron microscope) examination of the ink particles, yet it presents no information pertaining to the date of the ink.<sup>175</sup> As for the Shanghai Museum manuscripts, Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, the former director of the museum, has clearly stated that the ink found on the manuscripts can be dated to a time period earlier than the Ming dynasty, although he has neither provided a laboratory report nor identified the method employed.<sup>176</sup> Among these three institutes, the scholars from Zhejiang University have

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<sup>174</sup> In addition, considering the great importance of the manuscripts in the view of Chinese scholars, even if it were a viable idea to use an unwritten portion for measuring its date, perhaps no institute that has acquired unprovenanced manuscripts will allow such an analysis to be conducted. In August 2016, upon being asked about the possibility of using unwritten portion for measuring its date, Li Xueqin, who is in charge of the unprovenanced manuscripts acquired by Tsinghua University, personally refused it. Li believes that the authenticity of the manuscripts preserved in Tsinghua University is irrefutable; hence any examination that may cause damage to the manuscripts should not be permitted.

<sup>175</sup> Beijing daxue chutu wenxian jianjiu suo 2012a, 42-43.

<sup>176</sup> Zhu Yuanqing 2002, 3.

provided the most detailed information. In his preface of the *Zhejiang daxue cang Zhanguo Chu jian*, Cao Jinyan states:

“In October 2010, samples from the bamboo fragments were sent to Fudan University (via Shanghai Museum) in order to exam the ink on the samples. Samples from recently forged Han manuscripts fragments were sent for examination at the same time. Based on the electron microscope photos, the microstructure of the ink sample from the manuscripts preserved in Zhejiang University is completely different from that of the ink sample from the forged Han manuscript fragments. In addition, according to Wu Laiming, a researcher from the Shanghai Museum, the former is identical to the microstructure of the ink sample from the Shanghai Museum manuscripts.”

二〇一〇年十月對竹簡殘片取樣，委託上海博物館請復旦大學對竹簡墨蹟作顯微鏡微觀檢測分析，同時送檢的樣品還有新仿漢簡殘片，電鏡照片顯示，兩者微結構完全不同。據上海博物館吳來明研究員介紹，浙大楚簡墨蹟檢測照片所顯示的結果，與上博楚簡相一致。<sup>177</sup>

In March 2011, a second examination of the ink sample was conducted by Zhang Xiwen 張溪文, a professor from Department of Material Science at Zhejiang University. This time, a bamboo sample from the manuscripts preserved in Zhejiang University and a sample of a possibly forged wooden slip (*yi wei mujian* 疑偽木簡) were examined.<sup>178</sup>

The report of this examination is provided in the same volume of the *Zhejiang daxue cang Zhanguo Chu jian*, in which it is described what can be observed from the photos of electron microscope as follows:

“The ink on the bamboo sample has already permeated into the bamboo, and the boundary of the ink is blurry. It can be observed that graphite particles spread near the main body of the ink. We surmise that the spread and permeation of the ink is because the ink has existed on the bamboo sample for a fairly long time, and has been affected by its previous preservation environment and activities of microorganisms.”

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<sup>177</sup> See Cao Jinyan 2012a, “Qianyan,” 1.

<sup>178</sup> Cao Jinyan 2012a, 192.

被測竹簡上的墨蹟已滲透進竹簡部份，邊際模糊，墨蹟主幹部份四周有分散的石墨小顆粒。推測由於墨蹟已在竹簡上存在相當長的時間，並且受到環境作用和微生物侵蝕，已經發生明顯的擴散滲透。<sup>179</sup>

“The lines and pattern of the ink on the sample of wooden is clear and distinct. There is no graphite particle can be observed near the main body of the ink. This suggests that the ink has neither existed on the wooden slip for a long time nor permeated. The writing was scribed in a recent time.”

木簡上的墨蹟線條清晰，脈絡分明，四周無石墨小顆粒，說明墨蹟並未在木簡上存在相當時間，沒有發生滲透，為短時間內書寫。<sup>180</sup>

On the basis of the observation, the report concludes that the ink on the bamboo sample should be from the early times (*zaoqi moji* 早期墨蹟), whereas the ink on the wooden slip should be modern ink.<sup>181</sup>

One may immediately notice two major issues in the descriptions of the two examinations. First, in the second examination, Zhang Xiwen examines ink on two different types of writing support, but fails to provide any information about whether or not the same type of ink may act differently when being written on bamboo and on wood. In other words, the difference between two types of writing support could lead to the difference in examination results. The same issue applies to the first examination, in which case Cao Jinyan does not provide any information about the physical material of the samples from the so-called “recently forged Han manuscript fragments.” One cannot exclude the possibility that the difference in microstructures observed in the ink on the samples from Zhejiang University and that from the “Han manuscripts” is also caused by the writing support.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 196.

The second issue pertains to the selection of samples. In both examinations, all the samples come from manuscripts that were not excavated in a controlled condition. The approach of comparing two objects that both are potentially questionable is fundamentally flawed. Therefore, instead of using the microstructure of ink sample from the Shanghai Museum manuscripts, the scholars at Zhejiang University should ideally choose the microstructure of ink sample from scientifically excavated manuscripts as their standard, such as those from the Guodian 郭店 manuscripts (although no record suggests that such thing is available). For the same reason, unless someone could meticulously observe and record how ink will act on a modern bamboo slip in the course of time, it seems groundless to claim either in the second examination that “the ink has existed on the bamboo sample for a fairly long time,” or to claim the ink is from the early times, merely on the basis of the spread and permeation of the ink.

In short, even though Cao Jinyan claims that the microstructure of the ink sample from the manuscripts preserved in Zhejiang University is identical to that from the Shanghai Museum manuscripts, the analyses that support this claim are methodologically flawed. In addition, in spite of Ma Chengyuan’s claim that the ink from Shanghai Museum manuscripts is earlier than Ming, a claim which also remains doubtful with regard to its dating method, so far no method that allows the ink on unprovenienced manuscripts to be dated to early China has been invented.

### **III. 2. 2. 2. Examination of physical properties**

Upon acquiring unprovenienced manuscripts, respective institutes will routinely send samples of manuscripts to a laboratory to examine their physical properties besides radiocarbon dating. The two most examined characteristics are the species of the bamboo

or wood and the percentage of water that the bamboo or wood sample contains. Yet when the first volume of the Shanghai Museum manuscripts was published in 2001, it did not include those actual examination reports; one could only gather bits and pieces of information on the physical properties of the manuscripts from sources such as the preface of the volume or an interview of the former director Ma Chengyuan.<sup>182</sup> These sources usually provide examination results but lack details about methods and procedure. This is not surprising because scientific reports might be seen by textual scholars or paleographer as less appealing than manuscript texts or paleography. Fortunately, when the first volume of the Qin manuscripts preserved in Yuelu Academy was published in 2010, the original examination report on the bamboo was included.<sup>183</sup> This practice of making scientific examination report available was then followed by other institutes that have also acquired unprovenanced manuscripts.

Up to the present, various publications on unprovenanced manuscripts that are preserved in the Shanghai Museum, Yuelu Academy, Zhejiang University, Tsinghua University, and Peking University have mentioned the physical properties of their respective manuscript samples.<sup>184</sup> Among these publications, both reports on manuscript

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<sup>182</sup> See Chen Xiejun's 陳燮君 preface in Ma Chengyuan 2001, "Xu" 序, 1-4; and also Ma Chengyuan's preface in *ibid.*, "Qianyan," 1-4. For the interview, see Zhu Yuanqing 2002, 1-8.

<sup>183</sup> See the report in Zhu Hanmin and Chen Songchang 2010, 196-201.

<sup>184</sup> As of February 2017. For the examination report on the bamboo samples from the manuscripts preserved in Zhejiang University, see Cao Jinyan 2012a, 192-196. Liu Guozhong 劉國忠 briefly mentions the physical properties of samples from the manuscripts preserved in Tsinghua University in Liu Guozhong 2011, 53, and the actual report is provided in Jia Lianxiang 2015, 55-58. The "indoor excavation" report provides detailed information on the samples from the Qin

samples provided by Yuelu Academy and by Zhejiang University, consist of a discussion that pertains to authenticating manuscripts. As argued in both reports, one could compare the physical properties of an unprovenanced manuscript sample and that of a scientifically excavated manuscript sample to determine the authenticity of the unprovenanced manuscripts. In order to assess the validity of such an argument, I will scrutinize the report that is provided in the first volume of Yuelu Academy Qin manuscripts.<sup>185</sup>

The report comprises the results from applying five types of scientific techniques to the samples: 1) SEM, 2) Energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS), 3) Infrared Spectroscopy, 4) X-ray Diffraction (XRD), and 5) Differential Thermal Analysis (DTA). In addition to the bamboo sample from the manuscripts acquired by Yuelu Academy, three other samples also underwent the same five examinations for the purpose of comparison. These include a sample of modern-day fresh bamboo, a sample from the Han manuscripts excavated in Changsha Zoumalou 長沙走馬樓, and a sample from the “Jingzhou Han dynasty bamboo slips” 荊州漢代竹簡.<sup>186</sup> According to the report’s

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manuscripts preserved in Peking University, see Beijing daxue chutu wenxian yanjiusuo, 2012a. As for the samples from the Han manuscripts that are also preserved in Peking University, the examination report can be found in Hu Dongbo, Zhang Qiong, and Wang Kai 2011, 90-93.

<sup>185</sup> See the report in Zhu Hanmin and Chen Songchang 2010, 196-201.

<sup>186</sup> The Han manuscripts excavated in Changsha Zoumalou were first reported in Song Shaohua and Jin Ping 2005, 57-64, which are different from the more famous Zoumalou Wu manuscripts 長沙走馬樓吳簡 that were also excavated in Changsha. The “Jingzhou Han dynasty bamboo slips” might refer to the Han manuscripts excavated at Xiejiaqiao 謝家橋 in Jingzhou in 2007, see Jingzhou bowuguan 2009, and Zeng Jianhua 2010. Yet, since the authors of the report on the Yuelu Academy manuscript sample does not provide other information about the “Jingzhou Han

authors Fang Beisong 方北松 and Tong Hua 童華, the goal of applying scientific techniques to the four different types of samples is to “determine the authenticity of the bamboo manuscripts preserved in Yuelu Academy through analysis and comparison” 通過對比分析對嶽麓書院藏竹簡的真偽進行判斷。<sup>187</sup>

The first technique, SEM, provides images that display the topography of the sample’s surface. Those SEM images indicate that the topography of a fresh bamboo sample differs drastically from that of all the manuscript samples. In addition, a large quantity of white particles can be observed on all manuscript sample images. According to the authors of the report, cellulose, one of the major structural components of bamboo, had been compromised by the effect of hydrolysis (since the bamboo slips were immersed in groundwater before excavation) and microscopic organisms, and as a result of degradation, turned into these white particles (glucose).

元素百分含量/%	C	O	Al	Si	S	K	Ca	Fe
荊州漢簡	68.87	28.28	0.20	0.42	0.72	-	0.92	0.59
走馬樓漢簡	67.07	29.61	0.20	0.33	1.25	-	0.30	1.24
嶽麓書院藏竹簡	63.01	32.69	0.74	1.16	0.56	0.13	0.55	1.15

**Figure 10**

The second technique, EDS, was employed to measure the proportion of various chemical elements that each sample contains (see Figure 10).<sup>188</sup> According to the result of

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dynasty bamboo slips,” they might refer to something else, especially considering that the archaeological sites in Jingzhou area have yielded a large number of manuscripts.

<sup>187</sup> Zhu Hanmin and Chen Songchang 2010, 197.

<sup>188</sup> The chart in Figure 10 is a faithful reproduction of the “Biao yi” 表一 seen in Zhu Hanmin and Chen Songchang 2010, 199.

the EDS analysis, aside from common chemical elements such as Al Si, S, and Ca, all three manuscript samples contain Fe. The report suggests that the existence of Fe in all three samples was likely caused by the influence of their pre-excavation preservation environment, since the environment usually consists of soil and groundwater, both of which contain Fe. Yet, it occurs to me that the way in which the report interprets the result of the EDS analysis is seriously flawed:

1) Since the proportion of chemical elements in a fresh bamboo sample is not provided here, the report fails to prove whether the existence of the Fe element in the manuscript samples is either anomalous or normal. In other words, a control group is missing in this analysis; all the comparisons were made among experimental groups. For this reason, the claim that pre-excavation preservation environments caused the three manuscript samples to contain Fe element seems to be groundless.

2) The report lacks explanation for the significance of the data presented in the results. For example, the three samples contain 68.87%, 67.07%, and 63.01% C element, respectively. The difference between the first and the third is 5.86%, which is significant enough when considering that none of the other elements' percentage exceeds 2%, except for O element.

3) Besides, the result shows that the sample from the Yuelu Academy Qin manuscript contains K element while the other two manuscript samples do not. The report fails to provide any explanation to account for such a difference.

Running a certain type of test, such as EDS analysis, might be the standard procedure for a laboratory report. But the data collected from the test will not speak for itself – they must be explained or interpreted by whoever ran the test. In addition, if the results of the EDS analysis must be included in the report, then the report ought to make clear why and in what way the results pertain to the objective for running such an analysis (i.e., to determine the authenticity of the bamboo manuscripts preserved in Yuelu Academy). Even if nothing can be justified on the basis of the result, then “this result proves nothing” ought to be clearly voiced as well. In my opinion, the lack of a control group in the EDS

analysis leads to a fatal flaw in its design, whereas the inadequacy of explanation for the results of the analysis renders the analysis itself pointless.

The results of the next three examinations all suggest that the three manuscript samples suffered the effects of degradation. The third examination used an infrared spectrometer to produce the infrared spectrum of a sample. One will be able to rely on the infrared spectrum to identify the functional groups in the sample's molecule. As in contrast to the fresh bamboo sample, the infrared spectrums of the three manuscript samples suggest that the xylan (*mujutang* 木聚糖, also known as hemicellulose, a type of polysaccharide that is found in bamboo cell walls) in the samples has degraded.<sup>189</sup>

The fourth examination, XRD, provides information about the percentage of crystallinity in different samples. The result of the examination shows that the percentage of crystallinity in the fresh bamboo sample is 72.6%, whereas the percentage in the three manuscript samples is 18.0%, 18.0%, and 20.8%, respectively.<sup>190</sup> According to the report, the drastic difference between the percentage of crystallinity in the fresh bamboo sample and that in the three manuscript samples indicates a degradation of cellulose in the manuscript samples. Cellulose consists of crystalline and amorphous regions. Under the effect of degradation such as microbial decomposition due to the manuscripts' pre-excavation preservation environment, the bamboo cellulose's crystalline region decreases whereas the amorphous region increases, which leads to the decrease of the percentage of

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<sup>189</sup> Zhu Hanmin and Chen Songchang 2010, 199-200. The report states that the infrared spectrums of manuscript samples “indicate that the xylan in bamboo manuscript samples has degraded” 表明竹簡中，聚木糖發生了降解。Here the *jumutang* 聚木糖 might be a typo for 木聚糖.

<sup>190</sup> See Zhu Hanmin and Chen Songchang 2010, “Biao san” 表三, 201.

crystallinity. Therefore, in contrast to the examination result of the fresh bamboo sample, the decrease in the percentage of crystallinity in the three manuscript samples can verify that the cellulose in those samples has indeed degraded.

The last examination, DTA, provides pyrolysis temperature reading for each of the four samples. The temperature at which the fresh bamboo sample decomposes is 488.5 °C. The other three samples decompose at 414 °C, 354 °C, and 391 °C, respectively.<sup>191</sup> According to the report, the structural integrity of the bamboo has been compromised due to the degradation of the polysaccharide (i.e., cellulose and hemicellulose); thus the pyrolysis temperature has also decreased.

In summary, the second flawed examination aside, these four examinations succeed in demonstrating that the degradation of cellulose and hemicellulose has occurred in the three manuscript samples, in stark contrast to the fresh bamboo sample. The report's authors ascribe to the two millennia the manuscripts spent in a pre-excavation preservation environment undergoing microbial decomposition as the source of said degradation. In their conclusion to the report, the authors argue that the sample from the manuscripts preserved in Yuelu Academy is bamboo from the early times (*zaoqi zhucai* 早期竹材) on the grounds that its characteristics of degradation are similar to that of the other two scientifically excavated manuscript samples.<sup>192</sup> As much as the argument seems to be sound, it is not free of issues. First, although the goal of the analyses, as stated in the beginning of the report, was to examine a sample from the bamboo manuscripts preserved in Yuelu Academy so as to determine their authenticity, the

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<sup>191</sup> See Zhu Hanmin and Chen Songchang 2010, 201.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

report's conclusion only states that the sample is from bamboo from early times. The report's authors very prudently do not suggest anything regarding the authenticity of the manuscripts. With the five scientific analyses provided information on the similarities and differences between the physical properties of the four bamboo samples, it did not provide sufficient information to determine the authenticity of the manuscripts. In addition, it would be ideal for the report to include information about how fast the cellulose and hemicellulose in bamboo degrades. Although the results of the first and the last three examinations for the three manuscript samples share similarities, is it possible that the time needed for a bamboo sample to display such characteristics of degradation might be significantly less than two thousand years? Without this information, we are not able to determine precisely which pre-modern period the sample in question belongs to, only that the sample does not come from modern bamboo. Finally, it is always important for us to bear in mind that, for unprovenienced manuscripts, the true relationship between the entire set of manuscripts and the sample being examined remains uncertain. This uncertainty about whether the physical properties of the entire set of manuscripts can be sufficiently represented by that single sample is the fundamental flaw in conducting any type of scientific analysis on unprovenienced manuscripts.

### **III. 2. 2. 3. Water content**

Water content (*hanshuiliang* 含水量) refers to the quantity of water contained in a material. Since it is quite common for the manuscripts that were scientifically excavated in the southern area of China (i.e. Hunan, Hubei, Henan, Anhui, and Jiangsu, etc.) to have been immersed in groundwater before their excavation, measuring the water content contained in an unprovenienced manuscript sample is regarded as another viable criterion

to determine the authenticity of the manuscripts.<sup>193</sup> Although a sample's water content is part of its physical properties, the information pertaining to water content is not conventionally included in the sample's scientific examination report. Hence, the current section is designated to discuss the subject of relying on a manuscript sample's water content to determine its authenticity.

It was first pointed out in Hu Pingsheng 2010 that a majority of bamboo slips, which had been immersed in groundwater for more than a thousand years and then were discovered in the southern area, were like overcooked noodles at the time of excavation. Since the structural components (such as cellulose, hemicellulose, etc.) of these waterlogged bamboos slips (*baoshui zhujian* 飽水竹簡) had been compromised, they became quite tender and delicate. Even a gentle touch of one's fingers might cause the slips to fall apart.<sup>194</sup> According to Hu, this physical feature of the scientifically excavated waterlogged bamboo and wooden slips is so unique that no modern forger has hitherto been capable of recreating it.<sup>195</sup> Liu Guozhong 2011 states that similar features can be observed in the bamboo manuscripts that were acquired by Tsinghua University, using wording similar to Hu Pingsheng's to describe the condition of those waterlogged bamboo slips.<sup>196</sup> More details about the water content of the waterlogged bamboo slips preserved in Tsinghua University are provided in Jia Lianxiang 2015, including a report

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<sup>193</sup> Jia Lianxiang 2015, 61.

<sup>194</sup> Hu Pingsheng 2010, 99.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Liu Guozhong 2011, 38-39.

calculating the bamboo manuscript samples' water content.<sup>197</sup> Two Chinese terms related to calculating a sample's water content appear in Jia's discussion: *xiangdui hanshuilü* 相對含水率 (relative gravimetric water content) and *juedui hanshuilü* 絕對含水率 (absolute gravimetric water content), both of which can be translated into the English term gravimetric water content.<sup>198</sup> In the laboratory, the mass of the wet sample will be weighed before drying in an oven. The mass of the water contained in the sample can then be measured by subtracting the mass of the dry sample from the mass of the wet sample. Relying on these results, the two types of gravimetric water content can be calculated via the following formulae:

$$\textit{Relative gravimetric water content} = \frac{\textit{mass of the water}}{\textit{mass of the wet sample}}$$

$$\textit{Absolute gravimetric water content} = \frac{\textit{mass of the water}}{\textit{mass of the dry sample}}$$

As noted by Jia, Chinese publications that include information about water content frequently only use the term *hanshuilü* 含水率 without specifying which one of the two types of gravimetric water content they refer to. This has resulted in confusion in interpreting the data. For example, Jia quotes from their respective publications that the *hanshuilü* of the bamboo sample from the Yinqueshan 銀雀山 manuscripts is 76.85%, whereas the *hanshuilü* of the bamboo sample from the manuscripts preserved in Tsinghua

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<sup>197</sup> Jia Lianxiang 2015, 61.

<sup>198</sup> “Relative gravimetric water content” and “absolute gravimetric water content” are my own translation. “Gravimetric water content” is used more frequently, with providing the formula to indicate how it was calculated.

University is 400%.<sup>199</sup> The drastic contrast between these two numbers may lead one to question the accuracy and reliability of the data. Fortunately, the fact is that 76.85% is the relative gravimetric water content, whereas 400% is the absolute gravimetric water content. Once 76.85% is converted to absolute gravimetric water content, the resulting number is 332%, which falls into the same range as the absolute gravimetric water content of the bamboo sample from Tsinghua University (400%) and that of the bamboo sample from the Shanghai Museum (426%).<sup>200</sup> According to Jia, the absolute gravimetric water content of fresh bamboo is around 40%. By contrast, unearthed bamboo slips can range from 150% to more than 700%.<sup>201</sup> The calculation results of the three unearthed bamboo samples – one was scientifically excavated and the other two's provenance are unknown – seem to fit the big picture. Yet, Jia has noted that the absolute gravimetric water content of the bamboo sample from the Mawangdui manuscripts is only 30%, an unexpected result that he is unable to explain.<sup>202</sup>

In summary, based on the examples provided in Jia Lianxiang 2015, except for the anomaly observed in the Mawangdui manuscript sample, the other three measured absolute gravimetric water content of the bamboo samples from unearthed manuscripts, either scientifically excavated or unprovenicend, all fall into the range they are supposed

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<sup>199</sup> Jia Lianxiang 2015, 62-63.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 62-63. Jia noted that the calculation result of the bamboo from the Mawangdui manuscripts was acquired from Hu Jigao 1979, 66. Jia suspects that the data recorded might not be correct.

to. On top of that, as pointed out by Hu Pingsheng, no evidence suggests that any modern forger has succeeded in forging bamboo or wooden slips to have them acquire the great amount of water content that can only be observed in unearthened manuscript samples. Therefore, measuring the water content contained in an unprovenanced manuscript samples can indeed serve as a criterion at least to determine whether the sample belongs to bamboo from early times. It would be ideal for institutes that preserve unearthened manuscripts, including both scientifically excavated and unprovenanced ones, to gather and publish information regarding the water content of their manuscript samples. As for the authenticity of the manuscripts that provide the sample, the fundamental problem of whether or not the physical properties of the entire set of manuscripts can be well represented by that single sample still exists.

### **III. 3. Applying multiple types of evidence**

At present, in addition to the several types of evidence that have been discussed above, there are multiple types of material evidence at scholars' disposal to assist them in determining the authenticity of a certain set of unprovenanced manuscripts. It might be the case that one type of evidence alone does not provide sufficiently comprehensive information, but when multiple types of evidence are taken into consideration, they can possibly lead to reasonable and well-informed judgments regarding the authenticity of unprovenanced manuscripts. For example, the discussion in the last section of chapter three mentions that the absolute gravimetric water content of the bamboo sample from Tsinghua University (400%) falls into the same range as the scientifically excavated Yinqueshan manuscript sample (332%), and measuring the water content contained in unprovenanced manuscript samples can serve as a criterion to at least determine whether

the bamboo sample is from early times. Apart from this, the result of radiocarbon dating on the bamboo sample provided by Tsinghua University (a different sample, of course, than the samples used for measuring water content) indicates that, at 2 $\sigma$  confidence, there is a 35.1% probability that the sample's calendar date ranges from 400 B.C.E. to 340 B.C.E., and a 60.3% probability it ranges from 320 B.C.E. to 200 B.C.E.<sup>203</sup> It is understandable, therefore, that doubts regarding the true relationship among the samples used for these scientific analyses and the other manuscripts acquired by Tsinghua University might still remain. Yet, Liu Guozhong 2011 provides crucial information that can be regarded as a type of quasi-external evidence when he describes the procedure of cleaning and preserving the manuscripts after they arrived at the university:

“The second stage of our work was to remove the grime crusted onto the strips' surface. While buried underground the bamboo strips picked up a lot of dirt, forming a thick layer of grime that was difficult to remove. Restoring the strips to their original appearance could only be done by soaking them in clean water and then carefully wiping away the dirt...Removing dirt is one of the most fundamental tasks in preserving bamboo strips, yet it is also an extremely difficult job, since the strips are very fragile and easily damaged...Paying close attention to detail, our movements needed to be as gentle as possible, deciding with each stroke what had to be cleaned off and what should be preserved. We tried to avoid any area where traces of characters remained, doing everything in our power to save all of the writing on the strips. Similarly, we tried to preserve other important features of the strips as well, such as the remaining traces of silk threads and binding marks, since these data also constitute primary source material.”<sup>204</sup>

This passage describes the condition of the manuscripts when first acquired: the writing on the bamboo slips and other features, such as silk threads and binding marks, do not

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>204</sup> The English translation was quoted from Foster and French 2016, 58. See the original Chinese description in Liu Guozhong 2011, 40. The condition of the manuscripts was in fact first reported in Zhao Guifang 2012, 238, 241.

resemble what can normally be observed in published photographs until the dirt and a thick layer of grime are carefully removed. If a modern forger or a team of modern forgers schemes to fabricate a set of manuscripts, with the physical properties of their fake manuscripts matching that of the bamboo slips preserved in Tsinghua University, they need to achieve the following:

- 1) The results of radiocarbon dating and water content measuring of the fake manuscript sample need to match that of a scientifically excavated manuscript sample;
- 2) The writing needs to be executed on bamboo slips that are like overcooked noodles;
- 3) A layer of grime needs to be created on these extremely soft and fragile bamboo slips.

Perhaps someone might be capable of resolving these issues – it is theoretically plausible to use scientifically excavated blank bamboo slips to fabricate fake manuscripts – but to achieve all three listed factors listed above simultaneously would be an extremely difficult task. Besides, the aforementioned evidence merely concerns the material aspects of excavated manuscripts; other types of evidence, such as calligraphy and content of manuscript text must also be forged to meet their respective criteria. It has been clearly stated previously that I am neither in a position to judge nor intended to judge the authenticity of any specific manuscript; this statement still remains true here: the current discussion does not, and is not intended to, judge the authenticity of the bamboo manuscripts preserved in Tsinghua University. Nevertheless, if these manuscripts were indeed fabricated by modern forgers, then they have achieved something that is seemingly impossible. The various types of evidence used in discussing the authenticity of the manuscripts preserved in Tsinghua University remind us that one type of evidence

alone may not be decisive, but when multiple types of evidence point in the same direction, that which is suggested by the evidence might have led to a sensible conclusion.

#### IV. Conclusion

This thesis encompasses discussions regarding various aspects of *bianwei* studies in the context of early Chinese texts but has concentrated on dealing with topics such as the definition of authenticity and inauthenticity in that context, the methodology and arguments that can be employed to determine either the authenticity or inauthenticity of a text, and possible motives behind producing an inauthentic text.

Early Chinese texts, during and after the formative stage, were subject to changes, alterations, and omissions during two millennia of transmission. These changes, alterations, and omissions were either deliberately made because of editorial bias or were due to inadvertent mistakes such as scribal errors in copying manuscripts or wrongly selected type during printing. Since these changes might be treated by later generations of scholars as evidence to suggest that the texts are forgeries, it is of great importance for us to be aware of their true nature – these early texts have undergone long periods of fluidity, and any individual who was involved in the history of a text's transmission might have had his or her impact on the text. As a matter of fact, such fluidity might be said to be an idiosyncrasy of all pre-modern texts throughout Chinese history. An already mentioned example (I. 5) pertains to the received edition of the sixth century literatus Wang Tong's *Zhongshuo*, which was frequently treated by later scholars either as the genuine work of the author or as a forgery created by someone else. Yet, Ding Xiang Warner astutely points out that, rather than oversimplifying the issue of the text's authenticity as an all-or-nothing dichotomy, the textual problems of this received edition were caused by a gradual process of accumulative editorial interventions. Any individual who engaged in the transmission of the work give rise to these textual problems.

Warner's description of editorial interventions that shaped the received *Zhongshuo* was termed "collaborative authorship" by Christopher Nugent, who views this particular type of authorship as the norm for literati of the Tang dynasty. But undoubtedly the pre-modern Chinese literati's practice of editorial interventions was not limited to the Tang dynasty. In this thesis, numerous cases have been discussed in addition to the received *Zhongshuo*: the early transmission history of the *Guanzi* (I. 2) and that of the *Liezi* (I. 4), the reception of Tao Qian's poetry in the Song dynasty (I. 5), and the fate of two Ming dynasty-printed editions of the *Chonggu wenjue* (I. 5). Traces of editorial efforts can be witnessed in texts of distinct genres that originated from time periods ranging from early China to the late imperial era. Presented with such common and frequent phenomena, any sensible scholar should not continue using the oversimplified notion of authentic and forged to label a pre-modern Chinese text. Rather, the nature of a text's textual problems ought to be rigorously examined.

It is indeed the case that if any unprovenanced manuscript is not deemed authentic, then it can only be a forgery (III. 1). But I doubt that the majority of pre-modern texts, if not all of them, that were accused by pre-modern *bianwei* scholars of being forgeries were in fact fabricated by forgers. It is more likely that those *bianwei* scholars were only able to identify the textual problems of the so-called *weishu* and ascribe the problems to forgery, without recognizing the underlying causes that led to the problems. These causes, either termed editorial interventions or as collaborative authorship, remind us of the simple fact that "texts are always changed in the course of transmission, by accident or design."<sup>205</sup> In her seminal article "Book Culture and Textual

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<sup>205</sup> Cherniack 1994, 5.

Transmission in Sung China,” Susan Cherniack argues that the notion of “collaborative authorship” characterizes traditional Chinese textual transmission. Moreover, she noted that the contemporary trend in Western textual criticism since the 1980s, which abandoned the goal of restoring the critical edition but conceptualized a literary work as a natural “shape-shifter,” might be applied to the study of change in Chinese textual transmission:

“What we encounter is not the work as the author wrote it but what Jerome J. McGann calls a “shaping-shifting” entity – an ever-changing work of composite authorship, which reveals itself as an ongoing social project, with contributions from sundry readers, editors, collators, printers, and booksellers.”<sup>206</sup>

The aforementioned three studies on medieval Chinese manuscripts and manuscript culture by Tian Xiaofei, Christopher Nugent, and Ding Xiang Warner, respectively, represent successful applications of such a notion. In their studies, textual changes are treated as social phenomena in difference stages of their development. Such a non-pejorative view of a text may benefit the *bianwei* studies as well: instead of endeavoring to determine whether a text is authentic or not – which, in most cases, is intrinsically a false question for the pre-modern Chinese texts that are accused of being forgeries – we ought to aim to examine what kind of textual problems exist in a transmitted text and how these problems have occurred and developed. Essentially, this is the attempt to gain a better understanding of the nature of the pre-modern texts.

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 8.

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