EREMITISM IN CHINA TO 220 A.D.

Aat Vervoorn

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This thesis is based entirely on my own original research.

Aat Vervoorn

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Although hermits remain aloof from society, it is not advisable for those who study them to do so. Certainly I have benefited greatly from my association with others in the course of my research. This is particularly true in the case of my supervisors, Professor Liu Ts'ur-yan, Dr. K.H.J. Gardiner, and Dr. P. Ryckmans, who have provided much advice, criticism and encouragement. Dr. C. Jeffcott found time for many long discussions of my work, in the course of which numerous ideas were generated, issues clarified, and confusions greatly reduced. I have also gained much through my conversations with Chan Man Sing, whose subtle and incisive comments saved me from many a blunder. From Terry Russell also I have received most helpful comments and advice. Lee Cheuk Yin has helped me in many ways, pointing out major references and steering me towards a greater understanding of Chinese philosophy; and it is him I must thank for the fine calligraphy in this thesis. That ultimately my material has attained presentable form is in no small measure due to the excellent work of Caroline Twang: it is she who has expertly and efficiently transformed a rather shapeless manuscript into a thing of clarity and order.
Eremitism in China was a product of the socio-political and intellectual changes of the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States period. The basic philosophical presuppositions of eremitism, relating to individual moral choice and autonomy, were first formulated by Confucius, although there existed certain ideas, practices and individuals before him that can be regarded as having prefigured eremitism. During the Warring States period a wide range of philosophies of eremitism developed, philosophies based on varying premises and aspiring to ideals which frequently were antithetical. With the unification of China, first by the Qin dynasty and then by the Han, the socio-political context in which eremitic ideas had to operate changed drastically; the implications of virtuous withdrawal were more serious when there was no longer a choice of rulers to serve. Hence although what evidence there is indicates that most varieties of eremitism continued to flourish throughout the Han period, in the first hundred years of the dynasty there was little Confucian timely eremitism. However, from that time on a new type of eremitism began to develop, which in the Later Han period became highly fashionable. This was Confucian exemplary eremitism, which was a major element in the scholarly culture generated by the imperial backing of Confucianism and the operation of the recommendatory system for official appointments. The social and political standing of hermits also rose as a result of Wang Mang's policy of honouring worthy men in order to establish the legitimacy of his claim to the throne, a policy which was continued by the emperors of the Later Han. Political events towards the end of the Han - particularly the Great Proscription - resulted in hermits gaining even further social and political prestige and influence, and by 220 A.D. most of the major characteristics of the Chinese eremitic tradition had been established.
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INTRODUCTION

Eremitism was discussed at length by the philosophers of the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.), and accounts of hermits both legendary and historical are prominent in the texts of that time. Until well into the twentieth century hermits were to remain a major feature of Chinese culture.

When Europeans first found themselves in a position to travel more or less where they wanted in China in the late nineteenth century, the presence of hermits of various kinds was one aspect of the country which attracted their attention. Thus we find that in his account of a trip up the Yangtse River in 1871, the pioneer photographer John Thomson tells of visiting an almost inaccessible cave in the Wushan Gorge, inhabited by 'an aged hermit, who had been living there alone on herbs and meditation for many years past'. But for the Chinese of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries eremitism was more than a cultural curiosity; it was an element of their socio-political tradition which, for good or ill, they believed, continued to exert a major influence in their time. When Chen Duxiu (1889-1943) issued his 'Call to Youth' in 1915, he declared that China would survive only if young intellectuals were prepared to be active participants in the struggle for national survival rather than recluses who remained aloof:

sympathetically interpreted, withdrawal is the action of lofty men setting themselves apart from the world; unsympathetically interpreted, it is a manifestation of the weak unable to succeed in the struggle for survival....I want youth to become Confucius and Mozi and Kung Fu and Xuyous 興由斯.\(^2\)

Chen Duxiu's belief in the persistence of the eremitic tradition among
twentieth century Chinese intellectuals was strikingly vindicated the following year. For in December 1916, when the President of the Republic Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) was moving to assume the imperial throne and re-establish the monarchy, he not only bestowed traditional aristocratic titles on his leading generals and decreed that two of his leading supporters would henceforth be princes, but also declared four of his erstwhile friends and mentors to be the 'Four Friends of Mount Song'. He did this in order to fabricate a historical parallel between himself and Emperor Hui (r.194-188 B.C.) of the Han dynasty, who when heir-apparent demonstrated his fitness to inherit the throne by managing to win to his side four famous hermits whose support and approval his great father Han Gaozu (r.206-195 B.C.), had failed to obtain. The continuing preoccupation of Chinese intellectuals with eremitism is illustrated by the fact that, as recently as December 1979, the politically committed and now very elderly writer Ding Ling felt obliged to speak out against the selfishness of those who profess to 'see through the red dust of the world' and remain aloof from it.

The reasons behind the prominence of eremitism in Chinese culture are no doubt complex, but one key factor seems to have been that as far as the educated stratum of pre-Buddhist Chinese society was concerned - as we shall see, eremitism was largely a preserve of those with education and the material affluence which tended to be a precondition for education - religion played a relatively minor role in providing norms and ideas to guide the conduct of individuals. It was the philosophers who provided educated men with detailed instructions concerning moral principles and how the individual could attain perfection. Their teachings drew extensively on the rich,
complex religious traditions which existed in ancient Chinese society, but in articulating and elaborating religious ideas invariably rationalised and intellectualised them. This meant that the highest principles and ideals of educated Chinese tended to have a secular rather than a religious foundation. In cultures in which morality is regarded as divinely ordained, it is figures such as saints, holy men and monks who are revered for attaining ideals of personal conduct beyond the reach of most men. Such types do in various ways withdraw from the world for the sake of higher things, and therefore in some sense may be considered to exhibit types of eremitism, but their withdrawal from the world has to be understood in terms of a desire to transcend the world, to rise above it to a supramundane realm. The characteristic feature of Chinese eremitism, on the other hand, is that from earliest times it was a secular affair, like the ideals of individual perfection the hermits embodied. Therefore in the non-religious sphere of educated Chinese morality hermits filled roles which in other cultures are occupied by a range of religious figures. When institutionalised religions did become established in China, above all Buddhism, there was a certain amount of mutual influence between their monasticism and the older tradition of eremitism, but the latter lost little of its distinctiveness and vitality.

Eremmitism in the sense that I shall be using the term, then, involves the realisation of particular ideals of personal character and conduct derived from the highest moral authorities of a culture - in the Chinese case, this means primarily the great philosophers of the ancient period. In general, therefore, eremitism may be taken to refer to a mode of conduct or outlook has been fairly consciously arrived it, usually involving some moral and even intellectual sophistication. As to defining eremitism, perhaps it is best to say
that it entails, psychologically, a lack of regard for those things of
the world which are the common objects of human action, such as
wealth, power and fame, with correspondingly greater importance being
attached to goals which in a philosophical or moral sense are
conceived to be 'higher', for example, personal integrity and
unwavering devotion to what is right, or the eradication of desire and
complete identification of the self with the principle of order in the
cosmos; behaviourally, this is manifested in a tendency to withdraw
(either physically or mentally) from those types of social involvement
likely to result in the violation of those higher goals - in
particular, involvement in the realm of politics and state affairs.

Essential to all eremitism is the element of free choice: for
whatever reason a hermit turns away from the world, and whatever the
lifestyle he takes up as a result, he can properly be called a hermit
only if his actions follow from a moral decision rather than merely
the pressures of circumstance. This is one reason the refusal to
accept an official position when it was offered is so crucial in the
biographies of Chinese hermits: a refusal to accept an official post
is fairly clear evidence (though not necessarily conclusive) that the
individual concerned was, for the sake of his principles, declining
the most important opportunity his society offered to win wealth and
renown or to wield power. To be able to refuse such things one first
has to have the option of having them. This is one reason why
eremitism related mainly to the affluent section of society. Just as
it would be misleading to call someone who runs off into the mountains
simply to avoid danger a hermit, so too it is impossible to apply the
term to a poor peasant who from birth has had to scratch a living from
the soil in some remote backwater. It is possible that such a peasant
actually has no interest in worldly things and devotes himself to the
pursuit of moral perfection, but it would be impossible for anyone to identify him as a hermit for the simple reason that his life is no different from that of any other (virtuous) peasant; there is no evidence that he has willingly sacrificed anything to pursue his ideals. In this sense it could be argued that the notion of eremitism itself involves an element of class differentiation. But it is being in a position to choose between lifestyles that counts, and social background is relevant to eremitism primarily in terms of the way it widens or limits that choice.

In what follows, however, I have relatively little to say about the socio-economic background of Chinese hermits. One reason is that there is very little information available on this topic beyond the fact, already mentioned, that Chinese hermits were educated men, and educated men tended to come from families relatively well-off. Frequently, we must assume, the hermit's family was in a position to act as a buffer between the hermit and the grave economic consequences that could be expected to follow from a scholar's refusal to take office. This is the reason we find someone like Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), who came from a poor family, lamenting in his poetry that although he would like to become a hermit, he cannot afford it!

I stumble along in the gathering twilight,
My longing for fine hermitage unfulfilled.
Which road will lead me to a modest position,
Then back to the mountains to buy a small farm?5

But the fact that most Chinese hermits came from relatively wealthy families must not be regarded as sufficient grounds for dismissing all Chinese eremitism as an empty pose which had no practical consequences for the lives of the individuals concerned. As we shall see, the consequences were frequently drastic. Moreover, a considerable number of hermits from the period I shall be discussing are explicitly stated
to have come from poor families. Sometimes their poverty is no doubt to be understood in a relative sense, that of a scholarly family down on its luck rather than the poverty of a landless labourer's family. Nevertheless, it is clear that many did suffer very real and very severe material hardship, and it was their ability to hold unwaveringly to their principles despite this that made them famous.

I have adopted the term 'eremitism' as the most convenient English abstract noun with which to translate the Chinese term 'yinyi', which over the centuries has become the term most widely used in relation to the outlook and actions of those men referred to by a variety of terms which includes 'yinyi', 'yinshi', 'yinzhe', 'gaoshi', 'chushi', 'chuze', 'churen', 'youren', 'yimin', 'yishi'.

It is unnecessary here to embark on an extended etymological discussion of the meanings of 'eremitism', 'hermit' and related words such as 'recluse', 'anchorite' and 'monk'. Certainly it is true that 'hermit' etymologically implies 'lonely' or 'solitary', a notion which, as we shall see in a moment, is not dominant in Chinese eremitism. But in common usage a 'hermit' is not necessarily someone who lives in complete solitude, any more than a 'monk' (the word derives from the Greek 'monos', meaning 'alone') is a person who lives in isolation from all men. We can take 'hermit' to mean, quite simply, 'someone who withdraws from society', and this basic meaning, plus the historical accident that it has generated the only convenient abstract noun in 'eremitism', makes it perfectly adequate for my purposes. On the other hand I have tended to avoid the most likely alternative to 'hermit' - that is, 'recluse' - because in modern usage it has acquired a specifically anti-social meaning: as often as not 'recluse' nowadays is used to refer to someone whose distaste for
social involvement has no moral or philosophical foundation, and this makes it inappropriate for general usage in the Chinese context.

As far as the many Chinese terms which have roughly the same meaning as 'hermit' are concerned, they do sometimes carry different shades of meaning, connotations which derive at least partly from the texts with which they associated and the contexts in which they tend to be used, but at least in the period covered by this thesis they were used quite interchangeably. The most important of these terms were undoubtedly 'yinshi' (with variants such as 'yinzhe' also occurring), 'chushi' and 'yimin'. These I have consistently translated as 'hermit', 'disengaged scholar' and 'men in retirement' respectively. 'Yimin' occurs in the Lunyu 論語, where it refers men 'at leisure' (yì léi), that is, not holding office, not in the service of their lord. It implies that they have held office but because of personal decision or force of circumstance have relinquished it. One of the meanings to the English word 'retire' is similar, and hence my translation of the expression as 'men in retirement'. While 'yimin' is often used with its meaning in the Lunyu in mind, it is also used interchangeably with terms such as 'yinshi' and 'chushi'.

The 'yin' in 'yinshi' of course means 'to hide, to withdraw, to conceal, to secrete', and the notion of scholars hiding in seclusion is close enough to the fairly neutral term 'hermit' to make the latter a satisfactory equivalent. However, it must be remembered that 'yin' can also mean 'to lean, to recline', hence this expression also has the connotation of leisure or unemployment. The term 'yinyi' clearly conveys this meaning as well as that of hiding or going into seclusion.
The 'chu' in 'chushi' means 'to dwell, to remain, to occupy, to be at rest in'. In this context it is the antonym of 'chu Unchecked', 'to go out' (into the world, to take part in public affairs). A chushi is a scholar who remains where he is, at home, without involving himself in public affairs. Thus the basic emphasis of 'chushi' is somewhat different from that of 'yinshi', despite the fact that they were frequently used as synonyms. The fundamental focus of the former is on a refusal to take part in the affairs of the world, a wish to remain aloof from public life, rather than on the idea of going into seclusion or physically isolating oneself. Consideration of the term 'chushi' in fact can help us to understand one of the essential ways in which Chinese eremitism differs from western eremitism. Whereas in the West eremitism has been basically a matter of physically isolating oneself from society, usually in inhospitable surroundings such as deserts or mountains, in order to pursue 'higher' goals, in China the idea of physical isolation was not fundamental to eremitism, though hermits might seek to varying degrees to separate themselves from society. What was fundamental was the idea of cutting oneself off from public life, putting distance between oneself and those concerns of the world which might deflect one from one's moral purpose. This was something which could be achieved while living among the common people, in poverty and anonymity. Even when Chinese hermits did retreat into the mountains to live in self-sufficient isolation, they usually took their families with them. A completely solitary life was not something that was highly regarded. Thus even an extremist as famous as Chen Zhongzi 陳仲子 (fl.c.290 B.C.), who tried to live independently of a society he regarded as corrupt, still had his wife (and presumably also his children) with him.
The comparatively social orientation of Chinese hermits reflects the secular ideals they sought to realise. A Christian hermit lived a solitary life so that no-one might distract him from his personal relationship with God; he lived a life of self-denial and deprivation in order to weaken the claims his body made on his soul. But most Chinese hermits held earthly ideals, ideals which were largely social in implication; for them there was no point in the rejection of all human contact or the mortification of the flesh. They saw nothing wrong the satisfaction of basic human needs, such as food, shelter, and affectionate family life. What they did regard with suspicion was the desire for more than those basic necessities. It was that desire which drove men to throw off all moral restraints and exploit their official positions at the expense of the well-being of the people at large.

The term 'chushi', then, reflects this social orientation of Chinese hermits and their concern with public life. I have translated it with the expression 'disengaged scholar' in an attempt to convey the fact that not only were Chinese hermits men who refused to hold public office, but also that their withdrawal was as much political as it was physical. While it may be argued that a refusal to take part in politics is always a political act, it nevertheless makes good sense to describe Chinese eremitism as political disengagement.

To conclude this discussion of the concepts and terminology relating to eremitism, I will give two illustrations of the way the expression 'yinzhe' was used which give a very clear indication of what the concept of eremitism signified in early China. The first comes from the great Han philosopher Yang Xiong's 揚雄.
In that work Yang Xiong rejects the suggestion that Dongfang Shuo, the famous wit and eccentric from the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, should be regarded as a hermit—presumably on the grounds of his professed indifference to things such as high rank, power, wealth, and his cultivation of the role of what he called 'a hermit at court' (chaoyin: this notion is the subject of Chapter 4 below). Yang Xiong argues that Dongfang Shuo cannot be regarded as a hermit (yinzhe) because there is no evidence either that he conducted himself virtuously or that he had exceptional understanding. 'The hermits of old were renowned both for their speech and their conduct', says Yang Xiong. Dongfang Shuo was notorious rather than famous for his. Thus while Dongfang Shuo may well have been indifferent to worldly success and despite his position at court attempted to remain aloof from public affairs, in Yang Xiong's eyes he lacked the moral seriousness and exemplary behaviour essential to a hermit.

My second example illustrates even more vividly that externalities such as acting without regard for worldly success, living in isolation and poverty, and keeping aloof from public life, were not considered sufficient in early China to make one a hermit; only a person of wisdom and integrity could be regarded as such. This example comes from the Wei lue, a text of the fourth century A.D. of which only fragments have survived. It concerns Jiao Xian (c.168-c.256), one of the most fascinating and extreme figures in the entire history of Chinese eremitism, whose contemporary, the authority on hermits Huangfu Mi, regarded him as quite without parallel in the entire history of Chinese civilisation. In 211, having lost his wife and family in the fighting and disorders accompanying the fall of Han, Jiao Xian went to live in hiding on the
northern bank of the Yellow River near Dayang (not far downstream from the Wei River junction). There he eventually built himself a thatched hut. Thanks to a friend’s intervention, he was registered with the local authorities as a lunatic, thereby qualifying for an invalid pension in the form a daily allowance of grain from the government granary. This kept him alive, while his status as a lunatic left him free from the attention of government officials, except when they needed someone to bury the victims of epidemics. He lived a particularly hard life, avoiding human contact when he could, and seldom speaking. Yet despite the great deprivation he experienced he never did the slightest thing that might compromise his integrity, and his actions led some people to suspect that he was not mad after all. When early in 253 a large force was being dispatched by the Wei (D)ynasty to subjugate Wu, someone asked Jiao Xian what he thought. Jiao Xian’s only response was to sing:

The sacrificial victim, the sacrificial victim!
Neither fish nor animal.
More and more they pursue each other.
Intent at heart on killing the ewe
But killing their ram instead!

Nobody could make head or tail of this. However, when in due course the Wei army was soundly defeated, those with some knowledge of state affairs began to suspect that the 'ewe' Jiao Xian had sung about was Wu, while the 'ram' was Wei. And from then on everyone called him a hermit[yinzhe].15 In other words, no matter how isolated a life Jiao Xian lived or indifferent he was to worldly things, until there was reason to believe that he was a man of superior understanding and moral refinement he could not be regarded as a hermit.
The above considerations should be sufficient to show, on the one hand, that in Chinese culture there was a cluster of ideas, values and types of behaviour which can with some accuracy be labelled 'eremitism' in English, and, on the other hand, that Chinese eremitism had some distinctive qualities which derived from the cultural and social milieus in which it flourished. Hence there is good reason to believe that the study of Chinese eremitism may provide insight into the nature of traditional Chinese society and its political culture. Central to Chinese eremitism is the question of the relationship of the individual to the state and society, the problem of how social expectations and obligations are to be reconciled with personal beliefs and attitudes. A study of eremitic ideals and practices should lead to a deeper understanding of the concepts of individuality and individual responsibility in traditional Chinese culture, and also of the distinctive qualities of the socio-political order in which the individual found himself.

Over the centuries hermits featured prominently in Chinese philosophy, poetry and history. Yet from modern scholars—whether from the East or the West—they have received remarkably little attention. Chinese scholars have tended to view eremitism as a symptom of social decay, a form of self-deception and hypocrisy which serves only to hasten socio-political decline. Examples of this view are debunking articles on eremitism by Lu Xun (1881-1936) and Shen Gangbo. With his customary biting wit, Lu Xun argues that since a genuine hermit is someone who disappears from the view of historians, the hundreds about whom we know so much must have been rather less than sincere: being a hermit is a way of making a living like any other, and hence requires the hermit to hang up his sign in order to attract the attention to himself. Jiang Xingyu
星恒 wrote his study of the significance of hermits in Chinese culture, *Zhongguo yinshi yu Zhongguo wenhua* 中国隱士與中國文化, in 1943 in Chongqing 重庆, when the final extinction of Chinese culture was a very real possibility. Under these circumstances it is understandable that he attacked eremitism as a disease which sapped the will of the Chinese people to fight the Japanese. Nevertheless he did bring together some useful material on the subject, despite his hostile attitude. Even what is probably the best discussion of eremitism in the early period, Wang Yao's 王瑤 essay 'Lun xiqu yinyi zhi feng 論希夷隱逸風', treats it on a par with drinking wine, drug taking and forging 'old' texts. Unfortunately most of the work on this topic by scholars from the People's Republic suffers seriously from the necessity of having to fit eremitism into a rigid Marxist framework. In recent years eremitism has begun to attract more attention in Taiwan, particularly among younger scholars. Sometimes their work too suffers from historical material being interpreted in the light of modern political concerns. In their case hermits are represented as the champions of intellectual freedom and individual autonomy in the traditional autocratic society. This is an interpretation which contains an important element of truth but nevertheless has to be reconciled with the fact that on the whole Chinese hermits were less concerned to criticise the socio-political system as such than to criticise the abuses within it. One of the most useful works by a modern Chinese scholar is not concerned with eremitism as such so much as the position of intellectuals generally in early Chinese society: Yu Ying-shih's 翟英時 collection of essays, *Zhongguo zhishi jieceng shilun* 中国知識階層史論. Some of these essays were written more than twenty years ago and in some respects are open to
question, but they still throw considerable light on the development of the Chinese eremitic tradition.

Chinese eremitism has begun to attract some attention from Japanese scholars, but there too publications on the subject have tended to remain exploratory and limited in scope. As in China, eremitism has usually been discussed as a feature of literary history rather than a topic worthy of attention in its own right. The most extended Japanese discussion is still Nemoto Makoto's monograph, *Sendai shakai ni okeru teiko seishin*, published in 1952, but Nemoto's treatment is rather general and not very closely tied to particulars of time and place. Fuji Madaharu's *Chugoku no inja* (1973), is much less ambitious, discussing only a few texts and individual hermits from the early period. In recent years there have also been a number of journal articles on individual hermits, but on the whole these have been little more successful than those attempting more ambitious analyses.

Studies in English on eremitism, on the other hand, remain few indeed. They include A.R. Davis' pioneering study, 'The Narrow Lane: Some Observations on the Recluse in Traditional Chinese Society', and Li Chi's article on 'The Changing Concept of the Recluse in Chinese Literature', as well as Frederick Mote's important study of eremitism in the Yuan dynasty: Mote's work has recently been supplemented by Tu Wei-ming's study of one of the major hermits that period. Important material is also contained in Richard Mather's discussion of 'The Controversy over Conformity and Naturalness during the Six Dynasties', while more recently comparisons between Chinese and Christian eremitism have been drawn by Wolfgang Bauer.
One of the most striking things about all these studies of Chinese eremitism is that, despite the fact that many of them deal with the period up to the end of the Han dynasty (around 220 A.D.), there is not one which seriously addresses the question of precisely when and how the Chinese eremitic tradition began. The problem of identifying the forces which shaped its development—especially during the Han dynasty—has received only slightly more attention. It is primarily to these fundamental and virtually untouched questions that the present thesis addresses itself. It was my original intention first to examine the begins of eremitism in the pre-Han period, than consider its transformation and development in the context of the institutions of the unified empire, and then to move on to a detailed study of the Wei-Jin period, which can with some justification be regarded as the golden age of Chinese eremitism. Contrary to my initial expectations, however, I discovered so much material relating to the Zhou [周] and more particularly the Han period, much of it ignored or overlooked in previous studies, that my plan for studying the eremitism of the Wei-Jin period had to be postponed beyond the termination of this thesis. Nevertheless, I believe that the material presented in this study will show that some of the most entrenched assumptions concerning the outlook of intellectuals and their relationship to the socio-political order, in the Wei-Jin period as in Han dynasty, will now have to be revised.

Since my primary concern is with the origin and the development of eremitism in China, it will not come as a surprise that my treatment of the subject is largely chronological. Naturally there are other ways in which the material could approached. However, particularly in light of the fact that the failure to give adequate consideration to the evolution of the eremitic tradition in time has
been a weakness of many earlier studies, it seems to me that a careful, developmental study is required before other perspectives can be fruitfully explored.

Almost all the information used in this study comes from early historical and philosophical texts. I have referred only rarely to purely 'literary' works. In a way this is a pity, for the poetry of eremitism is particularly rich and fascinating. Nevertheless, reliance on literary texts for historical evidence introduces some very complex problems of interpretation, and these I have tried to avoid. Eremi
im as a subject in poetry (and painting) is a topic which requires separate treatment.

It will be noticed that my treatment of the pre-Han period is somewhat different to my treatment of the Han itself. In Chapter One I discuss the development of the various philosophies of eremitism and the socio-political circumstances which gave rise to them. In that chapter there is little in the way of detailed consideration of the lives or motives of individual hermits. On the other hand, in my treatment of the Han period in subsequent chapters I not only consider the emergence of new ideas and the transformation of old ones in the context of socio-political change, but also how those ideas went into action in the lives of individuals. To some extent this approach has been forced on me by the nature of the sources available: for the early period there is little information available concerning the lives of individual hermits; for the Han period - especially the Later Han - there is quite a lot. But it is also the approach best suited to the history of the time. The Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods was the time when the great philosophic traditions of China took shape; the Han was the time when those traditions were
adapted to the radically new conditions of life under the empire, when they acquired many of the distinctive features that were to endure for the next two thousand years.

As to the historical information on which I have relied: is Lu Xun's ironic conclusion true, that genuine hermits will invariably disappear from the view of historians and the only information we obtain will concern charlatans? Fortunately not. In early China, hermits were very important politically as well as socially, hence our main source of information is not what they said about themselves but what others said about them. At court and elsewhere, much of what hermits said and did was recorded for the edification of later generations. A considerable quantity of this information has survived, but has as yet been the subject of very little in the way of systematic analysis. Hopefully the present study will go some way towards making up for this earlier neglect.
NOTES


2. Chen Duxiu, 'Jinggao qingnian 敬告青年', *Duxiu wencong 據秀文存* (Hong Kong: Yuandong tushu gongsi, 1965), 1/5-6. Chaofu and Xuyou were legendary hermits. Except where indicated otherwise, all translations in this thesis are my own.

3. Xu Shichang 徐世昌, Zhang Jian 張謇, Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽, and Li Jingxi 李經羲 were named the Four Friends of Mount Song because of the sacred mountain of Yuan Shikai's home province of Henan 河南, Mount Song, and in allusion to the Four Silverhairs (sihao 四皓), the famous hermits from the early Han period. As will be shown below, the tradition of hermits adopting the position of 'friend' (as opposed to 'subject') at a ruler's court began as early as the fifth century B.C. Towards the end of the Former Han period the role of 'Friend' to the emperor was actually turned into an official position. This and the case of the Four Silverhairs are discussed in Chapter 2. On Yuan Shikai's appointment of the Four Friends, see Zhengfu gongbao 政府公报, 20 December 1915, and Jerome Ch'en, Yuan Shih-Kai, 1859-1916 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961), 213. T.E. Lautz, 'The Politics of Retirement in Republican China, 1911-1949', (Doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1976), takes the ancient eremitic tradition as the point of departure for his discussion of withdrawal as a political act in twentieth century China. It is significant that Yuan Shikai's 'Four Friends' had all retired from their positions after the beginning of the movement to restore the monarchy.


8. Lunyu 18.8, 20.1. This and all subsequent references to the Lunyu are given in terms of the book and chapter numbers used in such standard editions as Yang Bojun 楊伯峻，Lunyu yizhu 論語 譯注 (2nd ed., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), and D.C. Lau, Confucius: The Analects (Penguin, 1979).

9. One of the earliest extant uses of this compound occurs in Shizhou ji xu 十洲記序，traditionally but hardly reliably attributed to Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 from the reign of Emperor Wu (r.140-87 B.C.) The term 'yinyi' appears to have been just one of the many compound verbs relating to hiding, withdrawing, etc., coined by the kao 考 and fu 賄 poets of that period. For Shizhou ji xu see Dongfang dazhong ji 東方大中集，in Han-Wei-liuchao baijuan mingjia ji 漢魏六朝百三家集, Xinshu tang 信書堂 ed., 1879, ce 3/25a.

10. Li Xian's 季贊 (651-684) commentary to the Hou Han shu 後漢 書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965; hereafter HHS) 25/887, defines a chushi as 'someone who is in command of the arts of the Way but remains at home' (處士，有道者而在家者).

11. Mencius 孟子, 3B.10. This and all subsequent references to Mencius are given in terms of the book and chapter numbers used in such standard editions as Yang Bojun, Mengzi yizhu 孟子 譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), and D.C. Lau, Mencius (Penguin, 1970).


13. Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶 (1879-1933), Fa yan yishu 法言義疏 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, n.d.), 711. All subsequent references to Fa yan are also given in terms of Wang Rongbao's exhaustive commentary on the text, hereafter referred to as FY.


15. Wei lue in commentary to SGZ 11/363-64.


17. The original edition was printed on poor paper and in places was barely legible. Fortunately the work was reissued in 1982. (See note 6).
18. In Wang Yao, Zhonggu wenren shenghuo 中古文人生活 (Hong Kong: Zhongliu chubanshe, 1973), 77-109. This work was inspired by Lu Xun's 'Wei Jin fengdu ji wenzhang yu yao ji xiu zhi guanxi 魏晋風度及文章典範及酒之關係', Lu Xun cuan ji, 3/379-95.


20. See, for example, Liu Xiangfei 劉翔飛, 'Tangren yingyi fengqi 先秦隱逸風氣及其影響' (M. Phil. thesis, Taiwan National University, 1978); Hong Anquan, 'Liàng Han rushi de shiyin taidu yu shehui fengqi', Kong Meng xuebao, 42(1981), 115-39, and 44(1982), 221-54; Chen Yingji 陳英姬, 'Zhongguo shiren shi yu yin de yanjiu 中國仕人仕與隱的研究' (M. Phil thesis, Taiwan Normal University, 1983).


22. Yu Ying-shih, Zhongguo zhishi Jieceng shilun 中國知識階層史論 (Taibei: Lianjing chubanshiye gongsii, 1960). Where a Chinese scholar has translated his own name by the Wade-Giles system and is well known, such as Yu Ying-shih, I shall continue to use the Wade-Giles form rather than changing it to pinyin.


171-78; Takeuchi Hajime 竹村 晃, 'To Shin shitaifu no shosei
i no ichi sokumen 東シ先主の意見の一側面', Toho shukyo 44(Oct. 1974), 33-52; Shimomi Takao 下見隆雄,
'Jokan makki no in'itsu 後漢末期の隠逸', Tetsugaku
哲学, 31(1979), 31-42.

in Traditional Chinese Society' (The Twelfth George Ernest
Morrison Lecture in Ethnology, Canberra: The Australian National
University, 1959); Li Chi, 'The Changing Concept of the Recluse
in Chinese Literature', Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies,
24(1962-1963), 234-47; Frederick W. Mote, 'Confucian Eremite
in the Yuan Period', in Arthur F. Wright (ed.), The Confucian
Persuasion (Stanford U.P., 1960), 202-40; Tu Wei-ming, 'Towards
an Understanding of Liu Yin's Confucian Eremite', in Hok-lam
Chan and Wm. Theodore de Bary (eds.), Yuan Thought: Chinese
Thought and Religion Under the Mongols (Columbia U.P., 1982),
233-77.

26. Richard B. Mather, 'The Controversy over Conformity and
Naturalness during the Six Dynasties', History of Religions, 9.2-3
(Nov. 1969 - Feb. 1970), 160-80 (largely reproduced in his
introduction to his translation of Shishuo xinyu 世説新語, A New Account of Tales of the World [University of Minnesota
Press, 1976]); Wolfgang Bauer, 'The Hermit's Temptation', Guoji
Hanxue huiyi lunwen ji, 9/73-116.

27. A convenient way of locating material on eremitism, as on so many
topics, is to consult the leishu 類書. Particularly useful in
this regard are the relatively early Yuen lei jia 燕類纂 (Shanghai guji 上海古籍 ed., Shanghai, 1982), juan
36-37; Tai ping yulan 太平御覽 (Bao 郭 ed. 1807), juan
501-10; and the Gujin tushu jicheng 古今圖書集成
(Zhonghua Photolithographic ed., Shanghai, 1934), ce 集,
617/45a-619/13a. Hereafter these are referred to as YWLJ, TPYL,
and TSJC respectively.
CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF EREMITISM AND ITS DEVELOPMENT
IN THE WARRING STATES PERIOD

1. Eremitism and the Earliest Texts

There is no evidence that anything that might properly be termed eremitism existed before the time of Confucius (551-479 B.C.). As far as we can now determine, eremitism was a creation of the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States period (approximately 500-221 B.C.) and to a large extent stemmed from the ideas of Confucius himself. It was only after Confucius’ lifetime that a socio-cultural milieu existed in which eremitic ideas could flourish and an eremitic way of life could be pursued. Of course, eremitism in the fairly sophisticated sense that I want to use the term could not begin overnight. When they formulated their eremitic principles, Confucius and the philosophers who came after him found in their tradition elements which could be interpreted as prefiguring their own ideas. This they did, and supplemented their interpretations with numerous stories about legendary hermits from remote antiquity. Fascinating though those stories are, they tell us more about the period in which they originated than about the times to which they purport to relate. Therefore in the first section of this chapter, rather than recount tales about such legendary figures I will consider passages from texts of the period before Confucius expressing attitudes and ideas which can be regarded as elements of the prehistory of eremitism, and which, because of their antiquity and eventual canonical status, came to be regarded as supremely authoritative statements of eremitic principles. The passages I will consider are from the earliest segments of the
Book of Documents (Shang shu 尚書), the hexagram and line texts of the Book of Changes (Yi jing 易經), and the Book of Songs (Shi jing 詩經).

In those sections of the Book of Documents commonly accepted as 'genuine' (in the rather loose sense that they consist of material dating from pre-Qin 楚 times), there are two passages which came to be construed as relating to eremitism. One of these is the passage in Yaodian 葛 典 in which Siyue 四岳 declines to accept the position of emperor when offered it by Yao 蓬.1 Siyue's reason for declining, however, is that he modestly considers himself unworthy of that august position. So it seems that his actions stem from considerations such as deference and gentlemanly non-contention, modes of conduct which came to be closely identified with Confucian teaching2 but do not have any special eremitic significance, though they do indicate something of the background of more general ideals against which some of the distinctive characteristics of Chinese eremitism are to be understood. The other passage is that in the Weizi 淮子 section which narrates a conversation between the Viscount of Wei and two members of the Shang 莽 court when the fall of the dynasty was imminent. The Viscount announces that he 'will set forth and go away; the old men of our house have retreated to the countryside'.3 This passage illustrates the point made in relation to the definition of eremitism given above, that we can properly talk of eremitism only where there is evidence of a moral decision to withdraw from a world which threatens the moral integrity of the individual. There is no reason to assume in this case that the old men were trying to do anything more than save their own necks by deserting the palace for the country (huang 荒) or suburbs (huangjiao 荒郊).
Although there are points of contact between the two, we must distinguish between being a hermit and being a refugee. The term 'hermit' becomes impossibly imprecise if we apply it to all those who take refuge in isolated places in order to avoid danger. It is essential to the idea of being a hermit that the dangers the individual wishes to keep at a distance are essentially moral dangers, such as loss of self-control or personal integrity. In ancient China, as in other times and places, it was common practice to escape danger by fleeing into the mountains, forests or swamps. This is attested, for example, by the 

\[ \text{Mozi} \]

which states that such behaviour may be enough to elude men but not spirits, and also by 

\[ \text{Zhuangzi} \]

. In fact, it is reflection on the inadequacies of this practice as a way of staying alive that gives much of the inner chapters of 

\[ \text{Zhuangzi} \]

their point. I shall return to this in the section on 

\[ \text{Zhuangzi} \]

below.

The \textit{Book of Changes} originated as a divination manual, and continued to be regarded as such in some quarters long after it had begun to attract sophisticated philosophical attention. This familiar point needs to be restated, not in order to dismiss the text as so much worthless superstition, but in order to try to determine what meaning is likely to have been attributed to particular passages in the text roughly before the time of Confucius. References to the \textit{Book of Changes} in the \textit{Zuo zhuan} indicate that even before Confucius it was referred to for philosophical wisdom as well as for divinatory purposes, but of course it was the expositions contained in the \textit{Ten Wings (shì yì)} which transformed the text into a work of the highest philosophical interest, and the \textit{Ten Wings} do not date from before the Warring States period. In relation to the history of eremitism this is of the utmost importance, for it was the
Ten Wings which first introduced specifically eremitic ideas into this classic.

The fundamental, original purpose of the Book of Changes was to serve as a guide for decision-making in government: when faced with a given situation, a ruler or official could consult the oracle to determine what sort of response would be appropriate. What the hexagram and line texts (guaci 鬆 and yaoci 隨) provide is a description in the most general terms of the type of response indicated by any given hexagram. The texts for particular hexagrams and their constituent lines may advocate anything from prompt and determined action when circumstances are favourable to strict avoidance of action when the situation is such that action would precipitate disaster, when the only possibility of a positive outcome lies in cautiously waiting for circumstances to change. Inevitably these judgements are couched in terms so general that they may be applied to the full range of situations and decisions that might be faced by those involved in affairs of state. There is little in the text that would relate the judgements to specific actions, since that would destroy the system's claim to be a comprehensive guide to human affairs. This in turn means that as the repertoire of roles and modes of behaviour in the culture to which it belonged changed, so too did the explanatory scope of the Book of Changes and the way its judgements were applied to particular situations. Thus when eremitism was added to the repertoire of socio-political roles during the late Spring and Autumn period, those parts of the text which counselled caution and non-action came to be interpreted with that type of behaviour in mind, and eremitism came to be regarded as the course of action advocated when certain hexagrams were turned up.
It is illuminating to consider the hexagram dun \(\text{遁}\) in this context. 'Dun' ('to retreat', 'to withdraw', 'to hide') is given an amplified meaning in the commentaries Tuan zhuan 太傳, Daxiang zhuan 大象傳, and Zagua zhuan 離卦傳. 'Dun indicates retiring', comments the latter,\(^8\) while the commentary on the image is:

...the superior man keeps the inferior man at a distance, Not angrily but with reserve.\(^9\)

This commentary introduces eremitic sentiments which are not present in the hexagram or line texts - there 'retreat' is presented as a matter of caution, avoidance of danger, not as a question of moral superiority and the desire to keep the corrupt world at a distance.

It has been argued by Gao Heng 高亨 that the character dun 遁, 'to retreat', probably is a substitute for dūn 蠟, meaning 'piglet'.\(^10\) Reading dun to mean piglet certainly makes it easier to make sense of the line text; it also shifts much of the emphasis away from the notion of withdrawal to the practice of giving ceremonial gifts (for which piglets were used). Thus the interpretation of the fourth line, which is rendered by Wilhelm/Baynes as:

Voluntary retreat brings good fortune to the superior man
And downfall to the inferior man.\(^11\)

becomes:

Giving piglets as ritual presents, the gentleman gains good fortune, the petty man bad fortune.

Gao Heng's reconstruction of something close to the original meaning of the Book of Changes strips passages such as this of the encrustations of eremitic thought that built up around them over time. However, it does not change their emphasis on caution and the need to avoid dangerous situations. While dun probably originally meant
'piglet' rather than 'retreat', the fact that this hexagram indicates a dangerous situation remains unchanged. It should also be emphasised that the interpretation of such passages against a background of eremitic ideas began very early: it had certainly begun when the Ten Wings were compiled, presumably in the Warring States period.12 This applies not only to the dun hexagram, but also to all the others which develop the principles of caution and prudence, such as qian 乾, kun 坤, song 素 and gen 艮.

The only passage in the hexagram and line texts which could be regarded as presenting problems for my argument here is the well-known text for the last line of gu 顧: 少事五侯，高尚其事 translated by Wilhelm/Baynes as 'He does not serve kings and princes, sets himself higher goals'.13 Even Gao Heng comments that this line refers to 'staying in seclusion and not serving in office'.14 I believe this is wrong, however, and that this is one of the few points where Gao Heng goes off the track. If we set aside the idea, foisted on us by long-established patterns of thought, that this line must refer to eremitism, it becomes clear that a more natural rendering of the grammar would be, 'he does not serve the king or (feudal) lords, setting his own affairs higher'. In other words, we have to distinguish between setting oneself loftier goals and valuing one's private affairs more highly. The latter are as likely as not to be anything but lofty concerns. That it is not high-mindedness which leads to the refusal to serve is borne out by the text for the hexagram as a whole.

Gu, in the context of this hexagram, means 'affairs' (shi 事).15 The hexagram as a whole relates to the handling of affairs, and the individual lines are all said to refer specifically to
handling the affairs either of one's father or mother—at least up to
the final line. This means that if the final line did relate to
withdrawing from official posts in order to further loftier goals it
would be largely unconnected to the meaning of the rest of the
hexagram. But surely its original meaning was that one should give
higher priority to one's own affairs than to serving the king or
feudal lords; duties towards the ruler are to be disregarded not
because one wants to pursue goals which are loftier, but because
circumstances compel one to place private family matters first.
Counsel such as this, it is clear, fits perfectly well with what we
know of both western and eastern Zhou society: the conflict between
family interests and duties toward the ruler was a perennial one.16

As far as the Book of Changes is concerned, then, in the
'classic' itself—namely the hexagram and line texts—we find no
ideas relating specifically to eremitism, but there are passages which
advocate prudent withdrawal and placing private concerns ahead of
serving one's ruler. These passages came to be interpreted in terms
of fully-fledged eremitism in the commentaries known as the Ten Wings,
but these date from no earlier than the Warring States period.

Given the personal, everyday concerns of so many of the poems in
the Book of Songs, it would be reasonable to expect there would be
some which deal, if not with eremitism specifically, then at least
with the problems and pitfalls of holding office. This is precisely
what proves to be the case. Thus Mao 194 (Yu wu zheng 雨無
正) is about the dangers of serving in office, the dilemma of on the
one hand refusing to do so and offending against the Son of Heaven,
or, on the other hand, serving the ruler and incurring the ill-will of
others as a result. However, there is no suggestion that those who
are not inclined to serve offer any moral justification for their attitude. It is simply that serving entails onerous duties and is a source of danger. The emphasis on the dangers and inconvenience of holding office anticipates Zhuangzi, but while this outlook became an important element in his philosophy of eremitism, by itself it amounts to nothing more than dislike and distrust of what official service entails.

Other poems in the anthology present similar viewpoints. Mao 204 (Si yue 四月) is the complaint of an official 'exhausted' by his duties who receives nothing but misfortune for his pains. Mao 205 (Bei shan 北山) expresses the woes of an official who believes that he alone of all the king's servants is faithfully attending to his duties, while others ignore the call and give themselves over to idleness. Very similar are Mao 40 (Bei men 北門), 184 (He ming 鹤鳴) and 193 (Shi yue shi jiao 十月三十): in each case the speaker presents himself as a loyal subject who is the last bulwark against disorder. The viewpoint of those who do not want to serve, on the other hand, is unequivocally expressed in Mao 206 (Wu jiang da ju 無將大車), which advises the listener not to help the great carriage of state on its way, as he will make himself dusty; to serve in office is only to burden oneself with anxieties.

If such attitudes are akin to those later expressed by Zhuangzi, perhaps the poem which brings him most strongly to mind is Mao 186, 'The White Colt' (Bo ju 博駒), which as well as articulating a distaste for official duties contains the term xiaoyao 逍遥, or carefree leisure, which is so central to Zhuangzi's philosophy, as well as the white colt itself, which in Zhuangzi features in the marvellous simile comparing the brevity of human life with a glimpse
of a white colt as it rushes past a crack in a wall. The poem is also an example of how our understanding of a work can be distorted if we read ideas from later periods into it. It is fairly clear that the poem is supposed to be the utterance of a woman who is urging her lover to disregard other concerns, such as his official duties, so that they will be able to prolong the pleasure of each other's company: he must think of himself as a duke or a prince, she says, and give up all thoughts of leaving, in order to be able to enjoy 'carefree leisure without end'. Nevertheless, one traditional interpretation holds that the poem is a harangue against self-indulgence and eremitism - this is in fact how it is translated by Legge. With little more justification, other commentators have taken it as an invitation to become a recluse, interpreting the verbs yi 彦, you 副 and dun 仏 in the particular eremitic sense they subsequently acquired. This is anachronistic distortion of the same sort as that which attributes eremitic ideas to the hexagram and line texts of the Book of Changes.

Expressions of dislike of the dangers and burdens of official duties do not amount to eremitism. It is not just coincidence that the poems mentioned are mostly the complaints of men in office or on behalf of men in office. What the poems are about is the attractions of leisure and idleness for those who are in office; they do not suggest there are moral grounds for refusing to take up office. Pleasure-seeking and idleness are presented in terms of disregard for, or dereliction of, duty, and not as consequences of a refusal to take up duty. The reason for this is most important and helps us understand why, before the time of Confucius, eremitism could neither develop as a philosophy of personal conduct nor as social practice. The poems of the Book of Songs relate to a period when office-holding
was understood in terms of the principle of heredity, and the point about hereditary office-holding is that there is little scope for resigning or declining to take up certain duties and responsibilities, especially on moral grounds. We are used to pointing out the benefits that hereditary office brings to the incumbent, the land, income, power and prestige which are his, regardless of personal merit; but we are less inclined to see that the business of hereditary office-holding cuts both ways. If you are related to an evil king you are stuck with him, and, what is more, are liable to come unstuck with him. In the system of heredity, duty towards the sovereign remains a duty even if it is ignored, a part of the unalterable scheme of things.20

In the poems in the Book of Songs which suggest that there is a degree of choice as to whether or not the individual serves his ruler, such as Mao 194 (Yu wu zheng) and 206 (Wu jiang da ju), the choice is not so much whether or not to take up a given position as whether or not to conscientiously carry out the duties inherent in one's position. The alternative to doing one's duty is turning to pleasure-seeking and idleness. The main word used in this context, yi 违, as it appears in the Book of Documents as well as in the Book of Songs, usually carries connotations of neglect or dereliction of duty and is frequently condemnatory. Thus the Book of Documents contains the section 'Do Not be Idle' (Wu yi 無違) and yi is cited as the cause of the downfall of King Zhou 封王 of the Shang.21 The same meaning is obviously intended in a poem such as Mao 207 (Xiao ming 小命), in which someone on military duty in a remote region reproaches the noblemen back in the capital for their yi 违.
In saying that the poems in the Book of Songs relate to a period in which office-holding was understood in terms of the principle of heredity, I do not mean that there was no place for the consideration of individual merit and ability in official appointments in the Western Zhou and early Spring and Autumn periods. But the argument put forward by some scholars in recent years, that appointments to office at this time were made largely on the basis of personal merit rather than family ties, must be rejected. As Du Zhengsheng has shown in his excellent study of Zhou feudalism, 'heredity' is by no means a simple thing, and where discussion of this topic has fallen down is in assuming that appointment to office on an hereditary basis could only operate in one way — namely, through the eldest son of the proper (or senior) wife in each generation. Du musters a lot of evidence to show that in Western Zhou times all high positions were held on an hereditary basis in the sense that positions were essentially clan possessions, and eligibility for them was a matter determined by kin ties. However, positions did not necessarily pass to the eldest son of the senior wife; they often went to another clan member who was judged to have greater ability or merit. Thus within the hereditary system there was a place for appointment by merit, and no doubt such appointments were sometimes made regardless of kinship ties as well.

What must be stressed here is that principles of heredity were central to the official ideology of the Zhou rulers, which made kinship the basis of government and conceived their position and responsibilities in terms of those of the head of a family. The king was not just the head of state, the supreme authority; he was also the senior member of the senior branch of the family, he in whom all the virtuous power of the ancestors was concentrated and to whom all
other members of the family were obliged to defer. Such was the
theory, and while this was obviously an idealised conception and
reality often fell short of the ideal, it was the ideal which
legitimised authority and the actions of the aristocracy. It was in
terms of that ideal that a refusal to carry out one's duties toward
the ruler would have had to be justified - and that was impossible.
Justification of a refusal to serve the ruler required an alternative
conception of personal morality. It was Confucius who formulated that
alternative conception, and that is the reason why eremitism in China
really began with Confucius.

2. The Pivotal Role of Confucius

Before the notion of refusing to take office, or distancing
oneself from affairs of state despite being qualified to hold office,
can become a matter for philosophical dispute, it is surely necessary
on logical grounds alone for the whole matter of qualification for
office and the justification of participation in state affairs itself
to have become the subject of philosophical dispute: it is difficult
to see how the former could be debated if the latter was not. Nor can
there be much doubt that it was Confucius who turned the question of
qualification for office into a controversial issue by taking the
stand that it was according to the integrity and self-cultivation of
the individual, rather than kinship ties and heredity, that
appointments to office should be made. While Confucius no doubt
made use of ideas and principles already current in his time,
including the doctrine that the ruler's right to the throne derived
from his moral worth, we must assume that his adaptation of such ideas
to a universal ideal of self-perfection in the service of society was
something new. If it were otherwise it would be impossible to account
Perhaps of even greater significance for the development of eremitism was what appears to have been another fundamental innovation by Confucius: the principle that it is the moral nature of the individual, properly cultivated and self-regulated, which can be the only source of ethical value and social order. The junzi — the gentleman, morally superior man or noble man — does what is right by following his own refined moral understanding, spurred by neither fear of punishment nor hope of reward. It is with the concept of such a morally autonomous individual, whose ultimate measure of what can and cannot be done is his own moral sense, that the philosophical possibility of eremitism arises.25

At the heart of Confucius' philosophy lies the ideal of moral perfection, the man of benevolence. It was an ideal he believed was rarely accomplished and only then after long years of self-discipline and self-cultivation. Rules can be dispensed with only after they have been completely internalised.26 When Confucius said, 'Is benevolence really so distant? The moment I want it it is there',27 he was making the point, in a paradoxical way, that benevolence is a question of rectification of the will: once we really want to be benevolent we will be so, but to get that far is not easy.

The gentleman has his heart set upon benevolence even if he has not actually attained it. It is this moral commitment, his sincere endeavour to act according to correct principles, which makes him try to respond to each situation on its particular merits rather than mechanically applying general rules. What Confucius valued in personal conduct was flexibility. "For the gentleman in his dealings with the world there is nothing that is necessarily good, nothing that
is necessarily bad; he keeps only to his judgement of what is
right'. To judge what is 'right' requires great moral sensitivity
and discernment, but once the gentleman has those qualities he can
approach all situations with the flexibility which makes it possible
to make the right decision every time - including the decision whether
or not to take office, or whether or not to resign from his post.

Confucius was not one who regarded lightly the duty of a subject
to his ruler, nor did he suggest that that duty should easily be set
aside. His basic principle is simple to state but far from simple to
put into practice: the gentleman serves in office as long as by doing
so he can further the Way; once that becomes impossible he must
resign to avoid moral compromise. It was for his sensitivity and
discretion in knowing the right moment to take office or retire that
Mencius praised Confucius.

When introducing the notion that a subject's duty to his ruler
could in certain circumstances be waived, Confucius was conscious of
living in a situation in which there was more than one ruler to whom a
gentleman with his heart set upon benevolence could turn. The
principle 'do not enter a state in danger, do not stay in a state in
turmoil', presupposes a situation in which a choice is possible.
Eremitism, as we shall see, was very much tied up with the emergence
of the multi-state polity of the late Zhou period. For Confucius, the
purpose of retiring from a post was not merely to avoid personal
compromise, but also to be able to go elsewhere, to another state,
where, hopefully, it would be possible to help make the Way a reality.

Confucius indicated that should it prove to be the case that the
world was completely without the Way, he would leave it and go to sea
on a raft. In his view it was only when there was nowhere else to
turn that a man would be justified in withdrawing from society altogether. It is this idea which lies behind Lunyu 14.37, a passage which at first sight is rather puzzling:

Worthy men shun the world; next come those who shun a particular place; next come those who shun a particular expression; and next come those who shun particular words.

Interpreting the passage as if it were written by someone like Zhuangzi must be avoided. The point is that complete withdrawal is justifiable only when the whole world is without the Way and therefore to be shunned. It is somewhat less defensible to withdraw completely and finally if it is just a question of not wanting to serve in a particular state or territory in which the Way does not prevail. Remaining in retirement merely to avoid improper looks or expressions cannot really be justified at all, and doing it to avoid improper words even less so.

Confucius' own career demonstrates the strength of his conviction that if necessary a man of principle must travel from state to state until he finds a ruler willing to put his ideas into practice. 'A shi who has his mind set on a sedentary life is not fit to be considered a shi',33 The idea of loyalty to a given ruler or ruling house is not to be found in the Lunyu because for Confucius there was no one ruler or ruling house with an undisputed claim to the Mandate of Heaven. A gentleman could serve with a clear conscience any ruler who refrained from improper conduct and offered some hope that he would put into practice the enlightened principles put before him.

The possibilities for serving in office in the multi-state polity of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, clearly, were very different to what they were after the unification of the empire
by Qin and Han. Once the empire had been unified, virtually all choice about whom to serve was eliminated. If particularly towards the end of the Warring States period men found themselves looking to a unified empire under one ruler as the only way of ending the chronic warfare and social instability which plagued their time, their counterparts under the empire that followed not infrequently longed for the opposite: they looked back with nostalgia to the time when, if dissatisfied with the particular despot or libertine who happened to be on the throne, a virtuous man could simply cross the border into a neighbouring state and try his luck there. No-one expressed this idea more clearly than Han Yu (768-824):

If the scholars of old were out of office for three months they lamented the fact, therefore when crossing the state border they were sure to carry gifts of introduction with them. Moreover, if it proved impossible to present themselves in Zhou, those who considered it important left and went to Lu; if it proved impossible in Lu they left and went to Qi; if it proved impossible in Qi they left and went to Song, to Zheng, to Qin or to Chu. Now the empire has one lord and all within the four seas is one state, and if one is set aside in this one can go only to the barbarians, leaving the country of one's parents. Therefore for scholars who want to put the Way into practice, if they do not obtain a position at court, there remain only the mountains and forests. The mountains and forests are places where scholars who like to nourish themselves alone and are unconcerned about the world can find peace; for those who feel concern for the world it is impossible.34

If Confucius and his contemporaries were aware of the opportunities for employment the political situation of their time presented, they were also aware of the advantages it had for those who did not want to take office. Thus Lunyu 6.9 records the fact that when the Ji family ruling Lu wanted to make Min Sun (Ziqian) the steward of Bi, the disciple said: 'Decline politely on my behalf. If anyone comes to ask me again I'll make sure I'm crossing the Wen River [i.e. crossing the border from Lu into...
Qi]. The existence of a number of states side by side meant that those who do not want to serve a particular ruler could move elsewhere and this option was open to those who did not want to serve any ruler as well as to those who were eager to try their luck elsewhere.

There is one other passage in the Lunyu important for the history of eremitism, which, though it did not have the immediate significance of the ideas already discussed, nevertheless offers such a superb, ready-made justification for any would-be hermit that it is surprising more use was not made of it for that purpose:

Someone said to Confucius: "Why don't you take part in government?" The Master said: "The Book of Documents says, 'Filiality! Simply by being a filial son and a friend to his brothers a man influences government.' This certainly is to take part in government, so why need one be actively involved in government?" It appears to be this passage which inspired the proclamation by Emperor Zhao of the Former Han in 80 B.C. announcing that the virtuous recluse Han Fu, who had been summoned to the capital and given presents of silk, would not be burdened with the affairs of office, but that his duty would be 'to cultivate the conduct of a filial younger brother for the edification of his district'. The only place I have come across it specifically used as an excuse for retirement from office, however, is in Pan Yue's Fu on Living in Idleness (Xian ju fu). But as we shall see, this general attitude was to become of the utmost importance during the Han period.

The passages from the Lunyu I have discussed indicate that the development of eremitic ideas was closely related to the emergence of the yusushi, the wandering scholars who went from state to state offering their advice and assistance in the handling of state
affairs, and especially to Confucius' moral interpretation of their role, which stressed their obligation to withdraw rather than compromise themselves through association with a corrupt ruler. Fundamental to this was the principle that a man of integrity has not only a right but a duty to decide, in accordance with his sense of what is right, to whom he shall offer his services and when he shall withdraw them. I shall consider some of the philosophical, social and economic factors involved in the flowering of eremitism in the Warring States period in the following section, but first I must deal further with the question of the extent to which the origin of these ideas is to be attributed to Confucius. What of the many hermits and virtuous men protesting against evil who are supposed to have lived before Confucius or as his contemporaries?

To begin with the hermits mentioned in the Lunyu itself: the stories about Changju 長沮 and Jieni 晏嬰, and the old man carrying a basket on a staff 荷蓆丈人 both appear in Book 18 (Weizi 微子), a section of the text which almost certainly dates from around the time of Mencius and Zhuangzi, when the social and intellectual world was quite different to that in which Confucius moved some two hundred years earlier. As will become clear from the discussion of these passages below, the points they raise belong very much to the debates current in that later time. They cannot be accepted as evidence that such hermits existed in the Spring and Autumn period. The story about Jieyu 接舆, the madman of Chu, which also appears in Book 18, does not give us any particular reason to assume he was a hermit, any more than does the other version of this anecdote in the inner chapters of Zhuangzi, with which it is probably contemporaneous. It is only in later versions of the story that he is transformed into a model hermit with all the necessary
trappings. Similarly in the brief anecdotes concerning the keeper of the Stone Gate (shi mén nong 石門農) and the man from Wei carrying a basket (he kui zhe 荷橐者), there is nothing to indicate that they were hermits, even if they subsequently came to be categorised as such. This, plus the fact that the anecdotes appear in the later section of the text, render them useless as evidence that hermits existed in the time of Confucius.

As far as those hermits who may confidently be classified as legendary are concerned - including all the weird and wonderful figures clustered around the sage emperors Yao and Shun, such as Xuyou and Chaofu, Shanjuan and Puyizi - I shall say nothing except to point out that the entertaining stories about them are not to be found in any text that dates from before the beginning of the third century B.C., and that their appearance is best regarded as an indication of the attraction eremitism had for men at that time. Similarly, there are other figures, who in themselves were historical enough, but who began to take on the appearance of hermits only in the eyes of men of later times whose minds were imbued with eremitic ideas. To this category must be assigned Yi Yin of the beginning of the Shang dynasty and Taigong Wang of the beginning of the Zhou. A good illustration of this type of transformation at work is the somewhat later case of Xian Gao, according to the Zuo zhuan a merchant who in 629 B.C. saved the state of Zheng by a clever ruse which delayed the attacking Qin army long enough to enable Zheng to prepare itself against the assault. The basic account of this incident is elaborated in the Huainanzi: there Duke Mu of Zheng wants to reward Xian Gao for saving Zheng, but Xian Gao refuses to accept, saying that if he was rewarded for having told untruths (to the Qin officers) it would
undermine the fidelity of the state, and goes off to live out his life among the eastern barbarians. 47 Huangfu Mi enlarges on this still further in Gaoshi zhuan by saying that Xian Gao was not really an ordinary merchant at all, but a hermit of the marketplace who had refused to serve in office because he recognized the threat to Zheng posed by its aggressive neighbours Jin and Qin. 48

Also from the Zuo zhuan comes the account of Jie Zitui. There, all we are told is that when his lord Prince Chonger of Jin was forced to go into exile, Jie Zitui followed and served him faithfully for nineteen years. When Chonger became ruler of Jin in 636 B.C. and was rewarding his loyal followers, he overlooked Jie Zitui. In anger and indignation at his lord's failure to keep to the traditional rites governing the relationship between ruler and loyal subjects, Jie Zitui together with his mother went into hiding and was never seen again.

If we make allowance for a certain amount of embellishment and ideological purification, there is no reason why this account should be dismissed as untrue. Especially in the early Spring and Autumn period, when feudal structures and traditions were beginning to be eroded, there are likely to have been uncompromising traditionalists who felt they had to make a stand on behalf of social order and the rites against the modern tide of corruption. On the other hand, the grotesque elaborations and variations in later versions of the story, such as Jie Zitui cutting flesh from his thigh to feed his hungry lord and being burnt to death when that same lord tries to smoke him out of the forest in which he has taken refuge, are rather improbable. 50
Jie Zitui is not one of the people praised by Confucius in the Lunyu for making a stand on behalf of virtue, but Boyi and Shuqi are. In their case, complicated as it is by numerous alternative versions of their deeds, it is extremely difficult to tell fact from fiction and to determine their precise significance for the development of eremitism. Since I have discussed the legends concerning Boyi and Shuqi in detail elsewhere, I shall restrict myself here to commenting briefly on their relevance to the eremitic tradition.

Boyi and Shuqi, their biography tells us, were sons of the ruler of Guzhu who both fled that state in order to remain true to the principles of filiality and deference, Boyi because his father had wanted the younger son Shuqi to inherit his position after his death, and Shuqi because he believed that the position should properly go to his elder brother. It is that part of their legend concerning what happened after they left Guzhu, however, that relates them to the eremitic tradition. After going to the Zhou realm, we are told, some matter arose over which they felt they had to make a moral stand, and hence they withdrew to Shouyang Mountain, where eventually they starved to death. The grounds given for their departure from King Wu's domain vary considerably in different versions of the story. Most familiar is that recorded by Sima Qian in the Shi ji, namely that they took exception to King Wu's unfilial conduct in setting off on a military campaign before the completion of funeral rites for his father, King Wen, and his traitorous behaviour in taking up arms against his rightful sovereign King Zhou. Another version is that they objected to the covenants they witnessed being made between King Wu and his followers, covenants which promised land and title in return for participation in treachery
and violence and were sealed with the blood of a sacrificial victim. Such practices the brothers are said to have looked upon as evidence of the final decay of the social order based on mutual trust, co-operation and harmony supposed to have been characteristic of the reign of the legendary emperor Shennong. Yet other versions would have us believe that King Wu wanted to cede the empire to them, or, less fancifully, that it was office and salary that they sought to escape by hiding away in the hills, or 'the position of feudal lords'.

There is no evidence available to us that would establish the truth or falsity of any one of these claims, though it appears that the last three are relatively late in origin and are conscious attempts to turn Boyi and Shuqi into familiar eremitic types. Probably all these claims are reinterpretations of historical events which in themselves did not provide a neat demonstration of the validity of the doctrines of any particular philosophical school; the account of the brothers' departure from Guzhu is another moralist's reinterpretation of that kind. But even if the story of their withdrawal and virtuous death on Shouyang Mountain is accepted as factual, Boyi and Shuqi's significance for the development of eremitism would still be minor. Not only would their stand to the death for their principles be such an isolated incident that at most it could be regarded as a singular event which had little discernible influence for at least the next five hundred years, but even the fact that the brothers withdrew to a remote mountain environment seems totally incidental: the emphasis in the legend is on them dying for their principles, and they might just as well have thrown themselves in a river or cut their own throats. Suicide can have links with eremitism, as we shall see later, but suicide is a course of action at
odds with all the major philosophies of eremitism formulated by Confucius and those who came after him.

Therefore, as far as anticipating Confucius in the development of eremitic ideas and attitudes is concerned, the significance of Boyi and Shuqi was probably nil. At most they could be regarded as isolated examples of a type of commitment to moral principles that Confucius admired and which was central to his philosophy. More generally, we can conclude that while there were a number of people who lived before Confucius who expressed ideas which he took up and developed, or whose conduct he regarded as an inspiration or model, as far as eremitism is concerned there is no evidence of any significant cluster of ideas being articulated in any systematic way before him. It was after Confucius, and especially in the second half of the Warring States period, that a profusion of philosophies concerning eremitism developed and hermits became important moral exemplars. These developments will be discussed in the next section.

3. Social Change and Eremitism in the Warring States Period

Before Confucius there were little more than vague intimations of eremitism. Han Feizi 韩非子, writing near the end of the Warring States period, on the other hand, complained that as a result of the influence of eremitic ideas it was becoming impossible to run a state properly: 'men of wisdom retire, turning back to live in caves and refusing salaries, so that armies cannot avoid weakness and governments cannot avoid disorder'. Even though Han Fei held the view that even one hermit was one too many, there is sufficient independent evidence to show that his remark was not just polemical exaggeration.
During the Spring and Autumn period the lowest level of the aristocracy was the *shi* class. What the specific duties and responsibilities were that attached to the *shi* rank is impossible to say; however, they were clearly expected to be proficient in the 'Six Arts' of ritual, music, archery, charioteering, composition and arithmetic, combining cultural knowledge with military skills. Their rank entitled them to a small landholding, which they worked with tenants, and frequently they served as officials in the state administration. In the late Spring and Autumn period a fundamental change began to take place in the social role and standing of the *shi*, as the idea of what it was to be a *shi* shifted from someone who occupied a certain social rank (and therefore could be expected to have certain skills) to someone who possessed certain knowledge and expertise (and therefore was qualified to hold certain positions). Confucius' teachings played a major part in bringing about this change, and evidence that it was more or less complete by the time of the Warring States may be found in the texts of that period, where 'shi' is used, not as an aristocratic rank in conjunction with *qing* and *daifu*, but as one of the *si* min or 'four professions'. In other words, *shi* ceased to indicate a social rank and was used instead as an occupational category, along with farmer (*nong*), craftsman (*gong*) and merchant (*shang*).

The conception of the *shi* as someone who acquired certain knowledge and skills and then had to find a position in which he could apply his abilities, led to the appearance of the *youshi* or wandering scholars. Confucius was not necessarily the first wandering *shi*, but as far as we know it was he who developed the moral conception of the *youshi*'s role, as someone who has a duty to travel from state to state in order to serve the Way rather than to obtain personal wealth and
power. Naturally such an exalted interpretation did not appeal to everyone.

Yü Ying-shih has argued that, during the Spring and Autumn period, on the one hand ritual and ceremonial observances became much more diverse and elaborate than they had been previously, and on the other hand traditions became confused and fell into decay, with the result that few people could claim competence in these means of regulating society, and they gradually became a specialist task devolving upon the shi. During the Warring States period the shi ceased to look upon themselves merely as the interpreters of tradition, and instead began to see themselves as figures in a sense outside the socio-political system, as intellectuals whose task it was to formulate and transmit new teachings whose outlines society might gradually acquire. It was in the effort to provide such blueprints for society that the philosophers of the Hundred Schools competed.

While Professor Yü's point is essentially correct, I believe he has tended to focus his attention on a small, rather elite minority of the shi, with the result that youshi as a group acquire an elevated status not all of them can have deserved. It would be wrong to suppose that all shi were serious men who looked for philosophical answers to society's problems, just as it is wrong to suppose that all youshi roamed the states with the moral zeal of a Confucius. From the accounts of the retainers (ke) of the feudal lords of the Warring States period, it is all too clear that they cannot all be placed in the category of 'unattached intellectuals' on which Professor Yu's discussion focuses. They were a very disparate bunch who hawked whatever skills they happened to possess. Some certainly were scholars and teachers, others found employment as military advisors.
and generals, with some adventurous types shading off into the youxia, or 'knight-errant' category.62

Minor talents also had their hour of glory, if we can believe some of the tales recorded by Sima Qian. Lord Mengchang's employment of a petty thief and a mimic has long been referred to contemptuously by Chinese scholars,63 and Lü Buwei (d.235 B.C.) is said to have used a certain Lao Ai, who had genitalia of such generous proportions that when appropriately displayed they served to arouse the lust of the Empress-Dowager of Qin.64 It could perhaps be argued that the term 'ke' is not necessarily co-extensive in meaning with 'shi' and that any shi who served as retainers were intellectuals, scholars or teachers, but there is no evidence to show that less illustrious retainers of the sort mentioned fell outside the category of youshi. Shi as an occupational category probably was much more elastic than it had ever been as a rank.

A number of rulers became famous for their patronage of able and learned men — especially Marquis Wen of Wei (446-395 B.C.), Lord Mengchang of Qi, Lord Pingyuan of Zhao (d.251 B.C.), Lord Xinling of Wei (d.243 B.C.) and Lord Chunshen of Chu (d.238 B.C.), as well as Kings Wei and Xuan of Qi, during whose reigns (356-320, 319-301 B.C.) the Jixia academy flourished. If some of the shi supported by these men held office and worked in the administration of the realm, others did not and presented themselves as guides and mentors who could advise the ruler on the arts of government. Both they and the rulers regarded their relationship as something distinct from the traditional bond between subject and ruler, as something which was
more like the relation between teacher and student or between friends. This is the type of relationship alluded to in Zhuangzi when Duke Ai of Lu says, 'Confucius and I are not subject and lord, we are friends in virtue, that's all'. Thus at the court of Marquis Wen of Wei the distinguished figures of Zixia Tian Zifang and Duangan Mu cast themselves in the role of mentor and friend, refusing to accept official posts or regular salaries, and relying for support instead on the gifts and ceremonial offerings by which the ruler showed his appreciation of their talents and virtue.

If the situation of such men, as of retainers generally, lacked economic security, it did give a type of independence that was impossible otherwise. Since they did not serve in the capacity of minister or official, they could speak their minds relatively freely and could dissociate themselves from actions and policies of which they did not approve; since their bond with the ruler was an informal one, there were not the constraints of loyalty to prevent them from leaving if they believed their situation had become intolerable. At the Jixia academy in Qi, however, these informal relationships were institutionalised: although the scholars there were not expected to take office and their task was 'not to carry out duties but to discuss affairs of state', they nevertheless received the sinecure rank of daifu for their service to the state.

It is clear that as a way of maintaining independence and moral autonomy, no matter how proper and respectful it was considered by many, court sponsorship left something to be desired. When the arrangement became institutionalised, as at Jixia, it could reasonably be asked whether any claim to moral superiority based on it was not
illusory. A witty expression of misgivings concerning this point occurs in the *Zhanguo ce* in relation to Tian Pian, one of the prominent figures at Jixia:

A man from Qi had an interview with Tian Pian and said: "I have heard your lofty pronouncements, and though you claim not to have a government post in fact you willingly serve." "How do you know that?" asked Tian Pian. "From what I know about my neighbour's woman", he replied. "What do you mean?" asked Tian Pian. He replied: "My neighbour's woman claims not to be married to him. For thirty years it has gone on like that and they have seven sons. If they are not married, then so be it, but as a marriage it has been exceptionally successful. Now you claim to be without a government post, yet you have an income of a thousand zhong and one hundred attendants. If you have no government post then so be it, but the wealth you enjoy is nevertheless more than a post would yield." Master Tian excused himself.

The point made here stands regardless of any doubts we may have about the historical veracity of the conversation itself: if you receive a daifu's stipend from a ruler, even though you do not actually occupy a post, do you have the right to claim moral superiority to those who do serve? This type of criticism was made not only in relation to the institutionalised youshi at Jixia, for it focussed on a moral dilemma which faced all wandering scholars, especially those as famous as Mencius.

In a passage in *Mencius*, Peng Geng (believed to have been a disciple of Mencius), asks rather pointedly, 'Is it not excessive to travel with a retinue of hundreds of followers and scores of carriages, living off one feudal lord after another?' Never at a loss for an answer, Mencius replies quite properly that whether it is right or not to accept something from another depends on whether it is in accord with the Way. Besides, he argues, a worthy scholar makes an important contribution to society, therefore he deserves to be fed. What is not touched upon in this passage is the moral
standing of the giver or provider. While there is evidence enough to show that Mencius was not one to compromise himself by associating with corrupt individuals, the issue can become a little unclear where the subject of respecting the rites and honouring worthy men is concerned. Confucians have always used as a major indicator of a ruler's moral standing, as a measure of whether or not association with him could be justified, the question whether or not he treats worthy men with the civility and respect they deserve. A sceptic could be forgiven for doubting the sincerity of any self-proclaimed worthy who is prepared to classify a ruler as morally respectable on the basis that he extends to the worthy in question to honour and deference he feels is his proper due.

The point of Peng Geng's objection to Mencius and the rebuke of Tian Pian by the citizen of Qi is that taking office under a corrupt ruler is not the only way of compromising oneself. And in the case of Peng Geng the doubts expressed relate to issues more fundamental than the possibility of hypocrisy and unjustified self-righteousness - he questions whether the youshi (and here he has in mind particularly those who do not take office) really do make any contribution to society in return for the goods they consume: 'it is not right for a shi to take no part in affairs and yet be fed'. Mencius' position on this issue is in fact very similar to that of Confucius as stated in the Lunyu. In his eyes a shi is making a contribution to society by 'practising benevolence and righteousness', by 'being filial at home and respectful in society, and preserving the way of the former kings for the sake of students who come after him'.74
The charge that youshi were parasites who lived off society without contributing to it is one which recurs frequently in Legalist writings. More important here, however, is the fact that it was a charge that was taken seriously by some shi themselves, just as they took seriously the charge that any association with those in power was just as potentially compromising as actually taking office. It was with such men that what came to be regarded as the quintessential forms of eremitism originated; it was their response to those charges which produced much of what was to become the standard iconography and terminology for eremitism generally. Confucius taught that if one ruler proved impossible a man of principle had to move to another state to look for an opening. But what if one believed that all rulers were equally bad? Some famous youshi believed one could influence rulers without actually serving in office. But what if one believed that the informal position of friend or teacher at court amounted to no more than polite or intellectualised scrounging? Confucius and Mencius believed a man could make a significant contribution to the state and society just by conducting himself according to precepts which came from the sage kings and which he preserved and handed on to posterity. But what if some more tangible accomplishment was needed to satisfy oneself or to silence one’s critics? The only possible solution then was physical withdrawal, putting distance between oneself and the centres of power.

What the individual did in his seclusion at the edge of society was largely a matter of temperament, but also was influenced by the pressures and criticisms he had to deal with. Those who were filled with revulsion and indignation against the socio-political system generally withdrew as completely as possible from human contact, to dwell in the mountains or forests, in caves or crude huts, and subsist
on whatever wild foods they could find. Whether anyone in fact succeeded in living in total isolation for long is an open question—probably this image of the hermit represents an ideal type which actual individuals only approximated to a greater or lesser degree. It is exemplified by Xu Wugui 楚元魁, who according to the Zhuangzi lived in the mountains and forests on a diet of nuts and wild plants. That such figures continued to occur after the Warring States period is evident from the scornful comments about them made by Lu Jia 任富 (d. c.178 B.C.) in his Xin yu 新語, and the Ke yi 刻意 chapter of Zhuangzi, where they are described as ‘men of mountain and valley who condemn the age’.

The more extreme the hermit’s rejection of society and the stronger his reaction against his critics, the more total his isolation had to be. Sometimes, however, physical isolation was not sufficient to preserve personal integrity. Then it could be safeguarded only by the most radical withdrawal of all: suicide. Suicide in ancient China could serve many purposes. For those involved in affairs of state this included political protest; for those accused of wrongdoing it was a way of salvaging what remained of their honour. When suicide was both a socio-political protest and a reassertion of individual integrity, it could take on the appearance of an ultimate form of eremitism. The most familiar example in this context is Qu Yuan 荷原. Another example, which demonstrates the logical continuity between eremitism and suicide, is that of Wang Zhu 王匽, a virtuous hermit from Qi. When the Yan 燕 armies overran much of Qi in 280 B.C., the order was given by the Yan authorities, out of respect for Wang Zhu, that no-one was to go within thirty 里 of the town where he lived. They then offered to make him a general with a fief of ten thousand households, threatening to
slaughter the inhabitants of his native place if he refused. Wang Zhu's response was that when the king of Qi failed to heed his remonstrations he had retired to the country to plough the fields, and that he would rather die than accede to Yan's demand. Without further ado he hanged himself.80

For hermits who still felt some responsibility towards society, on the other hand, those who believed they had a duty to make a contribution to the common good, the alternative to the intellectual and administrative tasks of the shi was direct personal involvement in agricultural production. Physical withdrawal in their case meant retirement to some rural spot where they could devote themselves to tilling the soil. But not all of these farmer-hermits farmed because of their social conscience. Some merely aimed at economic self-sufficiency, which amounted to a less drastic but more feasible way of minimising contact with the world. A good illustration of how this set of ideas developed ultimately from Confucius' principle of withdrawing from a state in which the Way did not prevail is Lunyu 18.6, which deals with the hermits Changju and Jieni, who turned the soil by harnessing themselves to the plough. Jieni says to Zilu 子路:

Things are the same the whole world over, so with whom could you possibly change it? And as to following a fellow who shuns particular individuals, what would you think of following men (like us) who shun the world altogether?

The best and apparently most historically reliable example of the extremes to which this sort of attitude was taken is that of Chen Zhongzi (also known as Wuling Zizhong 楚令尹仲 and Tian Zhong 田仲). The Zhanguo ce contains an account of an interview of an envoy from Qi by the consort of King Huiwen of Zhao 趙惠文王.
(r.298-266 B.C.). The queen asks how it can be that a man like Wuling Zizhong has not yet been executed, for he has failed to serve his king, regulate his family or associate with the feudal lords. She regards it as an indication of the depths to which government has sunk in Qi.81 But if this conversation is historically accurate, the queen should in fact have been able to answer her own query: Wuling was in the state of Chu, and Chen Zhongzi presumably moved there from Qi in order to be able to escape persecution and live the simple life he was seeking. In Xunzi 作正 , Chen Zhongzi is referred to as an extremist in matters of self-control who failed to understand the importance of social distinctions and the duties associated with them, as someone worse than a bandit because it was fame he acquired dishonestly rather than just someone else's goods.82 It was for his extremism that Mencius also criticised him, despite regarding him as 'the most outstanding of the shi of Qi':

Zhongzi comes from one of the great families of Qi. His elder brother Dai 皑 received an emolument of ten thousand zhong from Ge 伋, but because he considered his brother's emolument ill-gotten he would not eat from it, and because he considered his brother's house ill-gotten he would not live in it. Shunning his brother and leaving his mother, he went to live at Wuling. When he went back one day his brother had been given a present of a live goose. He frowned and said, "What can be done with this honker?" Another day his mother killed the goose and used it to make him a meal. "This is that honker's meat", said his brother from outside. Zhongzi went out and vomited it up. He did not accept food from his mother but did from his wife; he refused to live in his brother's house and stayed in Wuling. Does this amount to the fullest realisation of his type of ideal? Chen Zhongzi's ideal could be fully realised only by an earthworm.83

Chen Zhongzi tried to carry to its logical conclusion the ideal that a man of integrity should not allow himself to benefit from association with any immoral person - to draw the line at not taking office, as far as he was concerned, was mere sophistry. So as to
minimize contact with the corrupt world he tried to become as self-sufficient as possible. But as Mencius points out, to apply this principle rigorously would be to make any social life out of the question. Unless Chen Zhongzi is fortunate enough to meet someone as saintly and fastidious as himself, everyone with whom he comes into contact will inevitably have their share of the common human failings. He may make sandals and his wife twist hemp and silk thread for barter, and in that way scratch a living, but can he be sure that the house they inhabit was built by a Boyi or the millet they eat was grown by one?  

The principle that everyone—from the ruler down—had to take part in agricultural production was fundamental to the teachings of the School of the Farmers or Tillers (nongjia 农家), together with the belief that this had actually happened during the reign of Shennong, in a perfectly harmonious society based on hard work, cooperation and mutual trust. A.C. Graham, in his excellent account of this neglected school of ancient thought, has argued that its doctrines originated in the coming together of some rather homespun peasant wisdom and the more sophisticated ideas of declasse intellectuals—hermits who refused to take office and turned to the fundamental tasks to make an honest living. The problem with this argument is that it has explanatory power only if we assume that all hermits held more or less the same opinions. It should be clear already, however, that eremitism involved a full spectrum of attitudes concerning self and society, while the Tiller doctrines only relate to one small part of that spectrum. Some hermits did regard farming as the only possible way of earning a living that was both morally respectable and socially useful; others, as we have seen, believed that a man who withdraws from office can serve society by moral
cultivation and teaching; still others washed their hands entirely of society and its problems; and others yet again, as we shall see in the next section, believed that a hermit should live in society but be completely detached from it.

What is obvious is that not everyone was satisfied by the suggestion that farming could provide a way of resolving the moral conflicts faced by the shi. After all, Confucius had explicitly rejected the idea that a gentleman should become involved in tilling the land. This was not just because a gentleman should be prepared to go hungry if necessary, but also because as a shi he knows nothing about farming anyway and should devote himself to those higher things which are his proper concern. The question did not pose itself for Confucius in the terms which subsequently evolved, and the idea of agriculture as a moral task became significant only in the Warring States period. The passage in Lunyu 18.7, in which an old hermit berates Zilu for his ignorance of agriculture and failure to work, might be thought to contradict this view. However, it appears that this anecdote is a case of putting words into the mouth of an eminent figure to give them extra weight, rather than a report of a historical incident. Zilu is made to observe:

Not to serve is not right. Not even the proper relation between young and old can be disregarded, so how could what is right between ruler and subject be disregarded? He may want to keep himself undefiled, yet he subverts the great relationship.

There is no reason to believe that hermits holding such principles were to be found in Zilu's lifetime. Similarly, there is in the Mozi a story about a certain Wu Lu who lives among the common people, farming in summer and making pottery in winter, and compares himself to Shun. Mozi criticises him because as a gentleman it is his
duty to teach about what is right, not just to practice it himself.90

The topic of agriculture and the problem of how a hermit is supposed both to support himself and make a contribution to society leads naturally into a consideration of the general economic factors affecting eremitism. It is to these I will now turn, before going on in the next section to examine other important streams of thought pertinent to eremitism - in particular that which comes from Zhuangzi.

As the lowest rank of the aristocracy, in the Spring and Autumn period the shi had been minor landowners whose fields were worked for them by tenants. The Guo yu, in the context of a description of the splendid achievements of Duke Wen after coming to power in Jin in 636 B.C., gives what is obviously meant to be a description of a social ideal realised:

The Duke lived from his tributes, the great officers lived from their fiefs, the shi lived from their fields, the commoners lived from their labours, the craftsmen and merchants lived from their trades, official servants from (the wages they received for) their service, and household servants lived from their private plots.91

In other words, the shi did not labour in the fields they owned. If in terms of the feudal system land was granted to aristocrats in return for their service to the ruler or feudal lord, then presumably those duties would have made it difficult for them to be personally involved in tilling the land.92 While admitting that he had many skills,93 Confucius specifically denied any practical knowledge of agricultural matters, as was pointed out above, and rejected the idea that a gentleman should become involved in such matters. It is most unlikely that he would have held such a view if tradition had prescribed a farming role for the shi. Moreover, those who rejected
the traditional shi ethos and Confucius' adaptation of it, such as the Tillers and the more socially orientated hermits, placed great emphasis on tilling the land in person, which would have been pointless if that was in fact the normal task of a shi anyway.94

For the youshi of the Warring States period things were very different. To travel from state to state in the hope of finding a position under aheedful ruler was a risky and uncertain business which amounted quite literally to living from one's wits. A vivid (but probably fictional) illustration of this relates to Zhang Yi 張儀, who as arch rival of Su Qin 蘇秦 looms so large in the political intrigues of the late Warring States period. Early in his career he is said to have received a severe beating for some alleged offence. To his distressed wife's complaint that had he not studied and travelled to persuade rulers he would not have suffered such humiliation, Zhang Yi's only response was to ask her to check whether he still had his tongue. When she laughed and assured him that it was still there, a relieved Zhang Yi said, 'That's all we need'.95 A youshi owned no land by virtue of rank because he had no official rank; he was dependent entirely on his eloquence to win himself titles and emoluments. Not surprisingly, even to talented men success came neither easily nor often.96 If a shi was fortunate enough to hold office and have estates which gave him an income, he was certain to lose that land if he moved to another state to take up a post. No ruler would continue to support a man who helped his enemies, or even his allies. Thus Mencius complained to King Xuan of Qi:

Nowadays when a subject whose remonstrations have not been acted upon and whose counsel has not been heeded, with the result that he has not been able to benefit the people, leaves (a state) for that reason, the ruler seizes him, creates difficulties for him where he is going, and appropriates his land the day he leaves.97
According to Qin statues any foreign shi who came to Qin was to be fined and any Qin shi who left the state was to be sentenced to three or four years' hard labour. 98

If moving from state to state in search of a position meant a life of economic insecurity, to refuse altogether to hold office obviously had drastic economic implications, and it is easy to see why any youshi who was lucky enough to enjoy the liberal support of a ruler who valued his services as friend and counsellor would be hesitant to leave. Fidelity to principles in ancient China was not an easy option. 99 From this perspective the decision on the part of many hermits to take up farming amounts to taking the most realistic course open to them.

But to farm one needs land. By the middle of the Warring States period (say the late fourth century B.C.) the feudal system of land tenure was largely defunct. Direct taxation in kind had begun to replace feudal cultivation of the lord's estate as early as 594 B.C. 100 Land continued to be granted by rulers to deserving subjects throughout the Warring States period, but increasingly this involved commoners rather than the hereditary aristocracy. In order to build up their economic power most of the states encouraged the opening up of virgin lands by settlers; immigrants were attracted from neighbouring states by promises of exemption from taxation and military service. Increased trade and manufacture, the growing role of money as the medium of exchange, and rapid changes in family and local prosperity associated with warfare and attendant social upheavals will have helped to create an economy characterised by a high level of exchange. 101 Under such circumstances the buying and selling of land would have been an inevitable development which no
ruler would have been able to eradicate even had he wanted to. There is no evidence to suggest that the buying and selling of land began as the result of anyone's policy decision; one moment's reflection is enough to show the absurdity of the traditional claim that it was Shang Yang 荀 輨 who was to be blamed for it. 102 Everything Shang Yang did aimed at tightening control over the activities of the population, and this included enacting sumptuary laws under which the land, housing and clothing an individual could possess was determined by social rank, which in turn depended on military merit. 103 To encourage uncontrolled exchange of land would have been to destroy the strict social order Shang Yang was at pains to construct. In Qin as elsewhere, buying and selling will have occurred because no-one could stop it. 104

The net result of all these economic changes, from which the social developments that led to the appearance of the youshi were inseparable, was that for those who did not want to be involved in state affairs there was land available which allowed them to turn to farming. Those with money could buy it; those with a more adventurous nature could acquire it gratis by squatting on virgin land. It may be that the movement of hermits into remote places was sometimes connected with state policies of colonising virgin land, since those policies could provide a legitimate excuse for occupying land for those whose principles might otherwise prevent them from doing so. Such considerations will not have troubled those who rejected the idea that the state had a right to claim any moral authority over them. The more remote the location to which one withdrew, the less likelihood there was of objection to land being occupied. Moreover, since the claims the state made on the individual did not automatically end just because the individual chose to ignore
them, withdrawing to an isolated spot in the mountains or forests also served as a way of avoiding the attention of tax collectors, corvee overseers and conscription officials.

4. **Philosophies of Eremitism in the Warring States Period**

In the previous sections I have discussed what may be considered the central developments in Chinese eremitism, namely, Confucius' moral conception of the role of the youshi and what were essentially modifications of, or direct reactions against that conception. From Mozi on, however, reaction against Confucius and the precepts he espoused led to philosophical positions based on quite different sets of premises, and these too were of major importance in determining the forms eremitism was to take in China.

One aspect of Confucius' teachings of which Mozi was extremely critical was the suggestion that a subject's duty to his ruler could be something other than absolute and unconditional. In Mozi's strictly hierarchical society it is the superior who is to decide what is right for his subordinates, not the other way around. By denying that a subject's duty to his ruler was unconditional, Confucius was encouraging insurrection, says Mozi, and the only reason Confucius ran about from state to state and ruler to ruler was to try to stay alive - he only became finicky about points of propriety and righteousness when his personal well-being was assured.

If Mozi rejected Confucius' moral individualism and aspired to the selflessness of Heaven, Yang Zhu in turn rejected Mozi's selflessness, believing that the individual's fundamental duty was to serve himself, and that if everyone was guided by enlightened self-interest the world would come to order by itself. Self-sacrifice
of the sort demanded by both Confucius and Mozi he rejected on
principle. It was precisely such self-sacrificing people, those
who allowed their feelings to overpower them and endangered themselves
for the sake of mere things, who were the cause of the disorder in the
world. Yang Zhu taught 'keeping one's nature intact and protecting
one's genuineness, and not involving the body in trouble for the sake
of external things'. Hence he refused to pull out even one hair
from his body in order to benefit the world. Although the topic
of not taking office is not broached in any of the extant passages
believed to reflect the teachings of Yang Zhu, there can be little
doubt that he would have argued that to take office was to become
embroiled in the pursuit of things. There would seem to have been
some basis for Mencius' complaint that 'Yang is all for himself, which
amounts to denying his ruler'.

Whatever Yang Zhu's contribution to the philosophical foundations
of eremitism, it was soon eclipsed by that of the brilliant figure of
Zhuangzi, who aside from Confucius is the single most important figure
in the history of Chinese eremitism. For Confucius, Mencius and the
youshi influenced by them, refusing or retiring from office was always
a second choice, a course of action which was forced on one by
circumstances. Even those who reacted against what they regarded as
the moral obtuseness of the youshi, such as Chen Zhongzi and the
Tillers, shared their basic premise that selfless devotion to the Way
is the first duty of a worthy man, and that if circumstances allow it
he must serve his ruler in whatever way is appropriate. But for
Zhuangzi it was not a question of being pushed into an eremitic life
by adverse circumstance: for him eremitism, properly understood, was
the highest ideal to which a man can aspire.
From the perspective of eremitism Zhuangzi’s teachings may be summarised as follows: Stay out of sight and out of trouble; keep away from politics and state affairs until such times as you have achieved sagehood. The perfect man (the sage, the true man), however, is beyond harm and can wander where he will, freely and joyfully; his environment has no effect on him, so he is totally at ease whether in or out of the world’s affairs.

To counterbalance the usual preoccupation with Zhuangzi the ethereal mystic and to set his ideal of the carefree sage in its proper context, it will be useful to consider first that side of his philosophy which deals with the problems faced by all those common mortals still flailing about in the world’s entanglements. Much of Renjian shi, for example, is concerned with the dangers that lie in wait for those who venture unprepared into the struggle for wealth, power and prestige. In the first anecdote Zhuangzi’s Confucius warns Yan Hui that the only outcome of his naive zeal to do good will be his own death: until he has perfected himself, gained complete self-control and detachment from the world, he has no business meddling in its affairs. The same point is made even more strongly in Ying diwang: When a sage governs, does he govern externalities? He gets himself right before acting and makes sure he can carry out his tasks, that's all. A bird will fly high to avoid the danger of stringed arrows. A fieldmouse will burrow deep under the sacred hill to escape the threat of being dug up or smoked out. You aren’t even as smart as these two creatures!

In Renjian shi Confucius goes on to voice Zhuangzi’s understanding of social and political realities: the impatience sermons would arouse in a despot and the unlikelihood that sermons alone would bring about moral regeneration in others; the attractions and dangers that fame
has for those who pride themselves in their own rectitude; the impossibility of remaining self-possessed in the presence of a tyrant who inevitably has the psychological advantage. Similarly, Zigao, the Duke of She, is advised that if he wants to survive the diplomatic mission on which he is about to be sent he should do only what he absolutely has to do, to volunteer nothing of himself and remain as passive, as invisible as he can. Qu Boyu tells Yan He that in affairs he must proceed with utmost caution, keep his talents to himself and not entertain ideas about his own abilities as unrealistic as those of the praying mantis trying to stop a cart by waving its arms in front of it. Ding the Cook also advocates caution, especially in dangerous situations.

The general point to be extracted from these parables is that danger comes from drawing attention to oneself, from revealing talents and qualities that are of use to others. It is the beautiful pelts of tigers and leopards that cause them to be hunted, the cleverness of monkeys and dogs that lead them to be chained up. Conversely, safety comes from being totally useless, for it is only when something is completely useless that it ceases to be an object of human desires. To become completely useless, however is not as easy as we might think - to succeed in doing so requires dedication and persistence. Should we find ourselves embroiled in public life before we have managed to make ourselves useless we must revert to the stop-gap measures of caution and discretion, recognising our limits, following along with the natural disposition of things and never trying to impose our will on anyone or anything not that way inclined already. But we must realise that it is only he who has attained complete understanding - the sage, the true man - who is truly beyond harm.
Cripple Shu  is able to keep himself alive thanks to his malformed body, but 'how much better if he had crippled virtue!' This whole dimension of Zhuangzi's thought is summed up by a passage in *Ying diwang*:

Do not be the medium for a name. Do not be a storehouse for schemes. Do not put yourself at the service of affairs. Do not be the proprietor of wisdom. Identify completely with the inexhaustible and wander where there are no signs. Make the most of what you receive from heaven, but do not recognise gain. Be empty, that is all. The perfect man uses his heart like a mirror: he neither welcomes nor farewells, he responds but does not retain; therefore he is able to gain mastery over things without being hurt.

The striking thing about these passages from *Zhuangzi* is that they contain nothing which suggests that to stay alive the individual must withdraw to some remote spot, seeking refuge far from human society in a mountain cave or forest hut. It seems clear that Zhuangzi attached no particular importance to physical location, though it may be that in the individual's efforts to make himself invisible a situation could arise in which physical isolation would be a useful strategy. Some of the analogies Zhuangzi uses, such as birds flying high and mice burrowing deep to avoid danger, certainly imply this. But humans are not animals, and because the dangers they face are likely to be more subtle and intangible than those which threaten animals they have to devise much more devious strategies to avoid them.

The type of hiding that interests Zhuangzi - making oneself invisible by doing away with any outstanding characteristics or abilities - is a type of hiding that takes place within society rather than outside it. The best way to hide is to be a face in the crowd, to be completely anonymous: it is when no-one knows who you are that you will be free from danger. It is the desire for fame that is the
biggest threat to personal well-being, hence Zhuangzi attacks it consistently, and his philosophical ideal, as shall be argued below, is a state in which all self-conceptions and personal identity vanish altogether. But to understand why it is the desire for fame that is the target of so much of Zhuangzi's criticism it is necessary to consider some of the social and religious beliefs concerning personal fame current in his time.

In Zhuangzi's lifetime, as in other periods in China, to acquire fame was generally regarded as a virtuous and proper thing to do. One reason the acquisition of fame was held to be such a meritorious and socially desirable thing was its significance in relation to ancestor worship. It was through fame that the individual glorified his ancestors and demonstrated the continuing potency of their virtue, hence it was his duty as a member of a clan to conduct himself in such a way as to bring the power of that ancestral virtue to the attention of all. Another reason was that the strength of the individual's moral influence was seen to be largely dependent on the extent of his reputation; an anonymous individual influences nobody except perhaps the few people he happens to meet.121 'A gentleman hates the thought of passing away and his name dying with him'.122 By this, of course, Confucius did not mean that a gentleman should hunger for fame per se - he taught that a gentleman should be more concerned with deserving fame than acquiring a baseless reputation123 - but rather that a gentleman should win fame in order to be able to exert a good influence long after his death. In Confucian thought, therefore, the connection between personal fame and moral influence was very close indeed, and reinforced the basic principle of filiality that through fame one glorified one's ancestors.124
In the political sphere fame was even more important than in private life because political influence had to be spread over a wider area - ideally the whole world. The importance attached to fame in the political context is readily apparent from some of the state hymns in the Book of Songs.\textsuperscript{125} In the multi-state polity in which Confucianism developed the political significance of fame was particularly marked. The type of situation portrayed by Mencius for example, in which people are supposed to yearn for the coming of a virtuous ruler,\textsuperscript{126} presupposes that the ruler's reputation for virtue has circulated beyond the boundaries of his own state.

Such were the religious, moral and political reasons for acquiring a reputation. But most men will hunt after fame regardless of whether there are respectable reasons for doing so, just as they will pursue wealth or power without being asked to. For such people fame is its own reward, and whether it is won by honourable means or for honourable purposes is secondary. Confucius and Mencius were well aware of this and so was Zhuangzi. Seen against this background of both the moral and amoral pursuit of fame, Zhuangzi's distrust of the whole business is readily understandable. To pursue fame is to try to draw attention to oneself, and that, in his opinion, is a mortal mistake. To be a hermit in Zhuangzi's sense is to be completely unknown.

In view of what happened to eremitism after Zhuangzi this must be emphasised. In his own lifetime some extremists such as Chen Zhongzi and the Tillers were taking up farming and aiming at self-sufficiency; others tried to live outside human society altogether. What such actions had in common was that they amounted to a public condemnation of the world and an assertion of the individual's own unblemished
Such public declarations could be sincerely made, but they could also be made from ulterior motives, such as to make a name for oneself as a man of spotless virtue. There is no evidence in the inner chapters that Zhuangzi was singling out these practices for criticism, though he cannot have been ignorant of them. Perhaps they did not seem to him to be sufficiently prevalent or fundamental to require a rebuttal. In the sections of the outer and miscellaneous chapters written by his disciples and followers the issue of physical withdrawal is much more prominent, which suggests that by then ostentatious seclusion had become more popular as a way of winning fame. Such practices received a significant boost when the Laozi 老子 went into circulation (probably not much before the middle of the third century B.C.):

doctrines such as 'he who values his body more than the empire can be trusted with the empire' provided good reasons for making a show of indifference to the world. During the Han and Wei-Jin periods the existence of the recommendatory system for appointments to office further encouraged this trend, and even during the Tang dynasty virtuous hermits continued to be one of the types of men officials were expected to recommend for government posts.

I have argued that Zhuangzi was interested only in hiding within society, not outside it. Yet it could be claimed that in the inner chapters there is a passage which advocates withdrawal to a remote mountain environment: that is the story about the spirit man (shenren 神人) of Guye Mountain 姑射山 in Xiaoyao you 道遥遊. However, consideration of this and related passages will show not only that Zhuangzi was not interested in the idea of physical withdrawal, but also that he was intent on criticising the popular religious traditions of his time, and that those traditions in fact involved a
particular sort of physical withdrawal which must have served as a prototype for eremitism. This point is important enough to merit detailed attention.

About the spirit man of Guye Mountain we are told, among other things, that he can protect creatures from sickness, ensure a bountiful harvest and travel beyond the human realm; his control over the natural elements is evident from his imperviousness to heat, his invulnerability to death by drowning and his mastery of the forces of the air. There can be little doubt that Zhuangzi takes over characteristics from Wu shamanism to describe his spirit man, for such abilities were regarded as the special skills of Wu in ancient China just as they were of shamanism the world over. It is logical to assume that the spirit man is said to live on his remote mountain because according to Wu beliefs (as in shamanism in other cultures) mountains were regarded as places of spiritual power whose forces could be tapped by those with the right knowledge, not because he is a hermit who stands aloof from society. In fact, what we know about ancient Chinese religion generally indicates that mountains were commonly worshipped either as gods themselves or as the dwelling place of gods.

As to the attitude Zhuangzi would have us adopt towards this fantastic figure, there is no reason to suppose we have to take it any more or less seriously than any of the other bizarre things mentioned in Xiaoyao you, such as the great beasts Kun and Peng, or tortoises and trees with preposterous lifespans. The point of such stories is to open our minds to the strange, the wonderful, to do away with assumptions and convictions. Wu shamanism, like all the other conceptions of the world current in his time, Zhuangzi dismisses as
the spirit man of Guye Mountain can only be comprehended by great understanding. A shaman may go to a mountain in order to draw spiritual power from it, and in retiring to such an isolated place provide a model for hermits who retire for other reasons, but for Zhuangzi's sage, as we shall see, eremitism is a state of mind, something which does not depend on physical location. The spirit man of Guye Mountain sees no point in becoming involved in the affairs of the world, but that is not the reason he lives on his mountain.

If mountains were objects of great religious significance in ancient China, the same was true of trees, which were associated with the gods of the soil. Shamanistic elements abound in the passages concerning trees in the inner chapters. In Renjian shi the tree seen by Carpenter Shi is no ordinary tree. It is the arboreal equivalent of the sage, so vast and full of spiritual power that it transcends all normal categories of thought and expectation; its perfect uselessness is of a sort only a sage can hope to achieve. Nor is it mere coincidence that this tree is located near a village shrine, for this establishes beyond question its connection with the power of the god of the soil. The divine power of big 'useless' trees is equally evident in the story about Ziqi of Nanbo who finds that licking a leaf from the huge tree growing on the Hill of Shang is enough to blister his mouth and sniffing it makes him drunk for three days. The spiritual power of the tree overcomes the powers of speech and ratiocination; like a shamanic medium who goes into a trance when in contact with the spirits, Ziqi is put into what in best psychological jargon is called a state of altered consciousness simply by licking and smelling the tree's leaves. But compared with Zhuangzi's sage or spirit man a
shaman is a bungling ignoramus, as Huzi's treatment of Liezi's shaman mentor shows. 137

I have stressed the presence of shamanic elements in the inner chapters, and Zhuangzi's view that shamanism is inadequate, in order to set in perspective his views on physical seclusion and withdrawing into the mountains and forests to obtain spiritual power. Zhuangzi's philosophy presupposes a tradition of turning to nature divinities for power as well as a tradition of running off into the mountains and forests for refuge from danger. It is only the existence of such popular practices that gives any point to his humour and satire. 138

In the most general terms, Zhuangzi's own ideal was not very different from that of the other philosophers of ancient China: it was to acquire true understanding and then make that understanding so much part of oneself that all actions issue from it spontaneously. The difference lay in his conception of what amounts to true understanding. Zhuangzi's sage is he who knows that ceaseless change is the only reality, that joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, life and death, follow each other without end. Change is inevitable and the sage knows to accept with equanimity those aspects of existence man is powerless to control. All phases of change are the same for him, so in that sense everything becomes one. Life and death, self and not-self - the sage regards these as just so many instances of the eternal transformation of things. Yet within the process of change there is an order or principle, and it is with that that the sage identifies so completely that the self, as far as he is concerned, ceases to exist. Having done away with self-identity, the sage does not construct an image of the world in terms of his personal prejudices and call it 'reality', nor does he try to trap things in
the web of his emotions. At one with change, he is as free of limitations as change itself.139

How does such a person fit into the human world? It is the sage's outlook that gives him his radical freedom. Unfettered wandering is a concept that is at the core of Zhuanzi's philosophy, but wandering is to be understood above all as an affair of the mind.140 There is no suggestion that the sage, though free to wander through the universe, would ever forsake the world of men. Quite the contrary. 'He has the body of a man, therefore he gathers together with other men.'141 Physically he is the same as other men, therefore he stays in society to satisfy his basic needs and associate with his own kind. What enables him to do this without coming to harm is the fact that he has done away with the desires and feelings that entangle others in the quest for riches, power and fame: 'he does not have the affective nature (qing 譴) of a man, therefore "right" and "wrong" cannot get at him'.142 If Mengsun Cai 建生 哭 哭 cries when his mother dies it is because he is a sociable being and other men cry, not because he regards death as an occasion for grief.143 The sage may have certain preferences, but he adapts to all circumstances with easy indifference; it is his inner calm, his tranquility of spirit which keeps him at a distance from others.144

Such was Zhuangzi's ideal. Whether many men could hope to completely bring about such a transformation of their conception of reality and themselves is debatable. It seems fairly clear that Zhuangzi regarded it very much an ideal to be aspired to, and that this is why so much of his teaching is directed at those still struggling towards the ideal. For such people - virtually everyone - it is Zhuangzi's more 'prosaic' strategies, such as the eradication of
desire, the cultivation of uselessness and perfection of anonymity, that have the most immediate relevance. Therefore it is not surprising that it was these aspects of his thought which were to attract most attention in the centuries which followed.

The outer and miscellaneous chapters of Zhuangzi, which date from approximately Zhuangzi's death to the early Han, contain a considerable amount of material relating to eremitism which cannot be examined in detail here. Some of this material faithfully follows and elaborates the ideas of Zhuangzi himself. Important examples of this are the Autumn Floods tale, which explains how the sage merges with the crowd rather than setting himself apart from it, safe from harm thanks to his grasp of basic principles; and the passage concerning Liezi in Da sheng (蓬生), which states Zhuangzi's central point explicitly: 'the sage hides himself in Heaven, therefore there is nothing that can harm him'. Other sections, however, expound ideas quite different to those of the inner chapters. I shall refer to some of these in the brief survey of other significant developments in the philosophies of eremitism of the Warring States period which follows.

The doctrines of the Laozi differ in some important respects from those of the Zhuangzi, even though the outer and miscellaneous chapters of the latter contain some passages identical to parts of the Laozi. In fact, it is all too easy to allow the existence of those identical passages to lead one to exaggerate the similarities between the Laozi and Zhuangzi - a tendency which is greatly reinforced by the traditional view that the Laozi contains the teachings of the divine sage-founder of Daoism, formulated many years before Zhuangzi. One fundamental difference between the two texts is that, unlike Zhuangzi,
the Laozi is essentially a political tract.

The political emphasis of the Laozi is evident in one of the themes it shares with the doctrines of the School of the Tillers, namely that of a primitive utopia, a simple, small, self-sufficient society in harmony with the natural world and devoid of any artifice or luxury that might inflame men's desire. One major difference between these two schools of thought is that, according to the Tillers, the ruler must work in the fields alongside the common people, whereas the Laozi prescribes complete aloofness and passivity on the part of the ruler. A.C. Graham has argued that unlike the Daoist utopia, that of the Tillers depended on hard work to make it function. But to suggest that there was no work to be done in the ideal society of the Daoists is misleading: it is just that it is not the ruler who is called upon to do it. Why make the people weak-willed and strong-boned if not to make them willing workers? The difference between the two schools can be better expressed as follows: the Tillers took a personal philosophy of farming as an alternative to serving in office and turned it into a universal socio-political doctrine which applied to the ruler as much as to the shi; the Laozi school took a personal philosophy of complete withdrawal from the sordid world and turned it into an art of ruling by means of which the ruler becomes invisible to his subjects and by non-interference in affairs sets the country to rights.

It could be said that there is nothing in the Laozi that deals explicitly with eremitism, yet at the same time the whole text is pervaded with the ideal of disregarding the self and doing away with desires. But it is an ideal which is meant to apply only to the
ruler. Again and again eremitic principles are presented as political arts, as ways of winning power and success. Thus, to be unacclaimed is said to be the perfect acclaim;\(^{154}\) the sage wins the empire by not interfering;\(^{155}\) the best ruler is one of whose existence the people are unaware,\(^{156}\) someone who can take his place over the people without harming them.\(^{157}\) Seclusion and quietism are the means by which the ruler brings harmony and stability to his state, but they are not an option for the common people.

It is illuminating to compare the *Laozi* both with the *Han Feizi* and the *Lüshi chunqiu*, texts from much the same time but differing in important ways. Thus Han Fei’s ideal ruler too is hidden from his subjects, and from concealment observes the conduct of his underlings;\(^{158}\) and Han Fei says clearly that the way of the ruler is not the way of his subjects.\(^{159}\) But unlike the teachings of the *Laozi* Han Fei’s doctrines include an essential ingredient of deviousness and duplicity. The difference is fundamental, for unlike Han Fei’s legalist ruler, the sage ruler in the *Laozi* is what he seems: passive, emotionless, void. He genuinely must be disinterested in political power and worldly affairs; he really must be blockish, devoid of scheming cleverness. To this extent the sage in the *Laozi* is Zhuangzi’s sage. But according to the *Laozi* it is precisely those sagely qualities that will win him the throne. ‘He who values his body more than the empire can be entrusted with the empire’,\(^{160}\) Moreover, once this eremitic sage is on the throne his benign influence will flow down to the people just as surely as if he was a Confucian sage-king, and like their ruler the people will be rid of their cravings for worldly things.\(^{161}\) The end product of this process could be described as an eremitic society.
In the *Lüshi chunqiu* the differences between what is appropriate for the ruler and what is appropriate for his subjects are developed at length; those differences underlie the entire political and social vision propounded in the work. The ruler, it is argued, must value his life above all other things and let all his actions be determined by enlightened self-preservation; the way that the self is preserved is by forgetting all about it, by doing away with all partiality or subjectivity (si 與) and attaining the selflessness of Heaven. All the terminology of the Laozi relating to simplicity, selflessness, quietude and non-action is applied to the ruler in the *Lüshi chunqiu*. One major difference, however, is that like Xunzi, Lü Buwei’s scholars believed in educating and redirecting desires rather than attempting the impossible task of eradicating them completely. It is by self-cultivation, not suppression, that the ruler becomes completely selfless. Still, ‘the conduct of the ruler of men is different to that of the common people’. Again and again it is said that the ruler is dependent on his virtuous and industrious subordinates. Where are such subordinates to be found? Having struck the dark times of the late Warring States period, worthy men have naturally gone off into seclusion, hence it is in remote and obscure places that the ruler must look for them, in the mountains and forests, by the rivers and seas. And how is the ruler to make use of such men if he is fortunate enough to find them?

...the more desires men have the more they can be used, the less desires men have the less they can be used; those who have no desires cannot be used at all... He who is good at ruling is able to make men to have endless desires, hence the use he can make of them is also endless.

The only hermits considered as good models for a ruler’s subjects in the *Lüshi chunqiu* are those who have withdrawn for moral reasons. Such men make good subjects because if necessary they would be willing
to die for the right ruler.\textsuperscript{171} Hermits of the Zhuangzi mode, whose eremitism is based on selflessness and lack of desire for worldly things, are mentioned primarily in order to set them up as examples to be emulated by the ruler himself.\textsuperscript{172}

Although the doctrines of selflessness and desirelessness, simplicity and quietude were developed in the Laozi in relation to the ruler only, their influence in Han and later times was much wider than that. Thanks partly to the tremendous prestige the text enjoyed, particularly after the deification of Laozi in the Later Han,\textsuperscript{173} and partly due to the fact that its teachings could to some degree be reconciled with Confucian principles, it was the Laozi rather than the Zhuangzi that became the most important source of such doctrines for any would-be hermits of later periods.

One other theme of the Laozi which is important in relation to the history of eremitism and also demonstrates the continuity of ideas between the Laozi and aspects of Confucian thought is that of timeliness. This concept, which is also crucial to the Ten Wings of the Book of Changes (which appear to date from much the same period), provides a way of finding room for both periods of dutiful service and periods of lofty withdrawal in the individual's relationship with ruler and society. The essence of this outlook was already present in Confucius, but in the Laozi and more especially the Ten Wings such behaviour is slotted into a cosmological framework. In this way eremitism ceased to be a type of conduct which \textit{prima facie} required moral justification and became something natural and inevitable, a part of the eternal order of things.
Timeliness, it should be noted, is an issue which was to become of major significance after the Qin unification of the empire. When the destruction of the other states ended the option of moving from the domain of one ruler to another, change in time replaced change in place as the main source of hope for those dissatisfied with the status quo.

In the Laozi, timeliness in withdrawing is expressed in terms of knowing contentment, of knowing when one has enough, of recognising that things begin to ebb as soon as they have reached fullness, that a rise is always followed by a decline. Change is the only thing that can be counted on, and the sage finds contentment in following along with the unfolding to the dao. 'To retire when things have been accomplished is the way of Heaven'. In the Ten Wings of the Book of Changes, as was pointed out in the first section of this chapter, eremitism was introduced into the schematic representation of the cosmic process of change by the hexagrams when those passages in the hexagram and line texts which advocated inaction, caution or withdrawal were interpreted in terms of the eremitic ideas the commentators brought to the text.

This sort of integration of eremitism with cosmology is also to be found in sections of the outer and miscellaneous chapters of Zhuangzi dating from the early Han period. The Ke yi chapter, for example, contains a five-fold classification of shi: there are moral extremists who condemn the world and withdraw to isolation in the mountains and valleys; scholars who devote themselves to learning and teaching, hoping to transform the world with their doctrines of benevolence, righteousness, loyalty and fidelity; scholars who make a name for themselves in the affairs of court and state, establish
social order and propriety and devote themselves to government; carefree idlers who are indifferent to world affairs and withdraw to a life of non-action and quietude by the rivers and seas; and those who practise the arts of longevity, aspire to immortality and have no interest except to nourish their bodies. In this system, eremitism is given a place in the cosmic scheme of things, not in terms of the necessity of responding to changing circumstances, but in terms of psychological differences which are the result of the operation of the Five Phases (wu xing 五行) in individual personalities and social affairs. The relevant correlations may be set out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Type of Shi</th>
<th>Type of Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Moral Fanatic</td>
<td>Pervasive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Moral Teacher</td>
<td>Enlightened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Man of Action</td>
<td>Vigorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Man of Nonaction</td>
<td>Quietistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Seeker of Longevity</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other five-fold classifications of social types are to be found in other texts. For example, Xunzi contains two different classifications of men according to degree of enlightenment. Somewhat later, Huan Tan 楮淡 (43 B.C.-28 A.D.) in his Xin lun 新論 included a five-fold classification of spiritual men, in which hermits (yinlun 隱濶) ranked second after divine immortals. It is impossible to ascertain how widely any such classifications were accepted, but perhaps their authority is less important than the fact that they were obviously very much a topical concern at the time when Five Phase theory was influential, and that they helped to establish a place for eremitism in what was regarded as the eternal scheme of
things.

Up to this point I have not discussed the views of Mencius and Xunzi separately, because their position with regard to eremitism is essentially the same as that of Confucius himself. In view of their influence in later times, however, it may be appropriate to conclude by mentioning their specific contributions to the history of eremitism.

Mencius reiterates that the first duty of a gentleman should be to resign from his post if by staying he will not positively further the Way: 'someone whose responsibility it is to give advice will leave if he is unable to do so',\textsuperscript{180} But this did not mean that he believed a gentleman should resign quickly - he himself delayed his departure from Qi to the extent that he was criticised for being unrealistic.\textsuperscript{181}

However, there are two other ideas related to eremitism which Mencius was the first influential figure to state. One is the idea, already mentioned in connection with the Five Phase theory, that whether or not someone withdraws from a given situation depends to some extent on individual personality:

> the actions of the sages are not always the same: some keep their distance from the world, some involve themselves in it; some resign their positions, some do not resign; but for all it is simply a question of being set on remaining undefiled.\textsuperscript{182}

It is not just that men respond differently to different situations, but that men respond differently to similar situations. Yi Yin, Boyi, Liuxia Hui, and Confucius were all sages, says Mencius, but they responded differently to the one basic dilemma because of their different personalities. Confucius was the sage whose actions were
timely and was unfailing in his judgement, but Mencius still admires the others for doing what they believed was right. Such a position opens up the possibility of defending a hermit's decision to remain seclusion by reference to his psychological make-up rather than by reference to objective circumstances.

The other important idea formulated by Mencius is that even if their actions are not always completely perfect, the conduct of hermits can serve as a model and inspiration to later generations if their lives are recorded and praised. Thus he refers to Boyi and Liuxia Hui as 'teachers of one hundred generations' who by force of example continued to transform the character of those who came after them: 'one hundred generations ago they set their example and for one hundred generations those who have heard about them have all been inspired by them'. Ban Gu restated this idea in Han shu juan 72, the chapter devoted to the lives of hermits and other figures who refused to compromise their ideals, and this chapter served as the prototype for the chapters on hermits which came to be included in the majority of the standard histories.

As we might expect, Xunzi takes a rather stern view of eremitism. He condemns impractical idealists and moral extremists such as Shentu Di and Chen Zhongzi as mere sensationalists out to make a reputation for themselves. Nevertheless, he accepts that there are times when withdrawal is necessary to preserve personal integrity, and a great Confucian can win deserved fame through virtuous retirement. Xunzi's main contribution in this context is to state clearly and explicitly the principle that when circumstances force him to retire the sage devotes himself to clarifying the Way, to scholarship and teaching:
When what he advocates is practised the world is set in order; when it is not he illumines the Way but obscures his whereabouts.  

Xunzi does not elaborate this principle any further, but clearly it follows directly from his belief that it is through learning that men acquire goodness. To give up learning is to become a beast.  

For a gentleman to withdraw from society and revert to quietism and simplicity would be to destroy his own integrity as a responsible being as well as to undermine the moral foundation of society. To say that Xunzi invented this idea is perhaps too much, since Confucius' whole career demonstrates it in action. But Xunzi formulated it explicitly, and as a result throughout the history of imperial China men found it easier to devote themselves with a clear conscience to study and teaching when involvement in state affairs was out of the question. It goes without saying that this alternative was to prove more attractive to most of those from scholarly families than either going out in person to break the soil and plough the fields or living a primitive, solitary life in the wilderness.

5. Conclusion

What is striking about the range of attitudes and principles that are involved in early Chinese philosophies of eremitism is not just its extent but also its cohesiveness, the way that philosophical positions quite distinct from each other often share underlying assumptions and key concepts as well as a set of values and a terminology. To attempt to explain these similarities or continuities simply by saying that all Chinese eremitism is the product of the social and economic conditions of the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, and therefore could be expected to exhibit a certain cohesiveness, is not really satisfactory. What must be
stressed over and above this is that the philosophies outlined in this chapter developed in response to each other as much as in response to a particular environment, that they are attempts to refute or transform the doctrines of competitors. It is this which explains why the ideas of one school so frequently appear as mirror images of those of another: identical in outline but back-to-front. Hence, when faced with a situation in which an individual can become a hermit both in order to win fame and in order to avoid it, to win the world and to escape from it, we must be careful not to dismiss as sophistry or hypocrisy what is really a result of the fullness and sophistication of the philosophical tradition to which Chinese eremitism belongs.

The great philosophers of the late Zhou period formulated a wide range of ideals of personal understanding and conduct, and it was not only as a result of opposing doctrines propounded by competing schools that those ideals could entail conflicting demands and priorities. For example, the Confucians stressed the goals of self-cultivation and social order, of knowledge and action. It would be wrong to label those ideals as 'polarities in Confucian thought' if that is meant to imply that the individual was conceived as being in a position to choose between them, to direct his life towards one pole rather than the other. According to Confucian teaching, self-cultivation was pointless unless it led to social order, while social order was considered unattainable without self-cultivation; similarly, knowledge and action were regarded as essentially complementary. We can go some way towards understanding eremitism by considering it as a series of strategies for reconciling conflicting ideals in such a way as to make those ideals attainable.
But more important still for an understanding of Chinese eremitism is the conflict, not between the various ideals themselves, but between those ideals and social reality. If the early philosophers had very firm ideas of what the perfect society was to be like, they were also painfully aware of how remote it was from the violent, chaotic world they inhabited. However, the ideals of personal conduct they espoused were not predicated upon the prior existence of that perfect society. To live up to ideals in an imperfect world is an arduous task, and one which requires, in a sense, a compromise - not personal compromise, but a compromise in what the individual can realistically hope to achieve. Eremitism represents the greatest achievement possible for a man of principle in adverse circumstances; it represents the accommodation of high moral ideals to a harsh, refractory reality.
NOTES


2. See, for example, LY 3.7.


6. On the date of the Ten Wings, see Qian Mu, 'Lun shiyi fei Kongzi zuo sanyi tu shidai zuo', Li Jingchi, 'Yizhuang jinyu', and 'Lun Yizhuang zhu zuo shidai shu', all in Gushi bian, vol. 3 (1931); Dai Junren, 'Based on the Ten Wings', in Lu Shang's 'Zhu Shangzi', all in Gushi bian, vol. 3 (1931); Dai Junren, 'Based on the Ten Wings', in Lu Shang's 'Zhu Shangzi', all in Gushi bian, vol. 3 (1931); Willard J. Peterson, 'Making Connections: "Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations" of the Book of Change', Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 42.1 (1982), especially 69-79. Dai Junren argues that in terms of style and thought and also rhyming patterns the Ten Wings resemble Xunzi more than any other text. His comment (p.1) that the Changes is best regarded as a congsu shen which acquired its present form over a long period under many hands applies to the commentaries as much as to the classic itself. Peterson (p.77) makes a similar remark about the Xici zhuan zheng which may be applied more generally, namely that it 'was accumulated over a certain period, beginning approximately a generation before the Ch'in dynasty was proclaimed and hardening by the first century B.C. into the form that was taught by Fei Chih and later engraved on the stone tablets'. Zhang Dainian argues that this commentary postdates Laozi but is earlier than Zhuangzi (I believe the inner chapters of Zhuangzi are in fact earlier than the Laozi as argued below), but is most unconvincing and does little more than reaffirm Qian Mu's observation that the commentaries contain a number of major concepts characteristic of the late Warring States period.

7. Zhou Yi (SBCK ed.), 7/3a,4b.


11. Zhou Yi 4/3b-4a; Wilhelm/Baynes 553.

12. See note 6 above. It remains to be seen whether the Mawangdui text of the Book of Changes, when finally published, will confirm Gao Heng's argument by having in place of 瑞. The use of 'substitute' characters is one of the notable features of that text. See Yan Lingfeng, Mawangdui boshu Yi jing chubu yanjiu (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe 1980). Of course, the use of 瑞 in the Mawangdui text would not invalidate Gao Heng's argument.

13. Zhou Yi 2/9b; Wilhelm/Baynes 78.


15. This is stated in the Xugua zhuan (Zhou Yi 9/5b), and is forcefully argued by Wang Fuzhi, 王夫之 (1627-1679), Zhou Yi baishu, cited by Gao Heng, Zhou Yi gujing jinshu, 68.

16. This argument is not weakened by Liu Baimin's observation, Zhou Yi shili tongyi (Taipei: Xue bujuan zhai 1966), 162, that in antiquity state affairs and family affairs amounted to one and the same thing. The line text refers specifically to the affairs of the parents, the immediate family, not to the family-based model of the state.


19. On the various interpretations of this poem see Bernard Karlgren, 'Glosses on the Siao Ya Odes', Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 16 (1944), 63-64.


22. Creel, The Origins of Statecraft, 376, is prepared to accept that the family served as the ideal model for government in the Zhou and that heredity was of major importance in the Spring and Autumn Period, but believes that from that point of view the western Zhou was like 'another country' (p.380). However, he ignores the ample evidence in the Book of Songs that kinship and descent were central to the socio-religious beliefs of the period (e.g. Mao 209, 210, 235, 240, 243, 247, 275, 279, 283, 286, 287, 302) and underestimates the efficacy of appointments by heredity in a society which regards heredity as the only source of political legitimacy. That appointment to office in the Spring and Autumn Period frequently had nothing to do with heredity is argued by Barry B. Blakely, 'Functional Disparities in the Socio-political Traditions of Spring and Autumn China', Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, 20.2 (1977), 208-43; 20.3 (1977), 307-43; 22.1 (1979), 81-118. Blakely makes a state-by-state examination of the appointments recorded in the Zuo zhuan, and finds that the proportion of offices held by members of the ruling clan or collateral branches varied strongly from state to state, from as high as 78 per cent in Song to a mere 9 per cent in Jin. He concludes that while kinship could be a help in obtaining office in states such as Song, Zheng, Chu, and Lu, in states such as Jin, Qi and Zhou it was actually a disadvantage (22.1/107). But Blakely's statistics do not establish what he thinks they do. He makes the elementary statistical error of assuming that in the absence of an appointment policy favouring kinsmen, royal kinsmen should occupy the same proportion of posts as non-kinsmen because members of each group will have equal chances of gaining office. But kinsmen would be over-represented in office if the proportion of available posts they held exceeded the proportion of kinsmen in the total population of the state (or, more precisely, the total number of possible office-holders). It seems safe to assume that the proportion of royal kinsmen in any state never approached even the 5 per cent of office-holders who were kinsmen in Jin. Hence even there kinsmen had the advantage over non-kinsmen when it came to receiving an appointment.


24. Such an idea is implicit, for example, in LY 2.18, 2.19, 2.20, 4.14, 5.6, 5.16 6.8, 12.22, 13.2, 13.13, 15.32. Liu Jiyao, 'Shi shu yin' 293, also makes the point that freedom to choose between official service and eremitism only became a possibility after the relationship between ruler and office-holders began to be established on an individual basis rather than in terms of heredity.


26. LY 2.4, 6.18, 7.33, 12.1.
27. LY 7.30.

28. LY 4.10; also 9.4, 14.32, 15.37.


32. Mencius also entertained the idea of going to live among the barbarians (9.14).

33. LY 14.2. For the term 'shi' as it was used in the pre-Han period - meaning nobleman, soldier and scholar all at once, with sometimes one, now another element dominating - it is impossible to find a satisfactory English equivalent. Hence in this chapter I prefer to leave it untranslated. As far as the Han period is concerned, however, the translation of 'shi' as 'scholar' is much less inadequate than it is in relation to the earlier period. Accordingly in the chapters which follow I use 'scholar'. For the sake of uniformity, but with reluctance, I translate 'junzi' as 'gentleman'.

34. Han Yu 'Hou ershi jiu ri fu shang shu 後二十九日復上書', Han Changli wenji jiaozhu 韓昌黎文集校注 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), 95. On the implications of the unification of the empire on eremitism see also Liu Jiyao, 'Shi yin 詩吟', 314.

35. LY 2.21.

36. Han shu 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962; hereafter HS), 72/3083; also Huangfu Mi 侯芳遠 (215-282), Gaoshi zhuanshu 高氏傳 (SBBY ed.; hereafter GSZ), B/9b.


38. Cui Shu 崔述 (1740-1816), Shusi kaoxin lu 詩史考信錄 4/28-30; Lunyu yushuo 論語解說, 20-22 (Cui dongbi yishu 崔東璧遺書 [Shanghai: Yadong tushuguan, 1936]), on the basis of the forms of address used in various sections of the Lunyu, has argued that part of the text (in Kaoxin lu he refers only to the last five books, in Lunyu yushuo to the last ten books) is quite different to and dates from much later than the rest of the text, containing usages current in the time of Mencius but not earlier. His arguments were taken up and expanded by D.C. Lau, Confucius: The Analects, 222-27. Hu Zhikui 胡哲偉, also drawing on Cui Shu but introducing further evidence of his own, has argued very persuasively that the whole of the second part of the Lunyu (Books 11 to 20) dates from much later than the first part, probably being compiled after the Mencius text was put together, and that the two parts most likely derive from the Qi lun 諸論 and Lu lun 冥論 respectively, which were combined by Zhang Yu 張禹 in the reign of Emperor Yuan 澐 of the Former Han (48-33 B.C.). See the articles collected in Hu Zhikui, Lunyu bianzheng 論語辨證 (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshiye gongsi, 1978), but especially 'Lunyu bianxian yuanliu kaozheng 論語.
(Originally published in "Dalu zazhi 大陸雜誌", 31.7-9 (1965) 23-26, 27-31, 30-36, and "Lunyu pianzhang Lun语篇章", originally published in "Kong Meng xuebao 孔孟學報", 12 (1966), 153-96. For my purpose here it is not necessary to accept all of Hu Zhikui's ambitious argument concerning the "Qi lun and Lu lun", but only his evidence that sections of the text in which the anecdotes about the hermits occur dates from around the time of Mencius. If it is accepted that these anecdotes deal with ideas and attitudes from the time of Mencius and Zhuangzi rather than Confucius, this in turn supports Hu Zhikui's argument that the second part of the "Lunyu" dates from approximately that period.

39. LY 18.5.


41. See, for example, Hanshi waizhuan 韓詩外傳 (SBCK ed.) 2/12b-13a; Lienü zhuan 劉女傳 (SBBY ed.) 2/9 a-b; GSZ A/9a-b.

42. LY 14.38 and 14.39.

43. Huangfu Mi, GSZ A/8b-9a; also Xi Kang 招康 (223-262), Gaoshizhuan, in Xi Kang ji jiaozhu 招康集校注, ed. Dai Kingyang 戴明楊 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1962), 401.

44. The main sources are Zhuangzi, the inner chapters of which date from the time of Zhuangzi's death approximately 286 B.C., and the outer and miscellaneous chapters frequently much later, and the Lushi chunqiu 春秋, which contains a postface dated 239 B.C.

45. Sima Qian 司馬遷 records traditions to the effect that Yi Yin and Taigong Wang were hermits but appears to give them little credence (Shi ji 史記 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959; hereafter SJ] 3/94, 32/1478). The many tales about Taigong Wang are examined and sifted for historical fact by Sarah Allan, 'The Identities of Taigong Wang in Zhou and Han Literature', Monumenta Serica, 30 (1972-73), 57-99. It was the tradition of Yi Yin as a hermit which led to the appearance of tales about figures supposedly his contemporaries but much more virtuous and uncompromising than he, such as Bian Sui 博望, Wu Guang 楚光, Ji Te 齊鐵 and Shentu Di 燕伋. Material relating to Yi Yin as hermit is examined in the interesting little article by Dan Tao 但道, 'Yi Yin de chushen: shi chufu haishi chushen?', Huaguang 彩光 1.3 (1939), 4-6. On Bian Sui, Wu Guang, Ji Te and Shentu Di see ZZ 6/13, 26/46-48, 28/70-78, 29/42; Lushi chunqiu (SBCK ed.; hereafter LCSQ) 19/2a-b; Hanshi waizhuan 1/12b; Xin xu 新序 (SBCK ed.), 3/9b, 7/13a.

47. Huainanzi (SBBY ed.) 18/10a-b. The basic Zuo zhuan account is repeated in 13/11a, as it is in LSCQ 16/10a-b.

48. GSZ A/5b.

49. Duke Xi, 24; Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu 417-18.

50. See ZZ 29/42-43; LSCQ 12/5a-b; Han Feizi (SBBY ed.) 8/11b; Fanshi waizhuan 7/4a; SJ 39/1660-62; Shuo yuan 説苑 (SBCK ed.) 6/4a-5a, 8/17a, 17/12a; Liexian zhu 1 18/11b; Shuo yuan 説苑 (Gujin yishi 古今逸史 ed.) A/8b-9a. For discussion of these passages in terms of the question of where (rather than whether), Jie Zitui went into hiding, see Wei Juxian 戰驤, 'Jie Zitui yinkao 介子推隱考', Shuowen yuekan 説文月刊 2.6-7 (1940), 103-09.

51. LY 5.23, 7.15.


53. SJ 61/2123. It is evident from the contrast drawn in Lunyu 7.15 between the conduct of Boyi and Shuqi on the one hand and the Lord of Wei 魏侯 (Ousted Duke Zhe 宋公蘇) and his father Kuai Kui 魏獻公 on the other, that this tradition concerning the brothers was believed by Confucius and his disciples. On the significance of this historical contrast see Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, Lunyu zhengyi 論語正義 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1930), 7/41-43. On the events involving Ousted Duke Zhe and Kuai Kui (subsequently Duke Zhuang 曜) see Chunqiu 春秋, Duke Ding 14, Duke Ai 周 16; Zuo zhuan, Duke Ding 14, Duke Ai 2, 7, 15, 16; Yang Bojun, Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu 1594, 1597, 1612-13, 1640, 1694-98.

54. SJ 61/2123.

55. LSCQ 14/7a-b; also ZZ 28/78-86, which derives from it.

56. Han Feizi 4/17b; Huainanzi 11/13b; Shuo yuan 8/19b.

57. That the story of that departure from Guzhu involves a refurbishing of history is evident from its close similarity to the story of the family of King Wen, which also concerns a ruler with three sons, two of whom leave their homeland out of the highest moral principles when their father declares his wish that his position should go to a younger son. In the case of King Wen's family, this is supposed to have led to the founding of the state of Wu 吳 by (Wu) Taibo 吳太伯. See SJ 4/115, 31/1445-46.

58. Han Feizi 19/6a. Han Fei's disapproval of anyone who dares to set aside their duty to their ruler is clear in passages such as 11/10a and 17/14a.

59. Hu, Ancient China in Transition, 7-8; Yu Ying-shih 'Gudai zhishi jiecheng de xingqi yu fazhan 古代知識階層的興起與發展', originally published in the fiftieth anniversary publication of the Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica, Zhongguo shanggu shidai dinggao 中國上古時代掇稿 (1978), rpt. in Professor Yu's Zhongguo zhishi jiecheng shilun,

61. Ibid., 30-38. For different perspectives on the rise of the shi to social prominence see also Hsu, Ancient China in Transition, 24, 34-37; Hou Wallu 侯外薰, Zhongguo sixiang tongshi 中国思想通史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1957), 1/40-47; Cao Xisheng 曹希圣, Bianshi yu youxia 僑士與遊俠 (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1970).


64. SJ 85/2511.

65. Yü Ying-shih, 'Gudai zhishi jieceng', 57-65. The stories about these feudal lords and their retainers provided much of the content of texts such as the Guo yu 戰國 and Zhanguo ce 戰國策, but see especially SJ juan 75-78. On the Jixia Academy see Hu Jiacong 胡家櫧, 'Jixia xuegong shi gouchen 經學宮史稿', Wen shi zhe 文史哲, 1981(4), 25-33.

66. ZZ 5/49.

67. LSCQ 15/9b-10a, 19/19b, 21/4a; Huainanzi 19/4a; SJ 44/1838-39; Xin xu 4/2b; Yü Ying-shih, 'Gudai zhishi jieceng', 57-59. On the distinction between a ruler's friend and teacher, on the one hand, and his subjects on the other, see also Mencius 5B.3.

68. Yantie lun 揚鐵論 (SBC ed.) 2/10b.

69. SJ 74/2347-48. Sima Qian's remark is not to be taken completely literally: if there were indeed thousands of shi gathered at Jixia they cannot all have been feted in the way he describes, although the more illustrious ones were no doubt well treated. See also Yü Ying-shih, 'Gudai zhishi jieceng', 63-66.

70. Zhanguo ce (SBC ed.) 4/16b.

72. Whether being fed is something which requires hundreds of followers and a baggage train of accessories is a matter not disputed. The vaguely opportunist note discernible in Mencius' reply becomes more pronounced in the words of later hermits who allude to this passage when justifying their own material concerns. See, for example, the anecdote about Xu Xun 許闍 in the Shishuo xinyu 世說新語 (SBBY ed.; hereafter SSXY) 3A/13b.

73. For example, Mencius 5B.4, 6B.14.

74. Mencius 3B.4.

75. For example, Shangjun shu 諸子書 (SBBY ed.), 1/4a-5a, 7b-8a, 10b-11b, 13b-14a, 5/6a; Han Feizi 19/8a-b, 11a-b.

76. ZZ 24/1-25.


78. ZZ 15/1-2.

79. Discussion of suicide as a form of social and political protest is to be found in Laurence Schneider's book on the Qu Yuan legend, A Madman of Ch' u: The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent (University of California Press, 1980).

80. SJ 82/2457. It has been suggested that Wang Zhu is to be identified with Yan Chu 阮籍, another hermit from Qi (mentioned in Zhanguo ce 4/12a; Shuo yuan 9/2a; GSZ B/4b-5a). However, both names are included in Ban Gu's Gujin renbiao 古今人物表 (HS 20/945,948). See commentary to Zhanguo ce (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 408.

81. Zhanguo ce 4/64b.


83. Mencius 3B.10; also 7A.34.

84. Mencius 3B.10. According to Shuo yuan 8/19b, in Wuling Chen Zhongzi made a living by watering other people's gardens - if this is true we must assume he watered only the gardens of virtuous men. There is a text called Wulingzi 烏陵子 which is supposed to be the work of Chen Zhongzi, but it is a late and uninteresting forgery. See Zhang Xinzheng 張心澂, Weishi tongkao 魏書通考 (2nd ed., Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1957), 1010-11. The collected works of Liu Xiang 劉向 in Han Wei liuchao baisan mingjia ji (ce 7/37b-38b) contains 'On Presenting Wulingzi to the Throne 上傳隆子 ' . However, it seems strange, not only that a work presented by Liu Xiang is not mentioned in the Han shu bibliography, but also that a person such as Chen Zhongzi would write a book at all.

86. Compare the argument by Fung Yu-lan 學者 A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (New York: Press Press, 1948), 37, updating a theory put forward by Liu Xin 學者 (53 B.C.-23 A.D.), that it is to hermits as a group that we owe Daoist teachings.

87. LY 15.32.

88. LY 13.4.

89. The motifs of personal involvement in agriculture and/or complete self-sufficiency appear in many of the tales about hermits which began to circulate in the Warring States period. If an early version of a particular story did not include such details they were often used to fill out later ones. The best examples of these are the tales about Jieyu, the madman of Chu, referred to in note 41 above, and the various versions of the Xuyou legend.

90. Mozi 49/40-54.


92. Hsu Cho-yün, Ancient China in Transition, 8, suggests that some shi must have worked the land personally, citing as evidence the Liji (Liji zhengyi 樂記工義, in Shisan jing zhushu 三十三經注疏. [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 35/785B), which says that when asked his age a shi formally was supposed to reply (if adult) that he had been able to till the land or (if young) carry firewood for X number of years. But formal expressions such as this usually contained a strong element of polite self-deprecation. It would be hasty to deduce from the fact that the Zhou kings referred to themselves as "I, the small child" (zhen xiaozi 小子) that they were actually children. Graham, 'The Nung-chia', 96, also suggests that for shi to personally cultivate the land would not have been an unusual state of affairs.

93. LY 9.6, 9.7.

94. Guanzi 管子 (SBBY ed.) 7/13a-b, 9/12b seems to imply that any shi not in office should personally take part in agriculture, but given that the authors of the Guanzi generally espouse Legalist principles that is hardly surprising and cannot be regarded as evidence that traditionally shi were expected to do so.

95. SJ 70/2279.

96. SJ 79/2425. On the poverty experienced by youshi, see also Yu Ying-shih, 'Gudai zhishi jieceng', 82-83.

97. Mencius 4B.3.

98. Yunmeng Qinjian zhengli xiaozu 楊夢秦簡整理小組, 'Yunmeng Qinjian shiwenn (er) 楊夢秦簡釋文 (二)', Wenwu 文物 1976(7), 9; Yu Ying-shih, 'Gudai zhishi jieceng', 90-91.
The extent to which such laws were enforced is not clear. After all, the chancellor of Qin, Lü Buwei, supported thousands of retainers (SJ 85/2510) without being charged with subverting the law, and many of them must have come from other states. Certainly according to SJ 75/2361 youshi continued to go to Qin.

99. See the comments by Davis, 'The Narrow Lane', 4, 9-12.

100. Zuo zhuang, Duke Xuan 15; Chunqiu zhu zhu, 766; Hsu, Ancient China in Transition, 108.


102. HS 24A/1126, 1137.

103. SJ 66/2230.

104. There is some evidence that Shang Yang did take steps to eradicate any vestiges of traditional feudal patterns of land tenure as part of his attempt to create a completely regulated, meritocratic society. The list of his reforms given in the SJ (68/2232, 79/2422) includes 'doing away with field border paths and estate boundary embankments'. But this is no more a move to throw society open to market forces than any of his other reforms, such as the establishment of an effective administrative system, the regularisation of taxes, and the standardisation of weights and measures. That the buying and selling of land began in Qin as the result of government recognition of what had become common practice is indicated by a passage in HS 99B/4129-30, which records an official's attempt to dissuade Wang Mang from trying to reinstitute the well-field system: 'Although the well-field system was the law of the sage-kings, it has long been defunct. The way of Zhou has declined and the people do not follow it. Qin knew that by complying with the hearts of the people great profit could be gained, therefore huts and wells were razed and the grid of field border paths was established...'. The fact that Shang Yang is said both to have established and abolished field border paths suggests that the expression means little more than that he formalised new patterns of land holding.


107. Mencius 7B.26; Huainanzi 13/7b.


111. Mencius 3B.9.
112. ZZ 4/4-6.
113. ZZ 7/6-7.
114. ZZ 4/34-53.
115. ZZ 4/53-60.
117. ZZ 7/13.
118. ZZ 4/71. Obviously Zhuangzi is concerned with more than just trees in the parables that mention them. Trees seem to have served as a standard metaphor in ancient China for officials or those involved in government. Good examples of this occur in the Book of Songs (Mao 241, Huang yi (Reme) ) and Lu Jis's Xin yu (B/la-2a). When Han Fei remarked that the ruler should prune his trees from time to time to stop them from blocking his gate (Han Feizi 2/14a-b) he was not recommending silviculture as a royal hobby.

119. ZZ 4/86.
120. ZZ 7/31-33.
121. Possibly no-one in ancient China was more aware of this than Sima Qian. See SJ 61/2129, 130/3299-3300; HS 62/2735.
122. LY 15.20.
123. LY 4.5, 12.20, 14.30, 15.19; also Mencius 6B.6, 7B.11.
124. This principle is clearly stated in the Xiao jing (SBCK ed.) 3b, 13b. On the early development of the concept of filiality see Harry Hsin-I Hsiao 'Concepts of Hsiao (Filial Piety) in the Classic of Poetry and the Classic of Documents', Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 10.2 (1979), 425-43.

125. For example, Mao 235 (Wen Wang 文王 ), 240 (Si qi 四禽 ), 278 (Chen lu 沉鵽 ).
126. See, for example, Mencius 1A.3, 1A.7, 1B.11, 2A.5, 3B.5, 4A.6-7, 4A.9, 4B.16, 6B.13.
127. It is impossible to deal adequately with this controversial issue here. I believe the arguments presented by D.C. Lau, Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching (Penguin, 1963), 147-62, for such a late date to sound. Certainly there is no allusion to the Laozi in the inner chapters (nor in Mencius) and it is probably significant that in the inner chapters Laozi is always referred to as Lao Dan 老聃.
never as Master (zi 

), just as Confucius is always referred to in those sections believed to be by Zhuangzi by means of his style Zhongzi 仲尼 , never as Master. On this latter point see Tang Lan 唐蘭 , 'Lao Dan de xingming he shidai Lao Dan de 行名 和時代 ', Gushi bian 4 (1933), 332-51. The historical reality behind the figure of Lao Dan is a more or less separate issue. Sima Qian obviously felt at a loss when faced with the conflicting stories about him. It is said that Laozi was an older contemporary of Confucius, and both that he was a 'gentleman in hiding' (yin junzi 隱君子 ) and that he had a post in the archives of the royal domain of Zhou, where Confucius visited him for information concerning the rites (SJ 47/1909, 63/2140. In the first passage Sima Qian qualifies the latter claim by using the tentative particle gai 許 , but not in the second). As we have seen, there is every reason to dismiss the suggestion of a gentleman in hiding in Confucius' time as an anachronism. Gao Heng 房鴻 , 'Guanyu Laozi de jige wenti 关于老子的幾個問題 ', 1979(1), 35-39, has argued plausibly that Laozi is to be identified with the Lao Yangzi 老陽子 mentioned in the Zuo zhuan (Duke Zhao 12, 26), that Lao Yangzi did have a post in the Zhou archives and that when Confucius was seventeen years old he went to him for information. There is reason to believe that the story of Confucius going to Lao Dan for instruction has some historical basis. The story cannot be Daoist in origin, since in Daoist terms it would be nonsensical for Confucius to go to Laozi for information concerning the rites. Nor is it likely that Confucian scholars would invent a tale about Confucius going for advice concerning the rites from a figure supposed to be hostile to the very ideal of ritual and ceremony. Hence the story, which serves as the basis for a number of episodes in Zhuangzi and is alluded to in the Lushi chunqiu (LSCQ 2/10a) and the Li ji (Li ji zhengyi 19/172C-173C), probably refers to an actual event which was recorded by Confucius' followers to show the importance Confucius attached to correct knowledge of the rites, and from the fact that Confucius went to Lao Dan for information we can be sure that Lao Dan was an eminent traditionalist. (A similar view is argued by A.C. Graham, 'The Origins of the Legend of Lao Tan', Guojì Hanxue huìyì lùnwen jì [Proceedings of the International Conference on Sinology on the Occasion of the Seventieth Anniversary of the Foundation of the Republic of China], 9/59-72). It may be that Zhuangzi, in whose work the earliest stories about Lao Dan the spokesman for carefree naturalness occur, played a major role in bringing about the radical transformation he appears to have undergone. To bring about such a transformation would have been easy for the philosopher who appears to have transformed the straight-laced Siyue into the irresponsible Xuyou.

128. Laozi, Ch.13. For the variants of this text see Zhang Songru 張松如 , Laozi jiaodu 老子校讀 (Jilín: Jilín renmin chubanshe, 1981), and D.C. Lau, Tao Te Ching (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982). Such ideas also occur in some of the later sections of the Zhuangzi, though they flatly contradict the philosophy of the inner chapters; for example, 11/13-15, 28/15-18.

129. Shen Defu 沈德符 , Wanli yehuo bian 萬曆野操作 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 858-59; Ho Ping-ti, The Ladder of Success in Imperial China (Columbia U.P., 1962), 11.
130. ZZ 1/28-30.


133. Mozi was no doubt expressing conventional wisdom when he said that 'In times past and present there have been no spirits other than those of Heaven, those of mountains and rivers, and those of men who have died' (Mozi 31/96-97). The Li ji states that mountains and rivers are inhabited by gods (Li ji zhengyi 22/197C), while the Shuowen jiezi 釋文解说 goes so far as to define 'mountain' (shan 山) in terms of a mountain's cosmic power to create and sustain life: 'Mountain means "exhale"; breath (qi 氣) is exhaled and dispersed, giving birth to the myriad things' (Ku Shen 考慎, Shuowen jiezi, 9B). Ge Hong 郭洪 (mid 3rd to mid 4th centuries A.D.) was drawing on an ancient tradition when he wrote that 'All mountains, great or small, contain gods and spirits' (Baopuzi 道朴子 [SBBY ed.] 17/1a). In the Yao dian chapter of the Book of Documents Shun offers sacrifices to mountains, while in the Yu gong 禹貢 chapter Yu's triumphal progress through the empire is in part an expedition aimed at gaining the submission and therefore support of the spiritual powers of mountains, rivers and other local deities. On this type of imperial progress, also evident in the Book of Songs (e.g. Mao 296, 'Pan 蘭'), see David Hawkes, 'The Quest for the Goddess', in Cyril Birch (ed.), Studies in Chinese Literary Genres (University of California Press, 1974), especially 54-58. Comments on the spiritual significance of mountains generally also occur in Hanshi waizhuan 3/16a-b and Shuo yuan 17/13a-b. The literature on specific holy mountains is enormous. Edouard Chavanne, Le T'ai chan (Paris: Leroux, 1910), 2-12, has a good discussion of mountain worship; see also Paul Demieville, 'La montagne dans l'art littéraire chinois', Choix d'études sinologiques, 1921-1970 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 364-89. The etymology of the
character xian 仙, or 'immortal', a pictograph of a man beside a mountain, also indicates a long-standing conceptual link between mountains, superhuman powers and the quest for personal immortality (see the entry for xian in Shuowen jiezi; also Demieville, 'La montagne dans l'art chinois', 367). Thus Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179-117 B.C.) is reported to have remarked to Emperor Wu that 'traditions concerning famous immortals have them living amidst mountains and swamps' (SJ 117/3056).

134. See, for example, LY 3.21; Mozi 31/50-51; Bo hu tong 古禮通 (SBCK ed.), 2/4b; Chavanne 'Le Dieu du sol dans la Chine antique', Le T'ai chan, esp. 466-76; W.H. Hudspeth, 'Tree Worship', China Journal, 7 (1927), 206-08; Henri Maspéro, China in Antiquity, trans. Frank A. Kierman Jr. (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson, 1978), 99; Lao Gan 老幹, 'Handai shesl de yuanli_u 漢代社稷的源流', BIHP 11 (1943), 49-60.

135. ZZ 4/64-75.
136. ZZ 4/75-79.
137. ZZ 7/15-31; also see 4/81-83.
138. The continuing existence of these two traditions was neatly confirmed by Ge Hong some six hundred years after Zhuangzi: 'All those who concoct medicines in their quest for the Way and those who live in hiding to escape (political) disorder go into the mountains' (Baopuzi 17/1a).


141. ZZ 5/54.
142. ZZ 5/54.
143. ZZ 6/75-80.
144. ZZ 6/4-17, 27-28, 67-71.
145. Zhuangzi was by no means the only philosopher to advocate the eradication of desire. The idea is present in the Lunyu (2.4, 5.11, 12.18, 14.12), in Mozi's doctrines of frugality and self-restraint, and was also developed by thinkers such as Song Jian 宋鷹 and Shen Dao 申道. It was only Zhuangzi, however, who went so far as to compare the mind of the sage to 'dead ashes' (ZZ 2/2).

146. On this complex question see especially Luo Genze 羅根澤, 'Zhuangzi wai-zapian tanyuan 外駁篇第一卷', Zhuzi kaosuo 子考索 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1958), 282-312; Guan Feng 關峰, 'Zhuangzi wai-zapian chutan 附傳', Zhuangzi neipian yijie he pipan 納篇內篇解和批評 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1960), 319-58; Zhuang Wanshou 紫巖...
147. ZZ 17/24-28. That the sage hides among the people is also stated in 11/57-59, 20/33-34, 25/34.


149. Laozi, esp. Ch.80, but also 3, 19, 53, 57.


151. Laozi, 3.

152. Even if we allow for the fact that a quietistic concept as important as that of nonaction (wuwei 无為) may have originated as a political principle in the works of Shen Buhai 申不害 (see H.G. Creel, 'On the Origin of Wu-Wei', in What is Taoism? and other Studies in Chinese Cultural History [University of Chicago Press, 1970], and Shen Pu-hai: a Chinese Political Philosopher of the Fourth Century B.C. [University of Chicago Press, 1974], the quietism and self-effacement advocated in the Laozi in spirit is closer to the inner chapters of Zhuangzi. On the political aspects of Laozi see also Liu Ts'un-yan 刘存仁, On the Art of Ruling a Big Country: Views of Three Chinese Emperors (Canberra: The Australian National University Press, 1973).

153. For example, Laozi 1, 7, 9, 12, 13, 19, 34, 44, 46, 57.

154. Laozi, 39; cf. ZZ 18/11.

155. Laozi, 35, 45, 48.

156. Laozi, 17.

157. Laozi, 66.

158. Han Feizi 1/11a, 2/8b.

159. Han Feizi, 2/10b; cf. ZZ 13/18-20.

160. Laozi 13; also 35, 45, 48.

161. Laozi, 19, 57.

162. LSCQ 1/9a, 2/11b; also 12/10b, 13/11a, 15/2a-b, 15/8b-9a, 19/20a.

163. For example, 3/8a-b, 5/4b, 17/4b, 17/9a, 25/6a.

164. Xunzi 19/1-13, 22/55-67.

165. LSCQ 4/7b-8a, 5/4a-b.
166. LSCQ, 20/14b.

167. For example, LSCQ 11/5b, 12/3a-b, 14/1a-b, 14/3b, 16/3b-4a, 22/8a-b.

168. LSCQ, 13/10b, 14/9b, 16/4b.

169. LSCQ 19/14b-15a, amended as suggested by Sun Jiangming 孙江明. See Xu Weiyu 徐维玉, Lushi chuqiu jishi 吕氏春秋集解 (Beijing: Wenxue guji kanxingshe, 1955), 902.

170. LSCQ 8/9b, 11/5a, 12/3a-b.

171. For example, LSCQ 12/3b-4a, 12/5a, 12/6b-7a.

172. For example, LSCQ 2/3b, 15/8b, 19/1b.


174. Laozi, 32, 33, 44.

175. Laozi, 9.

176. ZZ 15/1-6.

177. The correlations for type of government are taken from Huangdi nei jing suwen 黄帝内经素问 (Suwen Wang Bing zhu 素问 王冰注, SBBY ed., 20/12b); see also Alfred Forke, Lun-heng (2nd ed., rpt. New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), 2/448; Joseph Needham, Science and Civilisation in China, Vol. 2 (Cambridge U.P., 1956), 263. According to Zhang Xinzheng, Weishu tongkao, 978, the Suwen dates no later than early Former Han. Evidence of similar correlations is also to be found in the Guanzi, 14/4b-9a (trans. Needham, 2/248-49), which dates from approximately the same period.


180. Mencius 2B.5.


182. Mencius 5A.7.

183. Mencius 2A.2, 5B.1.

184. A witty and famous example is Xi Kang's letter to Shan Tao ('Yu Shan juyuan jue jiao shu 耶山巨源 極交書'), WX 43/1b-7b; Xi Kang jii Jiaozhu 112-131.

186. *HS* 72/3055.

187. *Xunzi* 3/1-2, 50. His rejection of hermits who withdraw in order to avoid the world's distractions and cultivate quietude (21/61-63), though more humorously expressed, is just as total.


189. *Xunzi* 22/43-44.


192. This is a point clearly developed in texts as different as the *Lunyu* and the *Zhuangzi*: see LY 8.13, 14.3; *ZZ* 4/86-87.
CHAPTER TWO

THE FORMER HAN AND THE WANG MANG PERIOD

1. Received Wisdom About the Han

In the late Warring States period hermits were numerous. In the Later Han Period (25-220 A.D.) eremitism was also a conspicuous social phenomenon. As we shall see, every kind of eremitism found in earlier times flourished, and one or two new varieties besides. Yet as far as the Former Han period (206 B.C.-8 A.D.) is concerned, the initial impression is of an almost total absence of eremitism. Thus the author of one recent article on Chinese eremitism goes so far as to state that although in the Han dynasty the issues associated with the choice between public service and eremitism continued to crop up in the lives of a few individuals, as far as the thought of the period is concerned those issues were not important.1

A traditional and influential picture of the Former Han is of a sober, orderly period which fell into decline only towards the end, a time of general commitment to the imperial system which had replaced the turmoil of the preceding centuries, a time when there was little reason for withdrawing from the socio-political order and cultivating one's virtue in seclusion. It was in those terms that Chinese scholars of later ages often looked back nostalgically upon the Han—especially the Former Han—when troubled by the disorder of their own times, and it is a view still held by many modern western as well as Chinese scholars.2 This image of the Han dynasty as one which enjoyed the enthusiastic support of the intellectuals of the time is so pervasive that even those who as a rule are not given to careless generalisations find it difficult to escape its influence. Thus we
find Hsü Cho-yün using the following terms to describe what is alleged to have been a sharp shift in the attitudes of intellectuals to the question of involvement in public affairs: 'By and large, scholars of the Qin period could not realise their aspirations in that age, and so hid in seclusion to await the (right) time... During the shift from Qin to Han and the beginning of the Han, the hidden scholars re-emerged in droves'.

In this chapter I shall show that while this view is not to be dismissed lightly, it has its limitations, and there is evidence that the eremitic tradition - or traditions - which flourished during the Warring States period continued throughout the Former Han. Far from being a period of uniformity and universal support for the empire, the Former Han was a time in which the extent of social and political involvement remained ultimately a matter of individual choice, and if many intellectuals did commit themselves to participation in the established order there were still others who felt such participation would be personally foolhardy or morally reprehensible.

Moreover, it was during the Former Han that developments occurred which were to play a crucial role in determining many aspects of the role eremitism was to play in Chinese culture throughout the entire imperial period. As we shall see, those developments were closely linked to some of the major political and intellectual innovations of the Former Han; in particular, the establishment of Confucianism as state orthodoxy and the institution of the recommendatory system for appointments to government posts.

So little work has been done on this aspect of the Former Han period that much of this chapter is perforce devoted to setting down the available information and examining the differences in outlook.
held by those who did in some way or other set themselves apart. I have been able to locate only one previous study which claims to survey aspects of the eremitism of the period, and that is a rather rambling piece of work which, although bringing together information concerning some important hermits of the Former Han, omits more than it includes. It also suffers from a failing common to more traditional treatments of this topic, namely that of reducing all eremitism to a dualism of Confucianism and Daoism. I believe that a more detailed study of the sources will show that an adequate account of eremitism in the Former Han requires that more precise distinctions be drawn.

2. The Bias of the Sources

One of the problems in getting an accurate picture of the social and intellectual world of the Former Han is that, perhaps more than we realise, our perception of it is coloured by the major sources on which we are forced to rely for information: Sima Qian's Shi ji and the Han shu of Ban Gu. For this reason it is sometimes difficult to see that, at least to some degree, the apparently radical differences between the world of the late Warring States period and that of the Former Han are illusory, the result of a difference in sources rather than historical reality.

For our knowledge of the Warring States period we rely not only on the Shi ji and works such as the Guo yu, Zhanguo ce and the Shuo yuan, but also a series of brilliant and varied philosophical texts. The result is that intellectual diversity is built into our very perception of that period. It appears that in the Former Han dynasty there were no philosophers of the stature of Mencius, Zhuangzi, Xunzi or Han Feizi. However, it is one thing to accept that the Former Han
was not a period of great philosophical inventiveness, it is quite another to assume it was therefore a period of intellectual uniformity in which everyone held the same ideas. What matters here is that in the almost total absence of major philosophical works from the Former Han we are forced to rely largely on Sima Qian and Ban Gu for information concerning eremitism in the period, and unfortunately those two great historians were not particularly interested in hermits. Luckily the man who has some claim to being the greatest intellect of the Former Han dynasty – Yang Xiong (53 B.C.-18 A.D.) – was interested in eremitism. As will become evident, it is to Yang Xiong, either directly or indirectly, that we owe most of the extant information concerning eremitism in the later part of the Former Han.

Before going any further I should justify my assertion that neither Sima Qian nor Ban Gu could muster much enthusiasm for hermits. It will be objected, for example, that Sima Qian demonstrated the social and historical significance he attached to eremitism by making his account of Boyi and Shuqi the first of his 'exemplary lives' (liezhuan 聖賢傳), while Ban Gu in fact criticised his predecessor for not giving virtuous hermits their proper due. Nevertheless, the evidence that neither historian held hermits in very high esteem is clear and unambiguous.

The primary reason Sima Qian began his liezhuan with the biography of Boyi and Shuqi was not so much because of his unbounded admiration for their noble self-immolation on behalf of what is right, as to contrast their conduct with his own life and work. Boyi and Shuqi chose death rather than compromise, but in Sima Qian's eyes death was the easy way out of a moral conflict: he himself chose to live with the gross humiliation imposed on him by Emperor Wu 武.
in order that he might complete his history,\(^7\) and by recording the lives of men such as Boyi and Shuqi continue to inspire men of later generations to strive for goodness. The trouble with eremitic types such as Boyi and Shuqi, he believed, was that no matter how upright they were, or how lofty the principles that led them to withdraw, by going into seclusion they closed themselves off from the eyes of the world and so destroyed any possibility of exercising further influence. Their names 'dissolved' unless they happened to be associated with another famous man or had their deeds recorded by someone like Sima Qian himself.\(^8\) Hence he contrasts their passivity in the face of adversity with his own unabating efforts on behalf of what is right. Truly great men, when the times are against them, are not content with remaining passively in seclusion; they write, and through their writings continue to influence the course of the world.\(^9\) Sima Qian's position in this matter is essentially that of Xunzi: when the ideas that he holds are not practised by the world a man of principle 'illuminates the Way but obscures his whereabouts'.\(^10\)

It is against this background that we must interpret the passage in the chapter on 'knights-errant' (youxia 遊俠) which led Ban Gu to complain that Sima Qian 'places recluses to the rear and gives prominence to cunning louts'.\(^11\) Men such as Ji Ci (Gongxi Ai 公皙哀) and Yuan Xian (Zisi 子思), says Sima Qian, did indeed have the highest principles and accepted poverty and low status as a consequence of refusing to compromise with their times. But they were merely laughed at by their contemporaries, while later generations got to know of their virtues only because their followers continued to write about them. In contrast, the actions of the wandering knights spoke of themselves and had an immediate impact on their time; their contribution to society was not dependent on
someone else's mediation. For this reason the influence of the likes of Ji Ci and Yuan Xian on their own time cannot be compared with that of the knights. 12

If Sima Qian was critical of the way hermits were dependent on others in order to influence the world in any way, he was also aware of the hypocrisy and deception that could be associated with eremitism. Indeed, he goes so far as to state that the reason men retire to live in mountain caves and establish a reputation for blameless conduct is that they want to become rich. 13 It is fairly clear from the context, however, that this comment is not to be taken completely literally. Sima Qian was not one to deny that men will sometimes make a stand, even to the death, on behalf of what they hold is right. It is just that this is less common than is often believed; human motives generally are not what they seem. Even an apparent determination to withdraw from the world in order to avoid compromise can derive from ulterior motives. And just as there are 'untitled nobility' (sufeng 無封) — men so rich they can live as lords, who do not have to have dealings with the world and so can conduct themselves with the righteousness of a disengaged scholar (chushi) — so too there are men who try to claim merit for living in lowly squalor despite the fact that they are devoid of any principles which might allow others to attribute a moral purpose to the life they lead. 14

Such was Sima Qian's sceptical view of hermits. Ban Gu criticised him for slighting such men, yet Ban Gu's own opinion of them was not as high as this criticism would imply; or, more precisely, his full approval extended only to those forms of eremitism which had been incorporated into the imperial system. The Han shu
contains a chapter (juan 72) which was to serve as prototype for the chapters on the lives of hermits included in most of the subsequent standard histories, but Ban Gu's purpose in writing this was primarily to praise the deeds of men of integrity prepared to involve themselves in the government of the empire. Such men in Ban Gu's eyes were better models for behaviour than Boyi and Shuqi, the Four Silverhairs from the beginning of the Han, or the uncompromising hermits praised by Yang Xiong in Fa yan - men of the calibre of Zhuang Zun 莊遜 (also known as Yan Junping 嚴君平) and Zheng Pu 鄭樸 (Zizhen 子真).15 In the Lunyu Boyi and Shuqi are referred to as 'men who retired' (yimin 適民);16 Ban Gu places these men of the Han period in the same category. But just as Confucius himself aimed at going one better than the yimin by regarding any given action as neither necessarily permissible nor necessarily impermissible, so Ban Gu wanted to record the deeds of men as flexible as this in their conception of when to serve and when to retire, when to take part in affairs and when to stay in seclusion. Although Boyi and Shuqi regarded King Wu's action in overthrowing the last Shang ruler as reprehensible, the virtue of the Zhou was nonetheless highly acclaimed. In this matter Boyi and Shuqi's judgement was wrong.17 Ban Gu believed that the Four Silverhairs, Zhuang Zun and Zheng Pu were just as mistaken in dissociating themselves from the Han court. The men he praises did not make that mistake.

Ban Gu's ideal is evident from his evaluation at the end of his chapter:

...men of the mountain forests go but are unable to turn back, men of the halls of court enter but are unable to withdraw; both have their own particulars shortcomings. From the high officials of the various states of the Spring and Autumn period to the generals, chancellors and famous ministers of the rise of Han, there have been many who were so preoccupied with salaries and besotted with winning
favour that they were thereby lost to their age. This is the reason that men of purity and integrity came to be treasured. But the great majority of these were only able to regulate themselves, they were not able to regulate others.

The men whose actions he recorded were able to regulate the conduct of others because they remained in the socio-political system and withdrew only to the extent that was absolutely necessary. Therefore they came closer to perfection than even the hermits mentioned in the preface to his chapter.

3. Encountering Propitious Times

For Sima Qian and Ban Gu, generally speaking, the Former Han period represented a time of comparative peace and order in which the empire was fortunate enough to be ruled by emperors who were relatively enlightened. It was a time, they believed, in which it was possible for all men of principle to take part in the great task of creating and maintaining social order and prosperity, and consequently one in which there was little justification for withdrawing from society. The view of the Former Han as a time of peace and enlightenment has a lot of historical weight behind it. It is an elementary point, but one which must be stressed here, that the shortlived Qin and more particularly the Han did bring unity, peace, and a stable and effective system of government to the empire. The contrast with the late Warring States period can scarcely be exaggerated. While during the early Han rebellions did occur and both territorial expansion and border defence made large-scale military activity necessary, there is no doubt that for the great majority of the Chinese people the unification of the empire brought peace, security and stability.
In the long history of imperial China it was to become a standard rhetorical flourish to refer to one's good fortune in living in age of peace and order under an enlightened emperor. Yet there is good reason to believe that for most of the men of the Former Han this remark was more than just a polite embellishment. In the early part of the dynasty the disorder and violence of the Warring States period and the civil wars following the collapse of the Qin empire were matters of living memory. Hence anyone with any historical sense at all living, say, during the reign of Emperor Wen (179-157 B.C.), cannot but have been acutely aware of how new, how short and apparently fragile was the period of peace and security they were experiencing in comparison with the hundreds of years of turmoil which preceded it. To be relieved and thankful at being able to experience such a time, would have been a natural and genuine response. It is to be expected that this would lead to many intellectuals being not only willing but eager to take part in government. Even those with personal reservations or distaste for public affairs would still see quite clearly the benefits conferred on everyone by keeping the system in operation.

This historical sense on the part of intellectuals of the early Former Han, their awareness of living in fortunate times, must be a major factor behind the apparent lack of enthusiasm for one major variety of eremitism. This was the mode of eremitism which derived from Confucius: that of withdrawing in adverse times in order to be able to serve the Way in another place or another time.

Towards the end of the Warring States period intellectuals had become very much preoccupied with the concept of timeliness, that is, the need to fit actions and ideas to the circumstances of the moment,
to adjust conduct and outlook according to the changing disposition of things. They tended to take up that concept in a negative way, using it to explain, for example, why it was impossible for them to take office and be involved in state affairs, or why it was necessary to resort to rule by law rather than rule by virtue. During the Former Han period the concept of timeliness became, if anything, even more important. This trend is evident in, and partly attributable to, the growing influence of the *Book of Changes* and the *Laozi*, both of which expound the principles of timely action and adaptation to change.20

What is more, when Former Han intellectuals invoked the concept of timeliness in relation to political and social circumstances, they frequently did so in a positive way, in reference to having been fortunate enough to meet with good times which allowed them to assist the Emperor in the great task of bringing security and prosperity to the people. One striking thing about major intellectual figures of the time, such as Lu Jia 隱亙 (f.c.190 B.C.), Jia Yi 賈誼 (200-168 B.C.), Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 B.C.), Sima Qian (c.145-87 B.C.), and Liu Xiang 刘向 (77-6 B.C.) is the way their commitment to the socio-political order remained firm despite the frequent personal difficulties and injustices they experienced as a result of that commitment. The problem is to determine how representative these men were of the intellectuals of their time. In terms of intellectual ability they were clearly exceptional; lack of evidence makes it impossible to determine whether their essentially Confucian sense of political and social responsibility was widely shared by the many thousands of less talented scholars about whom we know virtually nothing.
The best example of this acute sense of socio-political responsibility is that of Sima Qian, who despite having suffered severely at the hand of Emperor Wu was still able to write movingly in his letter to Ren An of the sense of anguish and inadequacy he felt at having failed during his twenty years service to make any significant contribution to the state. A similar attitude is evident in the case of Jia Yi. It was as a result of jealousies and intrigues that Jia Yi lost his favoured position at court and was sent off to remote and unhealthy Changsha, yet according to Sima Qian he died as a result of the intense grief and self-reproach he felt over the death of his charge, King Huai of Liang (Liu Ji), the youngest and much loved son of Emperor Wen. Seen against his life and career, Jia Yi's fu — especially 'The Owl' (Fùnǐáofú 鵲靈賦) — seem to be less heartfelt expressions of the aloofness and detachment from the world he associated with figures like Qu Yuan and Zhuangzi than attempts to cultivate those attitudes as an antidote for his acute sense of social and political responsibility.

In connection with this strong commitment to the socio-political responsibility on the part of these leading Former Han intellectuals it is helpful to consider the conception they had of the emperor's role in relation to their own. It was widely believed that the character and conduct of the ruler was the basic factor which determined the well-being or otherwise of the whole socio-political system. In itself this was an old idea, discussed by Confucius and variously developed by Warring States philosophers as different as Mencius and Han Feizi. But in the context of the multi-state polity of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods it had remained in a sense a fairly theoretical notion: as long as there were a number of competing states ruled by men whose
powers were limited by the existence of other centres of power, and intellectuals could move from state to state in an effort to win political influence, the concern of the intellectuals remained more on what they themselves should do and the theories they should espouse than on the character of a given ruler. The unification of the empire under one man whose claim to the Mandate of Heaven was undisputed clearly made the disposition and actions of that ruler a matter of the greatest practical consequence. For intellectuals with a sense of social and political responsibility the overwhelming question now became that of how to influence the emperor and lead him along the right path.

Here again, Jia Yi provides an excellent example. Much of his Xin shu can be understood as an elaboration of the principle that it is the nature of the emperor that determines the condition of the entire body politic. Thus he declares that if the ruler of men is righteous and everything in the state is done according to correct principles, his subjects will all be obedient; if the ruler of men keeps to the rites and everything in the state is correct, his subjects will all be respectful; if worthy men are promoted the people will become good, and if able men are employed officials will carry out their duties properly. As far as Jia Yi is concerned the chain of responsibility is clear: it is the fault of the officials if the people fail to do what they should, but it is the fault of the emperor if the officials fall short. Thus the ability of the populace to attain goodness is dependent on the emperor's ability to do so. Lu Jia expressed the same idea in terms of an analogy: if we want to change a shadow to a particular shape the only way is to alter the shape of the object which casts it. Like things influence like, and the people model themselves on their ruler. Dong Zhongshu held a
similar view. According to his biography in the *Han shu* he drew Emperor Wu's attention to the irresistible effect the ruler had on his subjects by invoking the famous simile from the *Lunyu*: 'Let the wind blow over the grass and it is sure to bend'. He argued that 'The lord of men corrects his heart in order to correct the court, corrects the court in order to correct the numerous officials, corrects the numerous officials in order to correct the myriad people, and corrects the myriad people in order to correct the whole world'. It is an idea around which much of the *Chunqiu fanglu* turns.

One consequence of such a view of the socio-political order is to make the issue of eremitism a highly derivative one. Since everything in a sense is predetermined by the disposition of the emperor, as long as the emperor conducts himself in the proper manner the question of eremitism should not arise; whether men of principle come to him or whether they withdraw into virtuous seclusion is ultimately a matter decided by the emperor alone. Hence because King Zhou of the Shang was violent and tyrannical, Dong Zhongshu argued, worthy men such as Boyi and Taigong Wang dwelt in seclusion, whereas sages and worthies flocked to assist Yao in his imperial task because he was virtuous and hard-working.

It might be thought that this stress on the paramount importance of the emperor's character and conduct in determining the condition of the entire socio-political system would lead to an unhealthy fatalism on the part of men of integrity, an inclination to sit back and wait and see what the emperor was going to do. In fact, intellectuals who held this view reacted in precisely the opposite way. For although the emperor influences everything that happens below him, the emperor himself is also susceptible to influence, and his decisive social and
political impact makes it all the more vital for those with access to the emperor to guide him, to urge him on to do good and to remonstrate fearlessly with him when he does wrong, to educate him in the principles of the true Way. That this situation could give rise to an acute sense of urgency and anxiety in those who believed their task was to guide the emperor in this way will become evident in what follows.

As I have already pointed out, it is difficult to know how prevalent a strong sense of socio-political commitment was among Former Han intellectuals. The half-dozen or so great names I have mentioned, who have long been honoured precisely for their adherence to Confucian teachings (though Lu Jia and Jia Yi especially were also influenced by non-Confucian ideas), inevitably dominate all accounts of the period. Yet it is clear that other schools of thought — particularly Daoism — flourished throughout the Former Han period (and indeed the Later Han too). The Daoism of the Han period was primarily that known as 'the teachings of Huang-Lao', i.e. the Yellow Emperor and Laozi. Or, to express the point more accurately, most of the information we have concerning Han Daoism relates to the Huang-Lao school. The reason for this is simple: Huang-Lao Daoism was as much a political doctrine as a personal philosophy. This is one reason why it was popular with the early Han rulers as well as a considerable number of the leading figures of the time. On the other hand, we have very little information concerning the influence of Zhuangzi at this time. The only major figures said to have been interested in his teachings come from towards the end of the period: Zhuang Zun, Yang Xiong, and Ban Gu's uncle Ban Si.
Many scholars have commented on the strong Daoist and Legalist influences in early Han Confucianism.\textsuperscript{33} Huang-Lao thought could be combined with Confucianism fairly easily. This is hardly surprising, since the Daoist influence is already quite strong in Xunzi and it was Xunzi's version of Confucianism which was particularly influential during the Han. Confucianism also left its mark on Daoism. In fact, Sima Tan went so far as to say that strength of the Daoist school was its ability to select the good points of the other schools and use them in a higher synthesis.\textsuperscript{34} Certainly this sort of eclecticism is demonstrated by the Huainanzi, which dates from more or less the same time,\textsuperscript{35} i.e. the middle of the second century B.C.

Probably the most historically important devotee of Huang-Lao doctrines in the Former Han was Emperor Wen's consort Dou (d.135 or 129 B.C.), for as empress dowager she not only made her son Emperor Jing study those doctrines,\textsuperscript{36} but also attempted to impose her preferences on her grandson Emperor Wu. Paradoxically, it may be asserted that the establishment of Confucianism as the state creed by Emperor Wu was due partly to the strength of the Daoist influence at the court when he came to the throne. The young Emperor Wu had to struggle for a long time against the power of his domineering grandmother, who removed from power leading Confucian officials to whom the emperor turned in order to win some measure of independence. By making Confucianism the state creed, Emperor Wu was able to free himself from the influence of his grandmother and the high officials sympathetic to her views, as well as winning the loyalty of a significant part of the bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{37}
But it was only gradually from this time on that the influence of Confucianism began to permeate all sectors of the imperial government. This was partly due to the power of two of the major innovations of Wu's reign: the Imperial Academy (taixue 太学), with its over-grown number of Erudites (士) and students, and the establishment of a formal recommendatory system for official appointments. I shall be discussing the scholarly ethos which these institutions nourished later in this chapter, when considering the close of the Former Han dynasty. What I wish to do here is to insist on the intellectual variety of the Western Han period, and suggest that there was room for more than one view concerning whether or not a man should involve himself in public affairs. Huang-Lao Daoism did not necessarily lead to withdrawal from public life, but - as we shall see - neither did Confucianism necessarily lead to political participation. Other doctrines which found adherents, including those of Zhuangzi and the School of the Tillers, emphatically rejected socio-political commitment. The continuity of such schools of thought was in no small measure due to the widespread practice of private teaching which flourished throughout the Han period. Reference is made in the histories to literally hundreds of men who gave instruction to students in a private capacity. The majority of those whose names are recorded, inevitably, were Confucian scholars, but the Confucian classics were frequently taught alongside ideas from other schools and together with less 'reputable' skills such as divination, astrology and other occult arts. Private teaching was one of the few occupations available to intellectuals who flinched at the idea of an official career, consequently it is to be expected that not a few of these private teachers in the Han were men who espoused eremitic ideas of various sorts, retaining their personal independence at the same
time as making a major contribution towards intellectual vitality and freedom within the empire.38

4. Individual Choice in the Unified Empire

The fact that many intellectuals of the Former Han dynasty were strongly committed to the socio-political system, partly as a result of their belief that they had encountered fortunate times, did not make them blind to the drawbacks of living and working in a unified empire. The intellectuals of the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, their dismay at the instability and disorder of their time notwithstanding, had been very much aware of the advantages of freedom of choice and movement, the alternatives for employment and influence, that the numerous states of the period offered.39 The men of the Former Han, in turn, were aware that in exchange for the new found peace and order they enjoyed they had lost something of those earlier freedoms. In this section I shall examine some of the evidence relating to their misgivings and dissatisfaction in regard to the imperial system.

One major Former Han figure who was obviously highly conscious of the disadvantages of the living in the unified empire was Sima Qian. This is the reason why in his biography of Qu Yuan he is critical of the great poet's suicide, which struck him as pointless and irresponsible. A man with the talents of a Qu Yuan could go from one feudal lord to another and always be sure of being welcomed as a retainer wherever he went, so it was unjustifiable for him to commit suicide merely because his ruler ignored him: there were still many untried opportunities to do good in other states.40
Sima Qian's observation has some force and this makes it all the more necessary to reflect to the fascination Qu Yuan held for Former Han intellectuals, both as a poetic model in the development of the sao and as a legend which aroused a strong personal response in them. Sao were written by men such as Wang Bao (d.61 B.C.) and Liu Xiang, whose sense of political commitment cannot be questioned. Despite the highly formal and ritualistic elements characteristic of the sao genre, it would be wrong to assume that for Han writers sao were no more than formal exercises in composition or demonstrations of technical virtuosity. The psychological core of the sao is a mingled sense of isolation, impotence and despair which derives from the poet's image of himself as a solitary loyal subject isolated from his ruler by a phalanx of sycophants and deceivers. It is this which leads to withdrawal into a wild, mysterious landscape and the contemplation of suicide as the ultimate political protest and expression of personal despair. On the part of someone in Qu Yuan's position such a response might seem excessive or unwarranted, as Sima Qian suggested, but men of the Former Han clearly felt that in their own situation such an action would be readily understandable. They believed that everything depended on the disposition of the emperor, and therefore everything was won or lost according to who had access to the emperor and was in a position to influence him. Alienation from the ruler in the unified empire of Han had drastic implications which even Qu Yuan could not have anticipated. Hence, to the extent that sao were expressions of genuine feeling, it seems that they were written by men who were not the type to wander off into wild mountain regions or embrace heavy stones and hurl themselves into rivers. Rather, they were written by men who felt the decisive significance of their standing vis-a-vis their ruler so acutely that when their access
to or influence over the ruler was threatened they were filled with
anxiety. For such men the ideal of timely withdrawal, advocated by
Confucius at a time when a conscientious shi could choose which ruler
to serve, had lost much of its relevance.

The same type of concern underlies the closely related poetic
category of fu which Hellmut Wilhelm has called fu on 'the scholar's
frustration'. Major examples of this genre are those by Jia Yi,
Dong Zhongshu and (possibly) Sima Qian. From these poems, in which
the writer's predicament is presented without the mythological
trappings characteristic of the sao, it becomes readily apparent that
Former Han intellectuals were very much alert to the limitations and
dangers of the system they supported. There is surely considerable
justification for assuming that, as far as their writers were
concerned, these poems served as a form of catharsis: they are
expressions of frustration and dissatisfaction which to some extent
served as a substitute for principled withdrawal. Such poetry—more
especially the sao—also played a major role in the development of
later eremitism by fixing its vocabulary and iconography for later
writers: the phrases and imagery of these early works continuously
recur in the voluminous literature on eremitism of subsequent periods.

Up to this point I have focussed on the fundamental issue of the
unification of the empire and the implications for eremitism of the
new imperial order. However, it is possible to exaggerate the extent
to which the unification of the empire limited freedom of choice and
opportunities for employment. At least until the middle of Emperor
Wu's reign a substantial measure of independence was enjoyed by the
kingdoms (wangguo 王國) parcelled out to princes of the dynastic
line and (initially by Han Gaozu) to outstanding loyal supporters and
imperial relatives. These kingdoms had sufficient autonomy and power to be able to threaten the stability and cohesion of the empire until they were stripped of most of their powers and brought under the control of the central government after the Seven Princes Rising of 157 B.C. To some degree they represented a range of competing potential employers for talented men. Moreover, the vastness of the empire and the administrative system of xian 和 jun authorities made it inevitable that the great majority of official positions continued to occur at a fairly localised level; only those with the greatest talents or the best connections found a place in the capital. It should also be noted that the custom of rich and powerful men keeping guests or retainers is something which did not die out in the Han. On the contrary, if anything it became even more widespread, with even some commoners keeping retainers. It appears in fact that the very popularisation of the practice helped to bring about the gradual lowering in the status of retainers which is discernible in the Han and Three Kingdoms periods. Thus it is easy to make too much of the claim that in Han China there was really only one employer.

But it cannot be suggested for a moment that the Han emperor was no more than a figurehead or that the central government was insignificant. As we have seen, Han intellectuals were much concerned with the implications of a unified system of government, and no-one can have lost sight of the fact that if they worked for a county or commandery administration or held a post at the court of a wangguo, ultimately they were the subject of only one emperor, to whom even the kings owed allegiance and whose power extended to all corners of the empire. A decision not to take part in that government amounted to a decision to refuse political participation altogether.
An important illustration of the perceptions of intellectuals concerning the implications of the unified political system of the Han is that involving Sir Shen (Shen Gong 申公). Sir Shen was appointed tutor to Liu Mou 賽， heir apparent of the kingdom of Chu, but Liu Mou disliked study and hated Sir Shen, and on becoming king had his former teacher chained as a convict. Mortified, Sir Shen returned to his native state of Lu, where he lived out his life giving instruction in the Book of Songs, turning away guests and never venturing out of his gate except when summoned by the king of Lu himself. As far as Sir Shen was concerned, therefore, it was not a question of having suffered wrong at the hands of the king of Chu and so going elsewhere to take office. The unjust treatment he received was an indictment of the whole imperial system, something which in Sir Shen's eyes could be erased only by proper action on the part of the emperor. This Emperor Wu did by inviting Sir Shen to court with presents of silk and jade and highest ceremonial honours, including being carried in an 'easy carriage' (an che 安車) with wheels padded with rushes to lessen the rigors of the journey.47

Another official who was acutely aware of the difference between serving the Han and the situation of those employed by the states of the Eastern Zhou period was Gong Sui 龔遂, who served as Prefect of Palace Gentlemen 郎中令 under King He 賀 of Changyi 昌邑. When the latter was put on the throne following the death of Emperor Zhao 赵 in 74 B.C., and became even more dissolute and irresponsible than he had been before, only the extremely conscientious Gong Sui and Wang Ji 王吉 continued to remonstrate fearlessly. Gong Sui is recorded as having commented on the dangerous predicament in which he found himself:
In antiquity regulations were liberal and even a great minister could retire. For me to leave my post now is impossible, and I fear that a pretence of madness would be detected, while to take my own life would be to disgrace myself before the age - so what can I do?

He obviously felt that the system in which he worked demanded a more total commitment than that in times past and did not leave much room for personal decision to withdraw. Whether or not there were regulations governing retirement in antiquity is debatable - it is unlikely that things were ever codified to that extent. But what matters here is Gong Sui's perception of his position relative to that of the officials of antiquity, his belief that options available to those of former times were not open to him. Whether those options were removed through the implementation of different laws or simply as a result of shifts in conventions and uncodified rules is beside the point.

From the foregoing, then, it is evident that while many of the leading intellectuals of the Former Han believed themselves fortunate in having met with orderly times which allowed them to participate in government without fear of moral compromise, they were not blind to the pressures and dangers that the imperial system could present for men of integrity. Nor must it be thought that their concept of timeliness was so crude that it required them to characterise their time as either wholly good or wholly bad, without leaving room for consideration of personal circumstances. It was an essential aspect of the notion of timeliness that it applied to the microcosm as much to the macrocosm, to the life of the individual as much to the age in which he lived. Thus in the life of individuals too there was a time for progressing and at time for retreating, for serving in office and for withdrawing into obscurity.
The theme of timely action in the life of individuals is present in the Shi ji, and there can be little doubt that this was an integral part of Sima Qian's own view of the world. 'Things reach fullness and then decline; seasons run their course and revolve again', he comments. Fortune and well-being depend on being alert to changing circumstances and acting in harmony with the disposition of the moment. This is a lesson Sima Qian finds demonstrated in the lives of men such as Zhang Liang 张良 (d.185 B.C.) and Dong Zhongshu.50

The Han shu also records the lives of famous men who lived according to this principle. Thus Shu Guang 蘇廣, who served as Grand Tutor to the heir apparent under Emperor Xuan 宣帝 (r.73-49 B.C.) resigned after five successful years in his post because he knew that a period of success must inevitably be followed by decline. On return to his native district he frittered away the gold he was given on his departure rather than run the risk of his sons and grandsons being corrupted by wealth.51 Better known is the case of Yang Yun 杨恽, a son of Sima Qian's daughter, who for his role in exposing the plot of the Huo 韓 clan was enfeoffed as Marquis of Pingtong 平通侯 in 66 B.C.52 He rose to the high post of Palace Superintendent before being dismissed and reduced to a commoner. It was then, when he had to resort to farming to make a living, that he wrote his famous 'Letter Replying to Sun Huizong 孫機宗書', which ranks beside his grandfather's 'Letter to Ren An' as one of the epistolary masterpieces of the Han period. It is a work pervaded with the sense that all things have their proper season, that in human affairs as in all else rise is followed by decline and a man must find contentment in whatever situation presents itself. Yang Yun did not choose to take up a life of rural simplicity and hard labour, and cannot be classified as a hermit, yet his is a masterly
evocation of the pleasures to be found in such a life; it is also an eloquent refusal to mourn what he has lost:

Human emotions which cannot be stopped the sages did not attempt to repress. Therefore a ruler or father, someone who commands our utmost respect or affection, is mourned for a fixed period when his life ends. But three years have already passed since I was punished.53

Unfortunately in this case a willingness to adjust to changing times was not enough to guarantee survival: Yang Yun was executed not long after writing his letter, in 55 or 56 B.C.54

The lives of other men also show that general commitment to the socio-political order and a sense of living in a relatively enlightened age did not preclude the possibility of having to endure individual hardship or making a personal decision to withdraw. Thus Zhu Yun 趙雲, who had a reputation for strength and bravery before becoming a scholar, was recommended as 'proper and correct' in the time of Emperor Yuan 元 (r.48-33 B.C.), received a position as magistrate, was jailed as a result of factional struggles, and barely avoided execution for his outspoken comments against a favourite of Emperor Cheng 成 (r.32-7 B.C.). Subsequently he never again took office, retiring instead to the country and devoting himself to teaching.55 Others were not granted that option. Wang Zhang 王章, who served as Grandee Remonstrant 留大臣 under Emperors Yuan and Cheng had the audacity to speak out against Commander-in-Chief Wang Feng's 王鳳 (d.22 B.C.) excessive power. Emperor Cheng accepted his views but failed to curb Wang Feng, and Wang Zhang died in jail as a result.56 These examples and the others mentioned earlier are sufficient to show that in the world view of the intellectuals of the Former Han period, strongly influenced as it was by the notions of cosmological change developed in the Book of Changes.
and Five Phase Theory, there was little room for simplistic or totalistic judgements about what sort of response the age demanded of them. In a world in which change is the only inevitability, the possibility of a personal crisis which might require total withdrawal from affairs is ever-present.

5. **Timely Withdrawal**

Given the general commitment to the socio-political system on the part of intellectuals already described, it is hardly surprising that for much of the Former Han there appear to have been few cases of timely withdrawal by men of principle determined to remain untainted and await the arrival of more auspicious times. Such cases as are recorded, which will be discussed here, relate largely to the beginning of the dynasty.

Mention should first be made of several figures who strictly speaking do not fall within the period of the Han empire but were so closely associated with famous men involved in the establishment of the dynasty, and feature so prominently in later legend and mythology, that they cannot be overlooked. Master Dongguo 東郭先生 and Lord Liangshi 狂石君 were two disengaged scholars (chushi) from the state of Qi. Ashamed at having been forced by the ruler Tian Rong 田榮 to take part in an offensive against Xiang Yu 项羽, they went deep into the mountains to live in seclusion. It was Cao Can 曹參 (d.190 B.C.) who, during his term as Prime Minister of Qi before Liu Bang's 刘邦 conquest of the empire, followed the advice of his persuasive friend Kuai Tong 龔遂 and with utmost courtesy invited them to Qi, where on their arrival they were treated as honoured guests. Master Dongguo appears to have passed into popular mythology very quickly. Chu Shaosun 楚少孺 added a story about
him to the *Shi ji* which is set in the reign of Emperor Wu, some seventy years after the incident mentioned above. There he is referred to as a master of the occult (*fangshi*) from Qi who, before being summoned to court and appointed to a high post, was so poor he walked in the snow with shoes which no longer had soles.58

Master Anqi (安期生) was another acquaintance of Kuai Tong who may originally have been historical but was quickly mythologised. According to the *Han shu* both he and Kuai Tong refused fiefs offered them by Xiang Yu.59 Elsewhere it is recorded that the master of the occult Li Shaojun (李少君) told Emperor Wu that in the course of his travels on the seas around the mythological realm of Penglai he once met Master Anqi, who fed him on jujubes as big as gourds.60 A similar claim is said to have been made by Luan Da (栾大), another master of the occult highly regarded by Emperor Wu.61

If figures such as these inspire little historical conviction, there would appear to be less reason to doubt the actuality of what is probably the most celebrated case of eremitism in the Former Han dynasty: that of the Four Silverhairs. Yet the facts of this case have been the subject of lively debate among Chinese scholars for over a thousand years.

According to Sima Qian62 these four old men had withdrawn into the hills because they disapproved of the uncouth manner in which Han Gaozu treated scholars and believed it would not be right to serve him. When in the eleventh year of his reign (196 B.C.) Gaozu decided to name a new heir apparent, Zhang Liang hit upon the strategy of securing the position of the present heir (the future Emperor Hui, who reigned 194-188 B.C.) by instructing him to invite these four men to court with all due ceremony.63 Zhang Liang believed that because
Gaozu had not been able to win the Four Silverhairs to his cause, if the heir apparent was able to do so this would make a favourable impression on the emperor and convince him his son was fit to rule.

From Sima Qian's account it is clear that the Four Silverhairs went into seclusion because of Han Gaozu's lack of civility to scholars: he records them telling Gaozu as much when they come to court in response to the heir apparent's respectful overtures. Ban Gu, in his own biography of Zhang Liang, reproduces the Shi ji account almost verbatim, but elsewhere in the Han shu asserts that the Four Silverhairs fled into the mountains to escape the evils of the Qin dynasty. This latter version, which ignores Sima Qian's unambiguous assertion that it was Han Gaozu's shortcomings that caused these four hermits to withdraw, was eventually widely accepted. It obviously reflects the increasing reverence with which the founder of the Han period came to be regarded in later times, and this reverence for Han Gaozu largely explains the subsequent refusal of some of the greatest Chinese intellectuals to accept that the Four Silverhairs could have been genuine hermits.

Sima Guang (1019-1086) rejected Sima Qian's whole account as implausible, believing it was just one more example of the Grand Historian's 'fondness of the bizarre'. If, as Sima Qian asserts, the eloquent and well trusted Zhang Liang could not dissuade the headstrong Gaozu from naming a new heir apparent, what hope was there that four old hermits would influence his decision? Sima Guang's contemporary Feng Jing (1021-1094), on the other hand, declared the four men to be the equals of Lu Zhonglian, the great hermit and hero of the close of the Warring States period (a figure about whom Sima Guang also had misgivings). Zhu Xi
tra, (1130-1200) sided with Sima Guang, condemning the Four Silverhairs as unprincipled schemers and plotters. Qian Qianyi 薛奎 (1582-1664) and Quan Zuwang 金祖望 (1705-1755) criticised them in similar terms, the former saying roundly that they 'were not hermits', the latter dismissing them as 'no more than retainers of the Eastern Palace who advanced and withdrew in chorus'. However, the Four Silverhairs found another defender in Wang Zhichang 王之昌 (1837-1895), who labelled them 'true heroes' whose case can only be understood in terms of the importance Han Gaozu attached to making use of good men. And as recently as 1982 Hong Anquan defended their good name, reasserting the view that they were virtuous men and were valued by Han Gaozu because he was a worthy ruler.

The most interesting of all the discussions of the Four Silverhairs is that by Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529), in a substantial essay which appears to have been overlooked by the compilers of his collected works. The great Ming philosopher stresses the impossibility of uncovering the facts concerning events which occurred well over a thousand years ago, observing that if the Han historians could not get to the bottom of the matter there is surely little hope for the lesser lights of later times. He too accepts the view that the Four Silverhairs went into seclusion during the Qin period (citing a popular saying as evidence) but does not regard Han Gaozu as blameless. Wang Yangming's position is that the Four Silverhairs cannot be regarded as genuine hermits as their conduct was not consistent with what he regards as the two basic categories of eremitism. If theirs was the unconditional eremitism of a Xuyou or a Chaofu, then they would have remained in seclusion to the end of their days; if, however, they were hermits of the same sort as Yi Yin (early Shang dynasty) or Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181-234), who
remained in seclusion only as long as the times were adverse, they
would have responded only after having been invited with gifts three
times. The alacrity with which the Four Silverhairs responded to
their first summons, says Wang Yangming, is laughable, especially
since the same crude, uncivil ruler who is said to have offended them
was still on the throne. He suspects that the 'Four Silverhairs' were
in fact imposters supplied by Zhang Liang, who, taking advantage of
the fact that the real Four Silverhairs had been in hiding so long
that nobody would recognise them, dressed up four other old men and
presented them to Han Gaozu to plead the heir apparent's case.

Of course all these arguments by later scholars are inconclusive.
Their primary interest here is perhaps as testimony of the keen
interest which eremitism continued to arouse in Chinese intellectuals
throughout the ages. Certainly some of the problems of interpretation
they raise are very real and show how difficult it is to get a correct
understanding of events about which we know so little. Nevertheless,
most of the objections raised against the Four Silverhairs can be
avoided if we refrain from trying to insist on the sageliness either
of Han Gaozu or the Four Silverhairs themselves. Then the episode as
originally described by Sima Qian seems quite credible, though we may
continue to doubt whether presence or absence of such men at court
would have greatly concerned Gaozu in any way. Yet here again there
is something in Wang Zhichang's argument that Han Gaozu did attach
importance to employing capable men, and in terms of the beliefs of
the time, such venerable hermits were very useful politically.

Underlying Zhang Liang's strategy to make the heir apparent's
position secure was the belief, first, that the Four Silverhairs were
exceptional men, and, second, that by honouring these exceptional men
and winning their support the heir apparent would win considerable prestige and enhance his claim to the throne. In other words, it presupposes a widely held belief that by honouring worthy men—especially virtuous hermits who have set themselves apart from the corrupting influence of the world—a ruler or would-be ruler demonstrated his fittingness to be in power. This idea, which had ancient roots, was to become especially important at the end of the Former Han, during Wang Mang's rise and fall, and I shall return to it later. Here it should be pointed out while Han Gaozu may have had a low opinion of men he regarded as virtue-preaching pedants, he was politically most astute. If there was political advantage to be gained by summoning to court even the most tiresome windbags, we may be sure that Han Gaozu would not have hesitated to do so. And as to his son's ability to win over the Four Silverhairs, Gaozu may not have been very impressed by the hermits themselves, but would have been impressed if their presence at court established the legitimacy of the heir apparent's claim to the throne in the eyes of the educated elite on which he relied for the administration of the empire.  

More general information concerning the response of Confucian scholars to the foundation of the Former Han dynasty is contained in the biography of Shusun Tong 敏史通, who in the fifth year of Han (202 B.C.), when Liu Bang had defeated his opponents but was becoming exasperated with the riotous, drunken behaviour of his followers, contrived to get the new emperor to agree to invite scholars from Lu (i.e. Confucians) to assist in establishing a proper court, with rituals more in keeping with his newfound dignity. Shusun Tong invited more than thirty scholars; of these only two refused to come, writing in reply:
You have served wellnigh ten rulers, flattering each to his face in order to gain intimacy and prestige. Now the possession of the empire has just been settled, the dead have not yet been buried and the wounded have not yet recovered, but still you want to establish rites and music. It is only after the accumulation of virtue for over a century that rites and music can rise and flourish. We could not bear to do what you are doing. What you are doing is not consonant with antiquity and we will not come. Go; do not defile us.75

Thus the objection of these men seems to have been against what they regarded as Shusun Tong's unseemly haste rather than any distaste for serving the commoner-turned-emperor Liu Bang.76 What evidence there is indicates that for the Confucian scholars who came after them there was even less to stand in the way of serving the Han emperors. Nevertheless, Ban Gu states at one point that it was Emperor Wu, by giving Confucian teachings imperial sponsorship and institutional backing, who was able to 'make literature and learning flourish, and bring forward and promote those hiding in seclusion'.77 In other words, in the ideologically uncertain early reigns of the dynasty even some Confucian scholars had their doubts about the appropriateness of taking office. Concerning the attitudes of those of other philosophical persuasions we can only speculate.

6. Eremitic Advisors

If there are few recorded cases of intellectuals refusing to take part in affairs of state during the Former Han because they felt the times were not propitious, there is nevertheless considerable evidence to be found of hermits for whom withdrawal was not so much a matter of timely action as a response to factors they considered more or less inevitable and unchanging, such as the human craving for wealth, power and fame, or the prospect of personal extinction. To such figures I shall turn presently. There was one type of hermit, however, that may be regarded as a transitional group falling between unconditional
hermits of this sort and the socio-politically committed intellectuals discussed in earlier sections. These were what can best be called eremitic teachers and advisors, men who refused to take office but nevertheless regarded political involvement as a duty rather than something to be studiously avoided. For such men the evils to be evaded were those entailed in being the subject of a particular ruler: being a subject brought with it the duties of subordination, obedience and personal loyalty, which made it difficult to put justice and righteousness above all else. Hence these men cast themselves in the role of friend or advisor, and by so doing placed themselves in a tradition which went back at least to Zixia, Duangan Mu and Tian Zifang at the court of Marquis Wen of Wei (d.396 B.C.), and was institutionalised at the Jixia Academy during the reigns of Kings Wei (r.356-320 B.C.) and Xuan (r.319-301 B.C.) of Qi.78

Eremitic advisors of this sort from the Former Han include Sir Ge and Master Wang, both of whom are said to have been students of Huang-Lao. When Cao Can was appointed Chancellor of Qi in 194 B.C. he soon became frustrated by the conflicting advice he received from Confucian scholars. Hearing of Sir Ge, from Jiaoxi in Qi, he invited him to the Qi court with generous gifts. By putting into practice Sir Ge's teachings on governing through purity and quietude and letting the people find tranquility unhindered, Cao Can was able to bring nine years of peace and harmony to Qi. Sima Qian does not state directly that Sir Ge was a hermit, but he does place him in a line of transmission of teachings coming from such eremitic figures as the Man on the Yellow River (Heshang zhangren) and Master Anqi.79 Huangfu Mi says that of all the scholars of Qi, Sir Ge alone did not rush off to involve himself in the civil wars that followed the collapse of the Qin dynasty, but
remained in seclusion and did not serve in office.80

Master Wang is described by Sima Qian as a recluse who discoursed ably on the doctrines of Huang-Lao. Following the death of Emperor Wen in 157 B.C., the Commandant of Justice Zhang Shizhi was afraid that when Emperor Jing came to the throne he might seek redress for the fact that when heir apparent he had been reprimanded by the Commandant of Justice. By following the advice of Master Wang, however, Zhang Shizhi was able to defuse this potentially dangerous situation. Subsequently, when Master Wang was invited to visit the court, in front of the assembled officials he asked Zhang Shizhi to do up his shoe for him, confident that Zhang Shizhi’s willingness to comply would enhance the Commandant of Justice’s reputation for humility.81

This same strategy is also said to have been used by the mysterious Sir Yellow Stone to test the character of Zhang Liang when they first met, apparently during the reign of Qin Shihuang. However, Sir Yellow Stone’s teachings appear to have been of a political rather than philosophical nature: the text he handed on to Zhang Liang concerned military and political strategy and was intended to make its recipient a teacher of kings.82 According to Sima Qian, Sir Yellow Stone also had the gift of prophecy and the ability to transform himself – or be transformed into – the yellow stone from which his name is taken.83

Whatever we might think of Sir Yellow Stone, it is clear that by no means all the men who declined to take office during the Former Han cultivated an attitude of moral aloofness or sought quietude and philosophic detachment. There were also those with military skills and inclinations, heirs as much of the knight-errant as of the
eremitic tradition. But not all of them were able to attract disciples as illustrious as Zhang Liang; nor were they always as ready as Sir He or Master Wang to establish contact with powerful men.

The Han shu contains a letter to King Xian of Huaiyang 濮陽 (one of the sons of Emperor Xuan) from Zhang Bo 章博, a cousin on his mother’s side, which raises the subject of eremitic advisors. In this letter Zhang Bo reports that when travelling in Yan 燕 and Zhao 邺 in search of ‘scholars in hiding’ (youyin zhi shi 隱之士) he heard that in Chu there was a Master Si 始 所生 who was an expert on The Sima’s Art of War 司馬兵法 and had the ability to become a great general. He went to see him and was most impressed by his knowledge, for he had gathered in himself all the arts of the Way and there was no text he did not possess (i.e. this was no ignorant soldier living in rustic squalor). Zhang Bo also mentions another worthy of outstanding ability living by the North Sea, but expresses misgivings about the possibility of persuading him to come to court. If the king could indeed employ such men, Zhang Bo declared, he would be able to accomplish great things. Apparently the king was delighted with the plan, but there is no evidence that it was followed up.

Also in this category of eremitic advisors must go the rather exceptional figure of Mei Fu 梅 , even though the advisory role he adopted was quite unlike that of the more traditional type of mentor mentioned so far. Mei Fu was appointed Commandant of Nanchang 南昌 during the reign of Emperor Cheng, but resigned from his post and returned to his native place. There he made a point of investigating any unusual phenomena said to have occurred in the district, going to the place in person to make full enquiries and then submitting a
report. He also wrote to Emperor Cheng in protest against the Commander-in-Chief Wang Feng's abuses of power. When the Emperor ignored his protestations on this and other matters, Mei Fu remained in seclusion at home, devoting himself to study. When Wang Mang came to power in the Yuanshi period (1-5 A.D.), Mei Fu left his family and vanished. It was said that he had become an immortal, and there were reports that he was living incognito in Kuaiji.

With the possible exception of Mei Fu, the figures discussed in this section are known to us only through their connections with powerful and famous men. They were what might paradoxically be called high-profile hermits. For they had qualms not about being near the centre of power as much as the constraints that actually holding office would place on them. But for others eremitism was a rather more stringent affair.

7. Unconditional Eremitism

What then of those who really did try to live in seclusion and anonymity, to keep themselves at a distance from the quest for power, wealth and fame? The only times when information about such men becomes available is when someone else is moved either to criticise or to praise them. It is to these figures that I will now turn.

When the early Han statesman and thinker Lu Jia described the social evils of his time in his work Xin Yu, he made reference to both the obsession with immortality and eremitism. On the one hand there are people, he complained, who venture far into the mountains in search of gods and immortals, forsaking their families and cutting themselves off from both proper bodily and spiritual nourishment; on the other there are hermits who live in isolation and obscurity.
because of their disdain for what they regard as human artifice and the corrupting influence of society. The latter type Lu Jia regarded with a mixture of disapproval and contempt:

As to throwing away one's clothes and tousling one's hair, climbing high mountains and living on fruit and nuts: look at such people and they have no carefree, relaxed expression, listen to them and they have nothing to say about benevolence and righteousness. They are as muddle-headed as madmen. Push them and they will not go, pull them and they will not come. Their contemporaries receive nothing from their efforts, those of later times will see no evidence of their talents. Their lord might fall but they would not go to his assistance, their country might be in danger but they would not come to its aid. They are solitary and have no neighbours; in their isolation they sleep alone. They could be said to shun the world, but it could not be said that they have their minds set upon the Way. To destroy one's body in order to shun danger is not reasonable; to have one's mind set upon the Way and yet shun the world is not loyalty. This is the reason a gentleman who lives in an age of disorder unites with the Way and virtue, cleaves even to the smallest good and shuns even the smallest evil, cultivates propriety between father and son and extends this as the model for propriety between ruler and subject.86

That during the Former Han as in the Warring States period there were those who physically withdrew from society in order to protect their purity is also evident from the later chapters of Zhuangzi. The Keyi chapter includes among its five categories of scholars those who withdraw to mountain valleys out of moral indignation and disdain for the world; those who withdraw to rivers and seas to live in carefree indifference to it; and those preoccupied with the quest for immortality.87 The continuing occurrence of men who sought physical isolation in order to remain unsullied by the world is also confirmed by the magnificent poem composed at the court of Liu An (179-122 B.C.), King of Huainan 淮南 circa.124 B.C., 'Summoning a Hermit' (Zhao yin shi 招隱士). This work, which was to inspire a long series of poems on the same topic, is constructed around the poet's perception of the awful, intolerable wilderness in which the
hermit has chosen to live. While there is evidence that during the Former Han and even in the Warring States expressions such as 'scholars of the mountains and forests' (shanlin zhi shi 山林之士) and 'scholars of the cliffs and caves' (yanxue zhi shi 岩穴之士) were sometimes used synecdochally to refer to the general category of men committed to high ideals of personal conduct, this poem must be interpreted literally - anything less would make it virtually meaningless:

The cassia trees grow thick
In the mountain's recesses,
Twisting and snaking,
Their branches interlacing.
The mountain mists are high,
The rocks are steep.
In the sheer ravines
The waters' waves run deep.
Monkeys in chorus cry;
Tigers and leopards roar.
One has climbed up by the cassia boughs,
Who wishes to tarry there.
A prince went wandering
And did not return.
In spring the grass grows
Lush and green
At the year's evening,
Comfortless,
The cicada sings with
A mournful chirp.
Wildly uneven,
The bends of the mountain:
The heart stands still
With awe aghast.
Broken and wild,
Chilling the heart,
In the deep wood's tangle,
Tigers and leopards spring.
Tower and rugged,
The craggy rocks, frowning,
Crooked and interlocked
The woods' gnarled trees.
Green cypress grass grows in between,
And the rush grass rustles and sways.
White deer, roebuck and horned deer
Now leap and now stand poised.
Sheer and steep,
Chill and deep:
Baboons and monkeys
And the bears
Seek for their kind
With mournful cries.
Tigers and leopards fight,  
And the bears growl.  
Birds and beasts, startled,  
Lose the flock.  
O prince, return!  
In the mountains you cannot stay long.\textsuperscript{89}

The passage by Lu Jia quoted above is of course also directed against physical withdrawal from society, but there is good reason to believe that his criticisms applied to all those who turned their backs on the world, even when they did not go to the trouble of removing themselves physically. For there were also hermits who chose to live in society, cultivating an attitude of sublime indifference to the world rather than lofty disdain. Such hermits, who drew inspiration especially from Zhuangzi, lived in obscurity and anonymity, earning their living by menial occupations, and thereby found the freedom to devote themselves to lofty ideals.

As I have already pointed out, it is to Yang Xiong above all that we owe what information we have concerning unconditional eremitism in the later part of the Western Han period.

The hermits praised by Yang Xiong were not moral extremists of the type criticised by Lu Jia and in the Keyi chapter of Zhuangzi; they were socially orientated men for whom withdrawal from the world was ultimately a state of mind rather than physical isolation. The only one who could be said to have had something of the world condemning extremism of a Chen Zhongzi in him was Zheng Pu. Yang Xiong says that because he refused to lower his aspirations he farmed for a living, and despite the fact that he did not have noble rank 'his name shook the capital'.\textsuperscript{90} Ban Gu also comments that he 'would not wear clothes not his own nor eat food not his own'.\textsuperscript{91} However, this cannot be taken to mean that he tried to achieve
complete independence from society by producing his own food and clothing, in the manner of Chen Zhongzi or other Warring States extremists associated with the School of the Tillers. For Ban Gu's remark applied also to Zhuang Zun, and as we shall see, Zhuang Zun was certainly not interested in self-sufficiency or avoiding all contact with the world. Probably Ban Gu merely meant that Zheng Pu would not accept an emolument in return for official service and insisted on earning his living directly by his own labour. That Zheng Pu was not a world-condemning fanatic is also evident from the comments about him in Chang Ju's 黃 陽 闕 (4th century A.D.) Huayang guozhi. There it is said that he guarded the Way in darkness and quietude, was completely virtuous in his conduct and taught that 'loyalty, filiality, love and respect are the supreme virtues in the world'. This is hardly the teaching of a man who sets himself above the world. During the reign of Emperor Cheng, Commander-in-Chief Wang Peng invited him to court with the appropriate ceremonial gifts, but Zheng Pu refused to accede to his request. After his death a shrine was built in his honour, which according to Huangfu Mi was still in use in his day.

There is some evidence that in the Warring States period there had been men who, in accordance with ideas such as those developed by Zhuangzi, lived eremitically within society and sometimes literally were 'shi yin', hermits of the market place. Not only is it unlikely that all the stories about such types in Zhuangzi are entirely fictional, but Sima Qian also mentions a hermit who worked as a gate-keeper, another who was a butcher, and yet others who associated with gamblers and soup vendors. It appears that hermits turned to all sorts of trades to keep themselves alive. One profession not mentioned in this context before the Han period,
however, was that of diviner or fortune teller. It may be that the appearance of hermits working as diviners in the Former Han is a reflection of the fascination cosmological influences on human affairs had for Han intellectuals. What seems to have been a characteristic Han idea is expressed in the chapter on diviners in the *Shi ji* (believed by some scholars to be the work of Chu Shaosun rather than Sima Qian). There Jia Yi is recorded as observing that 'the sages of antiquity, if not at court, were sure to be found among diviners and healers'.

This same chapter in the *Shi ji* is devoted to a portrait of one such sage of the market place, Sima Jizhu 司馬季貒. Probably this portrait is a fictional one, a stage-setting for the ideas Sima Jizhu is made to expound so eloquently. But this is no reason to assume that Sima Jizhu himself is equally fictional, or that he did not hold the type of ideas attributed to him. In the course of his harangue Sima Jizhu refers to both Laozi and Zhuangzi, and his philosophy of eremitism shows the influence of the latter especially:

...occupying a lowly position, a gentleman withdraws to avoid the multitude, hides himself away to avoid social relations; lest he be harmed by the crowd he allows only a trace of his virtue and complaisance be seen; by illumining his heavenly nature he assists the ruler and sustains the ruled, enhancing their merit and interests without seeking honour or praise for himself.96

The information concerning another diviner-hermit of the Former Han is much more reliable, and this is the man who is the most important as well as the most attractive of all the hermits of this period: Zhuang Zun, styled Junping, commonly known also as Yan Junping, the name used by Ban Gu in *Han shu* to avoid the tabooed personal name of Emperor Ming 明帝 (r.58-77 A.D.). Zhuang Zun had been Yang Xiong's teacher in Chengdu 成都 before Yang Xiong
left for the capital, and in *Fa yan* his former student praises him most eloquently:

Zhuang of Shu is profound and serene. Zhuang of Shu's treasure is his genius. He does nothing that might attract improper attention, handles nothing that might bring improper gain; he remains in obscurity without altering the principles to which he holds. What could (the pearl of) Sui Hou and (the jade of) Bian He add to this? Raise up this man and follow him, for is he not a treasure? Zhuang is our treasure. He practices what is difficult to accomplish. If it is not Xuyou that he emulates it must be Boyi, so what desires could he possibly have?

Zhuang Zun worked as diviner in the market place in Chengdu. It was a lowly profession, he believed, but one which nevertheless enabled him to benefit the common people:

When it is a question of things incorrect or evil, I say what would be advantageous or harmful according to the tortoise and milfoil. Sons I advise according to [the requirements of] filiality, younger brothers according to deference, subjects according to loyalty. Taking into account their particular circumstances, I guide them toward goodness, and more than half do as I say.

Having seen several people and earned the small amount he needed to keep himself, he would close his stall, lower the blind, and give instruction on *Laozi*. He was so widely read, Ban Gu informs us, that there was nothing of which he did not have a thorough understanding. He wrote a work of more than 100,000 characters, drawing on the doctrines of Laozi and Zhuangzi (a large part of it is still extant), but continued to practise his trade until his death at the age of more than ninety. One illustration of Zhuang Zun's encyclopedic knowledge is given in Yang Xiong's letter to Liu Xin concerning his compilation of *Fang yan*. There Yang Xiong comments that Zhuang Zun and another scholar from Shu called Linlu Wengru were the only men in the empire familiar with the documents which in former times had
been submitted to the throne by the 'light carriage envoys' (youxian zhishi 轻使)，but had been scattered when the Zhou and Qin buildings in which they were stored were destroyed. In parenthesis, it should be noted that the Linlu Wengru mentioned in this letter, whom Yang Xiong says was related to his mother's family, is described in Huayang guozhi as a hermit-scholar similar to Zhuang Zun. There his name is given as Linlu and his style Gongru, and it is said that after giving Yang Xiong the instruction which enabled him to compile Fang yan he went into seclusion and was never heard of again.

Ban Gu further records that a certain friend of Yang Xiong, Li Qiang 李强 from Duling, when appointed magistrate of Yizhou 益州, happily told his friend that now he would have the opportunity to persuade Zhuang Zun to come to court. Yang Xiong discounted the possibility, but Li Qiang nevertheless went off full of hope. On his arrival in Chengdu he was granted an interview by Zhuang Zun, yet when face to face with this venerable man he did not dare even to mention his reason for coming to see him, let alone attempt to persuade him.

From Ban Gu's brief sketch Zhuang Zun emerges as a most sympathetic character able to combine the highest personal ideals with a considerate attitude towards others. He epitomises some of the best features of Zhuangzi's philosophy: the pursuit of sageliness without setting oneself apart from the common people; the quest for contentment in a life of simplicity and anonymity; acceptance of the fact that the lives of the majority of people are subject to the demands of family and government, and helping them to cope with those pressures despite an unwavering personal commitment to an ideal beyond
the requirements of everyday life. It is not difficult to believe Ban Gu's statement that 'the people of Shu loved and respected him and he is praised there to this day'.\textsuperscript{105} Certainly the comments about him in the \textit{Huayang guozhu} confirm this image of Zhuang Zun. There he is described as having 'a noble nature, a tranquil manner enhanced by learning', a man whose subtle guidance altered manners and changed customs and spread kindness and harmony around him.\textsuperscript{106}

The only other person Yang Xiong praised with the type of superlatives he used in relation to Zhuang Zun was Li Hong (styled Zhongyuan). Li Hong also came from Shu and he too was Yang Xiong's teacher, but in some aspects of character and conduct he was the antithesis of Zhuang Zun. So high was Yang Xiong's regard for him that he characterised him in terms of the description Confucius gives of himself in the \textit{Lunyu}:\textsuperscript{107} as someone who not only would neither lower his aspirations nor demean his person, but who further believed that there was no course of action which was either necessarily permissible or necessarily impermissible, that each action had to be continually evaluated anew according to the circumstances of the moment.\textsuperscript{108} Yang Xiong says:

\begin{quote}
[Li] Zhongyuan is a teacher to the age. Look at his bearing and it is dignified, listen to his speech and it is solemn, observe his conduct and it is majestic. I have heard of him bending others to his virtue, I have never heard of him, in the name of virtue, bending to others. Zhongyuan fills men with awe... He will not look upon what is not correct, will not listen to what is not correct, will not say what is not correct, will not do what is not correct. It is this ability to correct his sight and hearing, speech and conduct, that fills me with awe for my former teacher.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

Yang Xiong provides no further personal details concerning Li Hong; in the \textit{Han shu} he is not mentioned at all. According to \textit{Gaoshi zhuan} his example transformed the people of his locality, to
the extent that those whose hair was going white were no longer expected to carry loads, and men and women when walking maintained a proper distance from each other. Once he was on the point of acceding to a request to take up a post as county prefect, but when the local people gathered to send him off he could not bring himself to leave them. What began as a sad farewell turned into a joyous celebration lasting more than a month, until the provincial governor sent someone to order Li Hong to come. At this point he 'made himself scarce'. Other texts, however, give different accounts of his relations with the authorities. The *Huayang guozhi* says that he served for one month in the commandery Bureau of Merit before resigning; the *Sichuan tongzhi* states that he was recommended as 'prolific talent' but did not heed the imperial summons.

From these accounts it would be rash to draw any conclusion more precise than the general one that Li Hong was a man of high integrity who was uninterested in wealth, power or status, who refused to become involved in political affairs, but as a model and teacher had a great influence on those around him. There is one other story about him related by Chang Ju, however, which had an authentic ring to it. As well as demonstrating Li Hong's rigorous moral standards, it also shows that the personal influence of even such a great man as this was not always as strong as either he himself or his biographers might have hoped:

[Li Hong's] son Zhui killed a man for what he regarded as an insult. The Grand Administrator said, "The son of a worthy man should not kill anyone", and released him. Zhui himself informed his family of this miscarriage of justice. When Hong sent him away to avoid the legal proceedings against him, the Grand Administrator was angry and questioned Hong about it. Hong answered respectfully: 'Zhui is a bandit who has killed a man. It is clear that the Commandery, out of partiality to me, has subverted the
law. A gentleman does not encourage (wrongdoing) but eradicates it. Shi Que's murder of his son Hou is censured in the Chunqiu. Confucius says that father and son should cover up for each other, that this constitutes uprightness. I did in fact send Zhui away.

It seems unlikely that anyone intent on glorifying a virtuous man would invent a story in which he could be said to fail in his role as father. The situation of a greatly respected man profoundly influencing the conduct of others yet being unable to instill high principles in his own son is an aspect of human experience as touching as it is commonplace.

At this point it is appropriate also to mention a number of other hermits from the Former Han whose biographies are included in Huangfu Mi's Gaoshi zhuan, some of them of rather dubious veracity. The most interesting of these is a certain Zhi Jun, who according to Huangfu Mi was a friend of Sima Qian. From Chang'an, Zhi Jun (styled Boling) chose to cultivate his virtue in solitude rather than follow Sima Qian's example of pursuing a career at court, and retired to live at Xing Mountain. The biography quotes a letter from Sima Qian rebuking him for his failure to make better use of his talents:

I have heard that there are three aspects of the Way that a gentleman regards as important: of these the foremost is to establish his virtue, next comes establishing his doctrines, and finally comes establishing his personal merit. I would venture to submit that, since your talents far outstrip those of others and you set yourself the highest aspirations, correcting yourself so as to be as clear as ice, as pure as jade, and your reputation is not burdened by imputation of even the slightest improprieties of conduct, your name is certainly distinguished already. However, you have not as yet accomplished completely that which leads to the highest good. I would like you to give this matter some consideration.

To this Zhi Jun replied:

I have heard that the gentleman of old took part in affairs
according to the level of their ability and remained at home according to the measure of their virtue. In this way they kept themselves free from regret. Profit cannot be got from nothing, fame cannot be acquired by improper means. Ever since the rise of Han the imperial Way has been much in evidence; it has also been a time when able men have profited, while worthless men have built a screen around themselves. According to the Book of Changes, when a great lord holds the Mandate petty men are not used. I wish for nothing more than to lie on my back gazing upwards, without a care whiling away my remaining years.

Zhi Jun does not appear to have been mentioned in any text before Gaoshi zhuan. This, plus the neatness of the contrast drawn by Huangfu Mi between Sima Qian suffering the humiliation of castration on the one hand, and Zhi Jun's long and carefree life on the other, suggests that perhaps this account perhaps owes more to Huangfu Mi's imagination than to historical fact. Why would he fabricate such a biography? Huangfu Mi's disciple was the poet and literary critic Zhi Yu (d.c.312 A.D.) who came from Chang'an. It would not have been out of character for a man with Huangfu Mi's generous nature and lively historical fancy to compose a biography of a distinguished ancestor for a highly regarded disciple, and we would expect the details of such a biography to reflect the values of both the master and his disciple.

Other hermits of the Former Han mentioned by Huangfu Mi are Sir Cheng, Anqiu Wangzhi, Song Shengzhi, and Zhang Zhongwei. What is recorded about Sir Cheng makes him seem rather improbable. Emperor Cheng is supposed to have gone in person to visit him, only to be rebuffed in a most impertinent way. Instead of losing his life for this impertinence however, Sir Cheng was given the opportunity to present the emperor with his work on government affairs in thirteen chapters. Anqiu Wangzhi is said to have refused all together to see Emperor Cheng. A student of
Laozi, he used the strategy of becoming a shaman to make himself ineligible for public office, then devoted himself to study and writing and founded his own school of interpretation of Laozi.\textsuperscript{121} Song Shengzhi (d.3 A.D.) lived a life of selfless devotion to virtue. Rather than pursue an official career he became a shepherd, and maintained his humble lifestyle despite being summoned to court in person by Chancellor Kong Guang (65 B.C.-5 A.D.).\textsuperscript{122}

Similarly, Zhang Zhongwei (together with a certain Wei Jingqing, who came from the same commandery) devoted himself to the cultivation of virtue in retirement rather than taking up an official career. A man with literary interests, he lived in the poorest, most undistinguished circumstances, in such strict seclusion that he was almost unknown to his contemporaries - only Liu Gong was familiar with him.\textsuperscript{123}

Other than what is said about Sir Cheng, there is nothing to suggest that these accounts are necessarily fictional. Nor is there reason to doubt the historicity of Han Fu, a famous hermit from Zhuo commandery who in 80 B.C. was summoned to court by Emperor Zhao in honour of his virtue. There he was presented with a letter of bestowal announcing of a gift of silk. The imperial proclamation stated:

\begin{quote}
We consider it would be a grievous thing to burden him with the affairs of office. His duty shall be to cultivate the conduct of a filial younger brother for the edification of his district. When travelling he shall be entitled to stay in official hostels and county authorities en route shall supply him with meat and wine and provide for his entourage and horses. As in the case of senior officials, every year in the eighth month he shall be presented with one sheep and two measures of wine, so that his life will not come to an untimely end. Should the misfortune of his death occur, a double coverlet and sacrificial pig shall be presented.\textsuperscript{124}
\end{quote}
To the end of his life Han Fu did not hold office, Huangfu Mi tells us, and to this extent he could be regarded as similar to Zhuang Zun, Zheng Pu or Li Hong. Yet there is a fundamental difference: whereas someone like Zhuang Zun tried to avoid fame and prestige, and by plying an ordinary trade earned what little he needed to live simply and inconspicuously, Han Fu was prepared to respond to the imperial summons, to be honoured at court and to accept the emperor's largesse. His eremitism was fully incorporated into the established socio-political order, as is shown by the recognition he received from the supreme authority. What is more, his refusal to take office does not appear to be linked to any particular objection to the moral qualities of the person occupying the throne or the integrity of his government. As far as can be determined, Han Fu had no desire to do anything more than cultivate the virtues of a Confucian gentleman in a private capacity, 'taking part' in the government of the empire only by transforming those around him by the force of personal example. According to the Lunyu this was a perfectly valid contribution to society, and Emperor Zhao's proclamation appears to allude to this view approvingly.125

Han Fu represents a type of eremitism which circa 80 B.C. was still rather new (indeed, because the date of his invitation to the court is fixed, it is tempting to treat him as its beginning). Yet the change he represents is absolutely crucial to an understanding of the development of eremitism, in terms of both variety and prevalence, not only in the Han period but also the Period of Division that followed. For Han Fu's eremitism is a manifestation of the scholarly ethos or culture which evolved steadily over a period of some three hundred years from the reign of Emperor Wu. It is an ethos which was profoundly influenced by two factors in particular: imperial
sponsorship of Confucianism and the operation of the official recommendatory system. Together these factors generated an obsession with exemplary personal conduct of an ostensibly Confucian mode. Eremitism in the style of Han Fu was one of the outcomes of this. Aspects of the development of this scholarly ethos and its attendant type of eremitism will be considered in the following section.

8. The Recommendatory System and the Rise of Exemplary Eremitism

The growing influence of Confucianism in Han government and the increasing imperial support it received has been discussed by many scholars from Sima Qian onwards. Official sponsorship of Confucianism centred on the Imperial Academy, to which an ever-increasing number of Erudites were appointed to provide authoritative interpretations of the classics, advice (frequently ignored) for the emperor and his government, and instruction for students who by the reign of Emperor Cheng numbered some three thousand. This whole politico-philosophical-cum-educational endeavour was based on jingxue, the study of the classics, which consisted largely of elaborate textual commentary and philological analysis. The main results of this activity were, first, a proliferation of schools of interpretation of the various texts, with the production of 'chapter and verse' commentaries to ensure the continuity of these schools of interpretation, and second, the dissemination of some knowledge of the texts throughout the elite (that is, those with sufficient resources and aspirations to provide their children with an education). As an educational endeavour the Imperial Academy tended to remain 'academic' in the pejorative sense: it stressed bookish knowledge of the texts rather than inculcating a fiery determination to put into practice the
frequently radical ideals contained in them. Nevertheless, it did help Confucian ideas to be diffused throughout the educated stratum of society.127

The official recommendatory system, on the other hand, directly affected the everyday conduct of individuals (though, again, not always for the best) because its operation depended, at least in theory, on the identification by the authorities of individuals who had demonstrated ability and virtuous qualities in their behaviour within the community. Detailed accounts of the Han recommendatory system have been provided elsewhere,128 so I shall not attempt to repeat them. My only aim will be to highlight the important role played by the recommendatory system in creating a social climate in which a reputation for impeccable personal conduct was of paramount importance and providing machinery to draw such conduct to the notice of the world at large. Without it, the history of eremitism in China would have been very different.

Some of the criteria according to which men were recommended had political utility of a direct and obvious sort - for example, 'the ability to speak frankly and remonstrate candidly', as specified in Emperor Wen's seminal edict of 178 B.C. Others invoked ideals of personal conduct of a less specific nature, such as that of being 'worthy and good, proper and correct', mentioned in the same edict.129 It was in 134 B.C. that Emperor Wu ordered each commandery and kingdom to recommend one person of 'filial and blameless' character, and this was to develop into the most important category of recommendation, the major criterion for annual recommendations to the court. But from time to time other criteria were also specified. Thus Emperor Yuan's edict of 43 B.C.
stipulated the four categories of 'honest and unaffected 君 , 'genuine and sincere 敬 , 'self-effacing and deferential 逊 , and 'exemplary conduct 德行 . These criteria were re-invoked by Emperor Guangwu in 36 A.D., and in the course of the Later Han dynasty were supplemented by still more categories including the more highly rated 'prolific talent 才 , .

Hence many of the criteria according to which men were to be recommended for office were of a fairly open nature and could be satisfied by a variety of types of action or demeanour. Accordingly, there developed along with the recommendatory system a range of what might best be termed personal styles, styles of conduct aspiring to the ideals institutionalised by the recommendatory system. Eremitism was one of these personal styles. But to understand the particular qualities of that eremitism it is helpful to consider it together with some of the other modes of behaviour generated by the recommendatory system.

At least since Sima Guang (1019-1086), Chinese scholars have been very much aware of the efforts of a significant number of Later Han scholars to conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion, to embody Confucian ideals of personal conduct and show moral courage in their socio-political involvement. The locus classicus is Gu Yanwu's 顧炎武 (1613-1682) statement that, the political decline of the period notwithstanding, 'from the Three Dynasties down, customs have never been finer than in the Eastern Capital'. Accounts of what brought this about differ. Sima Guang and Gu Yanwu, for example, trace it back to Emperor Guangwu's respectful treatment of scholars and his successors' continuance of that policy; the twentieth century scholar Chen Dongyuan 陳東原 places more emphasis on the reaction
of Eastern Han scholars to the political evils of their time - the power of the imperial relatives and eunuchs. The explanation which is most relevant here, however, is that given by Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1814): he argues that it was primarily the outcome of the recommendatory system, which spurred men to establish a reputation for virtuous conduct since such a reputation alone could lead to a recommendation for office and an official career. 'It appears that those recommended or imperially summoned in this period were invariably chosen according to their reputation, therefore whoever was able to obtain a reputation was sure to pursue it with all their might'. This view has been accepted, without its implications being fully explored, by some modern scholars.

The observation that personal reputation was the basis of the operation of the entire recommendatory system is of course not to be taken as an argument that scholars of the Han period were motivated in whatever they did solely by a hunger for personal renown. While there certainly were such people, there is no reason to assume that they were more numerous than in any other period. It is rather that, given a situation in which hope of an official career depended largely on ability to acquire a reputation for virtuous conduct, scholars were alert to the impression their conduct might make on others and the consequences that might flow from it; they were constantly on the lookout for individuals who embodied the ideals of their culture and against whom their conduct could be evaluated, both by themselves and others. What I wish to stress here is that the system which helped to generate this climate operated for well over one hundred years in the Former Han as well as in the Later Han, and that the styles of conduct it helped to generate were already well established by the time Wang Mang took the throne.
What were the modes of exemplary behaviour the recommendatory system helped to generate? The list is considerable and includes: comporting oneself as a worthy subject in one's relations with the local Grand Administrator (the man responsible for recommendations by the commandery); honouring distinguished and learned men as one's teachers; filial conduct (including ritually correct mourning of one's parents); refusal of material rewards or emoluments; conscientiousness in repaying favours or kindnesses; yielding hereditary rank to another relation; determination in avenging wrongs (particularly against one's family); exhibiting moral courage in dangerous or intimidating circumstances; and, finally, exemplary eremitism, which often entailed several of the other modes of conduct listed, as well as a resolve to remain aloof from public affairs which generally was less due to a negative assessment of the state of the political system than to a wish to demonstrate personal detachment from the worldly concerns of wealth, status and power.\(^{136}\)

Although not as fully developed as in the later part of the Eastern Han, the cultivation of all these personal styles under the influence of the recommendatory system is discernible in the last century of the Former Han - from approximately the time Emperor Zhao honoured the hermit Han Fu. To demonstrate this fully for each type of conduct is out of the question here, but, drawing heavily on Zhao Yi's work, I shall briefly consider the custom of ceding hereditary aristocratic rank, which dovetails nicely with the eremitism I shall go on to discuss.

Zhao Yi rightly points out that as a strategy for generating personal renown, yielding hereditary rank to another relative had great potential. This was something which could only be done with the
approval of the emperor, and naturally the mere request for such an approval in itself was enough to draw the court's attention to the supplicant. Zhao Yi slyly observes that with a bit of luck the supplicant could have his cake and eat it too: the emperor would refuse his request, so that in the end he would have his fame and keep his rank into the bargain. Cases of ceding aristocratic rank during the Later Han cited by Zhao Yi are: Ding Heng (not approved by Guangwu), Deng Biao (approved by Emperor Ming c.60 A.D.), Huan Yu (permission denied by Emperor Ming, c.60 A.D.), Liu Qi (78 A.D.), Xu Heng (108 A.D.), and Guo He (in 129 A.D.). Heading his list, however, is the case of Wei Xuancheng, who c.61 B.C. feigned madness in an attempt to cede the title he inherited from his famous father Wei Xian. It would be silly to try to build too much of a case around this solitary example of yielding aristocratic rank from the Former Han, but surely it is no accident that the date of Wei Xuancheng's attempt to cede his title came within twenty years of Han Fu being honoured at court for his exemplary eremitism. It was at approximately this time - the end of Emperor Zhao's reign and the beginning of the reign of Emperor Xuan - that the effects of imperial backing for Confucianism and the operation of the recommendatory system began to show themselves. The semi-official scholarly ethos was beginning to acquire its distinctive characteristics. One of the interesting aspects of the custom of ceding aristocratic rank is that if it is indeed partly the product of the recommendatory system, it cannot be regarded simply as an attempt to get a well-paid official position; hereditary rank brought a secure income of a sort no post in government could yield. It is difficult to make sense of the practice of yielding aristocratic rank unless we are prepared to see it at
least partly as an attempt to realise the ideals of the evolving scholarly ethos. The same is true of eremitism.

The type of eremitism which the recommendatory system helped to generate was essentially eremitism in quest of fame, not eremitism to escape from fame (the sort advocated by Zhuangzi). It was based firmly - if selectively - on Confucian teachings: for example, Confucius' insistence that the gentleman be more concerned about developing his moral nature than personal profit, more about possessing the qualities that would qualify him for office than about actually holding office, and the idea that simply by being a filial son and a good brother a man can be said to participate in government affairs; also Xunzi's dictum that a great Confucian can win renown through virtuous retirement, obscuring his whereabouts but illuminating the Way. 139 How was this eremitism justified in light of the fundamental Confucian principle that a gentleman must serve in office unless to do so would result in moral compromise? By emphasising not so much the corruption of contemporary government as the loftiness of the hermit's ideals: it is not that ruler and his government are so bad, it is just that the hermit is so strict in the demands he makes of himself that even in this relatively enlightened age it would be impossible to remain true to his ideals. As Yang Xiong argues in Fa yan, eremitism is not just a question of meeting the wrong time, it is also a question of having high ideals. This is why Confucius found remaining in office out of the question when most of his colleagues had no qualms about it whatsoever. 140 The phrase which constantly recurs in accounts (including those in imperial edicts) of refusals by these exemplary hermits to heed an imperial summons to take office is that from Lunyu 18.8: 'they would not lower their ideals' (bu jiang qi zhi 不降其志). Clearly in the autocratic empire of Han it
was better for everyone, emperor as well as hermits, to focus attention on ideals perhaps impossibly high rather than on allegations of evil and depravity in government. One further point which should be made is that while this type of exemplary eremitism was essentially Confucian, it could also draw on ideas from the Laozi for support, and frequently did so: for example, the principle that he who is indifferent to the empire can be entrusted with the empire, and the doctrine of 'knowing what is enough' (zhī zuò 知足).

Of the hermits of the Former Han period I have mentioned so far, the only one other than Han Fu who could be said to illustrate this Confucian exemplary eremitism is Li Hong, praised so highly by Yang Xiong. But in this context Ban Gu's Han shu chapter on men of lofty principles (juan 72) is particularly important, for Ban Gu's views regarding eremitism were very much the product of his time, the late first century A.D., when the exemplary eremitism encouraged by the recommendatory system was flourishing again after the shock waves of the Wang Mang period had died away.

Ban Gu's chapter cannot be regarded as a complete account of eremitism in the period. Nor was it meant to be one. In it Ban Gu's primary interest lies in those who, on the one hand, did not commit what he considered to be the error of refusing to serve the house of Han, and on the other did not make the error of serving under the 'usurper' Wang Mang. To Ban Gu this represented the proper sense of timeliness in advancing and withdrawing. He reserved his highest praise for Wang Ji and Gong Gu (d.44 B.C.), remarkable men of strictest principles who served their ruler and despite the dangers of their position continued to remonstrate fearlessly in an attempt to guide his conduct. The Two Gongs - Gong Sheng and
It is important to note that in ranking men such as Wang Ji and the Two Gongs higher than Zhuang Zun and Zheng Pu, Ban was consciously reversing the judgements of Yang Xiong in *Fa yan* in order to advance the claim of another conception of personal integrity - one in which the duty of a subject to his ruler carried a lot more weight. Whereas for Yang Xiong eremitism ultimately represented the detachment of the self from the political order and conventional values generally, in Ban Gu's eyes eremitism could be justified only by reference to the fundamental values of the political order, and so had to be entirely integrated with it. But equally important is the fact that all the men Ban Gu singles out for discussion were 'discovered', as it were, through the recommendatory system, and embodied the personal styles it fostered, including exemplary eremitism.

The biography of the Two Gongs allows Ban Gu to demonstrate both of the crucial aspects of eremitism as he conceived it: serving the Han by endeavouring to keep the emperor on the correct path, and refusing to serve Wang Mang when he came to power. Gong Sheng served Emperor Ai (r.6-2 B.C.) as Grandee Remonstrant and Imperial Household Grandee, and Gong She served very briefly as Grandee Remonstrant, but most of their lives they spent in their native district in Chu, devoting themselves to scholarship and being treated with the courtesies appropriate to teachers even by high officials. Of course it would be easy to explain their refusal to stay in office for long by reference to the rapid political decline of the time, the evil machinations of Wang Mang, and so forth, but this is not the impression which emerges from their biography. If these
were their reasons for not serving then why did they ever hold office at all? What makes their case so significant in terms of anticipating the developments of the Later Han is that as far as their refusal to take office is concerned we are given nothing very specific in the way of rationale or justification; it is just that they have high ideals, no more. In this and in their history of repeated imperial summonses and calls to office, coupled with refusals or reluctant acceptances quickly followed by resignations, they are representative of the hermits fostered by the recommendatory system, the hermits who were almost always described as 'chushi' or 'disengaged scholars'.

Before leaving the subject of the significance of the recommendatory system in relation to eremitism, there is one further point which needs to be considered, and that is the relationship of the recommendatory system to the contemporary world view based on the Five Phase theory. I have pointed out elsewhere that the cosmology created out of Five Phase theory and the Book of Changes helped to turn eremitism from something which by its nature required justification to something which was an inevitable, unavoidable feature of the eternal order of things. But if eremitism was cosmologically necessary, so was bringing hermits out of hiding. From its inception, one of the functions of the recommendatory system was, by means of leading virtuous and talented men into government affairs, to restore cosmological harmony. Emperor Wen's call, in the second year of his reign (178 B.C.), for men who were worthy and good, proper and correct, able to speak frankly and remonstrate candidly, was occasioned by a solar eclipse. Thereafter edicts ordering the recommendation of worthy men were frequently made in response to portents such as solar eclipses and earthquakes. The reasoning behind this is clarified by Kong Guang's account of eclipses to
Emperor Ai in 2 B.C.: just as the sun is the ultimate source of all yang forces, so the ruler is the ultimate embodiment of all that is venerable; if the ruler's virtue declines, this causes the yin forces to rise up and encroach on the brilliance of the yang, an eclipse results, and this can be remedied only by the ruler setting his mind solely on good government, employing worthy officials and caring for the people.\textsuperscript{146} Bringing virtuous men out of hiding was a way of nourishing the yang and therefore helped to restore the equilibrium of the cosmos.\textsuperscript{147} There can be no doubt that for the people of the Han period the cosmological function of the ruler's actions in bringing such men out of hiding was as important as their political function in bringing order and stability to government. Ultimately, of course, in terms of the beliefs of the time no distinction could be drawn between cosmological and political functions, and it is the insistence on that distinction in modern thought which makes it difficult for contemporary scholars to appreciate the centrality of cosmological concerns in Han political life.

9. Wang Mang and the Reaction Against Him

The development of the sort of exemplary eremitism described in the previous section was brusquely interrupted by the events associated with Wang Mang's rise and fall. The political machinations, social chaos and military ravages of the period that began with the reign of the puppet emperor Ping 平 in 1 B.C. and ended with Guangwu's defeat of Gongsun Shu 公孫述 in 36 A.D. provided men of principle with circumstances which amply justified withdrawal. The response of scholars to the events of the time show that, while in the more settled times exemplary hermits in the Confucian mode may have had something of a prima donna quality about
them, this did not mean that the ideals they professed were empty ones. Information has survived concerning a very large number of men from this time who remained true to their ideals in the face of acute personal suffering and even death.

Perhaps no-one illustrates the outlook of such men better than Gong Sheng, for he actually embodies this shift from the exemplary but rather theoretical Confucian eremitism of the last part of the Former Han to the equally exemplary but deadly serious Confucian eremitism of the Wang Mang period and its aftermath. (Gong She, who had been more inclined than Gong Sheng to stand on the loftiness of his principles and refuse office in earlier times, died before Wang Mang came to power).

Soon after Wang Mang took the throne in 9 A.D. he sent an envoy to coax Gong Sheng to court with gifts and ritual honours, but Gong Sheng excused himself on grounds of illness. When the envoy began to apply pressure and bully him into going, Gong Sheng came to the conclusion that death would be the only way out for him. He said to his sons:

I have been shown great kindness by the house of Han without having been able to repay it. Would it be proper, now that I am old and the day of my burial is imminent, with this one body to serve two dynasties and have to face our former ruler below?

Then he gave his funeral instructions, refused all food and drink, and died fourteen days later.148

Before going on to consider the other scholars who are said to have refused to serve Wang Mang, it is necessary to consider the rationale behind Wang Mang's attempts to woo men such as Gong Sheng to court, for if the Wang Mang period is of major significance for the
development of the Chinese eremitic tradition - and there can be no doubt about this - this is at least as much because of Wang Mang's attitude towards scholars as because of the attitude of scholars towards Wang Mang.

Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi taught that a gentleman values virtue more than profit, that if by serving a ruler he would compromise his integrity he withdraws, and in seclusion cultivates his virtue. At the same time, they believed that one of the ways a ruler demonstrates that he is fit to be served is by honouring and employing worthy men.\(^49\) By being able to win to his court virtuous men (particularly those who have withdrawn in protest from the political jurisdiction of others), a ruler gives proof that in the eyes of men of the highest integrity it is he alone who has the virtue indispensable to the supreme authority.

These ideas were well established before the Han dynasty,\(^130\) and both Han emperors and Han scholars made use of them. I have already referred to the case of the Four Silverhairs during Gaozu's reign, in which these concepts played a major role. The honours extended by Emperor Zhao to Han Fu are another example of imperial feting of worthy men. But it was above all with Wang Mang's rise to power that such practices became of crucial significance.

Wang Mang came to the throne with minimal use of force. His rise to power was due to his ability to exploit his connections with the imperial household (especially his aunt, the Empress-Dowager Wang), his political acumen in gathering allies in the top levels of government, and his awareness of the importance of establishing the legitimacy of his claim to the throne in the eyes of an elite whose outlook by now was dominated by Confucian principles. Wang Mang
realised that he lived in a time when military strength was no longer enough to guarantee political success, that unless he had the support of the guardians of the doctrines on which any claim to political legitimacy had to be based — those same men who supplied much of the expertise on which the administration of the realm depended — he could not hope to succeed. He knew he had to be seen doing the right things at the right time in order to win the support he needed, and demonstrating respect for the appropriate sort of eremitic sentiment was part of this.

Very early in his career Wang Mang was already supporting famous scholars, cultivating the friendship of generals and high officials, and with gifts inviting worthy and talented men to join his staff. It is recorded that in 4 A.D. he combed the empire for men of ability, constructed thousands of residences for scholars, and generally increased government support for learning. Not only did he make an effort to support talented men and draw them into service, but in his personal conduct also he cultivated a style which was in complete accord with the ideals of the scholarly ethos — especially the ideals of filiality, self-effacement, deference, and indifference to power and glory. Such ideals are directly linked to the more extreme positions of eremitism, and Wang Mang made much of them. He repeatedly declined the honours heaped upon him, resisting with a display of modesty and humility until it appeared he had no choice but to accept. This type of conduct prompted memorials to the throne such as that of 3 A.D. by Chen Chong, in which Wang Mang's virtues were lauded, his disinterest in worldly things and devotion to principle extolled. According to Chen, Wang Mang

in purity and quietude delights in the Way, is considerate towards his inferiors, kind to old acquaintances, true to his teachers and friends. Confucius said, "when poor he is
content, when rich he cares about the rites": This describes the Duke [who Brings Peace to the Han 安 漢]

Not only that, he is said to be 'always modest and retiring, advancing his sincerity but yielding his position', reforming the customs of the people by his virtuous conduct.155

It is a little difficult to square this apparent modesty and disinterest in worldly gain with Wang Mang's undoubted ambition, and we get some suggestion of his awareness of the importance of a whole array of Confucian virtues for public relations purposes from little details such as Chen Chong's comment that 'there is no-one in the populace who does not know that within his private apartments he (manifests) the virtues of filiality and fraternity'.156 Yet it is impossible to shrug off Chen Chong's memorial as a political ploy and the view of Wang Mang it expresses as crude lobbying. That such a view of Wang Mang was fairly widely held at the time is evident from the fact that when in 4 A.D. he declined to accept the estate of Xinye 新 萨 in addition to his other fiefs and honours, a total of 487,572 officials and private individuals memorialised the throne urging that he be granted this reward for his services. Such a figure, if correct, means that before taking the throne Wang Mang enjoyed wide popularity indeed, and that glowing accounts of his virtue and sagacity cannot be dismissed as the ruses of faction politics.157

Wang Mang, it is clear, was expert at winning people to his side. Being a product of the scholarly ethos of the time, he knew that men with reputations as exemplary hermits were essential to his purpose. It has of course long been the Confucian view that Wang Mang's efforts to attract worthy men were no more sincere than his filiality,
deference or humility; Wang Mang, it is argued, 'used the message of the classics to dress up his treachery'. But it becomes difficult to understand the reforms Wang Mang attempted to introduce - against the obvious economic interests of the elite on whose support he depended - unless we are prepared to believe he was in earnest about at least some of the ideas and principles he professed. His abortive attempt to re-establish the well-field system and his very Confucian dream of 're-establishing antiquity', for example, are surely evidence that he had absorbed many of the ideas which flourished in the scholarly milieu of the time, despite the fact that his character did not correspond to the humble, modest, deferential facade he liked to present to the world. In fact, Wang Mang's fall is to be partly understood in terms of the conception he had of himself as a sage-king who really was capable of restoring antiquity. It was this image of himself which led him to try to push through his reforms regardless of protests or difficulties, and it was the arrogance this belief in himself engendered which led him to suppose that once emperor he could dispense with the support of those who had carried him to power.

The ideal of restoring antiquity, which had been central to the thought of Dong Zhongshu, was very much 'in the air' by the end of the Former Han. It featured in the 'salt and iron' policy debates of 81 B.C. In his memorials to Emperor Yuan the high-minded official Gong Yu also stressed the idea of 'reformation by the restoration of antiquity' (jiao fu gu hua). One interesting example of the type of development to which this could lead was the appointment of the leading scholar Zhang Yu to the position of 'Teacher' to Emperor Cheng, and the appointment of Kong Guang and Jin Qin as 'Teacher' and 'Friend' respectively to Emperor
It would appear that the creation of these posts was part of an attempt to recapture what was believed to have been the spirit of courts in the time of Confucius and later (e.g. Marquis Wen of Wei), when wandering scholars of high ideals adopted the roles of friend and teacher of the ruler rather than subject. (Their titles notwithstanding, there is nothing to suggest that these Han officials were encouraged to think of themselves as anything but their ruler's subject). Wang Mang's honouring of virtuous hermits was also part of the attempt to re-establish antiquity. Not since the Warring States period had such attention, both political and intellectual, been focussed on hermits, and by bringing this about Wang Mang became perhaps the major single influence shaping the attitudes of Chinese rulers towards hermits for the next five hundred years. Once Wang Mang had relied extensively on hermits to establish his legitimacy, so too did those who came after him - especially Liu Xiu, the founder of the Later Han.

Gong Sheng is one important example of Wang Mang's attempts to win worthy men to his side; another is Xue Fang 阮方. Xue Fang had ignored an imperial summons from the Han ruler, and when Wang Mang came to power he showed Xue Fang the elaborate courtesy of sending for him by easy carriage. Xue Fang declined to go, saying:

> Yao and Shun occupied the high position, Chaofu and Xuyou the low. Now that our brilliant sovereign's virtue exceeds that of Tang 謰 (Yao) and Yu 頤 (Shun), this paltry subject wishes to retain his purity in the manner of [Xuyou of] Jishan 齊山. 161

According to Ban Gu, Wang Mang was delighted with this reply, and it is not difficult to see why. Despite the ulterior motive behind it, the compliment was not a negligible one. Wang Mang was able to utilise this remark for propaganda purposes and further demonstrate
his imperial virtue by not attempting to coerce Xue Fang into coming to court. The idea that a truly great ruler is one who is prepared to respect the principles even of those misguided enough not to want to serve him was also one which was taken over by Guangwu. Wang Mang only sometimes found it suitable for his purposes; Gongsun Shu, who proclaimed himself emperor of Shu during the wars that followed Wang Mang's collapse, had no time for the idea at all. (This will be discussed in the following chapter).

Ban Gu mentions a number of other men with reputations for learning and exemplary conduct who were sought out by Wang Mang. Some, such as Ji Qun, Tang Lin, and Tang Zun, did go to court to serve him, and accordingly are condemned by Ban Gu; others, such as Guo Qin and Jiang Xu, declined the honours extended to them and so win Ban Gu's approval. There is good reason to believe that the great majority of men were not particularly troubled at the thought of serving Wang Mang. Nevertheless, the number who refused to do so seems to have been considerable - certainly far more than Ban Gu's brief treatment of the topic might suggest.

Describing the response of scholars to Wang Mang taking the throne, Fan Ye in the Hou Han shu says that their righteous indignation was so strong that the number of those who resigned in protest 'was wellnigh beyond counting'. No doubt this remark contains an element of rhetorical exaggeration. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that despite Wang Mang's sensitivity to the need to win the support of the educated elite and his initial popularity, there was widespread protest when he actually took the throne. I have already mentioned some of the men known to have refused to take office
under Wang Mang, such as Mei Fu, Gong Sheng, Xue Fang, Guo Qin, Jiang Xu, Anqiu Wangzhi, Song Shenzhi and Zhang Zhongwei. In his excellent compilation of material on this topic, Rao Zongyi has gathered information concerning seventy-eight men who chose to go into seclusion rather than take office while Wang Mang was in power, as well as twenty-six others who chose to die rather than submit to his authority. This is an impressive figure, even if we allow for the fact that the meagre sources which exist are strongly biased against Wang Mang.

However, Rao’s list raises a number of problems. He fails to include at least one of the names mentioned in the sources and wrongly includes others. More important is the fact that available information about the men he lists shows that there was considerable variation in their reasons for refusing to serve Wang Mang, and therefore to lump them all together as evidence of the widespread indignation and revulsion Wang Mang’s actions caused is quite misleading. There is good reason to believe, for example, that the outlook of those who refused to take office under Emperor Guangwu as well as under Wang Mang was quite different to that of the men who refused to have anything to do with the latter but eagerly took office under the former. Hence I shall here briefly consider which of the names in Rao’s list fall into either one of these two groups, as well as those which fall into a third, namely those about whom little more is known than that they refused to serve under Wang Mang. In this last group I shall include those who died before Guangwu gained control of the empire and whose attitude towards him is therefore unknown.
To take the last-mentioned group first: thirty-seven of the figures listed by Rao fall into this category. Even within this category there are significant differences to be observed. For example, while most of these men resigned from their official posts after Wang Mang declared himself emperor, others, such as Yang Bao 杨 资 and Ren Wengong 任文公, already found the idea of holding office intolerable when his power grew excessively during the reigns of Emperors Ai and Ping. There is also the case of Cao Jing 曹竞, who resigned from his post in protest against Wang Mang but gave his loyalty to Liu Xuan 刘玄, who ruled as the Gengshi 英 帝 emperor in 23-25 A.D. After being imperially summoned by Liu Xuan to become Chancellor and be enfeoffed as marquis, Cao Jing committed suicide when the Red Eyebrows took Chang'an in 25 A.D. Cao Jing's case merits attention because it underlines the point that at the time even the most virtuous and perspicacious of men, even if they found Wang Mang to be very obviously in the wrong, were sorely troubled when it came to deciding which combatant in the armed chaos after Wang Mang's fall was to be regarded as the legitimate ruler. Guangwu's legitimacy, after all, was 'established' only by his eventual success.

This group also includes two men for whom the idea of serving any ruler was out of the question and who cannot be assumed to have had any particular objection against Wang Mang as such. One of these, Anqiu Wangzhi, I have already mentioned as having refused to have anything to do with Emperor Cheng and devoting himself to the study of Laozi; the other is the intriguing figure of Longqiu Chang 羅丘 羹. Longqiu Chang lived in seclusion in Taimo 太末, refusing to respond to every imperial summons during the Wang Mang period. The Chief Commandant 郇尉 of Kualji, Ren Yan 任延 (appointed in
23 A.D., the first year of Gengshi, at the age of nineteen), who was an exponent of the doctrines of quietude, purity and non-action, compared him with Yuan Xian and Boyi, and rejected as absurd the idea that he might be summoned to office. However, he did send Merit Officials to pay his respects, wrote letters to him, and sent physicians and messengers with medicines so frequently they met each other en route. After a year of this Longqiu Chang arrived at Ren Yan's gate one day in a palanquin, saying that before he died he wanted to register his name for employment, and by taking office work off the debt he felt he had incurred by accepting Ren Yan's generosity. Ren Yan tried to decline his offer, but after the third time he finally relented and appointed him Libationer in the Bureau of Consultation, following which Longqiu Chang died of illness, presumably in 24 or early 25 A.D.168

Quite distinct from this first group included in Rao Zongyi's list is the second category, about whom it is said that they refused to serve Wang Mang but did take office under Guangwu. Twenty-five of the names fall into this category.169

The model of what quickly came to be established as the proper Confucian protest against Wang Mang is someone like Xuan Bing (died 30 A.D.), who had already refused to serve during the reigns of Emperors Ai and Bing because of the Wang clan's power and went into seclusion deep in the mountains, ignoring repeated calls to take office. He took office under Guangwu in the first year of his reign, and Guangwu praised him as being superior even to the Two Gongs of Chu.170
Many of the men who rebuffed Wang Mang but served Guangwu were singled out for high honours by the latter. Zhuo Mou 程茂, who had already had a distinguished career before Wang Mang, was appointed Grand Tutor by Guangwu and enfeoffed as marquis.171 Liu Xuan 刘玄, who is said to have made off into the forest clutching the classics to his breast during Wang Mang's reign, was also rewarded by Guangwu with a fief.172 Much the same is said about Huan Rong 韩荣. He is described as returning home at the beginning of Wang Mang's reign (there is no mention of him holding office at the time) and during the upheavals at the end of it making off into the hills with his students, taking the classics with them. In 44 A.D. he was summoned to become Tutor to the heir apparent, was much honoured as teacher by Emperor Ming and given the rank of Marquis of Within the Passes.173 Wang Dan 王丹 also rose to be Grand Tutor to the heir apparent, Kong Fen 孔奋 was given the rank of Marquis of Within the Passes, while Wen Qi 文起, Ding Gong 丁恭 and Xi Guang 西光 all received marquisates.174

In this category too a few exceptions should be noted. Strictly speaking, Xue Fang did not serve Guangwu, but it appears that he died while en route to Guangwu's court in response to an imperial summons, so his attitude towards Guangwu was probably favourable.175 More complex is the case of Guo Dan 郭丹, who, having refused to have anything to do with Wang Mang, remained loyal to Liu Xuan and his family in their claim to the throne. It was not until the thirteenth year of Guangwu that he accepted a post as provincial Shepherd from the latter.176
Perhaps most interesting of all the men recorded as having served Guangwu after refusing Wang Mang is Ji Yun 顧雲. Ji Yun was a man of such energy and zeal that it was impossible for him to live quietly in seclusion or fail to speak out, even when to do so bordered on the suicidal. He had the audacity to write to Wang Mang after the latter had taken the throne informing him there was still time to repent of his actions:

The Liu clan enjoys Heaven's lasting mandate, [ming] and if Your Majesty were to comply with the times of (the Liu clan's) strength and decline, taking (the mandate) in accordance with Heaven and returning it in accordance with Heaven, (Your Majesty) could be said to know Heaven's decree [ming]. Should you fail to plan to do this at the earliest opportunity you will not be able to avoid (the charge of) having stolen the throne. Yao and Shun did not regard as their own the distinction Heaven bestowed on them, therefore they ceded the empire (to Shun and Yu); why is Your Majesty so anxious to burden yourself with distinction not brought by Heaven? Heaven is Your Majesty's stern father, I am Your Majesty's filial son. A father's instruction cannot be ignored, a son's remonstrations cannot be brushed aside. If only Your Majesty would heed them.  

Not suprisingly, Wang Mang found this treasonable and had him thrown into jail. But because he needed Ji Yun's knowledge of the classics and portents, Wang Mang sent someone from his private staff to coerce Ji Yun into pleading that he had suffered from a fit of madness and did not know what he was saying. Ji Yun responded to this proposal indignantly: 'What I have uttered is all the writ of Heaven and the ideas of the sages, it is not something a madman could make up'. Fortunately he was released in an amnesty, and with his friend Zheng Jing 鄭敬 went into seclusion.

After Wang Mang's fall Ji Yun's career continued to be just as stormy as before. In the third year of Guangwu's reign (27 A.D.) he joined the staff of General of Seried Crossbows Fu Jun 禦軍將軍傅俊, going home (to Xiping 衛平 in Runan 润南) four years
later and obtaining a position in the Bureau of Merit under Grand Administrator Ouyang Xi 翌陽款. His outspokenness soon brought him into conflict with Ouyang Xi, so much so that his friend Zheng Jing, who had also joined Ouyang's staff, said that he could not bear any longer to witness the way he was putting his life in danger with his fearless but futile criticisms of the senior official. Zheng Jing turned his back on the world of politics and went off into the Yiyang Mountains 禹陽山, where he was joined several months later by Ji Yun after matters had gone much as Zheng Jing had predicted. A month or so of rural quiet was as much as Ji Yun could tolerate, however, and he asked Zheng Jing to come with him: they had to decide whether they would follow the example of Yi Yin and Lü Shang 亜尚 or Chaofu and Xuyou. For Zheng Jing the parting of the ways had come. He chose the latter course, while Ji Yun went off to Jiangxia 江夏, where he set himself up as teacher, was recommended by the commandery as 'filial and blameless' and so began his court career. There too he continued to speak out fearlessly, his remonstrations bringing him both respect and provincial postings to keep him out of the emperor's hair. When dismissed from his last position as Prefect of Changsha he returned home, where he devoted himself to teaching and writing until his death.178

The different roads chosen by Ji Yun and Zheng Jing indicate the different attitudes and personal positions with which disapproval of Wang Mang could be associated. Ji Yun's 'aspirations lay in political involvement', 179 but Zheng Jing's did not. Nor did those of the seventeen other people recorded as having refused to serve both Wang Mang and Guangwu.180 Clearly in their case the refusal to serve under Wang Mang signifies something quite different from the outlook of those included in the previous category, hence it is necessary to
distinguish them sharply from the other figures listed by Rao Zongyi.

For one thing, as already mentioned, when Guangwu began his move for the throne there was little to distinguish him from a number of other figures in the power struggles of the time. Even after he declared himself emperor in 25 A.D. his victory was far from assured, and there was no particular reason to assume that he would be able to put an end to the bitter fighting that had been going on for years. Given this chronic political instability, it is to be expected that the simple wish to keep out of trouble would feature in the motives of those who found the prospect of serving Guangwu just as distasteful as holding office under Wang Mang. But keeping away from danger by itself cannot be regarded as eremitism; for it to count as something more than just self-preservation it has to be linked to a moral or philosophical position, such as indifference to wealth, fame and power. This certainly seems to have been true of Zheng Jing, who when refusing Ji Yun's request to go with him expressed satisfaction at having been able to preserve himself, tend the graves of his ancestors and devote himself to scholarship. Furthermore he counselled Ji Yun in terms which owe much to Zhuangzi and Laozi: 'do not harm your nature by burdening your spirit'. I shall be discussing the outlook of the hermits who lived in Guangwu's reign, together with Guangwu's attitude towards them, in detail in the following chapter.

The conclusion which must be drawn here is that the response of intellectuals to Wang Mang's taking of the throne cannot be interpreted simply as a welling up of indignation which led to widespread withdrawal to await more auspicious times. Certainly there was such indignation and such timely withdrawal, but there is considerable evidence that other sorts of attitudes and other
varieties of eremitism were also involved. Although it is largely because of the interest of Confucian historians in demonstrating the 'correct' response of scholars to Wang Mang that this evidence survives, the evidence itself shows that among the scholars of the time there were in fact many different outlooks and that not everyone was equally committed to participation in public affairs.

The variety of outlook evident among scholars around the time of Wang Mang suggests that the paucity of information concerning eremitism in the preceding period is due less to the non-existence of hermits than to the failure of those who compiled the major histories of the period to take an interest in them. In this context the case of Yang Xiong is illuminating. Yang Xiong was interested in hermits, and within the confines of his native district managed to uncover a number of most impressive ones, such as Zhuang Zun, Li Hong and Zheng Pu. Perhaps it is unrealistic to suppose there would have been a Zhuang Zun living in every city the size of Chengdu in the first century B.C., yet it is reasonable to assume there must have been many others who tried - with varying degrees of success - to live the sort of life he lived, but failed to attract the attention of those who were to determine the image of the period preserved in the histories.

Although to sigh over what might have been is not very productive, it is fruitful nevertheless to reflect on the ways in which an awareness of a strong tradition of eremitism in the Former Han modifies the picture we have of the period. It enables us to begin to see it as a time in which there were many different schools of thought about what was right for the individual and society, as a time when the intellectual life of the empire was by no means limited to the court and its immediate environs, and when individuals
continued to assert their right to live according to their own conscience, protesting against political situations they condemned and divorcing themselves from social conditions they deplored, while attempting to create a microcosm of order within their own lives.

The events of Wang Mang's reign and the upheavals which followed his fall resulted in hermits gaining unprecedented political and social status. This, plus the continuing interaction during the Later Han of the scholarly culture and the official recommendatory system, was to lead to a great vogue for eremitism.

2. For example, Paul Demieville, 'La pénétration du bouddhisme dans la tradition philosophique chinoise' (1956 ; rpt. in Paul Demieville, Choix d'études bouddhiques [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973], 242), describes the Han as a 'period of pragmatic imperialism in the Roman mode'. Alexander Soper, 'Early Chinese Landscape Painting', The Art Bulletin 23(1941), 143, writes that 'the realistic mood of the age gave little encouragement to anti-social dreaming'. These judgements are taken over by Arthur F. Wright, Buddhism in Chinese History (Stanford U.P., 1959), 9-10. Michael Loewe, Everyday Life in Early Imperial China (1968; rpt. London: Transworld Publishers, 1973), 27, refers to the Han as 'a time of cultural dissemination and conformity'. According to James K. Fairbank and Edwin O. Reischauer, China: Tradition and Transformation (1973; rpt. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1979), 69, the increased prominence given to Confucianism in Han government meant that 'men of education became supporters rather than opponents of the state'. Etienne Balazs, 'Political Philosophy and Social Crisis at the End of the Han Dynasty', in Balazs, Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1964), 195, states that 'During the long and comparatively peaceful reign of the Han, there was no need for any of the extremist [philosophical] systems of antiquity. Minds did not seek to inquire beyond the limits of Confucian pragmatism, and the various schools of ritual were absorbed in petty squabbles for priority'.


4. Hong Anquan, 'Liang Han rushi de shiyin taidu yu shehui fengqi', Kong Meng xuebao, 42(1981), 115-39 and 44(1982), 221-54. Far more thorough is Rao Zongyi 雷宗裔, 'Xi Han jieyi zhuan 西漢節義傳 ', Xinya xuebao 新亞學報, 1.1(1955), 157-208. However, Rao Zongyi is concerned almost solely with those who refused to serve the 'usurper' Wang Mang, which is a matter best considered independently, though the rise of Wang Mang and the response of scholars to him can only be understood as a consequence of developments in the Former Han. I examine Rao's work in detail in the final section of this chapter when discussing the Wang Mang period. Here it should be noted that Rao intended it to supplement the earlier Xi Han jieyi zhuan by Li Yesi 李贇 (1622-1680). Li Yesi was a Ming loyalist who refused to take office under the Manchu conquerors and devoted himself to study instead. Obviously he identified closely with those who remained loyal to be Han dynasty by refusing to have anything to do with Wang Mang.

6. SJ 61/2121-29; HS 62/2738. Ban Gu follows the judgement of his father, Ban Biao (see HHS 40A/1325). That Sima Qian gave the first place in his 'exemplary lives' to Boyi and Shuqi in order to praise hermits is stated, for example, by Hong Anquan, op.cit., 42(1981), 115, and 44(1982), 221, though he recognises that Sima Qian also had other reasons for his choice.


8. SJ 61/2127.


10. Xunzi 22/43-44.


12. SJ 124/3138, 3183.

13. SJ 129/3271.

14. SJ 129/3272.

15. The Four Silverhairs, Zhuang Zun and Zheng Pu are discussed in Section 7 below.

16. LY 18.8.

17. HS 72/3055-56.

18. ES 72/3097. That men of the halls of court and men of the mountain forests both have their limitations appears to have been a piece of popular wisdom in the Han dynasty, expressed in a saying of which various versions are to be found. Han shi wai zhuan 5/17b has: 'Men of the halls of court want a salary, therefore they enter and do not leave; the men of the mountain forests want fame, therefore they go and do not turn back; to enter and also be able to leave, to go and also be able to turn back, is to understand changing one's position and have unchanging sageliness'. See also Fengsu tongyi (SBBY ed., hereafter FSTY), 3/3b, 5/5b, 10/2a.

19. This and other characteristic attitudes of Former Han intellectuals are discussed in general terms by Hsü Cho-yü, 'Qin Fan zhishi fenzi', 483-514.

20. For evidence of the influence of the Laozi in the Former Han period (as an element in 'Huang-Lao 真 老 thought) see note 31 below. The Book of Changes had wide influence partly as a result of 'jingxue 經學' or 'study of the classics', the dominant mode of Confucian activity in the Han period which received imperial backing. (On jingxue see also note 127 below). Specifically on the Book of Changes see Ji Lei 續 論 (Qing dynasty), Hanru chuan Yi yuanliu (Wuxing congshu ed., 1929); also Lu Deming 陸德明 (556-627), Jingdian shiwen 經典釋文 (CSJC ed.), 1/12-17; Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, Zhongguo jingxue de jichu 中國經學的基礎, vol.1 (Taipei: Taipei xuesheng shuju, 1982), 83-104. Gao Huaimin 高懷民, Liang Han Yixue shi 梁漢易學史 (Taipei:
Zhongguo xueshu zhuzuo jiangban weiyuanshe, 1970), while gathering together some useful material, offers some very dubious arguments and interpretations.

22. SJ 84/2491-2503.
23. Jia Yi, Xin shu (SBBY ed.) 8/3b.
24. Xin shu 9/3b; also 9/5b-6a.
25. Lu Jia, Xin yu A/5a, 7b.
26. HS 56/2501; LY 12.19.
27. HS 56/2503.
28. Chungiu fanlu (SBBY ed.), see esp. 6/7a-8a, 11/5a-7b. The essential idea is clearly stated on 1/8a: 'If the father is not a proper father, then the son will not be a proper son; if the lord is not a proper lord, then the minister will not be a proper minister'.
29. This view is to be found in some of the imperial edicts and proclamations of the time. Thus a proclamation by Emperor Cheng 帝 in 19 B.C. concerning the need to select worthy men for office stated that because in antiquity the empire was governed with the help of worthies, 'in office nothing was left undone, below there were no men in retirement [yimin], the edifying influence circulated, wind and rain were timely, crops thrived, the populace was happy in its tasks, and everything was well and peaceful'. (HS 10/317).
30. ES 56/2508-09.
31. There are numerous references to the 'Huang-Lao' sympathies or policies of early Han rulers: Empress Lu and Emperor Hui, SJ 9/412, HS 23/1097; Emperor Wen, SJ 23/1160, 121/3117, HS 5/137, 23/1097, 88/3592; Emperor Jing, SJ 49/1975, 121/3117, HS 88/3592, 97A/3945; Empress-Dowager Dou, SJ 12/452, 49/1975, 107/2843, 121/3117, 3122-23, HS 22/1031, 25A/1214, 52/2379, 88/3592-93, 3608, 3612, 97A/3945. Figures from the Former Han referred to as students of the teachings of Huang-Lao or described in ways which indicate they were advocates of those teachings include the following:

Anqi Sheng 安其生 SJ 80/2436, HS 25A/1228
Bu Shi 卜式 SJ 30/1431-42; HS58/2624-28
Cao Can 曹参 SJ 54/2028-30, 130/3319;
                  HS 23/1097, 39/2018
Cao Yu 曹禹 HS 30/1731
Chen Ping 陈平 SJ 56/2062; HS 40/2038
Deng Zhang 鄧章 SJ 101/2748; HS 49/2303
Ge Gong 盖公 SJ 54/2029, 130/3319; HS 39/2018
Huang Sheng 黃生 SJ 121/3122-23, 130/3288;
                  HS 62/2709, 88/3612
Ji An 晁黯 SJ 120/3105; HS 50/2316
Le Jugong 樂巨公 SJ 104/2775 (SJ 80/2436
Le Xiagong 择璇公 SJ 80/2436
Liu De 劉泰 HS 36/1927
Mao Xigong 毛玉公 SJ 80/2436
Sima Jizhu 司馬季主 SJ 127/3221
Sima Tan 司馬談 SJ 130/3289; HS 62/2710
Shu Guang 欧陽 HS 71/3039-40
Tian Shu 田叔 SJ 104/2775; HS 37/1981
Wang Sheng 王生 SJ 102/2756; HS 50/2312
Yang Wangsun 杨万孙 HS 67/2907
Ying Qi 英奇 SJ 102/2756; HS 50/2323
Zhou Shaoxian 周紹賢, 'Huang-Lao sixiang zai Xi Han 政治文化學報, 26(1972), 85-102; Xiong Tieji 鄭 Tieji, "Cong "Lushi chunqiu" dao "Huainanzi": lun Qin Han zhi li de xin dao jia" Wu, 'Han Shiji zhi Cheng Hui shu shiwen', Wenwu 1974(10), 30-42; revised in the appendix to Tang Lan, 'Mawangdui chutu "Laozi" yiben juanqian gu yi shu shiwen', Wenwu 1974(10), 48-52; Cheng Wu 程武, 'Han chu Huang Lao sixiang he fajia lujian', Wenwu, 1974(10), 48-52.

On Daoist influences in the early Han period see Wang Mingsheng (1722-1798), 'Sima shi fuzi yishang' (CSJC ed.), 6/51; Zhou Shaoxian 周紹賢, 'Huang-Lao sixiang zai Xi Han 政治文化學報, 26(1972), 85-102; Xiong Tieji 鄭 Tieji, "Cong "Lushi chunqiu" dao "Huainanzi": lun Qin Han zhi li de xin dao jia" Wu, 'Han Shiji zhi Cheng Hui shu shiwen', Wenwu 1974(10), 30-42; revised in the appendix to Tang Lan, 'Mawangdui chutu "Laozi" yiben juanqian gu yi shu shiwen', Wenwu 1974(10), 48-52; Cheng Wu 程武, 'Han chu Huang Lao sixiang he fajia lujian', Wenwu, 1974(10), 48-52;}

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32. Zhuang Zun is discussed in section 7 below; the influence of Zhuangzi on Yang Xiong is discussed in Chapter 4. On Ban Si, see HS 100/4204-05. SJ 127/3215-21 gives an account of Sima Jizhu 夏禹婆主, a fortune-teller and hermit of the market place said to have been a contemporary of Jia Yi (200-168). Sima Jizhu is made to expound the ideas of both Zhuangzi and Laozi, but it is impossible to determine how historically accurate this is (Sima Jizhu is also discussed in section 7).

33. For example, see Shen Gangbo 沈剛波, 'Qin Han de ru 秦漢的儒', Dalu zazhi 大陸雜誌 38.9(May 1969), 277-82; Fu Lecheng 付樂澄, 'Han fa yu Han ru 漢法與漢儒', Shihuo yuekan 寶愛月刊 5.10(January 1976), 449-51; Xia Changpu 夏長坡, Liang Han ruxue yanjiu 漢儒學研究 (Taipei: Taiwan National University, 1978), esp. 3-11; Benjamin E. Wallacker, 'Han Confucianism and Confucius in Han', in David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuin Tsien (eds.), Ancient China: Studies in Early Civilization (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1978), 215-28.

34. SJ 130/3289.

35. This has led Dai Junren 戴君仁 (following Hu Shi 胡適) to develop the argument that the term 'zajia 齋家' ('eclectic school') was in fact no more than another term for the Daoist school of this time. See his article 'Zajia yu Huainanzi 齋家與淮南子', 1967, rpt. Xiang Weixin 邢維新 and Liu Fuzeng 劉福增 (eds.), Zhongguo zhexue sixiang lunji 中國哲學思想論集, Vol.3 (Taiwan: Mutong chubanshe, 1976), 3-34. A similar argument is presented by Xiong Tieji, 'Cong "Lushi chunqiu" dao "Huainanzi"'.

36. SJ 49/1975, 121/3117; HS 97A/3945.

37. On Empress-Dowager Dou's anti-Confucian moves at court and Emperor Wu's reaction (particularly after her death) see SJ 12/452, 131/3118, 3123, 107/2843, 121/3121-23; HS 6/157, 22/1031, 25A/1214, 52/2379, 88/3592-93, 3608, 3612. This is not to say, of course, that Emperor Wu did not also have many other reasons for backing Confucianism. Some of those other reasons are mentioned by John K. Shryock, The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius (1932, rpt. New York: Paragon Book Reprint Co., 1966), 38-42.

38. On private teaching in the Han period, see Yu Shilun 余世倫, 'Liang Han sixue yanjiu 漢漢私學研究', Shida xuebao 西大學報, 1.1(1966), 109-47. Yu Shilun lists references to over two hundred private teachers.

39. For example, see LY 4.11, 6.9, 8.13, 14.2, 14.37; Mencius 2A.2, 3B.3, 5B.1, 5B.4.
40. SJ 84/2503.


42. On the significance of Qu Yuan in relation to the reaction of former Han intellectuals to politics in the unified empire, see also Xu Fuguan, 'Liang Han zhishi fenzhi zhi zhuanyi zhi changzhi de yanli 两漢知識分子對專制政權的壓力', Zhou Qin Han zhengzhi shehui jieguo zhi yanjiu 中国漢政制社會結構之研究 (Hong Kong: New Asia College, 1972), 281-94.


44. Jia Yi, 'Han yun fu 旱雲賦 ', and Dong Zhongshu, 'Shi buyu fu 歲遇賦', in Han Wei liuchao baisan mingjia li 漢魏六朝百家名家集, Xinshu tang 信筆堂 ed., 1879), ce 1/2a-3b, 3/1a-2b; Sima Qian, 'Bei shi buyu fu 被時遇賦', in Yan Kejun 殷可均 (1762-1843), Quan Han wen jiaozhu 全漢文校注 (Fuwen zhai 富文齋, 1894 ed.), 26/4b-5a. For translations of Dong Zhongshu's poem and that attributed to Sima Qian, see James R. Hightower, 'The Fu of T'ao Ch'ien', Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 17(1954), 197-203.


46. On retainers see Ju Qingyuan 楚清遠, 'Sanguo shidai de ke 三國時代的 "客"', Shihuo, 3.4(1936), 15-19; Tao Xisheng 陶希聖, 'Xi Han shidai de ke 西漢時代的"客"', Shihuo, 5.1(1937), 1-6; T'ung-tsu Ch'ü, Han Social Structure (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 130-35.

47. SJ 121/3121; HS 6/157, 88/3608.

48. HS 89/3638.

49. SJ 30/1442.

50. See SJ 55/2048, 121/3127-28.

51. HS 71/3039-40.

52. HS 66/2889. For an account of this plot, see Michael Loewe, Crisis and Conflict in Han China (London: Allen and Unwin, 1974), 131-39.

54. HS 66/2897-98. See also Homer H. Dubs, History of the Former Han Dynasty (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1938-1955), 2749, note 19.6; Loewe, Crisis and Conflict, 147.

55. See HS 67/2912-16.

56. HS 76/3238-39.

57. HS 45/2166-67. An almost identical account occurs in Hanshi wai zhuan 7/2a-3a.

58. SJ 120/3208.

59. HS 45/2617; also GSZ B/6a-b. There is another 'biography' of Master Anqi in Liexian zhuan 原仙傳 (Gujin yishi 古今逸 史 ed.) A/13b.

60. SJ 28/1385; HS 25A/1216-17.

61. HS 25A/1223.

62. SJ 55/2045-47. In their interview with Han Gaozu the four men give their names as Dongyuan Gong 東原公, Qili Ji 倭里基, Xiahuang Gong 夏黃公 and Jiaoli Xiansheng 嘉里賢生. This corresponds with GSZ B/7a-b, though HS 72/3056 has 東原公 instead of 東原公. On this and other minor discrepancies in their names see Wang Rongbao's commentary in FY 666-69.

63. Yan Kejun, Quan Han wen 14/2a-b, reproduces a letter supposedly from Zhang Liang to the Four Silverhairs, together with the Silverhairs' reply, contained in Yin Yun's 殷芸 (Liang 梁 dynasty) Xiao shuo 小說. As Yan Kejun points out, however, they are obviously forgeries. Lu Xun also includes the letters in his compilation of fragments from Xiao shuo in Gu xiaoshuo goushen 古 小說考證. (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1951), 82-83.

64. HS 40/2033-36.

65. HS 72/3056. Mention is also made of Gaozu's attempts to summon them with gifts in HS 18/677.

66. Huangfu Mi follows Ban Gu's account in GSZ B/7a-b, as do most of the scholars mentioned in the following notes. However, Xun Yue 許誼 (148-209), [Qian] Han ji [前] 漢紀 (SBCK ed.), 4/9a-10b, follows Sima Qian.


69. Zhu Xi, Yuzuan Zhuzi quanshu 弗羅著作全書 (Guxiang zhai 古香齋 ed., 1713, rpt. 1884) 61/16b.

70. Qian Qianyi, 'Si hao lun', Youxue ji 有學集 43/2a-3a, in Qian Muzhai quanj ji 魯枝齋全集 (Shanghai: Wenming shuju, 1925); Quan Zuowang, 'Si hao lun', Ji ji ting ji 翼稽亭集 29,
Quan Zuwang (p.1227) refers to a hermit called Ying Yao said to have been a contemporary of the Four Silverhairs, who alone did not respond when summoned to court. Ying Yao is also mentioned in the Yangzhou fuzhi (cited in TSJC vol.617/54b) as being imperially summoned along with the Four Silverhairs, but not going.


One other treatment of the incident of the Four Silverhairs which should be mentioned here is that in the late Tang text Wunengzi. According to the Master Devoid of Ability, when Empress Lü tried to honour the Four Silverhairs with noble rank for having secured her son's position, the Four Silverhairs declined, saying they had come to court not because they wanted to but only to avoid a crisis. Refusing to become further embroiled in court politics, they returned to seclusion in the mountains. When Zhang Liang learned of their departure he went into retirement too. (Wang Ming, Wunengzi jiaozhu [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981], 26-27). However, it appears that the Master Devoid of Ability had a habit of recreating 'history' according to his conception of what should have happened (cf. his treatment of King Wen's meeting with Taigong Wang and King Wu's encounter with Boyi and Shuqi, 15-18).

This is stressed by Zhu Xi, Yuzuan Zhuzi quanshu 61/16a. Wang Yangming, 'Sihao lun' argues that since the two scholars of Lu did not respond to an invitation to come to court, their contemporaries, the Four Silverhairs, if genuine, would not have responded either. Wang Anshi wrote a poem in their praise (Wang Linchuan ji [SBBY ed.] 32/8a). They are also discussed in the most laudatory terms by Wang Zhichang, Qingxue zhai ji 14/19a-20b.

Wang Zhichang, 'Sihao lun', Qingxue zhai ji (Beijing: Jiangsu wenkui zhai, 1931), 14/6a-7b.

Hong Anquan, 'Liang Han rushe de shiyin taidu yu shehui fengqi', Part 2, 235.


See LSCQ 15/9b-10a, 19/19b; 21/4a; Huainanzi 19/4a; SJ 44/1838-39; Xin xu 4/2b; Yü Ying-shih, Zhongguo zhishi jieceng shilun, 57-59.

SJ 54/2029, 80/2436, 130/3319; HS 39/2018, 82/2723.

GSZ B/7a.

SJ 102/2756; HS 50/2312.
82. SJ 55/2034-35; HS 50/2312.
83. SJ 55/2048; also GSZ B/7a-8a.
84. HS 80/3313.
85. HS 67/2917-27. Ling Yangzao 滿陽澡 (1760-1845), Lishuo bian 素記 (CSJC ed.) 9/147-48, praises Mei Fu's loyalty to Han and laments the fact that in the eyes of the public being an 'immortal' was regarded as something more remarkable than being 'loyal' (zhong 增).
86. Lu Jia, Xin yu A/11b.
87. ZZ 15/1-6.
88. For example, see Han Feizi 11/9b-10a, 14/6b-7a; SJ 68/2235; Sima Qian's 'Letter to Ren An', HS 62/2727.
89. The translation is that by David Hawkes, Ch'ü T'zu, 119-20. There is an earlier translation by A.E. Erkes, 'The Chao-Yin-Shi: "Calling Back the Hidden Scholar", by Huai-Nan-Tse', Asia Major 1(1924), 119-24. For Chinese text see Chu ci 12/1a-4a; WX 33/20b-22a.
90. Wang Rongbao, FY 256.
91. ES 72/3056.
93. ES 72/3056; GSZ B/12a; HYGZ 10C/163.
94. SJ 77/2378-79, 2382.
95. SJ 127/3215. It may be observed that this maxim receives some confirmation from the HHS, for in that text many hermits are indeed found among the 'diviners and healers'. Chu Shaosun (probably writing c.40 B.C.) remarks at the conclusion of this chapter that in the course of his perambulations around Chang'an at the time when he was Gentleman he saw with his own eyes such worthy diviners, who had 'the air of gentlemen'. He adds that 'Ever since antiquity, among worthy men shunning the world there have been those who dwell in the wild, those who dwell among the people keeping their mouths shut and not speaking, and those who live in seclusion among diviners in order to preserve themselves' (SJ 127/3221).
96. SJ 127/3219/20. The account of Sima Jizhu included in Xi Kang's Gaoshi zhuang (Xi Kang ji jiaozhu, 413-14) obviously derives from the Shi ji, but the Daoist text Zhen gao 真詣 (compiled by Tao Hongjing 道 洪景 [456-536]) includes a lengthy account of Sima Jizhu's activities relating to the arts of longevity. See Zhen gao (Daozang 道藏 [Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1925-1927]), 14/12b-14b.
97. FY 305-06. The epithet 'profound and serene' was also applied to Zhuang Zun by Yang Xiong's disciple Hou Ba 侯芭. See commentary to Wang Yuanchang 王元長, 'San Yue sanri qishui shi xu 三月三日四水诗序', WX 46/13b.

98. HS 72/3056.

99. Ch'ü, Han Social Structure, 125, implies that Zhuang Zun had to make do with one hundred cash per day because customers were few and far between. But clearly the point of the Han shu account is that he could have earned much more had he been interested in material gain.

100. It would appear that here Ban Gu was referring to Zhuang Zun's Daode zhenjing zhigui 道德真經指歸 . Half of this early commentary on the Laozi has been preserved in the Daozang, with commentary by the Master of the Spirit of the Valley (Gushenzi 聚神子). This was dismissed as a forgery by the compilers of the Si ku quanshu zongmu 四庫全書總目 . Quan Zuwang 卢注 (Du Daode zhenjing zhigui 附 道德真經指歸, Jiji ting ji waibian 菊芝亭記外編, 34), Shao Yichen 郑延臣 (Zengding siku jianming mulu biaozhu 增丁四庫簡明目錄校誼) , and Zhang Xinzhen (Weishu tongkao 至詩文通考) , but more recently scholars have argued convincingly that it is genuine, despite a number of dubious insertions and accretions. See Yan Lingfeng, 'Bian Yan Zun "Daode zhigui lun" fei weishu 邊顏 "道德指歸論" 非虛書', Dalu zazhi 29.4(1964), 107-13; Wang Liqi 王立 器, 'Daozang ben Daode zhenjing zhigui "tiyao 道藏原本道德真經指歸 "詳要)' Zhongguo zhexue 4(1980), 337-60. It is argued by Chen Zhi 沈之, Han shu xinzheng 漢書新證 (Tianjin: Renmin chubanshe, 1979), 231, that, contrary to Quan Zuwang's argument against the works authenticity, it is in fact listed in the Han shu's bibliographical section: the Chen Junzi 陳居子 in two sections mentioned there (HS 30/1731) is a mistake for Chen Junping 陳君平, with the 'two sections' referring to parts 1 and 2 of the Daode jing. Further evidence to support this is presented by Wang Liqi, op. cit., 346-47.

101. HS 72/3056-57. Even if Zhuang Zun did live to be more than ninety it is not very likely that he was still alive when Wang Mang took the throne in 9 A.D. Assuming that Zhuang Zun was at least 30 years older than Yang Xiong, this would mean he would have been at least 93 years old in 9 A.D. The Gushenzi commentary to the 'Junping shuo erjing mu 俊平說二經目' says that 'when Wang Mang usurped government (Zhong Junping) went into seclusion with equanimity' (Daode zhenjing zhigui, [Daozang, ce 375]) and it is on the grounds of this supposed righteous protest against Wang Mang that Rao Zongyi includes Zhuang Zun in his 'Xi Han jieyi zhuan' 陜漢銘傳, Xinya xuebao 1(1955), 183. But even if we allow that Zhuang Zun may still have been alive at the time, it would go against everything else recorded about him to accept he would have regarded serving Wang Mang as a moral and philosophical problem quite distinct from serving any other ruler. It appears that the Gushenzi commentary, like other texts, confuses Zhuang Zun with Yan Guang 鄧光 on this point. Yan Guang was a famous hermit who was also a close friend of Emperor Guangwu, and is said in the Kualji dianlu 官集典錄, cited in the commentary to SGZ 57/1326, to have refused to serve Wang Mang (though he also
refused to serve Guangwu). See also notes 165 and 180 below.

102. Yang Xiong's letter, together with Liu Xin's to which it replies, is appended to most editions of Fang yan and has been translated by David R. Knechtges, 'The Liu Hsìn / Yang Hsiung Correspondence on the Fang Yen', Monumenta Serica 33(1977-78), 309-25. The authenticity of this correspondence has been questioned by some scholars, one reason being that in his letter Yang Xiong refers to Yan Junping rather than Zhuang Junping, which he would have had no reason to do. However, as argued by Dai Zhen (1724-1777), Fang yan shuzheng (SBBY ed.) 13/10b, the fact that the name of another person mentioned in the letter, Yang Zhuang, has not been changed suggests that Zhuang Junping's name was altered by a later copyist or editor at a time when he had become widely known as Yan Junping. Knechtges' further arguments for the letters' authenticity I believe to be fairly conclusive. The passage relating to Zhuang Junping and Linlu Wengru was paraphrased by Ying Shao in his preface to Fengsu tongyi, 1b. For a translation see Knechtges, 322. Ying Shao explains that the 'light carriage envoys' were sent out by the Zhou and Qin rulers each year in the eighth month to gather information on local sayings and expressions.

103. HYGZ 10A/131.
104. HS 72/3056-57.
105. HS 72/3057.
106. HYGZ 10A/129.
107. LY 18.8.
108. FY 721-22.
109. FY 722-23.
110. GSZ B/12a-b.
111. HYGZ 10A/130. It also says that Li Hong's will was strong enough 'to temper metal or stone'.

112. Sichuan tongzhi, cited in TSJC vol.617/55a. This is unlikely, however, since the annual recommendation of scholars as xiucai did not begin until 36 A.D. in the reign of Emperor Guangwu. But there were occasional calls for men of flourishing talent in the Former Han, such as those in 110 B.C., 86 B.C., 47 B.C. and 35 B.C. It could be that there were other such calls in the reigns of Emperors Cheng and Ai and that Li Hong was recommended in response to one of them.

114. LY 13.18.
115. HYGZ 10A/130.
116. GSZ B/9a.

117. GSZ B/9b.

118. There is a biography of Zhi Yu in the Jin shu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974; hereafter JS) 51/1419-27. HS 91/3694 does not mention a rich man from the capital named Zhi Gang, so evidently the Zhi family had long been established in Chang'an.

119. Huangfu Mi's generosity is evident in his readiness as respected scholar to write a preface for Zuo Si's 'Sandu fu' (see JS 92/2376); his historical fancy enabled him to work out a chronology of the legendary emperors in Diwang shiji (see note 32 above). The preface to Sandu fu is included in WX 45/26a-31b.

120. GSZ B/10a. Yao Zhengzong, Han shu yiwenzhi shiblu (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Provincial Library, n.d.) 2/1b, has 'twelve chapters', but since he presumably got his information from Gaoshi zhu (a cousin of Wang Mang) and Geng Kuang, it must be a mistake. Sir Cheng's lack of moderation was criticised, among others, by Zhang Shu (d.1847), "Ni Fan weizong "Yinmin zhu"" (see note 32 above), Zhang Jiehou (see note 21 above), and Liu Zhaoyou (eds.), Ming Qing weikan gao huibian chuji (Taibei: Lianjing shubanshe, 1976).

121. GSZ B/10a-b. See also HHS 19/703; Xi Kang's Gaoshi zhu (Xi Kang ji jiaozhu, 413). According to the Hou Han shu, Wang Ji (a cousin of Wang Mang) and Geng Kuang, studied the Laozi under him. The strategy of claiming to have had shamans in the family was also used during Wang Mang's reign by Xu Yang (see note 21 above) and in the Later Han by Gao Feng (see note 21 above). See HHS 82A/2710-11, 83/2768-69.

122. GSZ B/10b.

123. GSZ B/10b-1la; also Sanfu juelu zhu, cited in commentary to WX 39/23a. Liu Gong was either the son or nephew of Liu Xin and lived to the age of 70, probably dying late in the reign of Emperor Ming (58-75 A.D.). It is likely therefore that Zhang Zhongwei would have still been alive in the reign of Emperor Guangwu and no doubt refused to serve him as well. See HHS 30A/1041,1046-47.

124. HS 72/3083. The account in GSZ B/9b derives from the Han shu.

125. LY 2.21.

126. For example, SJ 121/3117-18; HS 22/1030-35, 88/3592-96; also the studies cited in note 33 above. Xia Changpu, Liang Han ruxue yanjiu, 51-80, provides a handy table of significant events in the history of Han Confucianism.

127. On the Imperial Academy in Han times see Zhou Guangzhu (1924), 75-104. On the intellectual trends associated with the Academy, see particularly Qian Mu (1943), rpt. in Qian Mu, Liang

129. HS 4/116.

130. HS 9/287; also Emperor Cheng's edict of 14 B.C., HS 10/323.

131. On the categories of recommendation used in the Later Han, see de Crespigny, 'The Recruitment System of the Imperial Bureaucracy of Later Han', 69-72; Hans Bielenstein, 'The Restoration of the Han Dynasty IV', BMFEA 51 (1979), 31-32.

132. See Sima Guang, ZZTJ 68/2173-74; Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), Ri zhi lu jishi 日知錄題 (SBBY ed.), 13/3a-4a; Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1814), Nianer shi zhaji 壬午史劇記 (CSJC ed.), 5/89-91; Chen Dongyuan 陳東源, 'Dong Han zhi shiqi 東漢之仕氣', Jiaoyu zazhi 教育雑誌, 24.2 (1934), 95-104; Huang Liangming 黃良明, 'Dong Han shidaifu zhi qijie 東漢士大夫之競節' (M.Phil. Thesis, Taiwan Normal University, 1972).

133. Rizhi lu jishi 13/3a. In fact Gu Yanwu is following ZZTJ 68/2173-74 fairly closely.

134. Zhao Yi, Nianer shi zhaji 5/89. The comment that scholars were 'invariably' chosen according to their reputation of course describes how the recommendatory system was supposed to function rather than how it did function. But abuse of a system is only possible as long as that system continues to fulfil its function and is regarded as legitimate.

135. For example, Wang Zhaohui, Liang Han chaju zhidu, 110-15; Chen Dongyuan, 'Liang Han zhi shiqi' 101, observes that 'Under the operation of the Han recommendatory system, it was necessary to win a reputation, for only then was there a way into public affairs'; also Huang Liangming, 'Dong Han shidaifu zhi qijie', 38-57.

136. On the types of exemplary conduct in the Eastern Han, see Zhao Yi, Nianer shi zhaji, 5/89-91; Wang Zhaohui, Liang Han chaju zhidu, 110-15; Huang Liangming, 'Dong Han shidaifu zhi qijie' 105-17.

137. See HHS 37/1263, 44/1495, 37/1254, 39/1306, 44/1500, 46/1545; HS 73/3108-09; Yuan Hong 原宏, Hou Han ji 後漢紀 (SBCK ed.; hereafter HHJ) 9/6b, 13/13a-b. It is striking that all these cases occurred in the first few years of the reign of a new emperor. This strongly suggests that part of the motivation behind them was the attempt to attract the new emperor's attention by virtuous action of a dramatic kind.
138. Evidence of the growing political influence of Confucianism at this time is provided by the Salt and Iron Debates of 81 B.C. The text of Yantie lun shows both that in government circles Confucianism had become a force to be reckoned with, and that it by no means had the field to itself. In 51 B.C. Emperor Xuan ordered an assembly of Confucian scholars in the Stone Drain Pavilion (Shiqu ge 石渠閣) to debate varying interpretations of the classics, with the emperor himself taking part as adjudicator. Unfortunately little information remains concerning this major event, which as a precedent was more historically important than the comparable White Tiger Hall debates of 79 A.D. One of the scholars who took part in 51 B.C. was Wei Xuancheng. See HS 8/272, 73/3113; Tjan, Po Hu T'ung, 91-94, 128-36.

139. LY 2.21, 4.14, 13.13, 15.32; Xunzi 8/11-15, 22/43-44.

140. FY 251, 386.

141. HS 72/3058-80. On Wang Ji and Gong Yu see also Loewe, Crisis and Conflict in Han China, 140-41, 159, 165, 177-80, 210, 234, 277; Ch'u, Han Social Structure, 278.

142. FY 305, 722.

143. HS 72/3080 also refers to Ning Shou 宁淑 of Kongfu 官府, who was recommended by Gong Sheng (along with Gong She and a certain Hou Jia 侯嘉) when Gong Sheng served as Grandee Remonstrant. Ning Shou refused to come to court, excusing himself on grounds of illness. Pleading illness was also to become a standard ploy by hermits who wished to remain where they were but also wanted to avoid any impression that they were critical of the emperor and his government.

144. HS 4/116.

145. References to these edicts are collected together by Xu Tianlin 許天麟 (fl.1205), Xi Han huiyao 西漢會要 (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1977), 44/509-11, 516-18; Wang Zhaohui, Liang Han chaju zhidu, 23-29.

146. HS 81/3359-60. See also Kuang Heng's 及時 memorial on the same subject to the young Emperor Yuan, HS 81/3333-37, as well as Cai Yong's 蔡邕 (132-192) advice to Emperor Ling 哥霽, EHS 60B/1994-95.

147. TPYL 501/6b cites Yi feihou 易飛侯 by Jing Fang 景防, the Former Han interpreter of the Book of Changes: 'In order to know where worthy men are hiding, look in all directions (for a place that) always has great clouds of all five colours but which produce no rain. There under, worthy men will be in hiding'. This handy information must also be understood in terms of Five Phase and yin/yang theory: the worthy's hidden virtue (yang) gives rise to an atmospheric condition in which the yang force is also dominated by the yin (clouds), but because the yang he embodies is present even if not made manifest, the yin force is not able to dominate completely and produce rain.
148. HS 72/3084-85. On Gong Sheng and Gong She see also Wang Zhichang, 'Chu liang Gong lun', Qinxue zhai ji 16/9b-11a. According to HS 72/3085, among the hundreds who came to mourn Gong Sheng there was an old man from Pengcheng who wept grievously and exclaimed: 'Alas! Incense burns itself up with its fragrance, oil consumes itself with its brightness. Ultimately Gong Sheng brought to a premature end the years Heaven gave him. He is no disciple of mine!' (see also GSZ B/Ub). These sentiments are very similar to those expressed in ZZ 4/89-91.

149. See LY 2.19, 2.20, 8.13, 12.22; Mencius, 1A.7, 2A.4, 2A.5, 6B.14; Xunzi 8/100-02, 9/1-6, 22-23, 51-54.

150. On the honouring of virtuous hermits by rulers before the Han, see ZZ 24/61-65; Han Feizi 11/9b-10a (also the parallel passage in Zhanguo ce 10/17b); SJ 68/2235.

151. HS 99A/4040-41.

152. HS 99A/1069.


154. ES 99A/4054. The allusion is to LY 1.15.

155. ES 99A/4055, 4058.

156. ES 99A/4054.

157. ES 99A/4070; on the support for Wang Mang, see also Loewe, Crisis and Conflict, 286-306.

158. Zhao Yi, Nianer shi zhaiji, 3/68.

159. On the re-institution of the well-field system, see esp. HS 99B/4110,4129-30. Just how strongly Wang Mang's thought and reforms reflect the Confucianism of his day is shown by He Lingxu, 'Wang Mang gaizhi yu xi Han rujia zhengzhi sixiang', Shehul kexue luncong, 16(1966), 75-127.

160. HS 68/2964, 81/3351. For Gong Yu's memorial see HS 72/3070. On the idea of restoring antiquity generally in Han Confucianism see also He Lingxu, op.cit., esp. 75-89. The concept of re-establishing antiquity appears in Xunzi 9/51.

161. HS 72/3095-96.

162. HS 72/3095-96.

163. HHS 83/2756.

164. Rao Zongyi, 'Xi Han jieyi zhuan'. Adding Kong Fan and Yan Guang, overlooked by Rao, brings the total to eighty men. This makes it rather difficult to accept Hans Bielenstein's dismissive comments about the 'handful' of men who refused to serve office under Wang Mang (See Bielenstein, 'The Restoration of the Han Dynasty IV', 30).
165. I omit from Rao’s list Zhuang Zun, Zheng Pu and Gong She. Certainly Gong She, and probably Zhuang and Zheng as well, had died before Wang Mang took the throne. Everything that is known about them, however, makes it clear that they would no more have served Wang Mang than they would have served any other ruler. As I suggested in note 101, the inclusion of Zhuang Zun in this list is the result of the widespread confusion between him and Yan Guang (see note 180 below for further consideration of this point). Men known to have refused to serve Wang Mang are:

- Anqiu Wangzhi 安丘王志
- Bing Han 彭然
- Cai Mou 蔡茂
- Cai Xun 蔡融
- Cao Jing 曹景
- Chen Xian 陳咸
- Dai Zun 戴遵
- Fan Fu 范符
- Fei Yi 細易
- Feng Xin 冯信
- Gong Sheng 郭勝
- Guo Qin 郭昆
- Guo Xianbo 郭獻伯
- Guo Youjun 郭幼君
- Han Qian 桓兼
- Hou Gang 侯剛
- Hu Gang 胡剛
- Jiang Xu 姜旭
- Kong Xiu 孔休
- Kong Zijian 孔子建
- Li Heng 李衡
- Li Ye 李業
- Longqiu Chang 龍泉昌
- Nan Rong 南容
- Nai Fu 奈符
- Qiao Xuan 桥玄
- Qiu Jun 秦俊
- Een Wengong 恩文公
- Een Yong 恩永
- Shen Jing 沈靖
- Shi Zhongzhou 史中周
- Shu Mengda 舜門達
- Su Zhang 苏章
- Wang Hao 王皓
- Wang Jia 王嘉
- Yang Bao 杨寶
- Zhang Ming 張明

166. HS 72/3096.

167. According to the commentary, now Longqiu xian in Wuzhou 常州 . It cites the Dongyang ji 東陽記; "In the Qin period (the name) was changed to Taimo. There is a Longqiu Mountain to the
a site on which there are nine particularly prominent, red-coloured rocks, which when seen from afar resemble a lotus flower. In the place where Chang hid there is a cliff cave like a window, which contains a stone bench that could be used to sleep on.

168. HHS 76/2461. Longqiu Chang must have died towards the end of the Gengshi period, because at the beginning the Jianwu period (25 A.D.) control of Kuaiji had gone to Guangwu, and Ren Yan asked his new ruler for permission to resign (HHS 76/2462). The biography of Ren Yan in DGHJ 15/6a-b collaborates most of the Hou Han shu account, but unfortunately makes no mention of Longqiu Chang. See also Xie Cheng's Hou Han shu in Wang Wentai Hou Han shu (1882; rpt. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1972; hereafter QJHHS), 7/14b. All subsequent references to surviving fragments of histories of the Later Han will be to Wang Wentai's compilation, except when they are included in the commentaries to Fan Ye's Hou Han shu.

169. Bao Xian HHS 76/2461. Longqiu Chang must have died towards the end of the Gengshi period, because at the beginning the Jianwu period (25 A.D.) control of Kuaiji had gone to Guangwu, and Ren Yan asked his new ruler for permission to resign (HHS 76/2462). The biography of Ren Yan in DGHJ 15/6a-b collaborates most of the Hou Han shu account, but unfortunately makes no mention of Longqiu Chang. See also Xie Cheng's Hou Han shu in Wang Wentai Hou Han shu (1882; rpt. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1972; hereafter QJHHS), 7/14b. All subsequent references to surviving fragments of histories of the Later Han will be to Wang Wentai's compilation, except when they are included in the commentaries to Fan Ye's Hou Han shu.

170. HHS 27/927-28, 933-34.

171. HHS 25/869-73, 927-28, 76/2462, 79B/2578; HYGZ 10C/173. The number of marquisates and high offices attained by this group would seem to refute the claim by Bielenstein, 'The Restoration of the Han Dynasty IV', 30-31, that those who had
refused to serve Wang Mang were neither especially favoured by Guangwu nor had particularly successful careers as a result.

175. HS 72/3096. There is some doubt about this however, for according to HHS 83/2757 Xue Fang refused to respond to Guangwu's summons.

176. HHS 27/940-42; HHJ 9/15a-b.

177. HHS 29/1025. The version of the submission in HHJ 7/14a-b is quite different in expression but similar in spirit.

178. HHS 29/1026-32; HHJ 7/13b-16b. See DGHJ 15/3b-4b; QJHHS 7/15a.

179. HHS 29/1029.

180. Those recorded as having refused to serve Wang Mang and Guangwu are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feng Meng</td>
<td>HHS 83/2759-60; DGHJ 16/11b-12a; HHJ 5/9b-10a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Tan</td>
<td>HHS 83/2760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin Gong</td>
<td>HHS 53/1740; DGHJ 16/12a-b; HHJ 5/7a-b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin Qing</td>
<td>HS 72/3096; HHS 83/2759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiu Zhong</td>
<td>Xi Kang's Gaoshi zhuan, 416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Xian</td>
<td>HHS 83/2762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang Ba</td>
<td>HHS 83/2762, 84/2782-83; HHJ 5/9b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang Zun</td>
<td>HHS 83/2760; Xi Kang's Gaoshi zhuan, 418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yan Guang</td>
<td>HHS 83/2763-64; DGHJ 16/12a; HHJ 5/8b; SGZ 57/1326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang Zhong</td>
<td>Xi Kang's Gaoshi zhuan, 416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin Mo</td>
<td>HHS 83/2762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang Chang</td>
<td>HHS 83/2758-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu Fang</td>
<td>HHS 83/2760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xun Ren</td>
<td>HHS 53/1740-41; HHJ 8/18b-19a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zheng Jing</td>
<td>HHS 29/1025, 1028-29; HHJ 7/15a-16a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou Dang</td>
<td>HHS 83/2761-62; DGHJ 16/12b-13a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rao Zongyi also lists:

Zhang Zhongwei 章仲威 | GSZ B/10b-11a
Han Shun 漢順       | GSZ B/11b-12a

But neither of these two men is explicitly said to have refused to serve Wang Mang. Yan Guang is not said either in HHS or HHJ to have refused to serve Wang Mang. However, according to his biography he was sometimes known as Yan Zun, and SGZ 57/1326 states that Yan Zun of Yuyao 裕姚, in Kuaiji (i.e. Yan Guang's native district) refused to take office under both Wang Mang and Guangwu. As pointed out in note 101 above, Yan Guang appears to have been confused with Zhuang Zun (Yan Junping).

181. HHS 29/1029; HHJ 7/16a; DGHJ 15/4a. Xie Cheng's Hou Han shu, cited in the commentary to HHS 29/1031, states that he lived at leisure and did not seek social contact, that he served briefly as Merit Officer under the Chief Commandant of Xinqian 聯遷 (also known as Xincai 新遷), then resigned to live in seclusion at Epo 嵋坡, where he passed his time in a thatched hut, chatting, drinking wine, playing the qin and reading, without responding when summoned by Guangwu.
CHAPTER THREE

THE LATER HAN

1. General Developments

In the preceding chapter I have shown that most of the varieties of eremitism which had arisen during the Warring States period continued to thrive in the socially and politically transformed world of the Han empire. Moreover, in later part of the Former Han the effects of the new order—especially of the imperial sponsorship of Confucianism and the operation of the recommendatory system for official appointments—began to manifest themselves in what is best regarded as a new sort of eremitism, which I have called exemplary eremitism. Exemplary eremitism was one of the ideals of personal conduct of the scholarly ethos which developed in the course of the Former Han. It continued to evolve in the Later Han and also the Wei-Jin period that followed. This ethos was basically Confucian, although Daoist and even Legalist influences sometimes became quite strong, and led to other forms of exemplary behaviour such as perfect filiality, formally correct mourning, yielding aristocratic rank, and honouring learned, virtuous men as teachers. Such eremitism was less a form of protest against political and social iniquity than an elaborate demonstration of lofty personal ideals designed to attract the world's attention.

The usurper Wang Mang was deeply influenced by the scholarly ethos that produced this sort of eremitism. Although the idea that a ruler can demonstrate his right to the throne by attracting worthy men to his court was an ancient one, and had been used by Han Gaozu among others, it was Wang Mang who exploited it to the full in his campaign
to win the throne through civil rather than military power. He did his utmost to establish his political legitimacy by winning virtuous hermits to his side with elaborate rites and ceremonial honours. Nevertheless, he failed to convince all the educated elite. The scholarly ethos which permeated much of his conduct and many of his reformist ideas also produced a strong protest against his usurpation, and many scholars withdrew into seclusion as a result. In orderly times the eremitism engendered by the scholarly ethos may have contained an element of affectation, but in times of crisis it literally became deadly in earnest.

The history of eremitism in the Later Han period - which was essentially two hundred years of proliferation and diffusion of eremitic ideals and practices - can be understood largely in terms of the continuing operation of the above mentioned factors. Emperor Guangwu, like the leaders he defeated in the battle for control of China, attached great importance to winning virtuous men to his side. So did the rulers who came after him - especially Emperors Ming (r.56-75) and Zhang (r.76-88). The imperial honours lavished on worthy men in seclusion enhanced their social standing and influence, and this further strengthened the role of eremitic ideals in the scholarly culture, which was becoming ever more elaborate and refined. Particularly in the second half of the Later Han period, exemplary eremitism was fashionable, and the compelling power of fashion combined with other factors to make eremitism at times almost obligatory. As the dynasty slumped further and further into corruption and chaos, socio-political circumstances provided ample grounds both for those who avoided involvement in public affairs on moral grounds and those who did so to stay out of danger.
2. **Hermits and the Power Struggle After Wang Mang's Fall**

The men who fought over the right to replace Wang Mang as ruler of the empire had obviously learned much from him concerning the potency of ideologically correct actions for winning the political support of the educated elite. Thus the Gengshi (23-25 A.D.) emperor Liu Xuan was aware of the need to attract worthy and capable men to his cause, both for the obvious reason of being able to employ their talents and the more subtle purpose of legitimising his claim to the throne. According to Ban Gu he imperially summoned Cao Jing, appointing him Prime Minister and enfeoffing him as marquis, in order 'to show he could attract worthy men and to restrain bandits and robbers'.

Liu Xuan's Commander-in-Chief Wei Ao was even more aware of the need to win over the educated elite. It was his reputation as a scholar which won him support when he was first put in command of Liu Xuan's forces. While in that position he summoned the disengaged scholar Pang Wang with gifts, and by following his advice was able to further establish his legitimacy in the eyes of the people by such strategies as proclaiming himself to be a loyal subject of Han and erecting a temple to Han Gaozu. When Wei Ao fell out with Liu Xuan in 24 A.D., and Liu Xuan was destroyed by power of the Red Eyebrows and Guangwu, all the old men and scholar officials of the Sanfu region rushed to Wei Ao's side. 'Always having respected and loved scholars', he appointed many distinguished men to his staff. He was described to Gongsun Shu as someone who regarded himself as a latter day King Wen, who 'honoured classical exegesists [zhangju] and made them his teachers, retained disengaged scholars and made them his friends'. In the long run,
however, he could not retain the support of these men, and with his death in 33 A.D. his family failed to retain the sphere of influence he had established.

Gongsun Shu, the final obstacle to Guangwu's control of the West, was far less sophisticated than Wei Ao in his dealings with the educated elite, yet in the beginning he still managed to win considerable support. When he declared himself King of Shu in 24 A.D., scholars came to him from every direction in the hope that he would be able to put an end to the disorder of the times. When he was urged to assume the title of emperor (which he did the following year, naming his dynasty the Cheng, after his capital Chengdu), one of the arguments used was that scholars of ambition were bereft and bewildered, and that by assuming the throne he would give them somewhere to turn. As 'emperor', he did in fact attract widespread support from the elite.

Gongsun Shu may have been aware that he needed talented men on his side, but he was not as particular as either Wang Mang or Wei Ao about the means that got them there. How different his attitude towards virtuous hermits was is clearly shown by the case of Li Ye, a scholar who in the Yuan Shi period (1-5 A.D.) had been recommended as 'illuminating the classics' and appointed Palace Gentleman. When Wang Mang took the throne Li Ye resigned on grounds of illness, shut his gate and ignored the commands of the provincial and commandery authorities to go to the capital. Forced by the Grand Administrator to respond to a summons, Li Ye eventually did so by having himself carried there on a litter. Wang Mang did eventually appoint him to a position, but on grounds of illness he did not take up the post, going into hiding in the mountains instead. When Gongsun
Shu gained control of the western region, he too summoned Li Ye, and, when after several years he had not come, sent someone to present him with the choice of either coming to court and receiving a distinguished position or else taking poison. Li Ye chose the latter course. Very similar was the case of Wang Hao and Wang Jia. Both resigned their positions when Wang Mang took the throne, refused to respond to Gongsun Shu’s summons, and committed suicide rather than give in to coercion.

However, not all those who refused to serve Gongsun Shu came to a violent end. Qiao Xuan had been recommended to the court in 15 B.C., when a solar eclipse prompted an edict asking provincial and commandery administrations to each recommend one man who was ‘honest and unaffected’, ‘self-effacing and deferential’, or had shown ‘exemplary conduct’. When Wang Mang took the throne he changed his name, returned home and went into seclusion. Having proclaimed himself emperor, Gongsun Shu repeatedly invited him with gifts to take office, and when he became angry at being refused presented Qiao Xuan too with the option of submitting or putting an end to himself. Luckily for Qiao Xuan, the Grand Administrator was sympathetic, and when Xuan’s son pleaded to redeem his father for one million cash, intervened on his behalf. Qiao Xuan was pardoned and subsequently hid himself away in the country. He died in 35 A.D., the year before Guangwu gained control of Shu.

By means of various ruses others were also able to survive. Ren Yong and Feng Xin both pretended to be blind when summoned by Gongsun Shu, while Fei Yi feigned madness. Fei Yi lived in the mountain forests for more than 10 years and survived to serve Guangwu; Ren Yong and Feng Xin had already died of
illness before the troubles ended.\textsuperscript{11}

Yu Ying-shih has pointed out the big contrast between Gongsun Shu's harsh treatment of hermits and Guangwu's tolerant and sympathetic attitude towards them, suggesting quite correctly that this difference provides insight into the reasons why Gongsun Shu was ultimately destroyed and Guangwu triumphed.\textsuperscript{12} Guangwu, a man of scholarly background himself and hence sensitive to the values and attitudes of scholars, went to some lengths to win scholars to his side. It was Guangwu's ability to gain the support of the educated elite (and the major local powers, the great clans, from which the majority of scholars came) which was one of the most important factors behind his eventual success. It is quite clear, as Yu Ying-shih shows, that courting the educated elite was a conscious policy on Guangwu's part (just as it had been with Wang Mang). According to Yuan Hong's \textit{Hou Han ji}, Guangwu made the observation: 'Now the empire is fragmented and in disorder, and armed opponents have sprung up everywhere. Those who obtain scholars will prosper, those who lose scholars will perish'.\textsuperscript{13} After overthrowing Gongsun Shu and gaining control of Shu, Guangwu's general Wu Han (d.44 A.D.) 'sought out hermits and bestowed posthumous honours on the loyal and righteous' in the emperor's name. Commemorative inscriptions were erected where the martyrs Wang Hao, Wang Jia and Li Ye had lived, while a special imperial summons was extended to those who, like Fei Yi, Ren Yong, and Peng Xin, had remained in seclusion while Gongsun Shu was in power.\textsuperscript{14} Such actions of public affirmation of the ideals of the educated elite were crucial in obtaining its support in newly conquered territory.
In the conclusion to his article on political power at the time of the restoration of the Han, Yü Ying-shih quotes the Later Han scholar Fu Gan, who identifies as one of four reasons for Guangwu's rise to power his 'requiting of fidelity and fondness of scholars'. I believe this conclusion has been convincingly established, both by Yü and by the long list of virtuous and talented men Guangwu is known to have attempted - with only partial success - to draw into his service. These were listed in the notes to the previous chapter, so there is no need to discuss them further here. What I shall do now is to examine in detail Emperor Guangwu's favourable attitude towards hermits and the way that attitude was maintained by Emperors Ming and Zhang.

3. The Attitudes of Emperors Guangwu, Ming and Zhang

Like Wang Mang before him, Emperor Guangwu was careful as far as possible to make his conduct match the ideals of the scholarly elite. The respect he showed hermits and the liberties he allowed them reflect his desire to win capable and upright men into his service; they also show his sensitivity to the need to establish the legitimacy of his claim to the throne in the eyes of the elite. Furthermore, it appears that he felt a genuine sympathy and admiration for such men. At least one of his close friends was a hermit. This attitude towards eremitism on the part of the founder of the dynasty exercised considerable influence upon his successors, who in this as in other things tried to remain true to what he bequeathed.

In his chapter on men in retirement (yimin) in the Hou Han shu, Fan Yi says of the founder of the Later Han:

Emperor Guangwu received recluses informally, and if those he sought did not come to him he would (send envoys to) visit them in their caves, summoning
them with the honour of (ceremonial gifts of) fine silk and a carriage (with wheels padded) with rushes.... Having a host of methods and pursuing them all, his will set on (obtaining) scholars and his heart on benevolence - this is certainly what is meant by "raise up men in retirement and all the hearts of the empire will turn to you". 

Hence Fan Ye saw the political utility of Guangwu's respectful treatment of hermits quite clearly. Moreover, if his account is reliable, Guangwu's efforts to win hermits to his cause began long before his hold over the empire was assured. As early as the Gengshi period he tried to employ 'two old men of Yewang ', but was rebuffed.

The biographies of some of the hermits who lived during Guangwu's reign contain interesting snippets of information about the emperor's attitude towards them. One such hermit was Zhou Dang , who was famous for his lofty conduct well before Guangwu won the empire. He was duly summoned and appointed Gentleman Consultant, but resigned on grounds of illness and went to live in seclusion. He was again summoned, along with other distinguished men, and when it proved impossible to avoid going, went along dressed as a peasant with his hair tied back with haystalks. When the time came for his audience with the emperor he hid and refused to present himself, saying he wanted to remain true to his ideals. Guangwu gave his consent. When a court scholar memorialised the throne to complain of Zhou Dang's disrespect and ingratitude, calling him a mere charlatan in search of a reputation, Guangwu issued an edict saying:

Since antiquity, brilliant kings and sagely rulers have inevitably had scholars who would not serve as retainers. Boyi and Shuqi would not eat the grain of Zhou; Zhou Dang of Taiyuan would not accept the emolument we offered. In this each of them had their ideal. (Zhou Dang) shall be presented with forty bolts of silk.

Guangwu was putting Zhou Dang in an exalted category, but he was doing
no less for himself. The rulers of the Zhou period who were famous for their patronage of scholars who cast themselves in the role of teacher or friend rather than subject, were clearly on Guangwu's mind. His use of the rather anachronistic expression 'scholars who would not serve as retainers' confirms this.

A similar point emerges from the account concerning Wang Ba 范, who, like Zhou Dang, was summoned to court on account of his lofty conduct. When he came into the presence of the Master of Writing 尚書, Wang Ba paid his respects by announcing his name, but did not refer to himself as 'His Majesty's subject'. When asked the reason, he replied, paraphrasing the Book of Rites: 'The Son of Heaven has those who are not his subjects, the feudal lords have those who are not their friends'. But the reply did not get him into trouble. Quite the contrary, the Minister over the Masses 司徒, Hou Ba 胡霸, wanted to yield his position to him, and when Wang Ba returned to his humble life in seclusion the court continued to summon him repeatedly.

Most revealing of all the anecdotes concerning Emperor Guangwu's attitude towards hermits, however, is the case of Yan Guang (c.38 B.C.–41 A.D.), who not only had a great reputation for lofty conduct but was also an old friend of the emperor himself, having studied with him at the Imperial Academy. When Guangwu took the throne, Yan Guang changed his name and went into hiding. So eager was Guangwu to have this worthy man beside him that he ordered the empire be searched for him. Eventually he was found and brought to the capital, and the emperor went in person to where he was staying. Yan Guang did not get up from where he was lying when the emperor came in, and the emperor went over to him, patted him on the belly, and
said, "Ah Ziling 子陵, couldn't you help me to do things according to principles?" To this Yan Guang replied: 'In times past when Yao made demands on his virtue, Chaofu washed out his ears. A scholar is bound to have ideals, so why come here to oppress me?' It is also recorded that once Yan Guang was invited to the palace to chat with the emperor about old times. It was an informal occasion, with the two men reclining beside each other, so Yan Guang made himself comfortable by resting his feet on the emperor's belly. The next day the Grand Historian (hence also the Court Astronomer) memorialised the throne to report that a strange star was encroaching severely on the imperial position. At this the emperor laughed, saying, 'It was my old friend Yan Ziling reclining together with me, that's all'.

I see no reason to disbelieve this account. (Even the report of the strange star makes good sense if we interpret it as a ploy by an outraged official speaking out against what he regarded as gross impropriety). Emperor Guangwu's friendship with Yan Guang underlines the fact that this emperor and his successors belonged very much to a milieu in which eremitic ideas flourished. Someone with a scholarly background like Guangwu would have been perfectly well acquainted with all the rationales for eremitism, and we would not expect him to change his ideas or his friends overnight on becoming emperor. Moreover, as has already been pointed out, there was considerable political advantage to be gained from a tolerant attitude towards hermits, and Guangwu was not blind to this. Whether it was out of friendship, admiration for his virtue, or for political gain, Guangwu continued to treat Yan Guang with the greatest respect until his death, despite the fact that he chose a simple farming life in preference to the distinguished position offered to him at court.
A further example of Emperor Guangwu's respect for and tolerant attitude towards hermits is to be found in one of the few stories concerning hermits and Emperor Ming. This concerns Xun Ren (d.c.59 A.D.), who, having divided among his relatives the fortune he inherited at his father's death, lived in poverty in the wilderness during the reigns of Wang Mang and Guangwu. In the first year of Emperor Ming's reign (58 A.D.), however, he responded to a summons from King Gang of Dongping, who had just been appointed General of Cavalry. Later, when they met at court, Emperor Ming asked Xun Ren playfully why he had responded to King Gang's summons after having refused Emperor Guangwu. Xun Ren replied: 'The former emperor kept to virtue to treat his underlings with kindness, therefore it was possible for me not to come. The General of Cavalry keeps to the law to make sure his underlings [obey], therefore not to go I did not dare'.

The anecdotes given above concern some of the most famous hermits of the time. There were, however, numerous others, some of whom have already been mentioned in connection with their refusal to serve both Wang Mang and Guangwu: at least twenty-nine men in all are referred to as having refused to take office in Guangwu's reign. On the other hand, there is little mention of hermits during the reign of Emperor Ming, though some of the most striking figures from the previous reign lived throughout his reign and even later – Liang Hong and Chunyu Hong are the obvious examples. But this does not necessarily mean that there were no other hermits at that time. There is much less information available concerning all aspects of Emperor Ming's reign than that of Guangwu, not just hermits. Wang Fu was one hermit greatly admired by Emperor Ming and summoned to court at the beginning of his reign; others from
the same period were Zhao Xiao and Wang Lin. 29 One indication that hermits continued to thrive at this time comes from Fan Ye’s comments concerning a scholar called Liu Yi. The image of Emperor Ming preserved in the histories is that of a great patron of learning who eagerly sought out talented and virtuous men. But that was certainly not the opinion of Liu Yi. According to Fan Ye, Liu Yi believed that Emperor Ming ‘was not in earnest about seeking worthy men [and therefore] many scholars lived in seclusion’, so he wrote a piece called ‘Qi Ji’ criticising this state of affairs. 30 Whether or not scholars remained in seclusion as a result of Emperor Ming’s indifference to worthy men is debatable, but Liu Yi clearly believed that many of his contemporaries were opting for an eremitic life.

Perhaps Emperor Ming’s attitude towards hermits was not all that it might have been, but there is no doubt that Emperor Zhang approached this matter seriously. His attitude is revealed in an edict issued in the fifth year of his reign (80 A.D.) calling for the recommendation of men who could speak frankly and remonstrate candidly. It ended with the direction: ‘Men of the cliffs and caves should be given priority; do not select [those who are mere] empty show’. 31 As examples of Emperor Zhang’s respectful treatment of such men, Fan Ye mentions Zheng Jun and Gao Feng. 32

Zheng Jun was one of the hermits Emperor Zhang succeeded in persuading to accept office: after being specially summoned with an easy carriage in 81, he was appointed Master of Writing, but retired not long after on grounds of illness. In 84 the administrations of the region where he lived were commanded to present him annually with meat and wine, and the following year the emperor did him the honour
of calling on him in person when passing through the district, granting him a Master of Writing's salary for the rest of his life (Zheng Jun died during the Yongyuan period [89-104]).

Other hermits of renown who took office under Emperor Zhang were Chunyu Hong (d.80), Sima Jun 鍾繇 and Ru Yu 阮籍. Nevertheless, not all hermits in Emperor Zhang's time proved to be so tractable. One of those who did not was Gao Feng. A man who became famous for his single-minded concentration on study as well as for his perfect sense of rightness and his acceptance of poverty and low status (his concentration was such that he was oblivious of heavy rain washing away the wheat his wife had laid out to dry in the courtyard and asked him to mind), Gao Feng was prepared to deviate from the truth in order to avoid having to take office. To make himself ineligible for official service he said that members of his family had been shamans, and further claimed that he had been involved in a legal squabble over land with a widow. When recommended for his frank speech in the Jianchu period (76-83) he pleaded illness, gave away his possessions and fled into seclusion.

An even more extreme character was Tai Tong, who lived in seclusion in the mountains in a hole he had dug and gathered herbs to keep himself alive. He did not respond when summoned by the provincial authorities during the Jianchu period. When passing through the district on official business, the Circuit Inspector went in person to see him, bearing gifts appropriate to a teacher. To the Inspector's comments concerning the extreme hardship in which he lived Tai Tong replied that this was nothing compared to burdens and dangers posed by His Excellency's official duties. After this he disappeared and was never seen again.
While Emperor Zhang was undoubtedly well disposed to hermits generally, there were limits to what he was prepared to tolerate from such men. What is more, those limits appear to have been set in terms of whether or not toleration was politically advantageous. This is evident from his response to Liang Hong, a man in whom utter disregard for worldly things led to condemnation of a political system which enslaved the common people to provide luxury for those at the top. When a poem by Liang Hong voicing these sentiments was brought to Emperor Zhang's attention (this was only a few months after the emperor had directed that priority be given to hermits in recommendations for office) he organised a search for Liang Hong to have him taken into custody and silenced. But Liang Hong had changed his name and gone into hiding.37 (This incident is discussed in detail in section 9 below).

On the basis of the evidence presented in this section, the only possible conclusion is that the first three emperors of the Later Han were well disposed towards hermits, that they took very seriously their imperial duty of winning worthy men to court, understood the politically important role hermits could play in legitimising their claim to the throne, and appreciated the fact that the public estimation of their virtue rose even further if they respected the wishes of those who refused to serve rather than attempting to coerce them. As far as the hermits themselves are concerned, we must resist the temptation to lump them all together without considering the variety of values and ideals they espoused. Some were extremists who shunned society altogether; some dabbled in the occult arts, medicine, or the secrets of immortality; others chose to live inconspicuously among the common people, pursuing ordinary trades or farming for a living; while others again set out to transform customs
through the influence of their conspicuously virtuous conduct.

It would appear that once the shockwaves of the Wang Mang period had died away there was little reason for the Confucian eremitism of protest against improper or corrupt rule. Nevertheless many of the hermits of the early part of the dynasty were Confucian scholars, and it is fairly clear that their behaviour represents a continuation of the Confucian exemplary eremitism which had developed in the last part of the Former Han. As we have seen, a considerable number had reputations for exemplary conduct and were eventually attracted to the court when treated with highest ceremonial honours. As was the case with the exemplary hermits of later part of the Former Han, the eremitism of these men is to be understood in terms of the loftiness of their ideals and their quest for perfection in conduct rather than in terms of social or political protest. This trend, as well as the tendency of the court to honour such men, was to grow still further in the reigns of the later emperors.

4. The Middle Reigns: A Turning Point?

Describing what happened after the reign of Emperor Zhang, Fan Ye says:

... imperial virtue declined and depravity filled the court. Disengaged scholars remained firm in their resolve and considered it shameful to rank among the high officials, or, if they did go (to court), zealously fought against (evil) without considering (anything else), and in their conduct many of them strayed from the mean. In other words, Fan Ye believed that the corruption of the times provoked extreme responses of a sort which in ideal circumstances might be considered reprehensible, but in terms of the actual conditions of the time are all too understandable. It is the conduct of such men, he says, that he records in juan 83. But he regards them
as less than perfect models of behaviour, and like Ban Gu in his chapter on men of integrity (HS 72) alludes to the Han saying that 'men of the mountain forests go but are unable to turn back'.

Further, like Ban Gu, Fan Ye makes sure he presents his readers with a higher model of conduct. Hence juan 53 consists of the biographies of men he considered to have a better sense of when to come forward and when to withdraw, who avoided extremism and by the force of personal example transformed the customs of those around them.

Although Fan Ye relates the lack of moderation on the part of those whose conduct is recorded in juan 83 to the political decline of the dynasty after the reign of Emperor Zhang, some two-thirds of the major figures discussed in the chapter actually date from Zhang's reign or earlier, which suggests that fervent opposition to evil was not the only thing that led virtuous men to extreme positions. Other factors were important in the early part of the dynasty, as I have already argued, including the growing trend towards exemplary eremitism. But Fan Ye was not a historian given to simplistic explanations, and even when dealing with the period after the reign of Emperor Zhang he does not try to account for the rapid spread of eremitic sentiments solely in terms of the deteriorating political situation.

Part of the explanation for the ubiquity of eremitism in the later part of the dynasty, according to Fan Ye, lies in the fact that once these attitudes could be justified by reference to the declining situation at court they became fashionable, and having become fashionable they became virtually compulsory. At the end of his biography of Chen Shi 陳寘 (104-187), who was largely compelled by circumstances to adopt an eremitic lifestyle on encountering the
political proscriptions during the reigns of Emperors Huan 桓 (147-167) and Ling 坑 (168-188), Fan Ye comments:

From the middle of the (Later) Han on, eunuchs were in office, arrogating power and behaving unrestrainedly. Hence it subsequently became the custom to regard withdrawal from the world, "speaking out while remaining fastidiously pure" as lofty things. If there were scholars who did not discuss such things, farmers and herdboys took it upon themselves to ridicule them. Hence in times when the government was reduced to confusion this fashion spread even further. Only Master Chen's timeliness in advancing and retiring could invariably be taken as a model.

Although Fan Ye does not pursue the point here, it could be argued that the fashion for eremitism, which had become a dominant feature of the scholarly culture, helped to undermine political stability. How did this fashionable eremitism come about? As we have seen, Fan Ye is inclined to overlook the evolving scholarly culture in the early part of the dynasty, with its tradition of exemplary eremitism going back well into the Former Han. In his comments at the end of juan 61 (the biographies of Zuo Xiong 苟雄, Zhou Xie 釈熙 and Huang Qiong 黃囍) he traces the popularisation (and debasement) of eremitism to the expansion of the recommendatory system, the abuse of that system by transforming it into a weapon of factional politics, and indirectly also to the ceremonial honours Emperor Shun 川帝 (r.126-144) extended to hermits. These views deserve careful consideration.

In antiquity, says Fan Ye, the feudal lords were expected annually to contribute men for the running of the royal court. Those who were recommended were carefully screened and given probationary employment before receiving a salary, while those who recommended worthy men were rewarded and those whose recommendees turned out to be unworthy were punished. The introduction of the recommendatory system in the early Han period aimed to achieve the same results. At first the criteria under which men were to be recommended were limited, but
after the restoration of the Han there was a major expansion of the formal categories for recommendation. The results of this elaboration and expansion of the system were not all good:

Once the glorious road (to office) had been broadened, yearnings became hard to restrain. Henceforth there was a flood of name-stealing imposters wrangling (for positions) and supplicants surged to the gates of the powerful and those in prominent positions,^2

It was in an attempt to eliminate the abuses in the recommendatory system that Zuo Xiong was instrumental in 132 in persuading Emperor Shun to limit recommendation for office to those over forty years of age, and to require all candidates to be examined for their abilities. Although these measures had a salutary short-term effect, they could not eradicate the factional intrigues at court, and these continued with increasing severity to subvert the recommendatory system, as 'those pursuing fame covered up their shortcomings and those [whose duty it was to] verify the recommendations manipulated the evidence'. But the habit of scholars to use the recommendatory system to advance members of their own faction does not by itself account for the popularisation of eremitic ideals. Equally important were the actions of Emperor Shun himself:

In the beginning, due to boyish weakness, Emperor Shun turned the administration upside-down, but he himself gave the orders, recognised ability and utilised his officials. Therefore scholars acquired the wish to be employed and the whole world echoed their sentiments. Hence the rites of dark crimson, jade and silk were perfected, to summon with gifts Fan Ying of Nanyang. The Son of Heaven descended into the ancestral hall and made arrangements (as if) for a sacrifice; a Master of Writing met (Fan Ying) and led him inside, where he was received and consulted. (The emperor) attached urgency to the recommendation of worthies for promotion, abased himself to follow the rite of humility, and thereupon disengaged scholars and rusticating masters, forgetful of the narrowness of their learning, shook out their garments in anticipation of a summons with banners and carriages. Emperor Shun may indeed have filled scholars with the desire to be in
official service, as Fan Ye argues, but in the process of doing so he paradoxically bestowed new prestige on the eremitic life and thereby provided further motivation for those who used it as a stepping stone to a well-paid, prestigious position.

So in relation to the popularisation and attendant debasement of eremitic ideals around the middle of the Later Han, Fan Ye identifies a number of causal factors. The political disorder and decay attributed to the interference in government by imperial relatives and eunuchs, which dominate all discussions of the period, is only one of these. Because it provided a moral justification for refusing office, this factor was indeed of central importance, and I shall discuss it in the following section. However, to correct the imbalance of traditional accounts it is necessary also to give due weight to the other factors mentioned by Fan Ye. One is the expansion of the recommendatory system, which resulted in greater opportunities for government appointments on the grounds of exemplary conduct. Associated with this was the subversion of the recommendatory system by faction fighting at court, with each faction recommending its own men, often in the guise of disengaged scholars. Also important was the imperial patronage of hermits, which was present from the beginning of the dynasty but reached new heights at the beginning of Shun's reign. Together these factors brought about the other development which Fan Ye does little more than hint at: eremitism became fashionable, and that fashion fed upon itself until it became the expected thing.

Considered individually, the factors identified by Fan Ye cannot be considered new in the middle of the Later Han period, but their mutually reinforcing effects at this time can be regarded as marking a
fresh stage of development in tendencies which had already been underway for some two hundred years.

The problem of political power being in the hands of eunuchs, and more especially in the hands of imperial relatives, was obviously not new at this time. It was a problem which had cropped up in the Former Han, but it gradually became particularly acute in the Later Han—partly as a result of the fact that after Emperor Zhang each Later Han emperor came to the throne as a minor. The usurpation of power by imperial relatives and eunuchs has traditionally been identified as the root cause of the Han dynasty's collapse. To determine the amount of truth in this view is a task too complex to carry out here. However, because of its important bearing on the subject of eremitism, I shall examine a modern formulation of this view by Yü Ying-shih in the Appendix to this thesis. Here the observation must suffice that what 'newness' there was in the problem of power in the hands of imperial relatives and eunuchs was a newness of degree rather than type.

As to the elaboration of the recommendatory system, this had begun early in Guangwu's reign, while subversion of the system for private or factional ends was a problem from its inception, prompting ineffectual decrees that abuses of the system be stopped, for example, at the beginning of the reigns of Ming and Zhang. Therefore as far as the effects of the recommendatory system in encouraging either genuine or spurious eremitism is concerned, there is every reason to believe that these had long been present, even if they had not always been so strong.
Emperor Shun's adulation of hermits, too, was no more than an intensification of what had gone before. As we have seen, Guangwu, Ming and Zhang all attached considerable importance to attracting worthy men to court, and though they did not go to the same ceremonious lengths as the young Emperor Shun, they did go to some trouble to fill scholars with 'the wish to be employed'. What is more, there is considerable evidence that the same was true of Emperors He (r.89-105) and An (r.107-125), despite the fact that their reigns witnessed a great increase in the political influence of imperial relatives and eunuchs. For the evolution of the scholarly culture which fostered the fascination with eremitism continued uninterrupted throughout the middle reigns of the dynasty. (As I argue in my Appendix, the gravest flaw of traditional interpretations of the dynasty's decline is their fundamental assumption that the outlook of imperial relatives and eunuchs was necessarily at odds with the ideals and values of scholars, that the influence of the former was inimical to the culture of the latter). It is to some of the evidence for this that I will now turn.

The respectful attitude of Guangwu, Ming and Zhang towards hermits, and the exemplary eremitism espoused by many of the hermits of their day, is not the only evidence of the pervasive influence of the scholarly ethos during the first part of the Later Han. I have already mentioned in the previous chapter Zhao Yi's discussion of the scholarly custom of ceding hereditary aristocratic rank, pointing out that this aspect of the scholarly culture went back at least to the case of Wei Xuancheng in 61 B.C. Of the six other examples listed by Zhao Yi, one dates from the reign of Emperor Guangwu, two from the beginning of Ming's reign, and one each from the reigns of Zhang, An and Shun.
Most interesting for my purposes here is the case of Liu Qi, who in 78 A.D. ceded the fief he inherited to his younger brother Xian. For this he was lauded by Jia Kui (30-101), perhaps the most important Confucian scholar at the court of Emperor He, who submitted a memorial comparing Liu Qi’s integrity to that of Boyi. As a result Emperor He summoned him to court, where he came to be greatly admired and enjoyed a long and successful career, rising to the position of Grand Commandant. In the course of that career he helped to further enhance the social and political standing of hermits: ‘It was Liu Qi’s nature to be true to (the values of) antiquity. He treasured disengaged scholars, and whenever men were to be summoned or recommended for office was sure to give priority to men of the cliffs and caves’. In other words, honouring hermits was one way of being true to the values of antiquity, and seeking out hermits in order to employ them, like Wang Mang’s reform programme, was part of the general scholarly wish to recreate in their own time the greatness of the (idealised) past.

This tendency developed further in the middle years of the dynasty. After Jia Kui and Liu Qi came men such as Zhang Ba, who when Grand Administrator of Kuaiji during the Yongyuan period (89-104) recommended a number of disengaged scholars for office, including Gu Feng and Gongsun Song. There was also Cen Xi, Marquis of Xiyang, and brother-in-law to Emperor An, who when appointed Grand Administrator of Wei Commandery summoned hermits with gifts and consulted with them on government affairs. Chen Zhong (d.125) was an influential figure at Emperor An’s court who rose to the position of Prefect of the Masters of Writing. He believed that for an emperor newly come to power it was particularly important to demonstrate his...
intention to transform the world by summoning hermits and other outstanding individuals. Therefore he repeatedly recommended hermits and upright men, including Zhou Xie 周懿 and Feng Liang 靜良, and was instrumental in getting Emperor An to summon them with full ritual honours (though ultimately without success).51

At the beginning of Emperor Shun's reign there was no sudden leap in the number of hermits, despite the attention and ceremonial honours the young emperor lavished upon them. Rather, the middle reigns of the Later Han dynasty appear to have witnessed a steady growth in the popularity of eremitic ideals, especially the Confucian variety of exemplary eremitism.52 For not only were many men in the highest levels of government before the reign of Emperor Shun preoccupied with bringing hermits into official service, but also some of the most famous eremitic figures associated with the intellectual milieu of Emperor Shun's reign of necessity flourished in the reign of Emperor An as well. The best example of this is none other than Fan Ying himself, the man whose reception by Emperor Shun in Fan Ye's eyes constituted a major turning point in the social standing and influence of hermits. Fan Ying was knowledgeable about the classics as well as arcane matters such as divination, astrology, and interpretation of portents. Though he lived in seclusion his fame was such that students came from everywhere to study under him, and quite early he attracted the attention of the provincial and commandery authorities.

In the reign of Emperor He he was recommended as 'worthy and good, proper and correct, and possessing the Way', but he did not respond when summoned. At the beginning of Emperor An's reign (107) he was imperially summoned to be made an Erudite, and in 121 he was again summoned, along with five other men. Of these six men, four — Fan Ying, Kong Qiao 亢高, Li Bing 李昴 and Wang Fu 王甫 —
did not respond. Hence by the time Emperor Shun managed to get Fan Ying to come to court and accept a position in 129, Fan Ying was already famous for the staunchness with which he stuck to his ideals, and imperial patronage of men like him was well established.

The same points emerge from the case of Yang Hou (72-153; his surname is sometimes given as Hou ) who in 127 was summoned by Emperor Shun along with Fan Ying. Before this Yang Hou had already been recommended as 'proper and correct, possessing the Way' and had refused to respond to a special imperial summons by Emperor An. Thus it could be argued that Emperor An was less successful than Emperor Shun in winning famous hermits to court, but not that he did not try to do so.

Zhang Heng (78-139) is perhaps the greatest of all the intellectuals associated with the reign of Emperor Shun, and he also is important in the history of eremitism as a 'hermit at court' (see Chapter 4 below). But he had been recommended as 'filial and blameless' in the reign of Emperor He, and it was Emperor An who first issued a special imperial summons calling him to court, appointing him Grand Prefect Astrologer , the post to which Emperor Shun was to appoint him again five years later after he had retired. Ma Rong (78-166) was also regarded as one of the leading lights of Emperor Shun’s reign, as a scholar and setter of fashions, but it was as a young man during the reigns of He and An that he studied under Zhi Xun , a famous Confucian scholar who lived in seclusion and ignored the imperial invitations with gifts requesting him to come to court.
Further evidence of the importance Emperors He and An attached to winning hermits to court is to be found in the imperial edicts calling for the recommendation of worthy men. Thus in 94 Emperor He ordered his senior officials and Grand Administrators to recommend men who were worthy and good, proper and correct, able to speak frankly and remonstrate fearlessly, adding: 'Bring out into the light men of the cliffs and caves, bring out into the open those living in obscurity and seclusion. Send them to the Equerry Office so that We may listen attentively to them'. In 115 Emperor An ordered the recommendation of men versed in the arts of the Way, the interpretation of portents, the laws of the yin and yang, and other branches of learning, stating that he wanted his officials 'everywhere to draw out those living in obscurity and seclusion'. And in 106, when the 'Infant Emperor ' was on the throne following the death of Emperor He, an edict was issued ordering all officials of the two thousand picul rank and higher each to recommend one 'hermit and great Confucian '. Obviously the summoning of worthy men was not something which was done only by strong and enlightened rulers; it was a matter of particular importance for imperial relatives out to establish the political legitimacy of the infant on which their hopes for imperial power depended.

The conclusion which must be drawn from the evidence presented here is that patronage and public regard for eremitism was already very strong before the reign of Emperor Shun, and that Emperor Shun's self-abasing reception of Fan Ying was not as sharp a turning point as Fan Ye believed. The political and social standing of hermits had continued to rise in the preceding reigns. However, this is not to say that the elaborate honours with which Emperor Shun welcomed famous disengaged scholars did not raise their standing still further.
Certainly from the beginning of Emperor Shun's reign references to hermits of various sorts become increasingly frequent, and it is impossible not to notice the fashionable element mentioned by Fan Ye in many of those references. It is clear also that some people were acutely aware of the vogue for eremitism that was developing, and regarded it with mistrust and apprehension. One of these was the remarkable figure of Li Gu (94-147), who had himself been recommended to the court on the strength of his reputation as a disengaged scholar. At one point Fan Ye comments that Li Gu 'believed that disengaged scholars were outright bandits with baseless reputations who had nothing to offer in employment, and that this was the reason they acted as they did.' He seems to attribute this view to Li Gu at least partly on the grounds of a letter Li Gu wrote in 127 to Huang Qiong (86-164), who was also a famous disengaged scholar of the time, urging him to put aside his doubts and hesitations and come to court to serve the emperor:

It is said that a gentleman holds that Boyi was too severe and that Liuxia Hui was not dignified enough, therefore the account says, "I am neither (Bo)yi nor (Luxia) Hui; [as far as I am concerned] a given action can or cannot be performed [according to circumstances]." It is said that sageliness and worthiness are the things to be treasured in the self. If you are sincere, then to wish to live leisurely in the mountains and valleys, imitating Chaofu and Xuyou, is indeed permissible. If you are going to put yourself in a position to assist the government and aid the people, now is the time to do it. Ever since society began, good government has been scarce and disorderly practices plentiful, and if it were necessary to wait until there was a Yao or Shun on the throne, this would mean that ultimately for men with ideals it would never be the (right) time. One always hears it said, "Things delicately poised are easily broken, things spotlessly white are easily soiled". With a song (as refined as) Yangchun, those able to join in the chorus are sure to be few; if one is preceded by a great reputation it is difficult to make reality square up to it. Recently when his honour Fan [Ying] of Luyang arrived after having been summoned, the court made preparations (as if) for a sacrifice; it was as if they were awaiting a god. Although there was nothing very exceptional about him, in speech and conduct he bore himself faultlessly. As to the slanders spread against him, which
diminished with time, were these not due to the fact that he aroused such great expectations, that his reputation was so grand? From the beginning, scholars summoned and invited with gifts, such as Hu Yuanan, Xue Mengchang, Zhu Zhongzhao, and Gu Jihong, have accomplished nothing that might be singled out for attention. This is the reason when the common people discuss these things they all say that disengaged scholars are outright bandits with baseless reputations. I hope that you, sir, will dispell this preposterous falsehood, command the respect of the populace, and in one sweep erase this saying completely.65

Li Gu's attitude towards disengaged scholars was obviously more complex than Fan Ye's comment suggests: it was the common people who regarded them as 'outright bandits with baseless reputations', not Li Gu, and he looked to Huang Qiong to erase that popular prejudice. There are genuine hermits and there are charlatans; the former are sincere in the values they hold and the lifestyle they adopt, the latter are not. Li Gu personally was not attracted to the type of eremitism epitomised by Chaofu and Xyou, but he nevertheless recognised it as a position which could legitimately be adopted, provided that the individual concerned was genuinely committed to the reduction of desires and was indifferent to worldly affairs. What concerned Li Gu most was the attitude of those men who professed to draw their inspiration from Confucius and claimed to be awaiting the right time before participating in government. Since the present emperor had shown himself to be committed to good government and had gone to some trouble to invite worthy men to court with the appropriate ceremonial honours, what further reason could they have for refusing to come? Either they were setting their standards unrealistically high, or else they were adopting an eremitic pose for ulterior reasons, such as the desire for fame or the freedom to devote themselves to scholarship. Clearly the object of Li Gu's criticism is precisely the style of Confucian exemplary eremitism which, as I have argued, had been gaining in influence since approximately 80 B.C. and
was now becoming highly fashionable. Li Gu had come to the conclusion that exemplary eremitism of this sort made too much of personal cultivation at the expense the Confucian ideal of social and political commitment.

Yet Li Gu's opinion of men such as Fan Ying and Yang Hou was not totally negative, despite his belief that they had failed to live up to the expectations they aroused. In a memorial to Emperor Shun a decade or so later, after Yang Hou and others like him had retired on grounds of ill health, Li Gu commented that although in the performance of their duties they had not been outstanding, they had nevertheless been respectful and diligent. Now that they were gone the Palace Attendants were all young men, without one old scholar to be found among them. Therefore Li Gu considered it appropriate to recall Yang Hou and his peers, so that they might 'assist in the sacrifices to the spirits of heaven and earth'.

According to Yang Hou's biography, while Yang Hou continued to live in retirement as a highly sought-after teacher of the doctrines of Huang-Lao, Li Gu repeatedly sang his praises at the court, with the result that in 146 during the brief reign of Emperor Zhi he was again summoned with gifts.

Thus even as critical an observer as Li Gu did not believe that the political utility of hermits was to be evaluated solely in terms of their ability to provide sagely counsel or masterful policies; they could contribute in other ways. Fan Ye held a similar opinion, one which obviously owed a lot to Li Gu. As with Li Gu, it was reflection on the case of Fan Ying that led him to state his position:

The demeanour of those referred to in the Han period as famous scholars can be known. Although they were [concerned with the questions of being] in or out of service, employed or put aside, they were at times less than perfect. In
their control of emotion and refinement of bearing, their reliance on the Way and scholarship as a means of acquiring a reputation, there is nothing that could be extended to all things and methods, embrace all times and undertakings. When Fan Ying and Yang Hou were summoned it was as if the court was awaiting a god, but when they arrived there was nothing exceptional about them. Fan Ying's reputation was the greatest and he was severely vilified. Li Gu, Zhu Mu and others believed disengaged scholars to be outright bandits with baseless reputations who had nothing to offer in employment, and that this was the reason they acted as they did. Nevertheless new men emulated them in order to make a reputation for themselves, and the rulers of the age treated them with all due ceremony in order to win over the populace. Moreover, since originally their uselessness [non-employment] was the reason they were employed [used], their utility could be said to lie in their uselessness. Why do I say this? Though their writings are brilliant the age will not necessarily make use of them; though they ground themselves on ritual observances, in declining times their example will not necessarily be widely adopted. But consider the way they mould the scholar-officials and refine their natures, making others follow them without anyone being aware of it: is it not that the Way is remote from practical applications and conceals itself within concrete particulars? As to those who make light of the ground they do not tread on and dismiss the value of the useless, such people jeer in chorus at subtle arts, debasing and abusing (those who are) the glory of the state; they believe that force and trickery can put an end of social depravity, that codified regulations are enough to achieve peace and security, that investigating suspicious cases represents the limits of knowledge, and that the Way is coterminous with laws and directives. They may come to the aid of the myriad generations, but they are no different from barbarians.98

5. Timely Withdrawal in a Violent Age

Fan Ye tells us that from the middle of the Later Han, scholars flocked into retirement in protest against the evils perpetrated by the eunuchs and imperial relatives. We know, too, that many steered clear of public office in order to avoid the dangers associated with the deteriorating political situation. Whether or not going into hiding to save one's life is really to be regarded as eremitism is something of a problem, as I have argued before, and one which needs further consideration. However, here I wish to forestall any attempt to cynically dismiss the idealism of the hermits of this period as mere high-sounding rationalisations of attempts to save their own
necks. While such cases did occur, this interpretation cannot be universally justified, if for no other reason than that refusing to take office frequently was no less dangerous than taking part in public affairs.

At the beginning of the Later Han period, the self-declared emperor of Shu, Gongsun Shu, had killed men who refused to have anything to do with him, such as Li Ye, Wang Hao and Wang Jia. In the second half of the Later Han the danger of sharing a similar fate was very real, particularly when power was in the hands of strongmen as ruthless as Liang Ji 梁冀 (d.159), Dong Zhuo 東漢 (d.192) and Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220). However, it was not only military dictators whose tolerance of hermits was limited. When the famous disengaged scholars Yang Bing 楊秉 and Wei Zhu 魏芝 pleaded illness and failed to respond to an imperial summons circa.160, a number of officials wanted to impeach them for 'disrespect'. Fortunately others with some influence interceded on their behalf and asked Emperor Huan to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their reverence. Yang Bing did go to court in response to the further summons which ensued, but Wei Zhu had disappeared into the Yunyang 雲陽 Mountains.69

Liang Ji's ruthlessness towards those who dared to defy him is obvious in his treatment of He Xie 郝更 and Hu Wu 胡武, two friends from the beginning of Huan's reign. Both men had their minds set on lofty matters and were not interested in taking office. According to Ying Shao, He Xie's principles were so strict that even when in want he accepted nothing from others, surreptitiously left behind cash whenever he had a meal at his sister's house, and if he drank from a well while out walking invariably threw a coin into
Resenting the failure of He Xie and Hu Wu to heed his summons, Liang Ji had Hu Wu and more than sixty members of his family killed, while He Xie was driven to suicide.

When Dong Zhuo came to power following Emperor Ling's death in 188, even the most famous men had to tread carefully. Few had either the opportunity or the courage to refuse when summoned. Despite their disapproval of everything he stood for, men renowned for their lofty conduct such as Xun Shuang (128-190), Cai Yong (132-192), Han Rong (c.123-c.192) and Chen Ji (126-196) all failed to find a way out, and as a result many of them came to grief in the chaos Dong Zhuo unleashed. Typical was the case of Cai Yong, who tried to plead illness when summoned, only to find the local authorities under orders to take him to Bang Zhuo by force. Zheng Xuan (127-200) was lucky enough to be able to use the excuse that he was prevented from coming because bandits had cut the roads. Only Shentu Pan remained unshaken in his resolve and refused to have anything to do with Dong Zhuo.

The respected scholar and statesman Lu Zhi (d.192) was also fortunate enough to avoid death at the hands of Dong Zhuo, despite having bitterly opposed his rise to supreme power. When Dong Zhuo was dissuaded by Cai Yong and Peng Bo from killing Lu Zhi outright, Lu Zhi asked to be excused from further service because of age and ill health and returned home. Dong Zhuo sent someone after him to kill him, but the plot failed and Lu Zhi lived out the last few years of his life in seclusion in the mountains.

Cao Cao may have been a much more subtle, clever politician than Dong Zhuo, but he was impatient both with moralising scholars and with talented men who refused to put their talents at his disposal. This
is well demonstrated by his treatment of Hua Tuo (also known as Hua Fu), who was renowned as a scholar, healer and master of the arts of longevity, and was widely regarded by his contemporaries as an immortal. Although during Emperor Ling's reign he had ignored both a recommendation as 'filial and blameless' and an official summons, Hua Tuo found himself compelled to respond to Cao Cao's call. Cao Cao kept him constantly in attendance, valuing his abilities highly. However, when Hua Tuo expressed a wish to relinquish his position and return home, and had his wife feign illness as an excuse for doing so, Cao Cao had him thrown into jail and killed.74

When the world of politics was as volatile as it was at the end of the Later Han, to refuse to get involved could be as dangerous as active participation. Xun Yue (147-209) experienced both. During Emperor Ling's reign he managed to remain aloof after pleading illness, but when Cao Cao came to power he too found himself compelled to play his part in public affairs.75 While in office at the court of the puppet Emperor Xian he wrote his Shen and Han. In the latter, on the basis of his own experience and that of his relatives and friends, he felt compelled to express his doubts about eremitism as a way of staying out of trouble:

Men of exceptional wisdom are not tolerated by their age, men of exceptional conduct are not suffered by their time. This is the reason why in the past men went into retirement. [But it sometimes happened that] although they retired they were still unable to save themselves, therefore they left the world and went deep into hiding. Heaven was high yet they did not dare raise their heads; Earth was solid yet they did not dare stamp their feet. The Book of Songs says:

Though they say Heaven is high,
Not too stoop I would not dare.
Though they say Earth is solid,
Not to tiptoe I would not dare.

I lament the men of today:
Why are they such poisonous reptiles?
If men do not dare to take their place in society, how much less will they dare to take their place at court? If by keeping to themselves they are still unable to avoid disaster, how much less will they dare to involve themselves with the age? If despite being blameless they are still denounced and vilified, how much less will they dare [to open themselves up to] imputations of guilt? If despite keeping their mouths shut they are still slandered and abused, how much less will they dare to speak frankly? Although they live in seclusion and go deep into hiding, they will still not be able to save themselves. This is why Ningwuzi 呂不才 pretended he was stupid and Jieyu 晏子 behaved like a madman: it was the extremes (in which they found themselves). Those without a plan for (feigning) madness or stupidity will not be able find safety in the world.76

However, this passage should not be regarded as evidence that in Xun Yue's time the attempt to escape harm by going into seclusion was regarded as enough to make the individual concerned a hermit. As I have already argued, a distinction has to be maintained between hermits on the one hand, whose actions are linked to an articulated philosophical position and the attempt to realise certain ideals of personal conduct, and mere refugees or fugitives on the other, whose actions really do amount to nothing more than an attempt to stay alive. In Zhuangzi's philosophy of eremitism the principle of lying low and staying away from danger is of major importance, but it is only one element in a sophisticated philosophical theory which also incorporates the ideas of eradication of desires and the obliteration of personal identity.77

Hermits who cultivated Zhuangzi's outlook did occur in the Later Han, but needless to say they were far fewer than the number of scholars who aspired to no more than putting as much distance between themselves and danger as possible. I have already referred to Tai Tong from the reign of Emperor Zhang, who lived in a hole in the mountains and was completely indifferent to worldly matters. In the later part of the dynasty there was Pang Gong 契公. When the
Inspector of Jingzhou, Liu Biao (this was c.190) attempted to persuade him to take office with the argument that it was better to save the empire than merely oneself, Pang Gong laughingly dismissed the suggestion that the empire was something which could be preserved. And when Liu Biao tried to argue that by refusing an official salary and persisting with his spartan life as a farmer he would have nothing to bequeath to his sons and grandsons, Pang Gong replied: 'My contemporaries all bequeath danger to their descendents; I alone bequeath safety to mine. Although what we bequeath to them is not the same, it is not as if I have nothing to bequeath'. Subsequently he took his family into the mountains and never returned.78

When it comes to attributing the motive of wanting to avoid danger to the hermits of the late Han and Wei-Jin periods it is necessary to exercise caution. An instructive example in this regard is Wei Huan, who during Emperor Huan's reign refused several times to respond to an imperial summons. In reply to his neighbours' urgings that he should accept a position, Wei Huan argued that even if he did he would be unable to bring about any improvements at court and the only likely outcome would be his own death, which would benefit no-one.79 However, there is no reason to assume that Wei Huan cultivated the life of a disengaged scholar simply in order to keep out of trouble. Those imperially summoned tended to be men who had demonstrated their commitment to Confucian ideals of conduct rather than those whose outstanding characteristic was timidity. Wei Huan may have used the probability of a futile death as a reason for not heeding an imperial summons, but it was not that which won him the admiration and respect of his contemporaries.
These considerations become particularly relevant when we consider accounts of some of the famous hermits who during the civil wars at the end of the Han are described as fleeing from the disorders of the time. The most important account is that in the Sanguo zhi of the group of men centred around the distinguished figure of Guan Ning (158-248), who sought refuge from the troubles by crossing the Bohai Gulf to Liaodong. This group included Guo Yuan, Bing Yuan, and Wang Lie, who were all renowned for their lofty conduct. Going to Liaodong had nothing more to do with establishing Guan Ning’s reputation as a noble hermit than it did with Guo Yuan’s subsequent successful career in Cao Cao’s administration. The political and social turmoil they encountered certainly must have convinced hermits such as Guan Ning, Bing Yuan and Wang Lie that they had encountered impropitious times and therefore strengthened their resolve to stay aloof from public affairs, but that leads us into philosophical and ethical considerations of an order quite distinct from the wish merely to survive.

In terms of long term significance for the history of eremitism, however, the general and ultimately unspecifiable effects of the prolonged social disorder of the times may have been less significant than the strongly emotional and ideologically charged reaction of scholars to them. This is particularly true of the political proscriptions of 167 and 169. It is those events and some of the figures involved in them which I shall now consider.

6. The Political Proscriptions under Huan and Ling

The proscriptions may be considered an indirect outcome of the young Emperor Huan’s destruction of Liang Ji and his family in 159, with the goal of destroying a power which constrained the emperor...
himself, controlled the court, the government bureaucracy, and extended to all parts of the empire. For support in his move against his erstwhile relatives by marriage (Empress Liang had only just died when the attack began), Emperor Huan, like Emperors He and An before him, found he had to rely on the court eunuchs. The emperor subsequently rewarded his chief eunuch supporters with high posts as well as large estates, and his continued reliance on them to retain power over the great families which threatened the imperial prerogatives further alienated a proportion of the Confucian scholars, who were becoming increasingly critical of this and many other irregularities and iniquities in the administration. These scholars saw themselves, with some justice, as the defenders of Confucian ideals, and their opposition to the evils they observed around them did create some unity among them (to this extent Yu Ying-shih’s comments concerning a scholarly communal identity in the later Han period, criticised in my Appendix, are justified). This 'Pure Faction', which had already begun to take shape before the sequence of events precipitated by Emperor Huan’s move against the Liang family, centred around Commander-in-Chief Chen Fan 陳蕃 (killed in 168) and Colonel Director of Retainers Li Ying 李鷹 (110-169) in the bureaucracy, and Guo Tai 郭太 (128-169) and Jia Biao 熊彪 among the students of the Imperial Academy. The eunuchs had to remove the threat presented by this group, and early in 167 succeeded in having Li Ying and many of his colleagues imprisoned on charges of factionalism and sedition. Some two hundred men were implicated, and while those imprisoned were released within a matter of months, the ones against whom the charges had been laid were proscribed from ever holding office again.
When Emperor Huan died a year later, the infant Emperor Ling was put in the throne by Empress-Dowager Dou 和 her father Dou Wu 武 (d.168). Dou Wu became Commander-in-Chief. Together with Chen Fan and Hu Guang 光 (91-172) he recalled Li Ying and other victims of the first proscription to senior positions. But before they could carry out their planned drive against the eunuchs the eunuchs took the offensive. Chen Fan was killed and Dou Wu committed suicide. Then in 169 the eunuchs persuaded the young emperor to do away with the faction altogether. Those involved in the first proscription were rearrested and many of them, including Li Ying, died in prison; a considerable number of other men were also persecuted, killed, or proscribed from holding office. The edict of proscription was not revoked until April 184, when the survival of the empire was threatened by the Yellow Turban uprisings.

In terms of the total size of the bureaucracy and the number of students at the Imperial Academy at the time, the number of victims in this protracted conflict was not large. Probably not much more than a hundred people died as a result, while the total number of those executed, exiled or proscribed is not likely to have been more than six or seven hundred. This, plus the apparent ease with which the eunuchs destroyed the political threat of the Pure Faction, indicates that only a small proportion of scholars and officials took their ideals seriously enough to regard themselves as the defenders of public morality and challenge the power of the eunuchs. Yet despite their relatively small number and their failure to find widespread support at the time, the influence these generally very courageous idealists were to have in later periods was tremendous. It is no accident that the Shishuo xinyu begins with anecdotes concerning men such as Chen Fan, Li Ying, Guo Tai and Chen Shi, for it was these
members of the Pure Faction who came to be regarded as the founders of the qingtan movement, and their deeds and opinions were to be seen as exalted models by many leading scholars throughout the Wei-Jin and Southern Dynasties.

The significance of the proscribed faction for the history of eremitism is clear. Here was a considerable number of men, with some claim to being the moral and intellectual leaders of the time, who by imperial decree were prevented from holding office. In their case being in enforced retirement was clear confirmation of their moral integrity, just as voluntary retirement was in normal circumstances. A situation had arisen in which imperial fiat made compulsory what circumstances might have demanded anyway, and even had he wanted to a man of principle could not take part in public affairs. Moreover, great men had died for what they believed was right. This gave being out of office new significance, new status, more kudos. Normally being out of office implied a general moral judgement against the times; now it was evidence of opposition to specific, well-known evils.

As always, it is necessary to consider the individual personalities and outlooks of those involved in the general phenomenon. It is quite clear that the members of the proscribed faction varied widely in their attitudes towards holding office; if some of them grieved over being prevented from being able to actively serve the emperor, others were little troubled by the fact, while for yet others again the proscription came as a blessing in disguise. Chen Fan and Li Ying had long devoted their efforts to government, and had they survived the purge and been simply proscribed there is no doubt they would have fretted over not being able to continue doing
Yet in the chapter of biographies of the members of the proscribed faction there are few who survived the proscription and yet served in government after it was lifted. Of course, this is partly because Fan Ye picks out for discussion the more exceptional figures, many of whom were killed or committed suicide—men such as Du Mi 杜密, Wei Lang 魏亮 and Fan Pang 范滂 (137-169). One man who did survive the proscription and later took office was He Yong 何顒, who was highly regarded in the Imperial Academy and closely associated with both the government and student leaders of the faction. He survived by changing his name and living incognito until the proscription was lifted, but ultimately died in prison (in 190) after refusing to serve under Dong Zhuo.84

Given the high ideals professed by the proscribed faction, it is to be expected that many of them would have been inclined to remain aloof from active participation in government anyway, so that the proscription did little more than resolve any moral conflict they may have experienced concerning virtuous withdrawal. Guo Tai, for example never held office before the proscription, and despite being one of the leaders of the faction managed to avoid persecution. He prudently retired to his home and devoted himself to teaching, dying of natural causes only a year after Chen Fan and Li Ying. Given his personal history, there is every reason to assume that being barred from office would not have troubled him in the slightest.85 Liu Shu 刘馥 and Xia Fu 夏馥 also always studiously avoided direct political involvement, but they were nevertheless caught up in the persecution. Liu Shu committed suicide in prison, while Xia Fu managed to avoid a similar fate by going into hiding in the mountains, where he died before the proscription was lifted. It is quite likely that at least in personal terms both men would have welcomed proscription from
holding office. The same applies to Kong Yu and Tan Fu, who likewise repeatedly declined official summonses and recommendations, but survived the proscription and subsequently continued to evince a distaste for official duties. Both served only briefly in government.86

Perhaps the most famous of those for whom the proscription amounted to an official enforcement of personal inclinations was Chen Shi. Although in his youth Chen Shi had held minor positions in local government, he had high ideals and was fond of study and went to Luoyang to attend the Imperial Academy. When summoned again to be a clerk he went into seclusion in the mountains, but his family's poverty eventually forced him to accept a series of positions in local government, including that of county prefect. Implicated in the 'faction', he passed the duration of the proscription living contentedly in humble circumstances, still influencing those around him. When the proscription was lifted he was offered a number of senior positions, but excused himself by saying he had been cut off from affairs for too long. Ignoring an imperial summons, he remained in retirement until his death three years later.87

Two major intellectuals of the period affected by the proscription were Xun Shuang and Zheng Xuan. Xun Shuang had only just received his first appointment as Palace Gentleman in 166 when he submitted a memorial criticising 'opportunism' and resigned. He went into seclusion when the faction troubles broke out and for over ten years devoted himself to literary pursuits. When the proscription was lifted in 184 Xun Shuang ignored both official summonses and Minister of Works Yuan Feng's recommendation of him as 'possessing the Way' (though he mourned Yuan Feng for three years
after his death). He was summoned by Commander-in-Chief He Jin 何進 in 189, but He Jin was ousted from power and killed the same year. After Emperor Xian 元帝 (r.190-220) had been enthroned and Dong Zhuo 董卓 was in power, he was again summoned. Reluctantly he responded. Within three days he was promoted to Minister of Works, and remained in office until his death later in the same year.88

Zheng Xuan, it appears, was always more interested in study than official service. In his youth he resisted his father's irate attempts to force him to take a position as clerk in order to be able to spend all his time with his books. He attended the Imperial Academy for a while, then roamed the country for more than ten years, seeking out learned men everywhere. When the proscription was imposed and he was banned from holding office, Zheng Xuan lived in complete retirement, devoting all his energies to study of the classics. Although the proscription was disastrous for China's political stability, it could be said that it helped Zheng Xuan become the greatest scholar of the classics of his time by granting him some fifteen years of undisturbed study. After the proscription was lifted he was summoned by one strongman of the period after another. The first was He Jin. Zheng Xuan was compelled to go, but after only one night at court he left again. When Dong Zhuo made him Chancellor of Zhao, he was able to use the excuse that the road was cut by fighting and therefore he was unable to take up his duties. Next he was recommended as 'prolific talent' by Yuan Shao and appointed to a court position. These honours he likewise ignored. Then finally he was imperially summoned, made Grand Minister of Agriculture 大司農 and presented with an easy carriage. He excused himself on grounds of illness and returned home, dying in 200 as Yuan Shao and Cao Cao struggled against each other for political supremacy.89
This brief survey of the political proscriptions of the reigns of Emperors Huan and Ling, and a consideration of the outlook of some of the major figures involved, is enough to show that for the history of eremitism the proscriptions were significant in more ways than one. In effect, the proscriptions led to a form of compulsory eremitism which brought new prestige and significance to being out of office. The victims of the proscriptions came to be identified (though not by everyone) as moral heroes whose enforced retirement was direct evidence of their uncompromising opposition to political and social corruption, and whose standing was enhanced by the glory they shared with those who had died for their principles. For later generations they became symbols of an unwavering devotion to the highest ideals of personal conduct. Nevertheless there were significant differences among these men in their attitudes towards involvement in public affairs. A considerable number had previously avoided political involvement, and for them the proscriptions amounted to an official sanction which backed up their personal preference. For those of scholarly inclination the proscriptions presented, among other things, opportunities for extended periods of uninterrupted study. While the element of political protest was certainly very strong in the eremitism of the last part of the Han dynasty, it must not be assumed that other sorts of motivation and aspiration were lacking, even among Confucian scholars. Pushed along by the power of fashion, exemplary eremitism reached new heights, often appearing in an amalgam with the more politically earnest eremitism of protest. It is this particular mix of attitudes and ideals that I will discuss in the following section.
7. **Confucian Exemplary Eremitism**

The best example of the mix of attitudes which characterised Confucian eremitism of the last part of the Han period is Guo Tai, who as student-activist was one of the leaders of the Pure Faction, yet at the same time cultivated the role of a disengaged scholar. He was both a teacher and a trendsetter. Despite coming from a poor family and losing his father early in life, Guo Tai was never interested in an official career. When he was twelve sui his mother tried to persuade him to take a position with the county authorities, but he felt he was suited to greater things and said he wanted to study. To his mother's objection that they had no money he replied he would do it without money. Severe hardship did not deflect him from his purpose and three years later he was already widely accomplished. Some time later he made his way to Luoyang to attend the Imperial Academy, and there made an immediate impact thanks to his intelligence and learning, good looks and imposing build, eloquence and musical ability. Like everyone also, Li Ying, who was then Governor of Henan, was deeply impressed by him, commenting: 'I have met many scholars, but never anyone like Guo Linzong'. They became close friends. Guo Tai obviously shared Li Ying's views concerning the political threat posed by the eunuchs and imperial relatives, but he knew when to keep his mouth shut and avoided dangerous talk, with the result that when open conflict erupted between the Pure Faction and the eunuchs he was able to stay out of trouble. 'He shut his gate and gave instruction, his disciples numbering in the thousands'. Nevertheless, when Li Ying and Chen Fan were killed by the eunuchs he was grief-stricken.
Although officially summoned by Minister over the Masses Huang Qiong and recommended as 'possessing the Way', he always refused to accept a government position. In reply to an attempt to persuade him to change his mind he once said:

At night I consult the heavenly images [of the Book of Changes] and in the morning observe human affairs. What Heaven revokes cannot be retained. Right now it is the mingyi 順義 hexagram which applies, whose lines form the image of the straight not being used, the time when remaining hidden brings success. I am afraid of being a fish in the raging green sea. I shall dwell among the cliffs and return to the [true] spirit, inhaling, and by inhaling the Original Breath cultivate the arts of Boyang 比陽 and Pengzu 彭祖. Shall I worry or shall I wander? Without a care I shall end my years.92

The attention Guo Tai attracted and the admiration he commanded are vividly communicated both by his biography in the Hou Han Shu and the account of him in the Hou Han ji (though Fan Ye appears to have been less sympathetically disposed towards him than was Yuan Hong, presenting him as much more of a dandy). Once when he was out travelling, Guo Tai was caught in the rain, which made one corner of his kerchief droop down. Immediately his contemporaries were folding down corners of their own in imitation of the 'Linzong Kerchief'. At a time when he left the capital, officials and scholars came by the thousands to see him off, and at his death in 169 at the early age of fortytwo sui thousands came to mourn him. His funeral inscription was composed by Cai Yong, the most distinguished poet of the age, who is recorded as having commented: 'I have composed many funeral inscriptions, and each time felt embarrassed; only in the case of Scholar Possessing the Way Guo can I do it without blushing.'93

Not only was Guo Tai important as a moulder of public opinion and trend-setter, he was also famous for his knowledge of men, writing a major work on the subject and personally recommending many talented
and virtuous scholars for office. Appended to his biography are accounts of a number of these men, many of whom appear to have cultivated an eremitic lifestyle similar to his own. They include Meng Min 墨敏, Mao Rong 茂容, Yu Cheng 玉承, Fu Rong 徐融, Tian Sheng 田盛 and Xu Shao 许劭.94

Even from the limited information contained in the Hou Han Shu and elsewhere, it is clear that Guo Tai was a complex figure who embodied many of the characteristics and attitudes of the scholars of his time. Some of his attitudes appear contradictory, yet even those apparent contradictions were very much part of the contemporary scholarly culture. He refused to take office, yet was deeply concerned politically; cultivated the lifestyle of a disengaged scholar, yet was on intimate terms with the leading political activists of his day; started fashions in personal deportment and dress, yet took the ideals of his culture seriously enough to strive for perfect filiality in mourning; invoked the inevitability of change and decline when refusing the offer of an official post, yet spent much of his time searching out men whom he judged to have the moral and intellectual requirements for office. To dismiss him as an elegant poser is out of the question, yet a carefully cultivated, self-conscious elegance was very much part of his character. It is this combination of moral seriousness and studied elegance in Guo Tai, I believe, which makes him the epitome of Confucian eremitism of the last hundred years of the Han.

There are numerous examples of this sort of eremitism recorded by Fan Ye. The ones he regarded most highly he collected together in juan 53 as a sort of pantheon of those who were perfect in their judgement of when to serve and when to remain in seclusion: men such
The case of Huang Xian is interesting not only because along with Chen Fan, Li Ying, Chen Shi and Guo Tai, he came to be one of the models for the qingtan movement (and hence appears at the beginning of Shishuo xinyu), but also because it gives us some idea how a reputation for virtuous conduct could be acquired in this period. Huang Xian came from a poor, humble family in Shenyang in Runan; his father was a cow doctor. Once when Xun Shu was passing through Shenyang he met Huang Xian at an inn. Although Huang Xian was only 14 sui at the time, he deeply impressed Xun Shu in conversation. Xun Shu himself was renowned in scholarly circles for his integrity (as well as for his eight virtuous sons, one of whom was Xun Shuang), and when he praised Huang Xian as a veritable Tan Hui to Yuan Lang, a disengaged scholar from the same district as Huang Xian who later accepted a position as Merit Officer, the boy's reputation was assured. Once he had been 'discovered' by eminent men his fame spread quickly. In this as in so many other things the word of respected figures from the same district could prove to be crucial. Thus Huang Xian's reputation was greatly enhanced by men of the stature of Zhou Ju and Chen Fan saying to each other, 'If a month goes by without seeing Master Huang, pettiness again sprouts in my heart'. When Guo Tai visited Runan he called on both Yuan Lang and Huang Xian. In the case of Yuan Lang he did not bother to stay the night, while with Huang Xian he stayed several days before being able to tear himself away.
Praise by scholars who themselves had reputations for virtuous
conduct, learning and knowledge of men, was the principal way in which
a new reputation was formed. This mechanism was institutionalised in
the recommendatory system. Huang Xian was recommended as 'filial and
blameless' and was urged by his friends to go to Luoyang. He did not
resist, but went to the capital only briefly and then came home again.
Without ever having held office he died at the age of forty-eight.
Fan Ye comments that no details of Huang Xian's opinions and demeanour
were recorded, but all who met him were influenced by him, and echoes
the opinion that Huang Xian's virtue was beyond words.100

What is striking about Fan Ye's assessment of Huang Xian, and
that of his contemporaries as well, is that his refusal to serve his
ruler does not seem to have been a matter for consternation. While no
doubt a refusal to take office at this time could have been easily
justified by reference to the power of the imperial relatives and
eunuchs, there is no suggestion in Huang Xian's biography either that
he had a political reason for refusing to serve or that he was
expected to have one. His perfectly correct conduct and its influence
on others, it appears, was justification enough for his disengagement.
Huang Xian, in other words, was the Confucian exemplary recluse par
excellence: 'his peers all looked up to him as their standard'.101

Jiang Gong (96-173) was also widely acclaimed by his
contemporaries, and like Huang Xian was included by Fan Ye in his
chapter on exemplary disengaged scholars. He illustrates both the
prestige such figures enjoyed and the lengths to which they went to
make their conduct truly exemplary. According to Fan Ye, because of
his wide knowledge of the classics and astrology, Jiang Gong attracted
more than three thousand students. High officials competed to summon
him, but even in the case of an imperial summons with gifts neither he
nor his two younger brothers responded.

It is recorded that once when Gong and one of his brothers were
on their way to pay a call at the commandery offices, they were
attacked by robbers who were going to kill them. However, each
brother pleaded for the life of the other so earnestly that the
robbers spared them both, making off only with their goods and
clothes. When asked what had happened by the commandery authorities,
Gong made no mention of the robbers. The robbers got to hear of this
and, regretting the way they had treated such fine men, came to where
they were staying, begged for an interview, kowtowed in apology, and
tried to return the goods they had taken. Jiang Gong would not hear
of taking the things back, however, and, after entertaining them with
meat and wine, sent them on their way. According to another version
of the story, when the robbers made off with the goods they had
overlooked some money lying in the bottom of the carriage, so
Jiang Gong sent someone after them to give them this also, and when
the robbers refused to accept it he put it into their hands personally.102

Is this story mere fantasy? I see no reason to assume that it
could not be true. In terms of the mores of the times it is quite
conceivable that a gentleman set on behaving in an exemplary fashion
would use being robbed as an occasion for demonstrating his sublime
indifference to material things - even to the extent of handing over
to robbers things they had overlooked. That Jiang Gong was highly
regarded for his rather flamboyant demonstration of indifference to
the world is beyond dispute. When he failed to respond to an imperial
summons, Emperor Huan decided to settle for second best and dispatched
an artist to obtain his portrait. However, Jiang Gong refused to cooperate even to that extent: claiming to be suffering from dizzy spells, he remained in a darkened room under a coverlet until the artist had departed.103

The last illustration of Confucian exemplary eremitism from this period I would like to consider also features in Fan Ye's pantheon of disengaged scholars. This is the man who seems to have been the most highly regarded of them all: Xu Zhi (97-168). When in 159 Chen Fan was asked by Emperor Huan to rank in order of worthiness the 'five illustrious disengaged scholars of the world'104 - Xu Zhi, Jiang Gong, Yuan Hong, Wei Zhu and Li Tan - he replied:

'Yuan Hong was born in a noble family, has heard about the Way and gradually acquired some maxims. Wei Zhu grew up among Sanfu's righteous and proper commoners; he is the type of whom it is said that he stands upright unaided, refines himself without having to be worked on by others. As to Xu Zhi, he hails from the low-lying region of Jiangnan but stands out like an eminence. It is appropriate to rank him first'.105

Unlike Yuan Hong and Jiang Gong, Xu Zhi did not come from a wealthy family. In the manner of some of the more rigorous hermits of the Warring States period, he would eat only what he had produced by his own efforts. Despite the hard farmer's life he led, however, he still found time for study, and was an authority on the Spring and Autumn Annals, Book of Documents and Book of Changes, as well as various forms of divination and the apocryphal texts. Greatly admired for his frugality and unfailing adherence to what was right, he was five times summoned by the local Grand Administrator, four times recommended as 'filial and blameless', and three times as 'prolific talent'. When Chen Fan was appointed Grand Administrator of Yuzhang (c.156) one of his first actions was to invite Xu Zhi to
become his Merit Officer. Xu Zhi could not avoid accepting the invitation, but retired almost as soon as he arrived. Subsequently he was recommended as 'possessing the Way' and appointed Grand Administrator of Taiyuan, but did not respond to the imperial summons.106

Huang Qiong was one of the senior officials who summoned Xu Zhi to office, and had also been his teacher. When Huang Qiong first accepted office Xu Zhi had broken off contact with him, but when he died (in 164) Xu Zhi went to his funeral, sacrificed at his grave and left without telling anyone his name. The accounts in the Hou Han shu and the Hou Han ji of what happened after this are very different. Fan Ye says that Guo Tai realised that the mourner at Huang Qiong's grave must have been Xu Zhi and sent Mao Rong after him, apparently to try to persuade him to take an active role in public affairs. This is supposed to have prompted the famous remark, 'When a great tree is about to fall...etc.' But Yuan Hong's version makes much better sense and indicates a very different relationship between Xu Zhi and Guo Tai; he does not telescope everything together into one incident as Fan Ye does. According to him the mourners selected Mao Rong to go after Xu Zhi to ask his opinion about political events. Returning without having managed to get Xu Zhi to discuss anything other than farming, Mao Rong criticised him in front of Guo Tai, who leapt to his defence. It was sometime after this that Xu Zhi, anxious at the risks Guo Tai was running through his political activism, wrote to dissuade him from actions as futile as they were dangerous: 'When a great tree is about to fall a single rope cannot hold it up. Why then scurry about instead of remaining peacefully at ease?' This remark brought Guo Tai to a new understanding, and he hailed it as the words of a master.107
I will discuss the relationship between Guo Tai and Xu Zhi further in my Appendix. The important point here is that it appears that Xu Zhi's remark about the tree was not an expression of selfish unconcern, but rather stemmed from his worry that Guo Tai might become implicated in events he was powerless to control and die for nothing. As in the case of Huang Qiong, when the opportunity arose Xu Zhi showed his respect for Guo Tai, despite the fact that he did not share his political convictions. When Guo Tai's mother died—a poor woman of humble status—Xu Zhi went anonymously to mourn her, paying an eloquent compliment by laying fresh grass on her tomb in allusion to a poem in the *Book of Songs*.108

At the beginning of his reign (168), Emperor Ling wanted to pay Xu Zhi the high honour of summoning him with gifts and easy carriage, but Xu Zhi died before it could be carried out. During the Yongan period (258-263) a pavilion was erected by his tomb in honour of his virtue, while during the Song dynasty, the year after he was appointed Grand Administrator of Yuzhang, Zeng Gong (1019-1093) erected a temple in his memory.109

It would be possible to continue for some time to multiply examples of disengaged scholars from the last part of the Han dynasty, though few, inevitably, managed to rise to the exalted level of a Xu Zhi. Men such as Xu Zhi, Jiang Gong and Huang Xian were admired precisely because they were exceptional, because by force of personal example they reminded the common run of scholars that the highest ideals of their culture could and should be realised. At the opposite end of the scale, there were many charlatans. In fact, as Li Gu's letter to Huang Qiong shows, there was a disposition among the common people to believe that all disengaged scholars were charlatans.
Therefore to balance this discussion of exemplary eremitism in the last part of the Han I will conclude with a few examples of men who were somewhat less than sincere in their conduct.

In Fengsu tongyi, Ying Shao criticises Zhang Boda and Deng Zijing for posing as hermits in order to make a reputation which would win them all the trappings of worldly success they professed to disdain. They 'made a show of what was spurious and bragged of what was false, deceiving the age with a glorious name', he says. But of all the characters at the lighter end of the eremitism scale the most interesting is Xiang Xu, a descendant of the famous hermit Xiang Chang of Guangwu's reign. Xiang Xu was something of a madman as well as a student of Laozi, who went around with dishevelled hair hanging down to his shoulders, lived a spartan life and hid from visitors. He had a number of disciples whom he named after Confucius' great followers. Sometimes he went to market on an ass to beg, sometimes he would give away everything he had to another beggar, then take him home and provide him with good fare. Eventually he received a special imperial summons and was appointed Chancellor of Zhao. Everyone had great hopes about the transformation his lofty — if eccentric — example would bring about among the people of the region, but to their dismay on arriving at his post he began to ride about in a new carriage with splendid horses, and the suspicion took root that perhaps he had been a charlatan all along. Nevertheless, he managed to obtain a position at court, where he made himself unpopular by criticising others and offering facile counsel. In 184, when the Yellow Turban rebellion broke out under the leadership of Zhang Jue, Xiang Xu proposed that the rebels be pacified by sending an envoy to recite the Book of Filial Piety at them! His unsympathetic colleagues denounced him as a Zhang Jue.
sympathiser and had him put to death.

The exemplary eremitism discussed in this section was the most important variety of eremitism in the last part of the Han dynasty, by virtue of its fashionability and the attention it received from the scholars of the time, as well as its historical significance as the foundation for much of the eremitism of the Wei-Jin period and the Southern dynasties. I have called it 'Confucian exemplary eremitism' because it developed around the Confucian idea that in retirement a hermit can transform the customs of those around by the loftiness of his conduct, and the great majority of these exemplary hermits did strive to realise what were essentially Confucian ideals of conduct. However, this does not mean they did not also draw inspiration from other schools of thought. It is clear that Xu Zhi harked back to the doctrines of the School of the Tillers; the charlatan Xiang Xu made use of the doctrines of Laozi. In the next section I will consider the influence of some of these other schools of thought and the types of eremitism they engendered, not just in the final phase of the dynasty but throughout the whole of the Later Han.

8. The Influence of the Hundred Schools

A good history of Daoism in the Later Han period has yet to be written. Studies have been made of certain aspects of the development of Daoist thought in the period, but there has been no attempt at a comprehensive treatment. Here I shall raise only a few points directly relevant to the eremitism of the period. Of these, the main general point which needs to be stressed at the outset, as should be evident from the foregoing discussion, is that the spread of eremitism in the later part of the dynasty cannot be simply attributed to the growing influence of Daoism among the educated elite at the time.
While it does appear that Daoism gained in influence towards the end of the dynasty, and was associated with certain varieties of eremitism, it is not those varieties of eremitism which predominate in the surviving records concerning the outlook and attitudes of scholars of the time. Of course this is partly due to the biases of the sources, but what has to be emphasised here is that Confucianism did not necessarily lead to a determination to be actively involved in public affairs, any more that Daoism invariably led to socio-political aloofness and a refusal to take office.

Daoism influenced scholars in many different ways. One of the most important of these was the development of the concept of the 'hermit at court', which attracted some of the greatest intellectuals of the Han period. In this case, Daoism, far from leading to a refusal to hold office, was associated with an attitude of detachment from worldly concerns while in office. This will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. In the outlook of the hermits at court Daoist ideas blended happily with Confucian principles. This was also true of many other hermits. The charlatan Xiang Xu mentioned in the previous section was as insincere in the use he made of the teachings of Laozi as those of Confucius. Rather more impressive was the disengaged scholar Yang Hou (72-153), an expert on apocryphal texts and charts and the interpretation of omens and portents, who was recommended as 'proper and correct, possessing the Way', received a special imperial summons, and was highly honoured by Emperor Shun. He was allowed to retire on the pretext of ill-health after Liang Ji had tried to obtain an interview with him. Despite his very Confucian scruples against contact with Liang Ji and equally Confucian preoccupation with portents (which prompted numerous memorials to the throne), in retirement he 'cultivated [the teachings of] Huang-Lao'
and gave instruction to over three thousand students.\textsuperscript{112}

In Yang Hou's case interest in the doctrines of Huang-Lao corresponded with withdrawal from public affairs. Other major figures from the last part of the dynasty who combined Confucian and Daoist ideas without taking office were Fa Zhen 涼真 (100-188) and Shentu Pan. Fa Zhen is described by Fan Ye as 'fond of study but not associated with any particular school; his erudition embraced "inner" and "outer" texts, charts and documents, and he was a great Confucian of the lands west of the Pass'. His scholastic bent, however, went together with a 'quietistic nature and few desires', and an aloofness from social affairs. When recommended to the throne he was described both as 'embodying all four disciplines' (i.e. the Book of Songs, Documents, Rites and Music) and 'treading the lofty path of Master Lao'. He was imperially summoned four times, but to the end of his days remained in seclusion.\textsuperscript{113}

Shentu Pan's outlook was quite different to that of Fa Zhen. He seems to have been an unusual mixture of stern Confucian scholar and Zhuangzi-style social hermit. From a poor family, he earned his living as a lacquer worker, but had a wide knowledge of the classics and apocryphal texts and charts, and in his conduct was so refined and dignified he amazed even the discerning Guo Tai. He ignored the whole series of imperial summonses, but at the same time disapproved of those who, while not in office, criticised and disputed government affairs. Student activists at the time of the proscriptions, such as Fan Pang, he believed to be in the wrong. He commented that the last time disengaged scholars had debated public affairs (in the Warring States period) it had ended with the burning of the books and burial of scholars by Qin Shihuang. So Shentu Pan withdrew completely from
affairs, living in a lean-to he made next to a tree and associating only with labourers. Even Dong Zhuo found it impossible to bully him into changing his mind.114

The influence of Zhuangzi was stronger, however, in the case of Wang Zun (Jungong), who lived anonymously among cattle dealers; the extremist Tai Tong, whom I have already discussed; and Han Kang, who found to his dismay that even selling herbs for a fixed low price in the market place was enough to establish an unlooked for reputation.115

One type of hermit who drew on aspects of Daoism was those who pursued the arts of longevity and immortality. The number of hermits from the Later Han referred to as practising these Daoist arts is surprisingly small. It includes Su Shun, who flourished during the reigns of He and An, and of whom it is said that he 'was fond of the arts of nourishing life, and dwelt in seclusion in search of the Way'. Nevertheless he did serve in office late in life.116 Like Su Shun, Jiao Shen was a contemporary of Ma Rong, but was more firm in his commitment to eremitism. A student of Huang-Lao, he lived in seclusion in a mountain cave and practised the arts of longevity. After his death it was rumoured he had become an immortal, with reports that he had been seen out in the vicinity of Dunhuang.117

But the mysterious arts of the time were by no means limited to those specifically identified as 'Daoist'. One can get some idea of the variety of the intellectual world of the Later Han - and therefore the complexity of what I have called the scholarly culture or ethos - by considering the chapters of biographies of 'masters of the occult' (fangshi). In the accounts of these men the intermingling of
many different types of intellectual endeavour and schools of thought can be observed. Modern intellectuals might prefer to draw a sharp distinction between scholarship and knowledge of the occult, but in terms of the outlook of the men of the Later Han it was extremely difficult to separate the two. The cosmologies of even the most sceptical intellectuals still had to retain a place for the interaction and mutual influence of the human and nonhuman worlds.\textsuperscript{118} Thus many of the masters of the occult mentioned by Fan Ye— and they come from all phases of the dynasty—had reputations in fields of learning which may strike modern readers as rather disparate. Many of them lived in an eremitic manner, reconfirming the links between withdrawal into the natural world and occult practices which were part of the ancient tradition of shamanism.\textsuperscript{119} Not surprisingly, some of these occult hermits pursued the arts of immortality also.

The best example of a man who combined scholarly and occult knowledge is the recluse who was treated with self-abasing respect by Emperor Shun and yet turned out to be such a disappointment to those at court: that polymath of the arcane, Fan Ying. Fan Ying was an expert on Jing Fang's interpretation of the Book of Changes 京氏易, as well as other Confucian classics. However, he was also skilled in such things as divination by the winds, astrology, apocryphal texts, and the interpretation of portents.\textsuperscript{120} There was also Duan Yi (he lived probably in the reign of Emperor Ming) who is said to have been skilled in the Book of Changes, divination by the winds, and always knew the names of those who came to consult him before they arrived. Unlike Fan Ying, he never took office.\textsuperscript{121}
Liao Fu 孫讞 (fl. during the reigns of An and Shun) learned from his father's example the dangers of an official career. After his father (who was Grand Administrator of Beidi 仁軒) died in prison, Liao Fu espoused Laozi's principle that one's body is more important than fame, withdrew from the world and devoted himself to the study of a variety of fields, including classical texts, astronomy, apocryphal texts, divination by the winds, and other occult arts. He refused to become in any way involved with affairs, even to the extent of advising about portents.122

Other masters of the occult were not so averse to political involvement. One, Fan Zhizhang 翌季張, is said to have used his occult skills to assist in defeating the western Jiang 南 rebels in 165.123 Gongsha Mu 公沙穆 and Dong Fu 東馥 were both renowned for their knowledge of the occult and lived much of their lives in seclusion, but both also studied at the Imperial Academy and later took office.124 Others turned their attention to medical matters. One was the Old Man of Fu River (Fu Weng 沸翁), who lived in obscurity by the Fu River in Sichuan and practised acupuncture (he is said to have written a treatise on the subject). His own disciple Cheng Gao 程高 also lived in seclusion, but Cheng Gao's student Guo Yu 郭玉 became Assistant Imperial Physician at the court of Emperor He.125 Another famous healer was Hua Tuo, whom I have already discussed. He was regarded by his contemporaries as an immortal, but when Cao Cao forced him into public life he came to an untimely end.126

Although expertise in matters such as divination and interpretation of portents was keenly sought after by the court and officialdom generally, occult arts and the claim to possess them were
nevertheless sometimes considered a threat to the public interest and political order. Such was the case with a certain Liu Gen, an expert in occult matters who lived on the holy Mount Song, and was called before the Grand Administrator on suspicion of being out to hoodwink the people. In response Liu Gen gave such an awesome demonstration of his ability to summon up ghosts that the official begged to be punished for his error.127

Even more interesting is the example of Zhang Kai (c.80-c.149), the son of Zhang Ba (Grand Administrator of Kuaiji in the Yongyuan period, 89-104). Zhang Kai had a reputation both for his knowledge of the classics and his proficiency in Daoist arts, so much so that crowds of would-be followers blocked the street where he lived and even people from the inner palace, imperial relatives and members of noble families came to live in adjacent lanes. To escape them he went into seclusion, in the mountains, making a living by selling medicinal herbs. Eventually his followers found him out, however, and the place where he lived literally became a marketplace. Nevertheless, he continued to ignore official recommendations and a special summons (in 142) from Emperor Shun. According to his biography one of his skills was being able to create a mist that spread for five li. A certain Bei You, who could only create a three li mist, came to learn his secret, but Zhang Kai would have nothing to do with him. At the beginning of Emperor Huan's reign (147) this Bei You was arrested after using his self-made mists as a cover for robberies. In the subsequent investigations he testified that he had been using techniques taught by Zhang Kai, with the result that Zhang Kai was jailed for two years before the matter was cleared up. (While in jail he put his time to good use, studying and writing a commentary on the Book of Documents).128
In the previous chapter I mentioned a type of hermit in the Former Han who cast themselves in the role of 'friend and advisor' to the ruler and high officials, men who in the manner of some of the wandering scholars of the Warring States period refused to hold office but were not averse to providing advice and guidance to those with political power. In the Later Han there were a considerable number of such hermits. Like the 'free-lance' advisors of the last part of the Former Han (e.g. Mei Fu), they tended to give counsel in matters pertaining to portents and omens rather than military strategy or diplomacy. The widespread practice of earning a living through private teaching made it virtually inevitable that there would be those who sought no less than to make a pupil of the emperor himself.

Lang Yi (from the reign of Emperor Shun) made the most of the opportunities presented by the recommendatory system for haranguing the emperor. Like his father Lang Zong, Lang Yi was an expert on Jing Fang's interpretation of the Changes, divination by the winds, astrology, and various other methods for decoding the messages to man from Nature, but lived in seclusion. In 133, after there had been a rash of portents, Emperor Shun summoned Lang Yi, who had already been recommended as 'possessing the Way, proper and correct', to court. Lang Yi presented for the emperor's consideration three detailed submissions concerning the essentials of good government (which included honouring worthy hermits), the meaning of portents, and the basic principle that ultimately the restoration of cosmic order could be achieved only by the actions of the emperor himself. At the same time he recommended for office the disengaged scholars Li Gu and Huang Qiong. However, when a special proclamation was issued announcing a position at court for Lang Yi himself he pleaded illness and returned home.
Very similar was Xiang Kai, who lived slightly later than Lang Yi. He is described as being fond of learning, with a wide knowledge of antiquity and skilled in astronomy and the arts of yin and yang. In 166, acting in a private capacity, he submitted two memorials expounding a whole range of portents. He bluntly insisted that it would be necessary for the emperor to rectify his personal conduct and put a stop to the power of the eunuchs if things were to improve. Not surprisingly, there were those who were displeased with this outspokenness. Xiang Kai was imprisoned, but because Emperor Huan was convinced of his sincerity in interpreting the portents he only had to serve a two year sentence. At the beginning of Emperor Ling's reign he was rehabilitated. Chen Fan recommended him as 'proper and correct', but he did not respond. Nor did he do so when he was imperially summoned as Erudite during the Zhongping period (184-89), and remained at home until his death.

What makes Xiang Kai especially interesting is the philosophical openness which went with his eremitic lifestyle. Not only does he refer to Confucian, yin-yang, and various astrological concepts in his memorials, but also has no hesitation in drawing on Daoist and Buddhist teachings to get his message across. He refers to the fact that Emperor Huan had initiated sacrifices to Laozi and the Buddha yet failed to give any serious consideration to their teachings. Xiang Kai is an example of the remarkable eclecticism of many Han intellectuals.

In the previous section I referred to the continuing influence of the ideas of the School of the Tillers in relation to the great hermit Xu Zhi. There is evidence of that influence in the attitudes of others of the period. Perhaps the best example is Xu Zhi's son Xu Yin
who carried his father's ideals even further. When the period of mourning for his parents was over (they died when he was young), Xu Yin lived in seclusion in a forest, growing all his own food and for relaxation reading the classics. Despite the great hardship and deprivation he suffered, he resolutely stuck to his ideals and would not accept charity from others.132

However, it was not always easy to reconcile the conflicting demands with regard to personal behaviour that the various philosophical schools made on the individual. Especially the ideals of the School of the Tillers could present problems in this way. A good example of this is Wang Ba, from the reign of Emperor Guangwu. Wang Ba chose a life of noble poverty, farming for a living, and his ideals were shared by his wife. One day a former friend who was now Chancellor of Chu sent his son (who was also an official) to deliver a letter to Wang Ba. When the distinguished visitor arrived, Wang Ba's own son, who had been ploughing in the fields, was so overawed by this correct, sophisticated figure that he could not look him in the face. Wang Ba was mortified, and after the visitor had departed asked his wife's forgiveness for what he, as father, had inflicted on their children: it was one thing to choose a life of rustic simplicity for oneself, it was quite another thereby to turn one's sons into dishevelled country bumpkins who knew nothing of rites and propriety.133 Wang Ba's wife may have reassured him that he had done the right thing and should not feel guilty towards his children, but the moral dilemma was a very real one, and one might expect that moments of guilt and self-doubt continued to trouble Wang Ba. The same dilemma was to trouble Tao Yuanming (365-427), who in a final testament written for his sons was able to draw some solace from the words of Wang Ba's wife when facing up to the fact of the hardship he
imposed on his family by choosing to be a farmer rather than a government official. 134

If Wang Ba had difficulty in reconciling his commitment to a farmer's life with his duties towards his children, Zhou Xie (from Emperor Shun's reign) had difficulty reconciling it with his wish to be a filial son. He was an authority on the Book of Changes and the Rites, and transformed those around him with his exemplary conduct, but also insisted on being completely self-sufficient, eating nothing that he had not produced himself. Feeling that going off to dwell in isolation or forsaking the land of his parents was out of the question, he lived in a thatched hut built by an ancestor, on the crest of the ridge above his parents' fields, in which he laboured unceasingly. 135

Physical labour in agriculture, especially when it was motivated by the austere ideal of self-subsistence, was not considered demeaning for an idealistic scholar. However, to work in a junior capacity for the government, particularly at a local level, was considered to be so. This was partly because of the fact that a junior position subjected its incumbent to pressure from corrupt and inept superiors. As Zengzi said, 'To shrug one's shoulders and smile obsequiously is more exhausting than working in a vegetable plot in summer'. 136 But it was also because the lowliness of the position did not match the image of loftiness and talent many scholars had of themselves. The most striking example of this is Feng Liang, a friend of Zhou Xie who was orphaned early and at the age of thirty sui was employed in a lowly capacity by the county authorities. One day when he had been sent out to welcome the Investigator, the ignominy of his position suddenly dawned on him. He threw off his official cap
and gown, overturned his carriage, killed the horse and made off. It was assumed that he had been killed by wild animals or bandits, and ten years passed before anyone heard of him again. Less dramatic but quite as emphatic was the twelve sui old Guo Tai's response to his mother's attempt to get him to ease their financial difficulties by taking a position as county clerk: 'How could a man like me allow myself to be used as somebody else's lackey?'

Self-image and moral indignation could also operate in different ways. Thus Zhou Hsieh (111-160; the son of Zhou Ju, not to be confused with the Zhou Xie of his father's generation) went into complete seclusion when a former clerk of his father's, despite his unseemly behaviour and abuse of the rites, was promoted and was much more highly regarded than Zhou Hsieh himself. This initial decision was reinforced by the fact that Liang Ji was now coming to the height of his power, and Zhou Hsieh lived in isolation for more than ten years, 'emulating Lao Dan's purity and quietude'. He opened his doors to guests only after having a premonition of Liang Ji's death.

The evidence presented in this section gives some indication of the complexity and variety of scholarly culture in the Later Han period, and the readiness with which scholars wove together ideas and attitudes from numerous philosophical schools. Generally speaking, the notion of doctrinal purity or strict adherence to the teachings of only one school seems to have been contrary to the intellectual trend of the times, though certainly dogmatists did occur. As far as eremitism is concerned, however, it should be clear from the preceding two sections that the philosophical positions which led individual scholars to espouse eremitism rarely were constructed from the
teachings of one school only. Certainly in the case of many, Confucian considerations were dominant, but frequently it makes little more sense to talk about 'Confucian hermits' than it does to talk about 'Daoist hermits', 'yin-yang hermits', 'Tiller hermits', or even 'Buddhist hermits'. All these streams of thought intermingled, and generalisations which attempt to reduce the ideals and motivations of individuals to a matter of allegiance to any given philosophical school are to be avoided.

By way of conclusion of this survey of eremitism in the Later Han, I would like to consider in slightly more detail a figure who to me seems to embody many of the finest characteristics of Han eremitism, and that is Liang Hong. What makes Liang Hong especially interesting is that a number of poems he wrote have survived. Those poems not only give moving expression to his efforts to remain true to high ideals in a hostile environment, they also given unique insight into the complexity of the motives and attitudes that led men to become hermits.

9. Liang Hong

Liang Hong, styled Boluan 博讓, came from Pingling 平陵 county in Fufeng 狄郡 commandery. His father was enfeoffed by Wang Mang for his services but died while Hong was still young. By the time Hong began to study at the Imperial Academy (which had been re-established by Guangwu in 29 A.D.) his family was very poor. A scholar of great ability and encyclopaedic knowledge, he was not interested in 'chapter and verse' exegesis of the classics.
At the completion of his studies, instead of embarking on an official career, he tended pigs in Shanglin Park. Fan Ye does not tell us the reason for this. Those of a sceptical turn of mind might look for political reasons, such as that his father's association with Wang Mang made it impossible for him to obtain a post under Guangwu. However, what evidence there is indicates that Guangwu had no objection to giving office to those who had personally served Wang Mang, let alone to their sons. The Qing scholar Wang Mingsheng believed that Hong never took office in order to erase his father's shame, but there is no evidence that Liang Hong considered his father's association with Wang Mang shameful. That he chose to take up the lowly occupation of pig farmer suggests that his reasons were quite different, that if his father's life and death had taught him anything it related to the dangers and false values of official life, and that this led him to pursue Zhuangzi's ideal of the sagely hermit living anonymously among the common people. This is confirmed by the statement in the Dongguan Han ji that when Liang Hong was a student at the Imperial Academy he and a friend swore they would never become officials under imperial authority. (When his friend eventually did accept a minor post, Hong wrote a letter reproaching him, and they went their separate ways).

Whether or not he was a successful pigkeeper is not recorded. However, one day Liang Hong made the mistake of letting a fire get away, with the result that some houses were burned. He gave away all his pigs in compensation, but this was still not enough, so he asked to be allowed to work off the remainder. This was permitted and Hong slaved at his tasks from morning till night. His behaviour convinced those who had lost their homes that this was no ordinary man. They began to show him the greatest respect and attempted to return his
pigs. Hong refused to accept them and returned to his native place.

Back in Pingling Liang Hong met a soulmate in Meng Guang, a woman who was neither young nor pretty, but strong, and just as committed as he himself to a simple life of hard work and virtuous endeavour. When they were married it was she who reminded him of his ideals of 'living in seclusion to avoid disaster' and 'having no desires'. At Meng Guang's urging they withdrew to the Baling Mountains, where they lived by farming and weaving, and amused themselves by reading and playing the qin. Hong admired the noble hermits of bygone days and wrote eulogies for twenty-four of the most distinguished ones of the Han period. By so doing he served as an important model for that later hermit and recorder of the lives of lofty men, Huangfu Mi.

In spring 80 A.D., however, Liang Hong and Meng Guang moved east. The sight of Luoyang as they bypassed it inspired Hong to voice his disapproval of imperial extravagance and the exploitation of the common people on which it depended. The result was his song 'Five Exclamations':

I climbed that Beimang Hill
Oh!
Turned to gaze on the imperial city
Oh!
The towering peaks of palaces
Oh!
The hard labours of the people
Oh!
Stretch on forever without end
Oh!

Such audacity could not be tolerated. Emperor Zhang tried to find Liang Hong in order to silence him, but he managed to avoid arrest by changing his name and hiding in the western Shandong region for a while before moving on to Wu.
The sentiments expressed in 'Five Exclamations' are all the more striking because they were uttered during the reign of an emperor widely regarded as an enlightened ruler concerned about the welfare of his subjects. Thus Liang Hong's song must be interpreted as a condemnation not of particular abuses of the political system, but of the system as such, a denunciation of the iniquity of a system which enslaved the common people in order to provide luxury and excess for those at the top. It is a type of political protest which owes more to the radical social ideas of Zhuangzi and the Tillers than to Confucian reformist sentiments.

Liang Hong stayed in Wu for the remainder of his life. He attached himself to the great family of Gao Botong, earning a living by husking rice. However, when Gao Botong observed the perfect respect which Meng Guang showed for her husband, he realised that he must be an exceptional man and lodged them in his own house. Thanks to this unlocked for security, Liang Hong was able to write a work of more than ten sections. Eventually he became ill, and realising that death was imminent gave instructions that his wife and son should return to their native place after his funeral. He was buried near the tumulus of the ancient hero of Wu, Yaoli, because everyone believed that such a great patriot and a man of such integrity belonged together.

The picture which emerges from the material relating to Liang Hong is of a man who really did attempt to seek nothing but moral perfection, and had little more than the moral support of his wife to help make poverty and hardship bearable. We are fortunate in that one of his works which has survived is a poem he wrote when leaving the Lu - Qi region for Wu, for this poem communicates
something of the emotions and ideals which led this man to live the life he chose:

I am leaving this old state,
Travelling far,
To a distant destination,
In the south-east.
My heart is anxious,
Downcast and distressed,
My resolve is wavering,
Now weak, now strong.
Wanting a whip and carriage,
To speed me on my way,
I have the complaints of my vulgarity,
The slanders against me.
I fear the crooked have been raised up,
And set above the straight,
And all the former fine talk
Was so much empty prattle.
I certainly am free of shame,
At standing on my own,
But hope there in that other province
They honour worthy men.
Carefree I shall wander,
And roam pleasantly,
In the manner of Confucius,
Travelling everywhere.
Should I happen to see
Something that delights me,
I shall leave my cart
And travel by water.
I shall pass where Ji Zha lived,
There at Yanling
And search for Lu Zhonglian,152
By the ocean shore.
Though perhaps I shall not find
The lustre of their features,
With luck the power of their spirit
Will abide with me.
Now it is the last month of spring,
The flowers are lush,
The wheat is full and heavy,
Growing luxuriantly.153
I lament that this time of abundance,
Must soon pass away,
And grieve that this fragrance
Shall one day decay.
What troubles my heart
Cannot be stopped;
From lasting anguish
There is no respite.
Mouths gossip and clamour,
Spreading slander against me.
Apprehension fills me:
Who could remain here?
This poem reveals a mind which is far from having attained a
tsage-like mastery of the self and sublime indifference to the world.
What it communicates, above all, is a sense of continuing moral
effort, of Liang Hong's struggle to retain a hold on himself lest in
an unheedful moment he might slip back into the grip of desires that
he cannot eradicate. In other words, it enables us to see that purity
and quietude were ideals precisely because they were things which did
not come easily, that more often than not they represented only what
men would have liked to be, not what they actually were. But the
poem expresses more than this unending struggle against human
fallibility. There is also Liang Hong's sense of trepidation at what
he is about to undertake, his sense of personal isolation in his quest
for goodness - also expressed in his poem to his friend Gao Hui
which here leads him to turn for support to the spirit of the great
men of the past. There is his sense of the mutability of all worldly
things, including fame, and also, of course, his political criticisms,
which in this case owe more to Confucius than Zhuangzi.

Was Liang Hong a Confucian hermit, or was he a Daoist hermit? It
is possible to think of contexts in which the question might be of
significance. However, once we have gained some insight into the
motivations and ideas of an individual such as Liang Hong, we realise
that no straightforward enumeration of philosophical doctrines is
likely to account for his behaviour. Although he was influenced by
the teachings of various schools of thought, the final mix of ideas
was his own, the product of his personality and circumstance as much
as of intellectual endeavour. The same is true of the other hermits
of the Han period, about whom, unfortunately, we usually know
considerably less. But one group about whom we do know quite a lot is
the very articulate group of intellectuals who chose to adopt the role
NOTES

1. HS 72/3096. For a detailed account of the rise and fall of Liu Xuan, see Hans Bielenstein, 'The Restoration of the Han Dynasty II', Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 31(1957), 11-112.

2. HHS 13/513, 521-22.

3. HHS 13/539; also 13/526. On Wei Ao's respectful treatment of scholars and hermits, see also Yü Ying-shih, 'Dong Han zhengquan zhi jianli', 145-46; on his political career see Bielenstein, 'Restoration of the Han Dynasty II', 159-98.

4. HHS 13/535.

5. HHS 13/535, 537.

6. HHS 81/2668-70; HHJ 3/3b; DGHJ 16/11b; HYGZ 10C/173-74.

7. HHS 81/2670; HYGZ 10A/138.

8. The eclipse is mentioned in HHS 10/321, but there is no indication of the order for the recommendation of worthy men.

9. HHS 81/2666-68.

10. HHS 81/2670; HYGZ 10B/147, 156.

11. HHS 81/2668; HYGZ 10B/156. On Gongsun Shu's treatment of hermits see also Yü Ying-shih, 'Dong Han zhengquan zhi jianli', 149-50.

12. 'Dong Han zhengquan zhi jianli', 183. Emperor Guangwu's reliance on the support of scholars to consolidate his hold over the empire is discussed by Zhao Yi, Nianer shi zhaji, 4/79-80.

13. HHJ 1/8b.

14. HYGZ 5/69.

15. Cited in YWLJ 10/190; Yu, 183.


17. Bielenstein, 'The Restoration of the Han Dynasty IV', 31, makes the strange remark that 'Guangwu showed little interest in summoning scholars. He wooed recluses, but there met with spectacular failure'. Quite apart from the fact of the considerable evidence, already alluded to, that Guangwu attached great importance to winning scholars to his court, the implication in Bielenstein's remark that recluses as a social category were distinct from scholars is totally misleading. To woo hermits was precisely an attempt to win scholars to court - both the scholar-hermits themselves and other scholars who would hear of this courteous treatment of virtuous men.
18. HHS 83/2756-57. This is a good example of the fact that descriptions of hermits as 'men of the mountains and forests' or 'cliffs and caves' are not always to be taken literally. The famous hermits summoned by Guangwu were certainly not the type to be found living in caves. The citation is from LY 20.1. Fan ye also comments on the respect Guangwu had for hermits in HHS 67/2185.

19. HHS 83/2758. These two old men unsuccessfully tried to warn him off his ambitious undertaking.

20. Later scholars did not necessarily regard him with unqualified admiration. Thus Ying Shao, FSTY 4/2b, takes him to task for fighting a duel in his younger days with a district official who had publicly humiliated him.

21. HHS 83/2762; DGHJ 16/12b-13a. HHJ 5/8b-9b contains two edicts in Zhou Dang's defence, in which he is also likened to Xuyou, Chaofu and the Four Silverhairs.

22. HHS 83/2762; HHJ 5/9a; DGHJ 16/12b. According to the Li ji, 'There are Confucians who above do not (take the position of) subject of the Son of Heaven, and below do not serve the feudal lords' (Li ji zhengyi 59/443A).

23. According to HHS 83/2763, Yan Guang (styled Ziling 子陵) was also known by the personal name Zun 尊, and came from Yuyao 広越 in Kuaiji. As is pointed out by Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842-1917) in Hou Han shu jijie 號漢書集解 (Changsha, 1923), 33/5b-6a, the attribution of the name Zun to Yan Guang appears to be the result of him being confused either with Zhuang Zun (referred to as Yan Zun by Ban Gu), or Yan Zun (styled Wangsi 王士) from Langzhong 長中, who in fact served as Inspector of Yangzhou 楊州. This confusion also occurs in the commentary to WX 36/19a (but not to WX 39/22a-23a). The Kuaiji dianlu (cited in commentary to SGZ 57/1326) uses 'Yan Zun' when clearly referring to Yan Guang. On Yan Wangsi, as well as the texts mentioned in the Collected Commentaries to HHS, see HYGZ 12/218. Yan Guang and Emperor Guangwu as fellow students are discussed by Liu Lingyu 呂令書, "Guangwu Liu Xiu de taixue tongxue " (Shandong wenxian 中原文獻 6.7(1974), 29-30).

24. HHS 83/2763-64, also 48/1619; HHJ 5/8b; DGHJ 16/12a; QJHHS 663-64; GSZ C/la-2a. The late Tang text Wunengzi B/27-29 provides an imaginative account of Yan Guang refusing Guangwu's overtures: Yan Guang puts his case so strongly that thereafter Guangwu 'did not dare' to attempt to make Yan Guang his subject.

25. HHS 83/2764.

26. HHJ 8/18b-19a and DGHJ 17/5b-6a both have 晉 1

27. HHS 53/1740; HHJ 8/18b-19a.

28. In addition to the eighteen mentioned in Chapter 2, note 180, there were:

The two old men from Yewang 巷王二名 HHS 83/2758
Jing Dan HHS 83/2764-65; HHJ 7/10a
Gao Hui HHS 83/2768
Gao Huo HHS 82A/2711
Chunyu Hong HHS 39/1301
Feng Zhou HHS 82A/2718
Zhou Ze HHS 79B/2578
Liang Hong HHS 83/2765-68
Niu Lao HHS 83/2765-68

The hermit by the eastern sea 東海隱者, GSZ C/2a-b.

29. See HHS 39/1298-1300. On Liang Hong and Chunyu Hong, see HHS 83/2765-68, 39/1301. Liang Hong I discuss at length in Section 9 below.

30. HHS 80B/2613. Liu Yi's opinion notwithstanding, Emperor Ming does appear to have made some effort to honour worthy men and had some success in persuading them to come to court. According to HHJ 8/18a-b, as soon as he ascended the throne he bestowed marquisates on the senior officials Zhao Xi 趙喜, Li Xin 李新 and Feng Fang 樊防 'because of what they had undergone in the mountain forests'. Using King Gang as intermediary, Emperor Ming was able to persuade Wu Liang 吴良, a man of the strictest morality, to come to court; a little later the worthy Cheng Gong 慎果 (d.76 A.D.) also responded to a summons by easy carriage (HHS 27/942-45).

31. HHS 3/139 has 莽, while HHJ 11/13b reads: 莽, while

32. HHS 83/2757.

33. HHS 27/945-46; DGHJ 18/4a.

34. Chunyu Hong was a student of the Laozi who throughout the reigns of Guangwu and Ming lived an exemplary life among the common people, withdrawing to secluded places in the mountains when summonses to office became too frequent and importunate. In 76, the first year of his reign, Emperor Zhang issued a edict commending his conduct and instructing the commandery authorities to present him with twenty bolts of silk. After this he was summoned, appointed Gentleman Consultant, honoured and promoted. He died in office in 80. (HHS 39/1301; DGHJ 18/8b records tales of his virtuous conduct but makes no mention of his holding office). Sima Jun and Ru Yu were both treated with the greatest courtesy by Emperor Zhang after being recommended for office by Jia Kui 賈逵 (30-101). When Sima Jun retired due to ill-health and old age after serving as Palace Attendant 侍中 the emperor bestowed a Grandee's salary upon him. Ru Yu rose to become Chancellor of Lu, where his influence was such, we are told, that eight or nine thousand families went to live there in order to be under his benign influence (HHS 36/1240; DGHJ 19/7b; QJHHS 478).

35. HHS 64/2106, 83/2768-69; DGHJ 18/9b; QJHHS 474-75. Fan Ye comments that his father (Fan Tai 范泰, Marquis of Xuan 蘇) , while generally critical of the excesses to which
hermits went, had the greatest admiration for Gao Feng's unwavering devotion to lofty principles and indifference to the mean circumstances in which he lived.

36. HHS 83/2770.

37. HHS 83/2765-67; HHJ 11/14b.

38. One exception which might be said to fall into this category is the case of Jing Dan 丁耽. At the end of the Jianwu period (c.55 A.D.) five of Emperor Guangwu's sons who held the title of 'King' were living together in the Northern Palace and liked to keep retainers. Yin Jiu 錫就, a younger brother of Empress Guanglie 郭氏, was able to persuade them that on their behalf he would be able to get Jing Dan, who was famous both for his scholarship and purity of conduct. The worthy hermit was unable to avoid coming, and when he arrived Yin Jiu amused himself by giving him real hermit fare to eat: boiled wheat and onion leaves. Later, when Yin Jiu got up to go and his attendants brought in a palanquin, it was Jing Dan's turn to laugh. 'I've been told that King Jie 桀 [of Xia 夏] rode in a carriage drawn by men', he commented. 'Is that what this is?' At this everyone present blanched. Jing Dan returned home to live in seclusion and never again had anything to do with public affairs (HHS 83/2764-65; HHJ 7/10a; DGHJ 16/13a). However, Jing Dan's objections obviously were not against the person occupying the throne so much as those who misused the power and influence they derived from him.

39. HHS 83/2757.

40. HHS 83/2757; cf. HS 72/3097.

41. HHS 62/2069. The phrase 'speaking out while remaining fastidiously pure' comes from LY 18.8.

42. HHS 61/2042.

43. On this see HHS 61/2020; de Crespigny, 'The Recruitment System of the Imperial Bureaucracy of Later Han', 76.

44. HHS 61/2042; HHJ 18/2a.

45. Wang Mang is the obvious example of excessive power in the hands of imperial relatives, but by no means the first. See Zhao Yi, Nianer shi zhaji, 3/59-60. An important case of excessive power in the hands of eunuchs is that of Shi Xian 石顯 and Hong Gong 胡恭, who in the reign of Emperor Yuan brought about the death of the great scholar and statesman Xiao Wangzhi 小望之 (d.47 B.C.) and had such influence that much of the bureaucracy was afraid of them. See HS 78/3286-88, 93/3726-30; also Zhao Yi, Nianer shi zhaji, 5/95.

46. See HHS 2/98, 3/133.
47. HHS 39/1306-10.

48. HHS 39/1307; see also DGHJ 17/2b.

49. HHS 36/1241.

50. HHS 17/663.

51. HHS 46/1556-57; HHJ 17/3a. On Feng Liang, see section 8 below. HHJ 18/4b-5a records an extremely interesting discussion concerning the role of the spiritual influence of the Central Holy Mountain, Mount Song, in causing Gui Commandery to produce an exceptional number of outstanding virtuous men (including Xuyou and Chaofu). In the course of this discussion (which took place late in Emperor An's reign), Zhu Chong 諸尚, who was appointed Grand Commandant at the beginning of the reign of Emperor Shun, commented that none of the great worthies of Gui Commandery could compare with Zhou Dang of Taiyuan and Zhou Xie of Runan.

52. Some idea of the development of eremitism in the later half of the dynasty can be obtained from the number of hermits referred to in material pertaining to the reign of each emperor. I include here a list of the names of men mentioned as having reputations as hermits, whether or not they ultimately took office, according to the reign with which they are most closely identified. Such categorisation inevitably is somewhat arbitrary, as the majority of them lived under three or four emperors. Nor is the list intended to be exhaustive; it draws almost solely on Fan Ye's Hou Han shu (all references are to HHS unless stated otherwise). However, it does include those who adopted the role of 'hermit at court' and are discussed in Chapter 4.

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53. HHS 82A/2722; HHJ 18/2a–b. The commentary quotes Xie Cheng's 謝承 Hou Han shu concerning the men summoned together with Fan Ying. Kong Qiao lived in obscurity, cultivating his ideals and studying so enthusiastically that for a whole year he would not venture out of his gate. He ignored the imperial summons and died at home. Li Bing was also an eager scholar indifferent to wealth and fame. In his house people treated each other like honoured guests. The provincial and commandery authorities repeatedly invited him with all due ceremony, but he never responded; even when he was recommended as 'prolific talent' and appointed Grand Administrator of Shaoling 司隸, he did not go to take up his duties, and remained at home to the last. Wang Fu was slightly less unbending. He lived in seclusion in a hut in the wilderness, was recommended as 'possessing the Way', responded and became Gentleman Consultant thanks to his skill in interpreting portents and analysing the causes of good and bad fortune. But he retired on grounds of ill-health, and it was after this that Emperor An summoned him. However, he too remained at home until his death. Part of the text of
Emperor An's letter ordering that these worthies be summoned is included in Xie Cheng's passage concerning Lang Zong 郎宗, one of the two men who did respond to the summons. I include it here because it shows that while Emperor An may not have gone to the ceremonial extremes of the young Emperor Shun in feting hermits, he nevertheless did try to ensure that such men were treated with perfect ceremonial honour: 'When Lang Zong, Li Bing, Kong Qiao, et al., previously received the order summoning them they could not agree to lower their ideals. We fear that those responsible [for summoning them] carried out the order ineptly and that the ritual observances were not perfect, causing them to be men who found advancing difficult and retiring easy, hidden dragons who would not bow themselves down. Each is to be approached with fine rites and be escorted to the Equerry Office 太常, so that through them [the failings of] the state's government may be examined and repaired and Our deficiencies remedied'.

54. HHS 30A/1047-50; HHJ 18/2a.
55. HHS 59/1897-98.
56. HHS 60A/1953. According to the Sanfu jueluzhu, cited in the commentary, it was from Zhi Xun that Ma Rong gained his wide literary knowledge, and Zhi Xun was so impressed by his student's ability that he gave him his daughter in marriage. On Zhi Xun see also GSZ C/5b.
57. HHS 4/178.
58. HHS 5/210. HHJ 19/7b, records an edict from Emperor Shun asking senior officials to 'bring out into the open those in hiding'. Another edict from the brief reign of Emperor Chong in 145 commands the recommendation of those who are 'worthy and good, proper and correct, scholars who live in seclusion cultivating the Way' (HHS 6/273).
59. HHS 81/2685; HHJ 15/3a. The phrase 'hermit and great Confucian' probably derives from Xunzi. It was in response to this call that Li Chong 李重 was brought to court. Li Chong was a man of great rectitude who, despite his poverty, needed to be forced to accept a position in the local commandery administration and had refused to heed a summons from Emperor He. When he came to court and had been appointed Palace Attendant, he was approached one day during a feast by Commander-in-Chief Deng Zhi 段志, who admired him greatly, to ask his advice as to how he could summon outstanding men for high level appointments. Li Chong began to express misgivings concerning 'scholars who dwelt in seclusion with their hearts set on the Way'. At this Deng Zhi tried to get him to eat something in order to keep him quiet, which prompted Li Chong to stalk out indignantly. When he was warned later that by criticising such men in front of Deng Zhi he was not exactly gathering blessings for his descendants, Li Chong retorted that the realisation of ideals had to come before the well-being of descendants (HHS 81/2684-85; HHJ 15/3a-b; see also DGHJ 19/ja-b).
50. Li Gu was recommended by Lang Yi 蘭其 , who himself lived in seclusion by the sea and refused to accept official appointments despite being recommended as 'possessing the Way' and 'proper and correct' and also being summoned by Emperor Shun. (Lang Yi's father Lang Zong, referred to in note 53 above, had cultivated a similar lifestyle after briefly holding office; Zhen gao 14/4b-5a provides an account of his Daoist interests). A personal distaste for serving in office does not appear to have inhibited him from bringing other worthy men to the attention of officialdom, and in this he was like a number of his contemporaries. When recommending Li Gu to the throne he referred to him as 'the disengaged scholar Li Gu of Hanzhong 漢中' (HHS 30B/1070). Li Gu was forty years old at the time. On Li Gu see also HHJ 20/3b-4a, 21/2a-3a.

61. HHS 82B/2725. According to Fan Ye, Zhu Mu 朱穆 (100-163) was of the same opinion.

62. Huang Qiong was summoned by Emperor Shun in 127 along with two other disengaged scholars, He Chun 謩純, and Yang Hou 狄厚. According to Xie Cheng’s Hou Han shu, cited in the commentary, HHS 36/2082, He Chun, styled Zhongzhen 忠真, came from Shanyin 桑陰 in Kuijī. He was summoned ten times by the Ducal Offices 公府, three times recommended as 'worthy and good, proper and correct', five times imperially summoned to become an Erudite, and four times imperially summoned by the Equerry Office, but refused each call. Later he did go to court however, where he interpreted portents and had some influence on the emperor, before being appointed as Grand Administrator of Jiangxia 江夏. Yang Hou is discussed further in section 8 below.

63. Paraphrase of LY 18.8.

64. The great poet Song Yu 宋玉 is recorded as having said to King Xiang of Chu 楚襄王 (r.295-263 B.C.) that unlike another song composed at his court, the chorus of which could be sung by thousands of people, there were only several hundred capable of joining in the chorus of Song Yu's Yangchun baiKue 阳春白雪 because the tune was so lofty and refined. See Dui Chuwang wen 都 chaud, attributed to Song Yu, WX 45/1b-2b; Xiangyang qijiu zhuang 東陽耆舊傳, cited in TPYL 572/2b.

65. HHS 61/2032. There is an intriguing confirmation of Fan Ying's uselessness in government in HYGZ 10C/163, where Wei Heng 樊衡, an ex-student of his, uses it as an argument against taking office himself: 'As to Fan Ji qi and Yang Zhonghuan 仲涵 [i.e. Yang Hou], although they responded to the summons and invitation with gifts, in what way did they benefit the age? When [Zhong] ni 君聰 and [Meng] ke 孟軻 could do nothing they remained at rest. That is why [Zhuang] Junping and [Zheng] Zizhen 樊正 refused to lower their ideals'. Little is known about the other disengaged scholars referred to in Li Gu's letter. Hu Yuannan and Zhu Zhongshao are not mentioned elsewhere. It is possible that Gu Jihong is the Gu Feng referred to in HHS 36/1241, 79B/2581. Xue Mengchang is Xue Bao 許, who was
renowned for his filial piety when mourning his mother. He received a special imperial summons in 121, was appointed Palace Attendant, but asked to be excused from service on the grounds of illness. Emperor An bestowed presents on him and sent him home, where he lived to a ripe old age of more than eighty (HHS 39/1294-95).

66. HHS 63/2081. This passage is not included in the version of the memorial given in HHJ 19/8b-9a.

67. HHS 30A/1050.

68. HHS 82A/2724-25. A view similar to that of Li Gu and Fan Ye was also put by Xu Tianlin (fl.1205), Dong Han huiyao 東漢會要 (Taipei: Shijie shuju 1960) 27/298. The idea of the usefulness of the useless is developed in Zhuangzi, to which Fan Ye alludes.

69. HHS 54/1771. Yang Bing came from a family which had a tradition of eremitism. His grandfather Yang Bao had refused to serve Emperors Ai and Ping as well as Wang Mang, while his father Yang Zhen 楊震 (known as 'the Confucius from the lands west of the Pass' because of his learning and integrity) managed to resist pressures to take office until fifty years old, then rising to the position of Grand Commandant (HHS 54/1758-69; DGHJ 20/1a-b; QJHHS 402-04, 538). Yang Bing himself had a stormy career. Over forty before he responded to an official summons, he repeatedly resigned in protest against wrongs. It is important for an understanding of the case against him and Wei Zhu that Yang Bing had only recently (in 160) resigned from his position of Grand Master of Ceremonies 大司儀 in protest against the execution of Li Yun 李膺, who had memorialised the throne against the declaration of the Lady Deng 殷 as empress. (On Li Yun see HHS 57/1851-52; on Yang Bing see HHS 54/1769-75, HHJ 22/9a-b). Yang Bing's son Yang Ci 楊次 (d.185) and grandson Yang Biao 楊彪 (142-225) carried on the family tradition of establishing an early reputation for lofty eremitism and then going on to have a distinguished official career (HHS 54/1775-89; DGHJ 20/1b-2a; QJHHS, 404-06). Wei Zhu, who had ignored numerous other calls to office, remained in seclusion for the remainder of Emperor Huan's reign. Early in Emperor Ling's reign, however, it proved impossible for him to avoid responding to a summons as Chancellor of Donghai 東海. This was unfortunate for him in more ways than one, because as a result of both his own conduct while in office and that of his wife, he lost his former reputation (HHS 26/921, 53/1746-47; HHJ 21/3b, 23/5a; FSTY 5/5a-b).

70. FSTY 3/3a. Ying Shao compares him to such extremists as Chen Zhongzi and Bao Qiao.

71. HHS 34/1184.

72. On the response of these men to Dong Zhuo see HHS 35/1209, 53/1754, 60B/2005-06, 62/2057-58. On Han Rang see HHS 9/370, 53/1754, 62/2063, 70/2281, 72/2326, 2340, 74A/2376; on Chen Jí (a son of Chen Shi) see HHS 62/2067-68. All had been summoned the previous year (188) by Emperor Ling, along with
a number of others, but not one responded (HHS 53/1754, HHJ 25/7a). The Hou Han ji wrongly attributes to the summonses of 188 to Dong Zhuo. It also mentions that one of the men summoned that year was Li Kai 李CheckBox, who was widely regarded for his learning and filial conduct; he lived in seclusion in the mountain wilds and to the end of his days refused to take office (HHJ 25/7a-b).

73. HHS 64/2119; HHJ 25/17b-18a.

74. HHS 82B/2736-39. Hua Tuo's case contrasts sharply with Cao Cao's treatment of the hermit Hu Shao 何容 (163-250). Hu Shao responded to Cao Cao's summons early in the Jian'an period, but pleaded that he was an insignificant rustic and asked to be allowed to go home. Cao Cao gave his permission and went as far as to say: 'Men each have their own ideals, and those who go out (into the world of affairs) and those who stay at home (in seclusion) pursue different things; it is right that those who strive to the death and those who are refined and lofty should not bend to each other'. It may be that Cao Cao's magnanimous sentiments on this occasion have something to do with the fact that Hu Shao had stressed that he was of 'no use in military or in state affairs' (SGZ 11/362). What happened to the talented poet Bian Xiang 毕纘 is rather more typical: when he refused to bow to Cao Cao's will after having resigned his position in the disorders of the Chuping 秦未 period (190-194), Cao Cao ordered him to be put to death (HHS 80B/2647).

75. Chi-yün Ch'en, Hsun Yueh (A.D. 148-209): The Life and Reflections of an Early Medieval Confucian (Cambridge U.P., 1975), 70, states that the comments in his biography indicate that Xun Yue "was forced to lead an "underground" existence like many other anti-eunuch partisans" of the time. While it is quite likely this was the case, it is not what is indicated by his biography, which says that he 'pleaded illness and lived in seclusion', suggesting simply that he withdrew from affairs by choice.

76. Han ji 25/6b-7a. This passage is also translated by Ch'en, Hsun Yueh, 72. The quotation is from the Book of Songs, Mao 192, 'Zheng Yue 五月'. On Ningwuzi, see LY 5.21; Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu, Duke Xi 28, 30, 31. On Jieyu see above, Chapter 1, section 3.

77. See my discussion of Zhuangzi, Chapter 1, section 5.

78. HHS 83/2776-77; also GSZ C/10a-b. According to the Xiangyang ji 想陽記, cited in the commentaries to both HHS 83/2777 and SGZ 37/959-54, his correct name was Pang Degong 報公. See also Li Zhi 孫徵 (1527-1602) Zang shu 僜書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 66/1099.

80. On these men see SGZ 11/339-40, 350-60. Liaodong of course was not the only extremity to which people fled to escape the ravages of the Yellow Turban uprisings and civil wars. The early Chinese Buddhist Mouzi (Pingjin guan congshu ed., 1885) 1/1a, comments that 'following the death of Emperor Ling the empire was in disorder. Only Jiao province [in the far south] was comparatively peaceful, and the outstanding men from the North all went to live there'.

81. The major sources of information on the proscriptions are HHS juan 67 and HHJ juan 22-23. For more detailed discussion of the events and the figures involved see especially Jin Fagen, 'Dong Han danggu renwu de fenxi', BIHP 34.2(1963), 505-58; Rafe de Crespigny, 'Political Protest in Imperial China: The Great Proscription of Later Han, 167-184', Papers in Far Eastern History, 11 (March 1975), 1-36.

82. HHS 67/2188; de Crespigny, 'Political Protest in Imperial China', 34.

83. This observation was first made by Chen Yinke, 'Tao Yuanming zhi xianliang yu qingtan zhi guanxi', in Chen Yinke xiansheng wenli lunji (Hong Kong: Wenwen chubanshe, 1972), 381-82.

84. HHS 67/2217-18. On He Yong see also Ch'en Chi-yün, Hsün Yüeh, 28-29.

85. HHS 68/2226. I discuss Guo Tai in more detail in section 7.

86. HHS 67/2213, 2215; HHJ 22/15a-b. There is some confusion concerning the case of Tan Fu. See de Crespigny, 'Political Protest in Imperial China', 29. On Xia Fu as a Daoist figure, see Chen gao 12/11a.


89. HHS 35/1207-12; HHJ 22/6b-7a.

90. For example, see Shentu Pan's criticisms of Fan Pang, Cen Zhi et al., HHS 53/1752 and HHJ 22/16a-b; Ying Shao's criticisms of Du Mi, FSTY 5/7a-b; and Ge Hong's criticisms of Guo Tai, Baopu xi, waipian 46/1a-3b.

91. HHS 68/2225-26; HHJ 23/8b-9a.

92. HHJ 23/12b. HHS 68/2225 cites only the first two sentences.
93. HHS 68/2227. Cai Yong's inscription, 'Guoyoudao beiwen', is included in WX 58/9a-11b.

94. HHS 68/2229, 2232-35. On Fu Rong see also HHJ 23/9a, DGHJ 21/3b, QJHHS 225-27; on Meng Min see HHJ 23/10a and the commentary to SSXY 3B/23a-b; on Mao Rong see HHS 53/1747, 68/2228, HHJ 23/9b; on Xu Shao see QJHHS 128-29. Like Guo Tai, Xu Shao was famous for his knowledge of men and wrote a book on the subject. See Yu Ying-shih, 'Han Jin zhi ji shi zhi xin ziju yu xin sichao', orig. published in Xinya xuebao (1958), rpt. in Yu, Zhongguo zhishi jieceng shilun, 236-43.

95. SSXY 1A/1b.

96. Xun Shu was summoned during Emperor An's reign, but served only briefly before retiring. Recommended as 'worthy and good, proper and correct', in 154 he again came to court, where he criticised Liang Ji. Liang Ji removed him by having him appointed Chancellor to the Marquis of Langling. Xun Shu soon resigned, and lived at home in seclusion until his death. His eight sons included Jing, who never held office, conducted himself with perfect propriety and was known as the Master of Profound Conduct. See HHS 62/2049-50; HHJ 21/8b; QJHHS 640-41; GSZ C/11a; SSXY 1A/2a; Ch'en, Haun Yueh, 24-28.

97. In the transmission of the Hou Han shu there has been some confusion between Yuan Lang and Yuan Hong. (see textual notes, HHS 53/1756). Yuan Lang, styled Fenggan, several times ignored calls to office 'but did not cultivate exceptional principles'. He finally accepted a position as Merit Officer and was widely respected (HHS 56/1820; also SSXY 1A/1a-2a, 13a-b, 15a-b). On the other hand, Yuan Hong, styled Xiafu (128-184), was a man of extremely strict ideals who was one of the most famous hermits of the age. Renowned for his uncompromising integrity and the filial piety he showed in mourning his father, he ignored a series of imperial summonses and devoted himself to farming and study. When the struggle between the Pure Faction and the eunuchs turned nasty, he reconciled a desire to withdraw completely from society and his duty towards his mother by building a sod hut in the courtyard of their home and remaining in it for the last eighteen years of his life. In that time he refused to see even his brothers, wife and children, paying his respects daily only to his mother (HHS 45/1525-26, 53/1746, 68/2226; HHJ 22/3a, 22/15b-16a, 23/4a; QJHHS 66-77; GSZ C/8b). Ying Shao criticises Yuan Hong for his extremism in FSTY 3/3b-4a. Yuan Hong's brother Yuan Hung, styled Shaofu, likewise refused all his life to have anything to do with public affairs. Ashamed at coming from a rich and powerful family, he changed his name and went to live with his teacher (HHS 45/1526-27).

98. HHS 53/1744. Both HHJ 23/14a-b and SSXY 1A/1b attribute this remark to Zhou Cheng (styled Ziju), also a contemporary of Chen Fan (see HHS 61/2023; QJHHS 476).
99. HHS 53/1744; HHJ 23/10a-b; SSXY 1A/1b-2a.

100. HHS 53/1745. The Siku quanshu zongmu (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1969), 124/2a-3a lists Tianluge waishi 禪佛 婆 婆 (320-385), the hermit and ultimately great statesman of Eastern Jin. That both the text and the poem are late forgeries is confirmed by Fan Ye's statement (some fifty years after Xie An's death) that nothing of Huang Xian's thought was recorded.

101. HHJ 23/14b. One of the people influenced by Huang Xian's noble conduct was Dai Liang 子良, who came from the same county and took up the role of virtuous hermit very seriously indeed. As a young man he was given to boasting about his personal purity, which his mother attempted to stop by braying like a donkey each time he did so. Whenever he saw Huang Xian he was always proper and correct, but would come home deflated, looking as if he had lost something, so that his mother would ask, 'Have you been to see that cow doctor's son again?'. Dai Liang would have to confess that he was not Huang Xian's equal. Unfortunately, neither the influence of his mother nor of Huang Xian seems to have been permanent: when asked later with whom he would compare himself, Dai Liang could think only of Confucius and Yu the Great (HHS 53/1744, 83/2772-73; HHJ 23/14b; SSXY 1A/1b).

102. HHS 53/1749. The incident concerning the money overlooked by robbers appears in Xie Cheng's Hpu Han shu (cited in the commentary to Fan Ye) and HHJ 22/3a. See also QJHHS 83-85, 401.

103. During the political machinations which followed the death of Emperor Huan, Jiang Gong was summoned to be appointed Grand Administrator, but he ignored the call and went to live in seclusion by the coast. When summoned by the young Emperor Ling (who extended to him the honour of writing out the edict in his own hand) he disappeared completely, living incognito and practising divination for a living. When the edict was finally revoked his family had no idea where he was and it was not until a year later that he appeared again. See HHS 53/1750; HHJ 23/5a; FSTY 5/5a-b.

104. The phrase is from Xie Cheng's Hou Han shu, cited in the commentary to HHS 53/1748.

105. HHS 53/1746-47.

106. HHS 53/1746 (also Xie Cheng's Hou Han shu, cited in the commentary); SSXY 1A/1a-b; QJHHS 80-82, 389-99.

107. HHJ 22/2a-3a; contrast HHS 53/1747.

108. HHS 53/1747-48; HHJ 23/11b. The grass was an allusion to the Book of Songs, Mao 186: 'a bunch of fresh grass/its owner is like jade'.
109. HHS 53/1748. Zeng Gong's "Xu Ruzhi xia congshu jian" (1877; rpt. Shiwu jia nianpu congshu, Yangzhou, n.d.), 1/7b-11a. Nevertheless, the praise for Xu Zhi was not universal: Ying Shao criticises his extreme behaviour in FSTY 3/4a-b.

110. FSTY 3/3b.

111. HHS 81/2693-94.

112. HHS 30A/1047-50; see also QJHHS 223-24; HHJ 18/2a.

113. HHS 83/2774; also 26/906, 44/1505; QJHHS 178. YWLJ 37/657 contains a funerary inscription for Fa Zhen attributed to Hu Guang. However, Hu Guang died in 172, sixteen years before Fa Zhen. In expression the inscription is very similar to the remarks attributed in HHS 83/2774 to Fa Zhen's friend Guo Zheng, who is further said to have engraved his eulogy on stone. Most likely, therefore, YWLJ gives a more complete version of Guo Zheng's eulogy.

114. HHS 53/1750-54; HHJ 22/16a-b, 25/7b-8a; QJHHS 85-86, 401-02.

115. See HHS 83/2760, 2770-71; GSZ C/3b-4a; Xi Kang's Gaoshi zhu'an, 418; QJHHS 474.

116. HHS 80A/2617.

117. HHS 83/2771-72. The scarcity of such figures in the major historical texts is of course a reflection of the essentially Confucian perspective of their authors. This intellectual bias can to some extent be countered by an examination of Daoist texts such as Tao Hongjing's Zhen gao and Zhang Junfang's Zhaoguang (10th and 11th centuries). Yunji qigian, which contain numerous accounts of Daoist adepts and masters. A considerable number of those said to have lived in the Han period are not mentioned in any of the histories. (See Zhen gao, juan 12-14, and Yunji qigian [Daozang ed.], juan 203-16). To establish the historical veracity of these accounts would not be easy, and certainly the feats and accomplishments attributed to their subjects do not encourage much credence. However, it is unlikely that the people involved were purely fictitious, even if some of the things they are said to have done are improbable. Many are described as having gone to live in the mountains, but it is important to note that this in itself is not enough to warrant our regarding them as hermits. As I have argued in Chapter 1, shamans went into the mountains and forests in quest of spiritual powers, just as these Daoists are said to have done, but that did not make them hermits. Essential to eremitism is the idea of aloofness or detachment from a world believed to be corrupt, coupled with the aim of moral self-perfection. This is an idea to which a shaman or Daoist in quest of longevity might or might not subscribe.
118. The obvious example here is Wang Chong 三豊 (27-c.97), author of *Lun heng* 論衡 (SBBY ed.; hereafter LH). Modern commentators make much of Wang Chong's 'scepticism', but it is important to realise that his scepticism was limited in focus: Wang Chong accepted the cosmology of Five Phase theory and the principle of the interaction of all things, with like influencing like. What he rejected was the idea that there was a moral force or agent (such as Heaven) which controlled or guided events towards moral ends.

119. See chapter 1, section 5. On the intellectual and political role of masters of the occult in Han times see Gu Jiegang, *Qín Hán de fāngshì yú rúshēng* 秦漢的方士儒生 (rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1978). Material relating to fāngshì has been translated by Kenneth J. Dewoskin, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China* (Columbia U.P., 1983).

120. HHS 82A/2721.
121. HHS 82A/2719.
122. HHS 82A/2719-20.
123. HHS 82B/2732.
124. HHS 82B/2730-34.
125. HHS 82B/2735.
126. HHS 82B/2736-39.
127. HHS 82B/2746.
128. HHS 36/1242-43. This Zhang Kai (whose family came from Shu) is not to be confused with another Zhang Kai (from Henan) who at the beginning of Emperor Shun's reign was accused of plotting rebellion (HHS 48/1605).
129. See Chapter 2, note 38.
130. HHS 30B/1053-75.
131. HHS 30B/1075-85. On Xiang Kai and his ideas, see Rafe de Crespigny, Portents of Protest in the Later Han Dynasty: The Memorials of Hsiang K'ai to Emperor Huan (Canberra: Oriental Monograph No.19 of the Faculty of Asian Studies, ANU, 1976); also de Crespigny, 'Politics and Philosophy Under Emperor Huan', 65-68.
132. Xie Cheng's *Hou Han shu*, cited in commentary to HHS 53/1748.
133. HHS 84/2782-83.
135. HHS 53/1742; also QJHHS 537-38.


137. HHS 53/1743; HHJ 17/3a. Similar actions are attributed to Zhao Ye from the reign of Emperor Zhang (HHS 79B/2575).

138. HHS 68/2225. Such sentiments were also expressed by Feng Meng early in the Wang Mang period (HHS 83/2759).

139. HHS 61/2031.

140. Unless otherwise stated, all details concerning Liang Hong come from his biography in HHS 83/2765-68.

141. See Bielenstein, 'Restoration of the Han Dynasty IV', 30.

142. Wang Mingsheng, Shi shi shangjue 38/327.

143. DGHJ 18/9a. It is quite likely that Liang Hong's decision to become a pig farmer owes something to the fact that in the inner chapters of Zhuangzi Liezi is said to have tended pigs for three years, and thereby regained primordial simplicity (ZZ 7/29-31).

144. HHJ 11/15a refers to her ugliness but not her strength, and emphasises that because of her nobility of character she was highly sought after as a match.

145. HHJ 11/15b has Meng Guang saying while HHS 83/2766 has . The former seems to make better sense.

146. It appears that they quickly became known as the model couple with their hearts set on high ideals rather than material comfort and status. According to HHS 84/2796, Ma Rong's daughter Ma Lun referred to them as such in the course of an argument with her husband Yuan Wei. This would have been some fifty or sixty years after Liang Hong's death. On the other hand, QJHHS 224 attributes the same remarks to Yuan Wei's daughter after her marriage to Zhang Feng, a hermit of last decades of the dynasty. Zhang Feng's younger brother Biao shared his values and also had a reputation as a hermit.

147. Of Liang Hong's work a fragment of only eight characters has survived in Li Shan's commentary to Shu Xi's 'Shen wang shi', and Xie Lingyun's 'Xue fu', WX 19/17b and 13/12b. The fragment is from 'Anqiu Junping song', which as Yan Kejun (Quan Hou Han wen 32/9a) points out, must have been in praise of Anqiu Wangzhi and Zhuang Junping. See also Hou Han shu 83/8b. Huangfu Mi refers to Liang Hong's work in his postface to Gaoshi zhuan. See also Yao Zhenzong, Bu Hou Han shu yiwenzi (1889, n.p., n.p.), 2/65a-b, 4/48a.
148. HHJ 11/14b dates 'Five Exclamations' from around the fifth month of the fifth year of Jianchu: June 80 A.D. It also states that after Emperor Zhang had failed to find him, Liang Hong fled to Kuaiji. Since the poem he wrote on the eve of his departure for Wu contains the line 'it is the last month of spring', it would appear that Liang Hong and Meng Guang remained in Shandong until April 81. Hou Han shu jijie 83/9a cites Hui Dong's observation that TPYL57/2a and Sanfu jueyu zhu (quoted by Guo Mouqian Yuefu shiji 楚辭集箋 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979] 85/1193) record Emperor Zhang's response to the poem as being 'sorrow' (bei 悽) rather than 'condemnation' (fei 舦) and that therefore the text of the Hou Han shu must have become corrupt. However, other than a wish to preserve Emperor Zhang's good name as a ruler who sought out virtuous and talented men, there is little that could lead to such a conclusion. If the emperor's reaction was indeed one of sorrow, it is difficult to see why he would instigate a search for Liang Hong or why Liang Hong would go into hiding. Besides, HHJ 11/14b also states that Emperor Zhang condemned the poem. The political outspokenness of Liang Hong's poem has helped it to win praise in the People's Republic. Thus in Han Wei nanbeichao shi xuanzhu published by the Beijing Publishing Company in 1981, it is one of a mere dozen or so poems by identified Han poets selected for inclusion.

149. The bibliographical section of the Sui shu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973) 35/1057 mentions Liang Hong ji in 2 juan, which presumably included his pieces in praise of earlier hermits. No trace of it has remained. See also Yao Zhenzong, Bu Hou Han shu yiwenzhi 2/65a-b, 4/48a.

150. On Yaoli see LSCQ 11/5b-6b; Shuo yuan 12/4a; Xin xu 3/10b. For his ruler, the King of Wu, he killed Prince Qingji 聶君, then committed suicide because he regarded his action shameful and the king unjust and unrighteous.

151. On Ji Zha see Chunqiu Zuo zhuang zhu, Duke Xiang 29, 31, and Shao 27; SJ 31/1449-75; Xin xu 7/2b-4a; Shuo yuan 7/21a-b, 8/2a, 14/2a-b, 19/5a. He was a younger brother of King Zhufan 趙彥 of Wu, whose position he is said to have declined. He was enfeoffed at Yanling (in modern Changzhou 常州 in Jiangsu).

152. On Lu Zhonglian see chapter 1, note 62.

153. There is some textual uncertainty about this couplet. Some commentators have argued that 春是 an error, but everyone appears to agree that 'spring' 春 is correct. (See Beitang shuchao 北堂書抄 [Guangzhou: Fuwen zhai, 1888], 154/3a). This is of some interest as it bears on the precise date of Liang Hong's departure for Wu. If it was indeed the last month of spring, it is difficult to see how wheat could have been ripening in western Shandong when he left (the last month of summer 末夏 would be more likely). On the other hand, setting the poem in the last month of spring would have given it a special poignancy for Liang Hong's readers, for that was the month in which the ruler was
supposed to summon worthy men to office (see Li ji zhengyi 15/135B). In general terms the poem owes a lot to the Chu ci: its theme of the unappreciated, slandered worthy, the motif of the journey, and its form (couplets of six syllable lines with the empty particle xi occupying the fourth place in each line). But it has a personal directness and emotional intensity unmatched by the Chu ci songs.

154. This has been eloquently argued by Lu Xun, "Ti weiding" cao, qi, Lu Xun quanji, 6/339-45; trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, Selected Works of Lu Hsun, 4/229-35.

155. This poem was written after Liang Hong left Fufeng for the east:

Birds call to each other
In times of friendship;
Recalling your loftiness
I am filled with yearning;
I think of you Hui,
And tenderness wells up in me.
CHAPTER FOUR

EREMITISM AT COURT

1. Dongfang Shuo and Yang Xiong

The idea of eremitism at court was an invention of the Han dynasty, and no account of Chinese eremitism could be complete without giving it careful consideration. The first person to claim to be a hermit at court seems to have been Dongfang Shuo, poet and courtier during the reign of Emperor Wu, and the initial formulation of the relevant concepts can with reasonable confidence be attributed to his irrepressible wit.

Professor Li Chi had characterised the notion of eremitism at court as involving a compromise, a compromise which is understandable enough in terms of the historical situation in which Chinese intellectuals found themselves, but nevertheless not particularly admirable:

...from as early as the Han there had developed for those who because of pressure or reluctance could not give up the world a theory of retiring while in one's official position. Such men may not rightly be called recluses since they do not seclude themselves from society; nevertheless they regarded themselves as yin because their attitude was basically opposed to that of other officials... Since dying for one's principles was folly and complete acceptance of the world was impossible, a compromise lay in seeking physical comfort while retaining a non-cooperative spirit.1

It might be questioned whether the notion of being a hermit at court is necessarily as insincere or cynical as Professor Li assumes. After all, Zhuangzi had taught that a true sage hides himself among the people, that true eremitism is a state of mind, a matter of complete detachment from worldly things. This doctrine was earnestly expounded
and practised with complete sincerity by men such as Zhuang Zun and Li Hong. Could it be that the idea of eremitism at court was an extension of Zhuangzi's principle of eremitism in the market place? Did Dongfang Shuo make a serious attempt to live according to Zhuangzi's ideals, or was he no more than a charlatan who said whatever suited his purpose?

Dongfang Shuo became the subject of a considerable corpus of folklore and legend which began to circulate even in his own lifetime. Even the earliest extant account of his life — that interpolated into the Shi ji by Chu Shaosun c. 55 B.C. — contains a lot of fanciful detail, most of which was rejected by Ban Gu when compiling the more sober account now included in the Han shu. However, as well as recording traditions as dubious as the one that Dongfang Shuo's application for an official post filled a whole cart and took the emperor two months to read, Chu Shaosun also mentions that when Dongfang Shuo's eccentric and unruly behaviour led his fellow courtiers to call him crazy, he replied, 'People like me are known as those who escape the world by taking it easy at court'. Chu Shaosun also states that once when Dongfang Shuo was lying drunk on the floor he sang:

Immerse yourself in the commonplace,
Escape the world through the Bronze Horse Gate.
In palace halls you can escape the world and preserve yourself:
What need is there for deep mountains and thatched huts?

However, the main source of information concerning Dongfang Shuo's ideas is his own writings. One of these, 'Reply to a Guest's Objection' (Da ke nan 答客難) is paraphrased by Chu Shaosun and quoted in full by Ban Gu. In this piece Dongfang Shuo offers a witty explanation of how it is that a man of his outstanding ability came to
occupy a position no higher than that of Gentleman (lang 章). The argument he produces was to be invoked repeatedly by later writers. Dongfang Shuo says that unlike the Warring States period, when a state's survival depended on its ability to attract and employ capable men in the face of fierce competition from other states, the empire now is at peace and all things are orderly and harmonious. There is therefore a glut of talented men, and all that remains open to a man such as he is to devote himself to self-cultivation. Yet the age is so enlightened as to make recluse anachronistic, and to try to emulate Xuyou or Jieyu would simply be to fail to adapt to the changing times. Even more direct and provocative is his 'Poem Admonishing His Son' (jie zhi shi 楚子皙):

Bright people stay in the world,
Esteeming nothing higher than the mean.
At ease, at leisure,
Follow along the Way.
The Shouyang affair was stupid,
Liuxia Hui was smart.
Eat your fill and walk in safety,
Replace farming with an official's duties.
Incline to eremitism but play along with the age,
Fool the times, and don't meet them head on.

Those who exhaust their talents put themselves in danger,
Those fond of fame win glory.
Life is burdensome when you are one of the crowd,
Harmony is lost when you have exceptional status.
Give away your surplus and there won't be a shortage,
Deplete your resources and shortcomings will be many.
The way of the sage
Is one with that of the dragon and snake:
His form may be seen but his spirit remains hidden,
He changes along with things,
Does what fits the times,
And has no fixed dwelling place.

Superficial similarities notwithstanding, I believe it would be a mistake to regard sentiments such as these as a serious application or elaboration of Zhuangzi's ideas. Ultimately Dongfang Shuo did not take hermitism any more seriously than the responsibilities of office
or social conventions; he certainly did not have the perfect self-control essential to Zhuangzi's invisible hermit. Dongfang Shuo was a wit and eccentric, an inveterate jester who was almost too clever for his own good. His buffoonery and flamboyant disregard for propriety, as instanced in the way he almost lost his life through drunkenness and pissing in the palace—such things would have been regarded by Zhuangzi as suicidal self-indulgence. Dongfang Shuo may have been content with mediocrity, but only if it was comfortable, and clearly believed that desires should be satisfied rather than repressed. (It may be that experience of hardship in his youth had something to do with this). As far as his significance for the history of eremitism is concerned, it is difficult to fault the shrewd assessment by Yang Xiong:

> When sagely speech and sagely conduct do not meet with the right time we have the eremitism of a sage. When worthy speech and worthy conduct do not meet with the right time we have the eremitism of a worthy. When jokes and pranks do not meet with the right time we have the eremitism of a clown.

Dongfang Shuo formulated the idea of eremitism at court without taking it very seriously. For him it was useful as a way of justifying the predilections he happened to have, and that was enough. If we are to look for an attempt to take up this idea seriously, it must be in the life and work of none other than Yang Xiong himself. I have already mentioned Yang Xiong's importance for our knowledge of eremitism in the Former Han dynasty; I would like now to consider the subtle and masterly way in which he put into practice some of the eremitic principles that held such a fascination for him.

The account of Yang Xiong in the Han shu is drawn almost entirely from Yang Xiong's own writings, including his important 'Autobiographical Postface'. In this he describes himself as
I am an unpretentious, easy-going sort of person. Because of a stammer I cannot speak fluently, am given to silence and fond of deep reflection, tranquility, nonaction, and the reduction of desires. I am neither anxious for wealth and prestige nor distressed by poverty and low status; nor have I erected a facade of purity in order to win fame from my contemporaries. Although my family's assets do not amount to more than ten gold pieces, and my house is in such want that we do not have so much as a measure of grain to fall back on, I am content. I set myself high standards, do not care for anything but the works of the sages, and, although it might bring wealth and status, will do nothing that goes against my beliefs. 13

If this is indeed Yang Xiong's opinion of himself - or the image he wanted to project - to what extent is it to be regarded as accurate? An examination of the facts about his life and the opinions of those who knew him will show that, subject to certain important qualifications, this picture is reasonably fair. Before embarking on that examination, however, it is necessary to comment on one aspect of his autobiographical sketch. It gives a certain prominence to the fact that Yang Xiong suffered from a speech impediment, and implies that his preference for silence and tranquil reflection was partly the result of this. No doubt this makes good sense psychologically: it is to be expected that in a society which valued eloquence and persuasive speech highly, and especially in the environment of the imperial court, where a person's performance was expected to be invariably polished and elegant, someone with a speech problem would tend to avoid stressful situations. Speech difficulties do feature in the personal histories of other eremitic figures, and is not difficult to see how a decision to refuse an official post and remain in seclusion could follow from a fear of exposing oneself to ridicule or contempt. Moreover, a reluctance to speak could itself be given the most respectable of philosophical rationales. For did not Confucius
say that a gentleman desires to be 'hesitant in speech'; and is it not stated in Zhuangzi and Laozi that 'those who know do not speak, those who speak do not know'? It is especially interesting that in the Shi ji Sima Xiangru, the great poet from Chengdu whom Yang Xiong admired and emulated, is also said to have suffered from a speech defect. Not only that, he is also said to have refused to become involved in high affairs of state, despite holding office, and not to have aspired to a position commanding noble rank. The similarity between these two great literary men from Shu, both of whom owed their relatively minor posts at court to their poetic abilities, may have been just coincidence, but it is also possible that Sima Xiangru's influence extended to Yang Xiong's lifestyle as well as to his poetic technique, that to some extent Yang Xiong modelled himself on this great predecessor with whom he could identify closely.

Yang Xiong did not leave Chengdu for the capital until he was over thirty. At court he was given the undistinguished position of Gentleman, and in this he remained for most of his life, despite obvious ability and the contacts and opportunity to rise to a more lucrative and influential position. He served beside Wang Mang before the future emperor of the Xin dynasty began his rise to power, and was also a colleague of Dong Xian (23-1 B.C.), who as Emperor Ai's homosexual partner enjoyed tremendous (if short-lived) influence. But even after Wang Mang took the throne in 9 A.D. Yang Xiong did not attempt to advance himself. It was only near the end of his life that, because of his seniority, he was given the modest post of Grandee. 'Such was his indifference', comments Ban Gu, 'to power and profit'.18
Wang Mang himself, who knew Yang Xiong well, believed him to be totally disinterested in power or personal advancement. In 11 A.D., when a number of young scholars – including Liu Xin's son Liu Pen – were arrested when they tried to counter Wang Mang's attempts to show that his rule had been divinely prefigured, Yang Xiong was implicated. On learning that the jailor was coming to take him into custody, Yang Xiong tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide by jumping from the tower in which he was working. Wang Mang was puzzled by the affair and asked for an investigation, commenting, 'It is not like Xiong to involve himself in affairs'. The idea that Yang Xiong might be involved in worldly matters obviously struck those who knew him as highly improbable. The investigation proved them right.

While this story confirms Yang Xiong's indifference to wealth and power, it also suggests that he was not nearly as 'easy-going' as he might have liked to be: he certainly had not reached the state of sublime indifference characteristic of Zhuangzi's sage, in which life and death, glory and ignominy all become equal. In other words, Yang Xiong was a complex and fallible human being, who struggled towards sagehood and in some respects came close to attaining it, but in others still had to fight to attain a measure of self-control. This was how he was perceived by his close friend and admirer Huan Tan (43 B.C.–28 A.D.). Huan Tan regarded him as the most outstanding figure of the whole of the Han period, but nevertheless believed he had some very human failings, despite his great wisdom and understanding. He refers a number of times to Yang Xiong's poverty, but says that this was partly the result of Yang Xiong's failure to moderate his grief at the death of his two sons, which led him to the great expense of having their bodies taken back to Chengdu for burial. Thus while Yang Xiong had attained the Way of the sages
and understood life and death, he was unable to accept his sons' death with equanimity. This again is hardly the conduct of an 'easy-going nature'. Yet Huan Tan was convinced that his disregard for material things was sincere. Yang Xiong's grief left his family so poor that when he died there was no money for his funeral and his disciple Hou Ba had to bury him. Commenting on this, Huan Tan says that his indifference to material things 'was the blindness of an intelligent man'.

So there is good reason to believe that Yang Xiong did his best to adopt the role of hermit at court. Does this mean he identified in any way with Dongfang Shuo? The answer is no. As we have already seen, he did not have a high opinion of Dongfang Shuo. He regarded Dongfang Shuo's love of notoriety with contempt and dismissed his writings and the stories about him as worthless. If Dongfang Shuo's behaviour had to be described in terms of eremitism, according to Yang Xiong it could only be as 'the eremitism of a clown'. 'Hermit' (yinde) was a term he refused to apply to Dongfang Shuo because of his total lack of exemplary speech or conduct. What is more, he refused to use the term even in relation to Liuxia Hui, despite the fact that the easy-going minister from Qi is praised in the Lunyu. Yang Xiong carefully detached from its original context the comment by Mencius that Liuxia Hui was 'not dignified enough'. As far as the people of antiquity were concerned, Yang Xiong asserts, 'to starve conspicuously was lofty, to draw a salary in seclusion a low thing to do'.

There is more to Yang Xiong's protestation here than appears at first glance. Yang Xiong makes no reference to the fact that although in the Lunyu Confucius contrasts Liuxia Hui with Boyi, he does go on
to say that what Liuxia Hui said and did was appropriate to his particular situation. Likewise Yang Xiong skirts round the fact that, in the passage from Mencius to which he alludes, Mencius presents Liuxia Hui and Boyi as opposite extremes, both of whom lacked the flexibility of response which made Confucius the perfect sage.28 For this Yang Xiong was strongly criticised by Wang Anshi (1021-1086), who said that by failing to distinguish between the one Way and the different actions by which it is manifested in different situations, Yang Xiong merely demonstrates the extent of his ignorance.29 But Yang Xiong was being rather more subtle than Wang Anshi gives him credit for. It seems to me that he was perfectly well aware of what he was doing, and was counting on the fact that those who really knew him would be alert to his willful misreading of Mencius. While most of his contemporaries, just as Wang Anshi, will have taken his remark at face value, a few close friends will have construed it correctly, and known that he criticised the idea of being a salaried hermit precisely because that was how he regarded himself. To suggest that the author of Fa yan and Taixuan jing was blind to the need to fit action to the circumstances of the moment would be absurd. What his criticism of Liuxia Hui really amounts to is a clever attempt at camouflage, a case of the hermit at court covering his tracks.

Yang Xiong's sympathy for eremitism is evident at many points in Fa yan. He regarded it as something which was not only the result of meeting with bad times,30 but also of having high moral standards. That was why Confucius found it impossible to serve in office when lesser men saw no impediment to doing so.31 What is crucial in Yang Xiong's eyes, however, is that whether he is in office or in retirement, a sage never loses his sense of social responsibility: 'Therefore he does not withdraw from his time or set himself apart
from the crowd. Could someone who withdraws or sets himself apart be a sage? Yang Xiong marries the ideas of Confucius and Zhuangzi. In adverse times the sage does not retire ostentatiously to the wilderness; he remains inconspicuously among the people, where through his teachings and personal example he continues to work for the transformation of the world:

In office a gentleman wants to put his righteousness into practice, in retirement he wants to spread his Way. He serves unwearingly, teaches untiringly, and in this way makes the most of the time he has.

There is every reason to think that Yang Xiong interpreted his own position in the light of these principles.

Nowhere is Yang Xiong's defence of eremitism more determined than in his discussion of Li Hong. As was pointed out in Chapter 2, Yang Xiong describes his former teacher in terms used in the Lunyu in relation to Confucius. This description leads on to the following exchange:

"If he is like you say he is, then why hasn't his fame spread?"
"If it wasn't for Zhongni [i.e. Confucius], how would we have ever heard of the fellow who starved on the western mountain, or that dismissed minister of the eastern state [i.e. Boyi and Liuxia Hui]?"
"Did Wang Ziyang [i.e. Wang Ji] or Gong Yu meet with a Zhongni (to spread their fame)?"
"Does a star look bright merely because of the intensity of its radiance (or because it also appears high in the night sky)?"
"In that case why didn't Li Hong put himself in a high position?"
"Radiance is a matter of the self, being placed in a high position is a matter of Heaven. Could you put yourself in a high position simply by wanting to?"

By insisting that it is ultimately a matter of Heaven or fate whether or not a virtuous man rises to a prominent position, Yang Xiong is clearly attempting to leave a way open for people such as Li
Hong (and himself) should they be uninterested in rising to prominence. It is most unlikely that he really believed that Li Hong was eager to obtain a high post but had not been lucky enough to be appointed. As we have already seen, according to Yang Xiong's own testimony Li Hong had little enthusiasm for an official career. Of course this was not something Yang Xiong could say to his imagined interlocutor in *Fa yan*, so it was expedient for him to introduce the concept of fate. Such a strategy leads easily into the type of argument used by Dongfang Shuo, that in enlightened times the number of deserving men far exceeds the number of posts available and even dedicated men have to be content with humble positions - an argument Yang Xiong develops at length in his *Jie chao* which was closely modelled on Dongfang Shuo's *Da kenan*.

My argument that Yang Xiong adopted the role of hermit at court, marrying the ideas of Zhuangzi and Confucius, leads naturally to the question of his attitude to fame. Zhuangzi's eremitism was essentially a matter of shunning fame: did Yang Xiong do likewise; could he do likewise, given the fact that he wrote poems and other works which he must have known would draw attention to himself and to his ideas?

Yang Xiong takes up the question of fame in *Fa yan*. There he rejects the suggestion that since, as Confucius says, a gentleman is upset at the thought of leaving no name to posterity, he should make use of high rank to make a reputation for himself. The only type of reputation that matters for a gentleman is a reputation for uncompromising virtue - like that of Zheng Pu. For Confucius it was more important to be worthy of such fame than to actually be famous; he believed that a gentleman should concentrate on
self-perfection rather than on advertising his sterling qualities to the world. It would appear that Yang Xiong combined these ideas with those of Zhuangzi. Like Sima Qian, in accordance with his self-image as writer and teacher, Yang Xiong considered it an essential part of his task to draw the attention of his contemporaries to the inspiring example of those who, like Zheng Pu and Yang Xiong's own teachers in Chengdu, pursued self-perfection without giving any thought to fame. Fame might come to a hermit, according to Yang Xiong's view, but the hermit certainly must not set out to make himself famous. Fame, like high rank, is a matter which should be left to fate.

This view of fame is also evident in Yang Xiong's comments on Zhuang Zun. The remark in Fa yan that Zhuang Junping had no more desires than Xuyou or Boyi prompts Yang Xiong's interlocutor to comment that perhaps Xuyou is not the best of models, that when Yao wanted to cede the empire to Xuyou, Xuyou declared himself too ashamed to have anything to do with such a vile suggestion. Yang Xiong replies:

That is what someone fond of (a reputation for) greatness would do. Interpret it as a case of Xuyou not wanting anything from the world and that is that; but get a true understanding of Yao's abdication to Shun and you will see it is no less important than Xuyou's response. Those fond of a reputation for greatness try their utmost to outdo each other. Wasn't it appropriate for Chaofu to wash out his ears? Surely it was appropriate that the awesome matters of the Sanctuary of the Spirits were conducted under the cover of night?

This is a witty interpretation of the Xuyou legend indeed. It shows how sensitive Yang Xiong was to the whole business of 'hermits' posing elegantly or behaving flamboyantly in order to attract attention. Chaofu had to wash out his ears, Yang Xiong argues, not on
hearing about Yao's distasteful proposal, but after listening to Xuyou boasting about the fact that he had turned Yao down. If even Xuyou is not beyond suspicion of affectation, what is the likelihood that the eremitism of lesser men will be sincere? It should also be noted that the view that Yao, properly understood, is a figure as impressive as Xuyou, has some historical significance. During the Wei-Jin period, when the idea of eremitism at court gained some currency, Yao was hailed as a hermit greater than Xuyou because of his ability both to rule and to cede the empire without being affected by it.40

Was Yang Xiong trying to win fame by means of his writings, despite his belief that a true hermit would never draw attention to himself? According to Ban Gu, Yang Xiong may have been indifferent to fame in his own lifetime, but he nevertheless hoped to win posthumous fame through his writings.41 I believe that while Yang Xiong clearly hoped to pass on his conception of the Way, he really seems to have been uninterested in popular acclaim, whether in his own time or after it. Ban Gu himself records the anecdote that once towards the end of Yang Xiong's life, when he was instructing Hou Ba in the Fa yan and Taixuan, he was visited by Liu Xin. Observing master and disciple at work, Liu Xin commented:

You are wearing yourself out for nothing. Nowadays, there are (professional) scholars who enjoy the advantage of a salary, yet even they are still unable to understand the Book of Changes, let alone your Taixuan. I'm afraid that in times to come men will use it as a cover for sauce jars.42

Yang Xiong's only response to this was laughter. He cannot have been that concerned about fame.

It is in terms of his indifference to fame and his eremitism that the difficulty of Yang Xiong's later works is also to be understood. That the elliptical style and recondite vocabulary of Fa yan and
Taixuan represent a conscious attempt to be difficult is indisputable. Yang Xiong's correspondence, court compositions and other writings show he could write as clearly and smoothly as anyone. This intentional difficulty moved even so great a scholar as Su Shi (1036-1096) to complain in a moment of exasperation:

Yang Xiong was fond of using words difficult to understand in order to dress up his shallow, facile ideas, realising that if he expressed them precisely everyone would recognise them for what they were. This is precisely what he refers to as "carving seals". That describes both his Taixuan and Fayan, and yet he had regrets only concerning his fu! To the end of his life he continued to carve seals, only he changed the phrasing and then went so far as to refer to his works as classics!43

While it is almost inevitable that a modern reader will share Su Shi's exasperation from time to time, there is also reason to believe that here Su Shi fails to approach with sympathetic understanding someone very different to himself in both personality and outlook. Surely the point of Yang Xiong's opaque style is not so much to impress others as to keep them at a distance, to retain a measure of isolation for himself and to limit access to his conception of the Way to those who he believed would be genuinely able to understand what he had to say. The difficulty of Yang Xiong's work represents both an attempt to defend personal privacy while meeting public responsibilities, and to protect high ideals from being dragged in the mud by lip-service and popular acclaim. What we have in Taixuan and Fayan, in other words, is not obscurantism but an eremitism of style.

2. The Later Han

It seems that Yang Xiong was not the only person at the end of the Former Han to take the idea of eremitism at court seriously. According to Ban Gu, the scholar Mang Rong cultivated himself, strove to realise his ideals, and refused to accept any post in the
bureaucracy higher than a six hundred picul position. (When Wang Mang came to power he resigned from office altogether). Nevertheless, it was Yang Xiong's example which had the most influence. It was in no small measure due to the tremendous respect leading intellectuals of the Later Han felt for Yang Xiong that the idea of eremitism at court gained some currency during that period.

Undoubtedly the most important example of a Later Han scholar taking up the idea of eremitism at court is the man who could with some justification be called the greatest intellect of the time: the poet and philosopher, mathematician and inventor, Zhang Heng. I have already referred to Zhang Heng's lack of interest in worldly success in Chapter 3 (Section 4). Not only did he have the highest admiration for Yang Xiong's intellectual achievements - especially the Taixuan jing - he also found inspiration in the lifestyle Yang Xiong had chosen. In imitation of Dongfang Shuo's 'Da ke nan' and Yang Xiong's 'Chao jie' he wrote 'Ying xian' to justify his lowly position in the eyes of the world. He too makes much of the fact that he lives in an age oversupplied with talented men, that high rank is a matter of fate and that all he can do is wait for it to come to him. Moreover, he alludes to 'a multitude' of men who have advocated this attitude, going right back to Laozi, 'the hermit at court who was librarian'.

Yet it would appear that Zhang Heng was not as serious as Yang Xiong about being a hermit at court. He allowed himself the liberty of memorialising the throne on the politically sensitive question of apocryphal texts and charts, which he regarded as superstitious and potentially dangerous nonsense. Eventually he rose to the position of Master of Writing before his death in 139. Nevertheless, he did try
to follow Laozi's example of taking a job as librarian. At the
beginning of Emperor An's reign, when Liu Zhen, Liu Taotu
and their colleagues were at work in the Dongguan Library
compiling and collating historical, philosophical and literary texts,
they sought the emperor's permission for Zhang Heng to join them, but
much to Zhang Heng's regret it was denied. Later, when the chief
compilers had died without having been able to complete their task,
Zhang Heng asked to be allowed to work in the library and devote all
his time to carrying on this undertaking. Unfortunately permission
was again denied.

Zhang Heng was not the only one to espouse the idea of eremitism
at court at this time. Others also did, so much so that during
Emperor An's reign the Dongguan Library was jocularly referred to as
'Mr Lao's Archive' and 'The Daoist's Penglai Mountain'. Fan Ye
alludes to this fact in his biography of Dou Zhang, who was
given a position in the library precisely because of his combination
of scholarly and eremitic leanings. Moreover, Dou Zhang was a friend
of Ma Rang and Cui Yuan, both of whom belonged to the
circle of scholars centred around the court who espoused eremitic
ideals. Ma Rang was appointed to the Dongguan Library in 110, not
long after having rejected the life of a disengaged scholar as too
precarious, and he remained in that relatively cloistered position for
more than ten years, also returning to it towards the end of his life,
after having run foul of both the Deng and the Liang families.

Cui Yuan was a student of the leading Confucian scholar Jia Kui,
and was widely respected for his learning. He never worked in the
Dongguan Library, but he avoided taking an official post until he was
over forty. Although he eventually rose to the position of Chancellor
of Jibei, this appears to have been in the face of genuine reluctance on his part. To the end of his life he lived very simply, and tried to ensure that this simplicity would continue even after his death by ordering his son to bury him with a minimum of fuss and expense. Hence it may be said that, having been a disengaged scholar most of his life, when the time came to take an official position Gui Yuan tried to remain true to his former ideals by cultivating the detachment from worldly things essential to the concept of eremitism at court. Whether his position was at the court or in the provinces is of little significance. In fact this possibility is covered by Yang Xiong's alternative term for 'hermit at court: what he called being a 'salaried hermit'. I shall return to this point shortly when discussing the case of Wang Chong.

However, while on the subject of Zhang Heng, Ma Rong and their circle, I should also mention Wang Fu, the author of Qianfu lun (Discussions of a Man in Hiding). Finding cultivation of the personal connections and mutual recommendations on which advancement in office depended too distasteful, and being repulsed by the decadence and corruption which characterised life in the capital, Wang Fu firmly adopted the position with which his friends merely flirted. Throughout his life he remained in seclusion, vehemently criticising in his writings the many ills he observed in contemporary society.

Although it was with the generation of Zhang Heng, Ma Rong and Gui Yuan that fascination with the concept of eremitism at court peaked, members of the previous generation had also been attracted to it, including the historian Ban Gu and Gui Yuan's father Gui Yin (d.92). Both of these men were strongly influenced by Yang Xiong.
Yang Xiong had been a friend of Ban Gu's grandfather Ban Zhi and with his uncle Ban Si shared an interest in the teachings of Zhuangzi. Ban Gu himself drew extensively on Yang Xiong's work for both information and ideas, and despite being quite different in outlook and disposition found his 'Jie chao' sufficiently relevant to his own life to write his 'Bin xi' in imitation. He composed it, he says, during the Yongping period (58-75), when he was criticised for having a position no higher than that of Gentleman and doing no more with his time than studying, writing, compiling and collating. Nevertheless, what we know of Ban Gu indicates that while he certainly made scholarship his vocation, he was not nearly as indifferent as Yang Xiong to worldly success or the affairs of state. Certainly this is suggested by his relationship with Commander-in-Chief Dou Xian (d.92), which indirectly was to bring about his death. Wang Chong argued that it was Yang Xiong's low position at court which left him free to write and study. It would be wrong to ignore the deeper philosophical significance eremitism had for Yang Xiong, the seriousness with which he tried to come to grip with the problems of diminishing desires and escaping fame. In the case of Ban Gu, however, it would appear that interest in being a hermit at court amounted to little more than a wish to study unhindered.

Like Ban Gu, Cui Yin was a talented scholar with great literary ability. Having mastered the classics at an early age and developed a virtuosity in textual exegesis which embraced the principles of both the Old and the New Text schools, he continued to make scholarship rather than career advancement his major concern. When this resulted in his contemporaries criticising his 'Great Mystery quietude' (taixuan jing), he wrote 'Da zhi' in response.
In this piece Cui Yin elaborated the now well-established theme of having been fortunate enough to encounter an enlightened, peaceful age in which there was a surfeit of talented and worthy men. When 'disengaged scholars mass in mountains, students flow in streams, gowns and robes [of officials] cover the earth, and caps and canopies [of office] drift in clouds', what hope could he have of making a contribution to the running of the empire? Cui Yin says that the problem is not that he does not want to serve, but that he is not prepared to boast or advertise his talents in order to attract attention and gain promotion. Like Ban Gu, Cui Yin became a protege of Dou Xian, who eventually found his earnest remonstrations annoying and got rid of him by having him promoted: Cui Yin was appointed prefect of a county in faraway Liaodong. However, rather than take up duties in such a distant region he went home in retirement and stayed there for the rest of his life.

The Cui family was one of those in which eremitism became a tradition passed on from generation to generation. Cui Yin's outlook was inherited by his son Cui Yuan, but Cui Yin must have been strongly influenced by his own father, Cui Yi 趙毅, who lived in seclusion all his life, though this appears to have been largely because of illness. Moreover, Cui Yuan in turn passed on the eremitic ideal to his son Cui Shi 趙寔 (c.110-c.170). Although Cui Shi is best known for his espousal of Legalist ideas, especially in his work Zheng lun 政論, his attitudes were not all of the harsh, austere variety associated with that school of thought. Certainly in his personal life he retained much of the outlook of a hermit at court. The expenses of his father's funeral reduced Cui Shi to poverty, yet nevertheless he ignored one summons to office after another, preferring to earn what little money he needed as brewer and peddler.
rather than as an official. It was not until 151 that he too accepted a position in the Dongguan Library. Most likely it was prior to this that he composed his 'Da ji 代記', in the mode transmitted from Yang Xiong to his grandfather Cui Yin, arguing against his 'guest':

You vainly look for happiness wearing brocade robes, you do not know the singular benefits of noble retirement. Unicorns hide in the remote wilderness and do not stray onto roads where there are traps; phoénixes soar in the vastness (of the sky). Therefore those who set their principles high are in a position to emulate them. Li Si 李斯 was roused to zeal and so lost his sense of proportion, [Wu Z]i xu 子胥 and [Wen Zhong 文] pursued merit and so had nowhere to dwell.

Consider the way men enter (official service) and exert themselves (in affairs), and it is not because they consider the self but because they are after a salary, not because they conclude (that it is the right) time but because they want (to seize) an opportunity. When it is a case of being confronted by evil and not encountering the right time, or having little knowledge but making big plans, (it requires only) the smallest mote, the minutest particle and the catastrophe is all-consuming. Where glory comes with the speed of lightning, humiliation is sure to fill the world. Therefore it is said: "Savour the bait and swallow the hook, and you'll regret it under the sacrificial knife". "That (an animal is) covered in finery and fed on grain (to fatten it) comes from its (beautiful) fur".

As to preserving tranquility and remaining in quietude, being utterly calm and seeking nothing, sinking one's line in a deep pool or nestling at rest on a high hill: although it does not bring fiery joys, neither does it bring burning anxieties. I presume to regard this as good. The multitude can follow their own counsel.

As an expression of eremitic sentiments this is much stronger than anything written by his forebears. It is interesting too that, of all the possible illustrations of men who came to grief because they became overly zealous, Cui Shi chooses Li Si, for it suggests that even when he wrote his piece he was attracted to Legalist ideas, yet apparently did not feel any conflict between those ideas and his life as a hermit of the Zhuangzi mode. When he did eventually accept
a position in the Dongguan Library, and so take up the role of salaried hermit, he cannot have remained there more than a few years. Soon he was taking an active part in provincial government, and it may be that his personal experience in administration further convinced him of the necessity of legalist measures for social and political stability.

Wang Chong (27-c.97) was of the same generation as Ban Gu and Cui Yin. It is he who is the best example of a scholar applying the idea of being a salaried hermit to a career in local government. Provincial posts could be non-stressful and safe compared with those at court, and so we might expect those without great worldly ambitions to prefer them. After all, had not Zhuangzi himself found a comfortable position in a lacquer garden? The problem with positions at a local level was that if the aim of the exercise was to retain freedom to pursue scholarly interests, county and commandery administrations could not supply the marvellous research facilities available at court. Nevertheless, Wang Chong seems to have managed very well despite this.

Wang Chong admired Yang Xiong immensely, and both his writings and his lifestyle bear some similarity to those of his great predecessor. The model for the 'Autobiography' with which he concludes Lun heng was Yang Xiong's Autobiographical Postface; the personal traits and aspects of his career he draws to the reader's attention are very similar to the self-image presented by Yang Xiong. Wang Chong too says that he has a free and easy-going nature, that he has neither sought fame nor subordinated his life to the quest for profit, that although he is so poor he does not have even one mou of land to keep him he is more free to pursue his aspirations than
a king or a duke, and although his rank is so low that he does not have a salary it is as if he enjoys a huge income. Like Liuxia Hui, he is indifferent to whether or not he has an official post, retaining his inner tranquility regardless of circumstances and devoting himself to study. 'I live alone in seclusion', he writes, 'investigating things and distinguishing truth from falsehood'.

Wang Chong clearly describes himself in terms of an eremitic ideal. Yet he did have an official career of sorts, even if it was not very distinguished. For a while he served as Assistant Merit Officer, and in 88 became Attendant Official at Headquarters. But he only held the post for some two years before retiring and living in seclusion for the remainder of his life. While he says that he 'did not have good fortune' in his career and so 'merely' wrote books and his autobiography, it is clear that he does not intend these comments to be taken at face value. Like Dongfang Shuo and Yang Xiong before him, he defends himself against the charge that by not rising to high office he has failed to make full use of his talents: neither did Confucius rise to high office, he argues, and dismisses it as a matter of fate. The ideal towards which he aspires is quite different to that of the vulgar:

What lofty men regard as distinction does not correspond with what the vulgar regard as distinction, hence their names are not acclaimed by the age. Yet although their bodies may perish along with vegetable matter, their reputations will be spread along with the light of the sun and moon. To match Confucius in conduct, to be the equal of Yang Xiong in writing: that is what I would regard as glorious.

The terms in which Wang Chong describes the termination of his official career leave little doubt that he regarded it as no more than a hindrance to his literary work. He writes in reference to his
position as Attendant Official at Headquarters: 'My talents were small, my duties large; my responsibilities related to official correspondence. For years my longing to write had to remain unsatisfied'.

Freedom from official duties is the best option for those with literary ambitions. If they must hold office, Wang Chong argues, it can only be a minor post if they are to attain anything at all of their aspirations. Men caught up in high matters of state, such as King Wen and the Duke of Zhou, have no time for leisure or creating the beauties of literature. Confucius was able to compile the Spring and Autumn Annals because he was not employed by the Zhou states; Sima Xiangru did not have responsibility for affairs of high office and so was able to compose his Zixu fu; Yang Xiong occupied the lowly post of Gentleman and so was able to complete his Taixuan jing: in all cases a senior post in government would have put paid to their literary work.

Like Yang Xiong, Wang Chong was suspicious of those who made a great show of refusing office. In the past, he says, men accepted with equanimity whatever befell them, 'they did not sell their knowledge to seek a salary, they did not refuse noble rank in quest of fame'. He also rejects the idea that those who shun the world and keep themselves apart from the vulgar in order to remain pure and blameless in conduct may be called 'worthy' (xian). What is particularly interesting is that he goes on from this to argue that wealth and status are the normal objects of human desire, and that those who turn away from them to go into seclusion do so only because they have not encountered the right time or been able to fulfil their aspirations. Changju and Jieni (the hermits mentioned in the Lunyu)
may have shunned the world and lived in seclusion, Boyi and Chen Zhongzi may have refused high rank and contented themselves with low status, but 'it was not what they aspired to'. Similarly, he rejects the suggestion that the term 'worthy' might be applied to the tranquil and desireless followers of Laozi, those whose aspirations do not relate to serving in office and want no more than to keep themselves alive and nourish their nature. Such men do not concern themselves about the world or helping the common people in their distress, in the way that Confucius and Mozi did, and it is this social indifference which disqualifies them from being classed as worthies.

Wang Chong's comments about Changju, Jieni, Boyi and Chen Zhongzi indicate a certain amount of ambivalence on his part. As we have seen, in his Autobiography he places considerable emphasis on his being indifferent to wealth and status, yet here he suggests that even the great eremitic figures mentioned were not as indifferent to these things as they might be thought to have been, that they resigned themselves to poor and lowly circumstances only when they had failed to realise their worldly ambitions. Is this to be read as an involuntary confession on the part of Wang Chong himself? That would probably be going too far. What it does suggest, however, is that Wang Chong found it difficult to reconcile his personal lack of enthusiasm for an official career with his sense of social responsibility. Although he was not interested in rising to high office, he did not regard himself as a follower of Laozi and was committed to working for the well-being of his contemporaries. Hence he made no attempt to help fate find him an important post, but endeavoured to discharge his moral debt to society through his writings. Wang Chong perhaps had himself in mind when he wrote:
In the world a worthy man is completely loyal. When he advances he advocates reforms in order to enlighten the court; when he retires he expounds and expostulates in order to bring to their senses the common people who have strayed from custom.\(^75\)

It appears that the vogue enjoyed by the concept of the salaried hermit diminished after the reign of Emperor Shun. The only major figure from the last part of the dynasty known to have made use of it was Cui Shi. Probably the changing political situation at this time is enough to account for its decline. After all, the idea of being a hermit at court presupposes a stable, orderly political situation and an abundant supply of talented, virtuous men to fill official posts, so it would not be surprising if it became hard to invoke as the Han dynasty staggered towards extinction. Nevertheless, we can deduce from the poet and statesman Cai Yong's (132-192) very explicit and courageous refutation of it, that the idea did remain current.

Cai Yong first attracted the attention of Emperor Huan's court through his virtuosity on the qin. He found it impossible to avoid attending court, but his dismay at the extent of the power of the eunuchs there soon led him to plead illness and return home, where he lived in retirement studying antiquity. However, lest his contemporaries might think that his refusal to remain at court was no more than self-indulgence, the result of a longing for a carefree life of scholarship, he composed 'Shi hui', criticising the idea of eremitism at court and reaffirming the Confucian position that a refusal to serve in office could be justified only in terms of having encountered bad times. He did not want to be put in the same category as Yang Xiong, Ban Gu and Cui Yin, despite the fact that that was much safer than declaring oneself a critic of the status quo.\(^76\) In the third year of Emperor Ling's reign (171) he began his official career
with the position of Compiler in the Dongguan Library. Unlike some of his predecessors in 'Mr Lao's Archive', however, Cai Yong continued to play an active role in politics until, caught up in the aftermath of Dong Zhuo's death, he died in prison in 192.

In the Wei-Jin period the ideas associated with being a hermit at court continued to be used, but for different purposes. The argument that one lived in an age so splendid that it was impossible to obtain a position commensurate with one's talents was naturally as convenient for those who held no position as for those who held a lowly one. As a justification for not taking part in affairs of state it was used to good effect by writers such as Huangfu Mi, Shu Xi and Ge Hong. When politics turned nasty, as frequently happened in this time, it could even be invoked as a reason for accepting office despite an earlier espousal of eremitism. This was done by Xiang Xiu (c.221-c.300). Thereafter the notion continued to surface from time to time, particularly in periods not conducive to ordinary varieties of eremitism.
NOTES


2. Professor Li himself observes that hermits at court 'followed the advice of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu to abandon oneself to the tide of the times and avoid revealing one's difference from other men' (ibid, 241).


4. SJ 126/3205-08.

5. HS 65/2841-74. The biography is translated by Burton Watson, Courtier and Commoner in Ancient China (Columbia U.P., 1974), 79-105.

6. SJ 126/3205. For the unlearned, Chu Shaosun adds a note that the Bronze Gate was the gate to the palace officials quarters, so named because of the bronze horse which stood beside it.

7. According to Yantie lun 4/9b, Dongfang Shuo claimed there was no-one who could match him for ability in persuasion, and boasted that his ability could dissolve hard substances and split stones. HS 65/2863 states that although Gentleman was his usual rank, he did briefly hold the higher position of Grand Palace Grandee .

8. SJ 126/3207; HS 65/2864-67. Dongfang Shuo's other famous piece, 'Discussion of Master Nobody ', HS 65/2868-72, is more conventional in its treatment of eremitism.

9. Dongfang dazhong ji , Baisan mingjia ji, ce 4/37a-b. Part of the poem is cited in FY 712 by Yang Xiong. It is also translated by Li Chi, op.cit., 242.

10. In his application for office Dongfang Shuo stated that he lost his parents when young and did not begin study until his twelfth year, which is later than would be expected for a boy from a rich family. This and the other details concerning Dongfang Shuo's conduct are taken from HS 65/2841-74.

11. FY 711-12. As Yan Shigu points out in his commentary to the Han shu, Ban Gu's assessment of Dongfang Shuo consists largely of direct quotation from Fa yan. See HS 65/2873-74.

12. Xu Fuguan, Liang Han sixiang shi , Vol.2 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1975), 321-26, 391-92, has discussed Yang Xiong's eremitic tendencies and likened him to Dongfang Shuo. He argues that the reason for Yang Xiong's reclusive behaviour was his wish to be free to devote himself to
study (cf. Wang Chong, LH 28/9b, who argues that it was the fact that Yang Xiong held the lowly position of Gentleman which enabled him to complete his Taixuan jing). Following Xu Fuguan, Hong Anquan, 'Liang Han rushi de shiyin taidu' (Part 2), 231, 237-38, has labelled Yang Xiong a 'hermit at court'. But neither Xu nor Hong are able to relate this aspect of Yang Xiong's personality to his writings in a convincing way.

13. HS 87A/3514. That this passage and most of the remainder of the biography consists of Yang Xiong's own work is clear from HS 87A/3583 and Yan Shigu's commentary on it. For further argument that this is so, see David R. Knechtges' introduction, The Han shu Biography of Yang Xiong (Tempe, Arizona: Centre for Asian Studies, Arizona State U., 1982).

14. LY 4.24, 13.27; ZZ 13/68, 22/7; Laozi 56. Well-known figures with eremitic leanings who had speech problems were Cheng Gongsui 成公綏 (231-273), Zuo Si 左思 (c.250-305) and Ge Hong (d. mid-4th century A.D.). See Jiùjia jiu jin shu jiben 舊家舊籍總錄 (CSJC ed.), 158; JS 72/191, 92/2376. A major counter-example is Han Feizi: see SJ 63/2146.

15. HS 87A/3515.

16. SJ 117/3053. Note that Xi Kang included Sima Xiangru in his Gaoshi zhuán (Xī Kāng jì jiǎozhù, 414)

17. HS 87B/3583 says he was more than forty. This raises certain problems of chronology. Xu Fuguan, Liáng Han sìxiāng shì (Vol.2), 312-13 argues that 'over forty' is probably a mistake for 'over thirty'. See also David R. Knechtges, The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung (Cambridge U.P., 1976), 113-16.

18. HS 87B/3583. In his letter to Liu Xin, Yang Xiong writes that in the year he received his appointment at court he sought the emperor's permission to devote himself to study for three years without drawing a salary. Permission was granted and Yang Xiong was supplied with the necessary resources, but without suspension of his salary. See Dai Zhen, Fang yan shuzheng, 13/19a-24a; Knechtges, 'The Liu Hsin/Yang Hsiung Correspondence', 316. Wang Chong, LH 20/8b, says that when Yang Xiong was writing Fā yān he was offered a large sum of money by a rich man who hoped this would result in his name being recorded in the work of the famous scholar. Yang Xiong declined his offer.


20. Huan Tan, Xin lun, cited in TPYL 432/6b, 602/2a. See also Pokora, Hsin-lun, 173-74.

21. Xin Lun, cited in TPYL 556/1b; Pokora, Hsin-lun, 106.

22. HS 87/A/3514. It is likely that it was at least partly because of the difficulty he experienced in controlling emotion that Yang Xiong believed that it was impossible to eradicate desires and
feelings, but attached importance to diminishing them. See FY 137-38, 180, 205, 211, 272, 756, 758.

23. According to Yang Xiong jiadie 楊雄家譜 (cited in YWJ 40/731; TPYL 558/6b-7a), Yang Xiong was buried by Hou Ba and Huan Tan, whom Yang Xiong had treated generously. It was Hou Ba who personally carried the soil to make his tumulus. See also Li Shan's commentary to Ren Fang 雷芳, "Liu xiansheng furen muzhi 劉先生夫人墓誌", WX 59/31B. Thus Yang Xiong's concluding comment in his fu 'Driving Out Poverty 遲貧賦' (Yang shilang ji 楊師郎集, Baisan mingjia ji, ce 8/4a), that poverty remained his constant companion, was true in death as well as life.


27. FY 711-12. Xu Fuguan, Liang Han sixiang shi (Vol.2), 391-92, finds it impossible to reconcile Yang Xiong's attitude towards Dongfang Shuo and the notion of being a hermit at court with Yang Xiong's own life, and indulges in some rather futile speculation in an attempt to resolve the problem.

28. Mencius 2A.9; also 5B.1, 6B.6.


30. FY 296.

31. FY 251.

32. FY 451-52.

33. FY 386.

34. FY 722.

35. Baisan mingjia ji, ce 8/27a-30b. For a translation and discussion of this work see Knechtges, The Han Rhapsody, 97-103.

36. LY 15.20.

37. FY 266.


39. FY 311-12. In order to make his point Yang Xiong had to follow those versions of the story in which it is Chaofu, not Xuyou, who washes out his ears. This is the version used in GSZ A/2a-b. Xi Kang's Gaoshi zhuan appears to have contained both versions: in the passage on Chaofu, Xuyou washes his ears, while in the passage on Xuyou it is Chaofu who does so, only to be confronted by an angry Pool Keeper who accuses him of polluting the water (Xi Kang ji jiaozhu, 399). The Sanctuary of the Spirits was the place
where Yao's abdication to Shun is said to have occurred.

40. See for example the comments attributed to Xiang Xiu (c.221-c.300) in JS 49/1375 and SSXY 1A/19b-20a, and the Guo Xiang commentary (d.312) to the passage concerning Yao and Xuyou in Zhuangzi (Guo Qingfan, Zhuangzi jishi [Taipei: Huazheng shuju, 1980], 1A/22-24; also Richard B. Mather, 'The Controversy Over Conformity and Naturalness During the Six Dynasties', History of Religions, 9.2-3 (1969-1970), 168-71, and Mather, A New Account of Tales of the World, xx.

41. HS 87B/3583.

42. HS 87B/3585. According to Wang Chong, LH 29/5a, Hou Ba propagated the system of Taixuan jing after Yang Xiong created it.

43. Su Shi, 'Da Xie Minshi shu', in Dongpo qi ji (SBBY ed.), Dongpo hou ji, 14/10a. The expression 'carving seals' comes from Fa yan (FY 81), where Yang Xiong uses it to refer dismissively to his 'childish' habit of writing fu, meaning something painstaking and laborious but not worthy of the attention of a grown man because it is of no benefit to society.

44. ES 72/3083.

45. See HHS 59/1897; HHJ 19/6a.

46. HHS 59/1898-1908.

47. HHS 59/1940.

48. HHS 23/821-22. This has been pointed out by Jack Dull, 'The Confucian Origins of Neo-Taoism', (Paper delivered at the Second International Conference on Taoist Studies, Harvard University, 1-7 Sept., 1972). Dull's focus in that paper was the influence of Daoism on Later Han intellectuals, and he interprets these epithets as evidence of the strength of Daoist influences in court circles. While those influences were certainly significant, I believe that their eremitic connotations may be more important for understanding why they gained currency.

49. HHS 60A/1953, 1970-72, 80A/2617.


51. HHS 49/1630. For an attempt to fix the precise time that Wang Fu lived see Jin Fagen, 'Wang Fu shengzuo niansui de kaozheng ji Qinfu lun xieding shijian de tuilun', BIHP 40 (1969), 781-99. For Wang Fu's criticisms of the scholars of his time, see Qinfu lun (SBCK ed.), 1/10a-b, 2/4b-5a, 11b-12a, 14b-15a, 3/11b-12a, 8/2a-3b, 5b-6b.

52. HS 100A/4205. Ban Si finds a place in Xi Kang's Gaoshi zhuang: see Xi Kang ji jiaozhu, 415.
53. HS 100A/4225; also HHS 40B/1373. For 'Bin xi' see HS 100A/4225-31 and WX 45/12a-18a.

54. See HHS 40B/1385-86.


56. HHS 52/1708-09.

57. HHS 52/1709-16. Zhang Heng's 'Ying xian' appears to owe as much to Cui Yin's 'Da zhi' as it does to Yang Xiong's 'Jie chao'.

58. HHS 52/1718-22. See also Dull, 'Confucian Origins of Neo-Taoism', 17-22.

59. HHS 52/1708.

60. On this aspect of Cui Shi's thought see Balazs, 'Political Philosophy and Social Crisis', 205-13.

61. Cui Shi may have heeded his father's dying wish (HHS 52/1724) that the expense of taking his body back to their native place for burial be avoided, but he cannot have placed many other limits on expenditure for the funeral.

62. HHS 52/1725-31. As in the biographies of so many intellectuals of this period, it is difficult to know what to make of Cui Shi's 'poverty'. Certainly his family, the Cuis of Baling 被, which was to be one of the great families during the Period of Division, already had considerable social and economic standing at this time (see Patricia Ebrey, The Aristocratic Families of Early Imperial China: A Case Study of the Po-ling Ts'ui Family [Cambridge U.P., 1978]). However, this does not mean that individual branches of the family could not have been relatively hard up. On Cui Shi see also Shi Shenghan 石敬漢, Simin yueling jiaozhu 四席名著 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 79-88, and Patricia Ebrey, 'Estate and Family Management in the Later Han as seen in the Monthly Instructions for the Four Classes of People', Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, 17.2 (1974), esp.176-79.

63. YWLJ 25/460. On Li Si (d.208), the main architect of the Qin empire, see SJ 87/2539-63, and Derk Bodde, China's First Unifier (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1938). Wu Zixu and Wen Zhong were able ministers on opposing sides during the wars between Wu and Yue during the reign of King Goujian 謝句 of Yue (r.497-465 B.C.). Both committed suicide after being slandered and accused of treason. See SJ 41/1739-47, 66/2171-83; Guoyu jilie 19/1a-8b, 20/1a-6a.

64. See LH 28/9, 29/3a, 30/8b, 9b.

65. Certainly this is confirmed by his biography in HHS 49/1629-30, where we are told that his family was too poor to be able to afford books, so that when he went to Luoyang to study at the Imperial Academy (where his teacher was Ban Biao) he used to read the books on display at stalls in the market. Nevertheless he later ignored a special imperial summons from Emperor Zhang.
66. LH 30/2a.
67. LH 30/9b.
68. LH 30/8a. Elsewhere Wang Chong compares the situation of worthy scholars with that of large rocks in river rapids: the water swirls the smaller pebbles over them until they are completely lost from view. This is due to the failure of those in senior positions to recognise their qualities, and the result is that some withdraw and go to live in caves (14/2b).
69. LH 30/8b.
70. LH 30/9b. Wang Chong also refers to the fact that it was after he lost an earlier position that he had the opportunity to write his other major work, Jisu jieyi (30/3a-b).
71. LH 28/9b.
72. LH 30/2b.
73. LH 27/7a; also 27/9a.
74. LH 27/7a.
75. LH 29/6a.
76. HHS 60B/1980-89.
77. HHS 60B/1990-2006; HHJ 27/2b-3a; SGZ 6/180.
78. See Huangfu Mi, 'Shi quan lun', JS 51/1411-15; Shu Xi, 'Xuan ju shi', JS 51/1428-30; Ge Hong, 'Yinyi', Baopuzi, waipian 2.
79. See note 40 above. Wei Fengjuan, 'Shilun Wei Jin chaoyin zhi feng yu shanshui shi de xingqi', Shehui kexue zhanxian 21 (1983), 275-83, indulges in Marxist fantasy by interpreting the concept of 'chaoyin' as a strategy by the ruling class for resolving its internal contradictions.
80. The Ming dynasty is a good example. Then the idea of 'chaoyin' was expressed by the term liyin, or 'hermit-official'. The unorthodox Li Zhi makes considerable use of it in his Zang shu, provocatively applying the term even to that black sheep of Confucianism from the Five Dynasties period, Feng Dao (Zang shu, 68/1140-42). On Feng Dao see Wang Gungwu, 'Feng Tao: An Essay on Confucian Loyalty', in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (eds.), Confucian Personalities (Stanford U.P., 1962).
CONCLUSION

Eremitism was a creation of the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, a product of the socio-political and intellectual changes which transformed the Chinese world at that time. There were certain ideas, practices and individuals before Confucius' lifetime that could be said to anticipate various aspects of eremitism, but these are best regarded as representing the prehistory of eremitism rather than an earlier tradition of the practice. It was only after Confucius that eremitism became a philosophical possibility; socially and politically its emergence was dependent on the existence of the multi-state polity of his time.

Confucius taught that a gentleman must retire from office if to remain in the employ of a given ruler would lead to moral compromise, that if necessary he had to withdraw from that state and travel from one domain to another until he found a ruler he could serve and still remain true to his ideals. After Confucius we see the appearance of scholars who travelled from state to state but refused to take office under any ruler and so become a 'subject'; these men tried to avoid the moral conflicts usually inherent in official duties by accepting only the informal role of 'friend' or 'teacher' to the ruler. However, there were others who believed that it was utterly pointless to travel from state to state because all rulers were equally bad, that casting oneself in the role of friend or teacher of a ruler was mere self-deception. Such men believed that the only way compromise of ideals could be avoided was by shunning public life altogether and devoting oneself to honest agricultural pursuits, perhaps even aiming at complete self-sufficiency in order to reduce contact with corrupt
society to a bare minimum. Eremitism of this sort was advocated by extremists such as Chen Zhongzi.

Fundamental to the types of eremitism just mentioned is the belief that eremitism is forced on the individual by the disparity between the corruptness of the world in which he lives and the loftiness of his ideals of personal conduct. In an ideal world, according to this view, there would be no hermits. Moreover, most of the exponents of these varieties of eremitism (even extremists such as Cheng Zhongzi) believed that the influence of their personal example would help to bring that ideal world a little closer, and attached great importance to their reputation as men of uncompromising virtue as a way of spreading that influence.

In the type of eremitism advocated by Zhuangzi all these ideas were turned upside down. According to Zhuangzi, the aim of eremitism was precisely to avoid fame, and indeed all other conventional values; the ideal world, as he conceived it, would contain nothing but hermits. The goal for which the individual had to strive was complete identification with the principle of the cosmos, the order underlying the unending process of change. This could be achieved only by doing away with all notions of self, by making oneself completely invisible. This radical sort of eremitism did not depend on ostentatious withdrawal to some isolated mountain cave, but rather on the idea of ridding oneself of all distinguishing characteristics and personal conceptions, and living inconspicuously among the common people. Eremitism of this sort was primarily a state of mind. It was from Zhuangzi's philosophy that the ideas of the 'hermit in the marketplace' and the 'hermit at court' derived.
While Zhuangzi's ideal was the complete effacement of the self, he nevertheless advocated a more prosaic form of eremitism for those who had not yet attained that ideal. This involved keeping away from potentially dangerous situations (particularly political affairs), avoiding entanglement in worldly concerns, cultivating a simple life, accepting the unalterable conditions of human existence and finding joy in its necessities. These ideas, which obviously derive partly from the common folk custom of fleeing to remote places to escape danger, also occur in sections of the Zhuangzi text not written by Zhuangzi himself. In addition they feature in the Laozi, though in that text as in the Lüshi chunqiu eremitism is frequently invoked as a model for the conduct of the ruler and not for his people. Yet another variety of eremitism which was part of the broad stream of Daoist ideas was that which centred on the quest for immortality. It too involved withdrawing to remote places in the mountains and forests, and probably owed much to ancient shamanistic practices.

Thus by the end of the Warring States period an eremitic tradition had evolved which was remarkable for its sophistication and complexity. What is more, it was a tradition which lay near the heart of the socio-political culture of the time. It concerned the relation of the individual to his ruler and the wider society, an issue which was to remain a major preoccupation of Chinese intellectuals throughout history, and it is this political dimension of Chinese eremitism which is the major reason why hermits were so important in early China.

The Qin unification and the establishment of an enduring empire by Han brought many deep-seated social and political changes. What could not be changed was tradition. The Han empire inherited the
cultural legacy of the Warring States; its intellectuals had to adapt the repertoire of ideas they received to circumstances which in many ways differed drastically from the milieu in which those ideas had originated.

As has been shown, there is little evidence relating to eremitism in the first hundred years or so of the dynasty, yet what evidence there is suggests that most forms of eremitism continued to thrive. The only exception, perhaps, was the timely eremitism advocated by Confucius. The most famous Confucian scholars of the period seem to have believed that the times in which they lived were favourable for political action; they contrasted the relative peace and enlightened government of the Han with the harsh and turbulent centuries that had gone before. While it is difficult to know how representative these famous men were of the intellectuals of the period, due to the biased nature of the sources on which we have to rely, it is reasonable to assume that if there had been much timely eremitism in the first century of the Han it would not have gone unnoticed by Sima Qian and Ban Gu. It seems that the shift from the multi-state polity of the Warring States to the unified empire of Han was responsible for this relative lack of interest in timely eremitism in more ways than one. It is not simply that the empire brought relative peace and prosperity to its subjects, but also that it did away with one of the essential conditions on which the eremitic ideal as formulated by Confucius depended. In the unified empire it was no longer possible to do what Confucius had done and travel from one state to another in search of a ruler who would put lofty ideals into practice. The implications of timely eremitism under Han were different: a refusal to serve was tantamount to ending one's political involvement entirely. Accordingly, scholars who took their social and political
responsibilities seriously were much less inclined to take that step.

The fact that there was apparently little Confucian eremitism in the first part of the Han period merits some reflection, not least because that hundred years or so was also the time when the influence and prestige of Confucianism was slighter than at other times in the dynasty. On the face of it, it would appear that traditional accounts of eremitism in the Han, which trace the spread of eremitism to political decline and the growing influence of Daoism, are hard put to explain the fact that the only time when there was little Confucian eremitism was during those early reigns of the dynasty commonly decried because of the Daoist sentiments espoused by the political and intellectual leaders of the time. How can they account for the fact that it was only after Confucianism received imperial backing and was made the ideological basis of the state that Confucian eremitism became popular?

The evidence presented in this thesis shows that the spread of eremitism from approximately the middle of the Former Han dynasty cannot be understood unless we take into consideration the evolution of the scholarly culture generated by the educational endeavours of the empire and its recommendatory system for appointments to office. This culture was basically Confucian, but in the absence any strong insistence on doctrinal purity the influence of other schools of thought - including Daoism - was always strong. It was a culture which offered a considerable range of lifestyles, philosophies and ideals. The type of eremitism I have called exemplary eremitism was a product of that scholarly culture.
Exemplary eremitism was Confucian in inspiration. It was based on the idea, not so much of having encountered times so bad that to serve in office would result in moral compromise, as of having ideals of personal conduct so high that even participation in the relatively enlightened government of the present would make it impossible to remain true to those ideals. For an exemplary hermit fame was a most welcome thing. For those who were sincere it was the mechanism which would spread their moral influence afar and so enable them to be true to Confucius' idea of taking part in government by transforming customs through the force of personal example; for those who were less than sincere fame was the mechanism which led to a recommendation for an official position.

The existence of the official recommendatory system led to a social climate in which ideals of personal conduct were regarded as a serious matter and received a lot of attention from officialdom and intellectuals generally. It is this which accounts for the increase in the amount of information recorded about hermits from this time on, as well as the apparent increase in the number of hermits themselves. To determine how much eremitism spread in the Han period, or which varieties of eremitism became most prevalent is impossible. The philosophical and socio-political convictions of the authors of the major histories of the period—Ban Gu, Xun Yue, Yuan Hong and Fan Ye—made it inevitable that in the sources Confucian exemplary eremitism appears dominant. Yet, as far as historical reality is concerned, it is highly likely that in actuality too Confucian exemplary did become most prevalent. The Confucian focus of that recommendatory system which influenced so much of the lives of intellectuals at the time will have seen to that.
Of course the evolution of the Han scholarly culture did not occur independently of the political events of the period, and for the history of eremitism as for many other things the most significant political event was the rise and fall of Wang Mang, who was himself a product of the scholarly culture. Wang Mang was important for eremitism not only because his usurpation led to widespread withdrawal by idealistic scholars, as is emphasised in traditional accounts, but also because he lavished attention on hermits in order to demonstrate to the educated elite that he possessed the virtue Heaven demanded in an emperor. At times Wang Mang was even prepared to forego the services of a talented, virtuous scholar, if his acceptance of the scholar's sincere but 'misguided' refusal to serve could further enhance the legitimacy of his claim to the throne.

For Emperor Guangwu as for Wang Mang it was an urgent matter to demonstrate to the world the legitimacy of his claim to throne. He too was a product of the scholarly culture, and he had learned the lessons contained in Wang Mang's rise and fall. He made concerted efforts to win the support of the scholars, expanding the recommendatory system and extending imperial backing for Confucianism, as well as honouring the famous hermits of his day. The feting of such men and their dominance in the recommendatory system was to remain a prominent feature of the political life of the remainder of the Han period. Emperors Ming and Zhang carried on the policies of the founder of the Later Han, and the prestige and influence of disengaged scholars continued to grow. This applies also to the reigns of He and An, despite the fact that this period also witnessed a growth in the political influence of imperial relatives and eunuchs. After all, this makes good sense: those attempting to gain power by control over a young emperor had to do all they could to establish the
legitimacy of his— and hence their— government. The unprecedented honours Emperor Shun extended to virtuous and learned hermits elevated their standing still further, and helped to develop a fashion for eremitism which as perceptive a man as Li Gu could only regard with distrust and dismay, the common people with contempt and derision.

Fan Ye points out the political decline which set in after Zhang's reign provided a ready justification for all those who took up this fashionable eremitism, so much so that it became the expected thing for any scholar to do. This being so, it is extremely difficult to determine how much of the eremitism in the last part of the Han dynasty was a sincere protest against political corruption and disorder, and how much of it was decorous self-indulgence. There is no doubt whatever that many leading scholars did withdraw in protest against what they regarded as the corrupting interference of imperial relatives and eunuchs; some died as a result of their refusal to serve in a government in which such people held power. But in the histories we find reference to fantastic charlatans as well as to men of uncompromising virtue.

If we consider the famous scholars involved in the political proscriptions of the reigns of Huan and Ling we find that even in the conduct of the most earnest of men there seems to have been some element of 'trendiness'. But there is no question of the seriousness of their moral commitment in times of crisis. The glory of the proscribed scholars lived on in the following centuries, and their example brought greater prestige than ever to living in seclusion and remaining aloof from the world of public affairs.
Yet it would be a mistake to allow our view of the last part of the Han period to be too much influenced by the very partisan traditional interpretation of the proscriptions, which derives ultimately from the proscribed scholars themselves. It would be quite misleading to interpret the history of this period simply as an extended struggle for power between righteous scholars intent on preserving the Way of the sages on one hand, and evil imperial relatives and eunuchs intent on subverting it on the other. There were indeed power struggles, but in those struggles it was not possession of the scholarly culture and its ideals which marked the scholars off from their opponents. (As is argued in the Appendix to this thesis, there is every reason to believe that the imperial relatives and eunuchs were as much a part of the scholarly culture as their opponents; the differences among scholars were as important as the distinctions between the imperial relatives and eunuchs and the small minority of scholars who actively opposed them).

The scholarly culture of the last part of the Han period, as in earlier times, was tremendously varied. It was dominated by Confucianism, thanks partly to the imperial support Confucianism enjoyed, but was characterised by the easy interaction of doctrines of all the philosophical schools. Daoism flourished, and Legalism was again attracting considerable attention. The metaphysical systems of the Book of Changes and the Yin-yang school were utilised by everyone. Philosophical speculation shaded off into the occult arts, and interest in the arcane often went hand in hand with knowledge of classical texts. The primitivistic social ideals of the School of the Tillers also continued to find adherents, while Buddhist ideas were just beginning to circulate.
The complex interaction of all these schools of thought means that some caution is required when attempting to determine the relation between adherence to the teachings of any given school and a decision to become a hermit. Daoism is a case in point here. It has traditionally been held that as the Han dynasty declined, more and more scholars withdrew into self-centred Daoist escapism, and that it is the strong influence of Daoism under the Wei and Jin dynasties which accounts for the prevalence of eremitism among the intellectuals of that period. While there certainly is evidence that Daoism gained in popularity from the late Han on, and Daoist teachings do contain certain eremitic ideals, it is no more true that Daoism inevitably led to quietistic withdrawal than that Confucianism invariably led to idealistic participation in public affairs. Thus the long list of talented and influential men attracted by the concept of the hermit at court were able to square Daoist sympathies with socio-political responsibilities they refused to put aside, while many Confucian exemplary hermits found just as little difficulty in reconciling those responsibilities with their own disinclination to hold office. Much of the so-called 'Daoist' eremitism of the Wei-Jin period is in fact a continuation of the Confucian exemplary eremitism which developed during the Han period.

The conclusion to which this thesis leads is that by the end of the Han dynasty most of the major aspects of the Chinese eremitic tradition had already taken shape: the varieties of eremitism and their philosophical rationales, the place of eremitism in the scholarly culture and its integration in the imperial system, as well as the high social standing of hermits and their political influence, were all well established before the Han dynasty came to a close. What happened subsequently to that tradition could with some
justification be described as little more than a filling out followed by gradual atrophy. It may be useful to conclude with a few general comments about those subsequent developments.

We have seen that the existence of the official recommendatory system of the Han empire was crucial in determining the popularity eremitism enjoyed, the forms it took, and the prestige it commanded. Recommendatory systems continued to function, with certain modifications, until around the end of the Tang period. In the annals of the Tang emperors we still find edicts calling for the recommendation of virtuous hermits for office. The social-political standing of hermits was such that under the Tang law code they and their descendants were guaranteed certain rights and privileges. For example, the descendants of a man who had been summoned to take up an official position but had declined in order to live as a hermit, could, on the basis of the offer having been made, claim the same rights as the descendants of regular officials. If we contrast this with the situation during the Ming dynasty, when any scholar who refused to serve the emperor was liable to execution, it is obvious that in the interim a drastic change occurred in official attitudes towards hermits and what they represented. Many factors would need to be considered to account for that change. However, one major factor undoubtedly was the gradual phasing out of the recommendatory system in the Tang-Song period and its replacement with the examination system as the main instrument for the selection of officials. When this happened rulers and scholars alike had to reassess eremitism, and for quite dissimilar sets of reasons neither party found it as attractive as it had appeared before.
While eremitism lost its major institutional base with the dismantling of the recommendatory system, in the following centuries the socio-political situation of Chinese intellectuals remained basically unchanged, though the Mongol and Manchu conquests of China produced a new sort of moral dilemma. The ideals to which they tried to remain true also changed little, and genuine eremitism remained important as a way of realizing those ideals.
NOTES

1. For some of the evidence, see Liu Xiangfei, 'Tangren yinyi fengqi ji qi yingxiang', 5-11, 16-21; also Shen Defu, Wanli yehuo bian, 858-39, and Ho Ping-ti, The Ladder of Success in Imperial China, 11.


Traditionally accounts of the Han period have emphasised what have been regarded as discontinuities: the irruption of Wang Mang’s treasonable ambitions into a basically orderly system; the usurpation of power by imperial relatives and eunuchs following the enlightened, Confucian-inspired government of Guangwu, Ming and Zhang. The decline and ultimate collapse of the Han, according to this view, is to be understood in terms of the undermining of the imperial system by forces hostile and essentially alien to it, and the spread of eremitism is to be understood as protest by scholars against those hostile, alien forces.

However, it could be argued that far from being an explanation of dynastic decline, the arrogation of power by imperial relatives and eunuchs was actually a major aspect of that decline, and is itself something which has to be explained. In my account of the eremitism of the Han period I have stressed continuities rather than discontinuities: the continuous evolution and elaboration of the scholarly culture; imperial support for Confucianism; and the existence of the recommendatory system for official appointments. Here I will consider in more detail the view of the last part of the Han period as a three-way power struggle between the scholars, imperial relatives and eunuchs, in order to reveal more clearly the limitations of the account of the eremitism of the time in terms of scholars retiring to avoid moral defilement and mortal danger. I will focus my discussion on the fairly recent and very sophisticated restatement of this view by Yü Ying-shih in his article on what he
calls 'the new self-awareness of scholars' of the late Han and Wei-Jin periods.¹

Yu Ying-shih describes many of the social and intellectual developments of the later part of the Han period in terms of this new scholarly self-awareness, which he says entailed both communal and individual self-awareness. It was a phenomenon, he argues, which was closely tied up with their struggle against the influence and power of the imperial relatives on the one hand, and the eunuchs on the other. Particularly after the death of Emperor He in 105, that struggle became more intense, and the self-awareness of scholars as a group became sharper and more developed.² Sharing a common culture and political ideals, and usually a common socio-economic background, scholars naturally fraternised with each other extensively. It was this tendency that partly accounts for the charges of factionalism that were levelled against scholars, particularly during the reigns of Emperors Huan and Ling. This fraternisation further encouraged the development of distinctive attitudes and conduct—in other words, a distinctive identity.³ The scholars compared themselves with the shi of the Warring States period and took the welfare of the world to be their personal responsibility.⁴ Their communal self-awareness found expression in their veneration of their leaders and the way teachers were honoured by their disciples.⁵ The individual self-awareness of scholars of this period, Yu argues, was manifested in their preoccupation with exceptional conduct and personal fame. Fame came to be regarded as an end in itself, as the examples of disengaged scholars such as Guo Tai, Xu Zhi and Shentu Pan show.⁶ Individual self-awareness also lay behind the characteristic activity of the time of evaluating individuals, as exemplified by the so-called 'pure pronouncements' (清議) of the students at the imperial university.
in Luoyang (one of the major roots of the 'pure conversation' [qingtan] of the Wei-Jin period) and the writings of Guo Tai and Xu Shao.7

The developments Yü Ying-shih describes are all significant, but I fear that the theoretical framework in which he attempts to explain them is seriously inadequate. In general my objections are these: first, the 'self-awareness' Yü describes was not new in the mid Later Han period; second, the type of development he describes is simply too weighty and complex to be sustained by the idea of self-awareness; and third, the attitudes and values he outlines cannot be regarded as what distinguished scholars from imperial relatives and eunuchs because those attitudes and values were held by only a small proportion of the 'scholars' of this time. I shall consider each of these objections to Yü's argument in detail.

The 'newness' of the attitudes and values Yü Ying-shih discusses is obviously a most important issue, for if they in fact do not turn out to be new in the mid Later Han then they cannot be seen as a specific response to factors peculiar to that period. Now Yü Ying-shih himself at one point refers to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period as the first occasion of self-awareness among Chinese scholars (as is shown among other things, by the way disciples honoured their teachers then).8 If scholars of that period did have that self-awareness - and Yü Ying-shih himself has done much to help us see that they did9 - in what sense was the self-awareness of intellectuals of the later part of the Han dynasty 'new'? If the answer is given that it is a matter of degree, I would reply that in relation to self-awareness the concept of degree is one which soon loses its usefulness, and that therefore it would be better describe
what is new in terms other than increasing self-awareness.

The scholars of the Warring States period were certainly conscious of themselves as having a distinctive social and intellectual role, an identity different, for example, to that of farmers, craftsmen or merchants. The scholars of the last part of the Han period did compare themselves with the scholars of the Zhou period, as Yu points out. But comparisons of this sort were frequently being drawn no later than the second half of the Former Han dynasty. In Chapter Two I emphasised the currency in the late Former Han of the ideal of 're-establishing antiquity', which produced such developments as official posts of 'Teacher' and 'Friend' to the emperor, as well as many of Wang Mang's reforms. The courting of virtuous hermits by men such as Wang Mang, Wei Ao and Liu Xiu, I have argued, has to be understood partly in terms of that ideal of re-establishing the customs and institutions of antiquity. When in 29 A.D. Emperor Guangwu compared the conduct of the hermit Zhou Dang to that of Boyi and Shuqi and implicitly cast himself in the role of King Wu, he was not doing anything new. The aspiration of Han scholars to regain what was seen as the sublime order of the past made it inevitable that they would compare themselves to their Zhou predecessors.

Most of the other developments Yu Ying-shih describes as characteristic of the later part of the Later Han also had quite a long history before then. That scholars tended to share a common socio-economic background was, as far as we know, as true of the Former Han as of the Later Han, while the fact that they shared a common culture and political ideals is more or less true by definition (though it is easy to exaggerate the uniformity of scholars as a
social group, as will become clear below). So scholars throughout the Han period were always disposed to associate with each other and thereby lay themselves open to the charge of 'factionalism' by their enemies. Certainly the idea was current at the beginning of the Later Han. Thus when Guangwu's Minister Over the Masses Hou Ba wanted to yield his position to the famous hermit Wang Ba, who like him came from Taiyuan commandery, he was dissuaded from doing so when another official jeered that 'It is the habit of people from Taiyuan to form factions and [Wang] Ruzhong has something of that spirit'. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that the problem of factionalism became more pronounced towards the end of the Later Han. As to the scholarly custom of students honouring their teachers, as Yu Ying-shih himself points out, this was very much in evidence in the Zhou period, though some of the forms it took towards the end of the Later Han, such as giving posthumous titles to teachers, may have been innovations by the scholars of that time.

Preoccupation with fame is another thing Yu believes to be peculiar to the scholars of the second half of the Later Han. But here again, although the ways in which fame could be acquired might have changed over the centuries - partly, as Yu recognises, as a result of the influence of the recommendatory system - I do not believe there is much ground for saying that scholars of the end of the Later Han were more obsessed with it than those of earlier periods. Nor do I believe that it is accurate to describe this concern with fame as fame for its own sake (though no doubt for many scholars fame represented something valuable in itself). As I have argued elsewhere, at least from the time of Confucius fame was valued as a way of spreading one's moral influence. If, as Confucius says in the Lunyu, 'A gentleman hates the thought of passing away and his name
dying with him', it is not because he wants public adulation, but because if his name dies with him so does his ability to influence those who come after him. This concern with fame as a way of spreading personal influence was inherited by scholars of the Former as well as the Later Han. Moreover, as Zhao Yi has argued, Han scholars also had to a large extent to rely on personal reputation as a way of securing an official career through the recommendatory system. When men such as Guo Tai, Xu Zhi and Shentu Pan pursued fame they were identifying with the long tradition that went back to Confucius himself. Guo Tai valued fame at least partly because he regarded the welfare of the world as his personal responsibility. The same can be said of Xu Zhi.

It is simply not true, as Yü Ying-shih claims, that Xu Zhi's outlook is representative of a decline in socio-political commitment among scholars after Guo Tai. For one thing, Xu Zhi was an exact contemporary of Guo Tai, so whatever attitudes he may be taken to represent were already current in Guo Tai's lifetime. More important, however, is the fact that Guo Tai himself always refused to take office too, but no-one would accuse him of being politically indifferent on those grounds alone. Yü Ying-shih bases his view of Xu Zhi largely on his remark that 'When a great tree is about to fall a single rope cannot hold it up'. But as I have argued in Chapter Three, there is good reason to believe that this comment is to be interpreted as a statement of concern over the welfare of Guo Tai rather than as an expression of selfish indifference on Xu Zhi's part. It would appear that Xu Zhi's sense of social responsibility was no less strong than that of Guo Tai, and it was precisely this which led him to value fame as a mechanism for spreading his personal influence among the people.
To understand the outlook of scholars of the second half of the Later Han dynasty, therefore, we have to consider the traditional aspect of their attitudes as well as what was new; we have to consider the protracted development, not so much of self-awareness on the part of scholars (and here I take up my second major criticism of Yü), as of the scholarly ethos or culture to which I have frequently referred. Moreover, to fully appreciate the nature of the scholarly culture of the second half of the Later Han we have to see it not only as the product of a long period of continuous evolution, but also in terms of attempts to recreate an idealised past in a socio-political environment which was very different to that past and in which the implications of what it was to be a shi had changed drastically.

The major factors shaping the scholarly ethos of the Han period, as I have already argued, were imperial sponsorship of what was ostensibly Confucian learning and the existence of an official recommendatory system which, at least in theory, applied Confucian criteria of selection. By the late Han period these factors had been operating for some three hundred years and were scarcely likely to generate a new type of 'self-awareness' among scholars. But just as imperial backing for scholarship increased in scope throughout most of the Han period, and the recommendatory system was gradually expanded, so too did the scholarly culture become ever more varied and complex.

My discussion in Chapter Three of the continuing influence of the 'Hundred Schools' will have given some idea of the variousness of the scholarly culture in the Later Han. But it is important to bear in mind also that even within what is called Confucianism there were fierce, protracted debates between opposing schools of thought (debates considered important enough, for example, to justify the
appointment of numerous Erudites to advise the emperor about varying interpretations of even one classic). Hence to talk blithely about 'the scholarly culture' is grossly misleading unless consideration is given to the fact that within that culture there was room for a great variety of intellectual positions, personal values and lifestyles. This leads to my third criticism of Yu Ying-shih, namely, that he attributes to all scholars a fairly specific set of ideals and values, and argues that it was the espousal of those particular ideals and values which enabled scholars as a social group to establish their self-identify in opposition to the imperial relatives and the eunuchs.

As Yu himself points out, the scholars of the later part of the Han period were very much aware of differences among themselves in terms of both regional background and personal merit. I will not discuss further the question of regional differences since they are of only minor significance here. But the distinctions scholars drew amongst one another in terms of personal merit raise some important questions. These distinctions (which, as Yu observes, were in part a byproduct of the recommendatory system and found expression in the 'pure pronouncements' of the time) show that the scholars themselves recognised sharp differences in the extent to which individuals lived up to scholarly ideals.

Yu mentions Zhao Qi's 《世說》 (108-211) criticism of his relation by marriage to Ma Rong (79-166). Zhao Qi, who eventually became famous both as scholar and statesman, took the role of disengaged scholar rather more seriously than Ma Rong, who appears to have maintained an eremitic position only as long as it caused him no hardship. In a letter to a friend Zhao Qi wrote: 'Although Ma Jichang is renowned among his contemporaries, he does not
hold firmly to the integrity of a scholar'.18 But again, contrary to what Yu claims, this sort of insistence on the ideals that a scholar should live up to does not indicate a new self-awareness on the part of scholars circa. 150. When Emperor Guangwu was trying to persuade Yan Guang to take office in 29 A.D., Yan Guang justified his refusal by reference to the fact that 'a scholar is bound to have ideals'.19

If we accept the idea that the only 'true' scholars are those who live up to the highest scholarly ideals and standards, it becomes clear that we will also have to accept somebody's definition of what 'the highest scholarly ideals and standards' were, and, furthermore, that the number of 'true scholars' so identified will inevitably be very small indeed. I believe that Yu Ying-shih, like most historians past and present, has fallen into the trap of accepting the judgements of the Pure Faction of the end of the Later Han as to what makes a true scholar, judgements which were canonised by the qingtan movement of the Wei-Jin period and which shaped the social and historical outlook recorded in many Southern Dynasties texts, including the Shishuo xingyu and Fan Ye's Hou Han shu. Yet many scholars of the late Han period may have held quite different views as to what a scholar's ideals and standards should be.

Xunzi had distinguished between 'great Confucians' (da ru 大儒) and 'vulgar scholars' (su shi 小士) in the late Warring States period.20 This distinction was taken over by Han writers commenting on their own time. In the reign of Emperor Shun, Wang Fu bitterly decried the vices and corrupt practices of the vulgar scholars of the day, their factionalism and the way they manipulated the recommendatory system for their own ends.21 During the Jian'an period (196-220) this theme was taken up by Xu Gan 徐幹 (170-217)
when reflecting on the causes of the Han dynasty's collapse. Naturally the proportion of great Confucians was always much smaller than that of vulgar scholars. In this the last part of the Han dynasty cannot have been very different to any earlier period. During the reign of Emperor Huan many scholars may have had misgivings about the rightness of Liang Ji's stronghold on the government of the time, but few were prepared to make a stand against him; the majority of scholars and officials simply knuckled under and did whatever was necessary to protect their personal interests. Similarly, the relative ease with which the eunuchs destroyed the threat of the Pure Faction in 168 indicates that the Pure Faction found very little in the way of active support from within the bureaucracy. As long as eunuchs had the power to make and break officials the bulk of the bureaucracy simply did as it was told. This in fact helps to explain why the students of the Imperial Academy were important in strengthening the anti-eunuch faction: they were not actually part of the bureaucracy, and having less to lose those than scholars actually holding official posts could afford to be more outspoken in their criticisms.

The conclusion to which this leads is that the scholars of the late Han were a rather heterogeneous social group: they did not necessarily share a common outlook; they did not share a common identity generated by an intense moral indignation against the political influence of imperial relatives and eunuchs; nor did they all try to live up to a given set of scholarly ideals and standards. Our picture of the political life of the last part of the Han period becomes more complicated still when we consider the fact that, contrary to the traditional view that imperial relatives and eunuchs were to be sharply distinguished from scholars because of their
wickedness and depravity, which contrasted with the high ideals and moral purity characteristic of the scholars, there is good reason to believe that the imperial relatives and eunuchs of the time were no less imbued with the scholarly ethos - including its political ideals - than anyone else.

Yü Ying-shih goes so far as to admit that the distinction between scholars and imperial relatives cannot be made absolute, giving Commander-in-Chief Dou Wu (d.168) as an example of a man who was both. An even more important example, of course, was Wang Mang. But it is more than just a matter of a few isolated examples of imperial relatives who also happened to have scholarly interests. What must be avoided is baseless assumption that families who had a daughter fortunate enough to become an imperial concubine, or even empress, tended to be nouveau riche devoid of scholarly culture. Evidence has yet to be produced that the families related to the Han emperors by marriage included fewer scholars than other families of comparable socio-economic background, and, leaving moral prejudice aside, it is reasonable to assume such evidence could never be produced. The majority of imperial relatives with scholarly pretensions may have been no more than 'vulgar scholars', but the same was true of scholars generally.

The distinction between eunuchs and scholars is just as difficult to maintain as that between scholars and imperial relatives. To assert that all eunuchs were of humble origin is completely unwarranted. Positions in the palace - particularly those which entailed daily, intimate contact with the emperor - were not open to rude, illiterate country bumpkins; they required some measure of personal cultivation and sophistication. Although eunuchs could be
trained, and a school for eunuchs was established, it would be strange if in this as in other things there was no preference for people with the right background. What is more, it would be a grave error to assume that palace positions open only to eunuchs were not highly sought after, or that the 'right' families would necessarily consider such positions inappropriate for their sons. No-one could have been blind to the opportunities such positions could bring.28

Sources for the Han period tell us very little about the social background of eunuchs (though at least one, Cao Jie ⚜️, is said to have come from a family which for generations had included senior officials).29 Han eunuchs, like those of later periods, will have come largely from two social groups: those downwardly mobile, from families reduced to slavery as a result of some crime or action arousing the emperor's displeasure, and who could therefore have had castration forced on them; and those upwardly mobile, coming from ambitious families whose aspirations for power and prominence had been thwarted in the normal channels (e.g., because of lack of wealth or the right connections finding themselves excluded by the factions within the bureaucracy, without hope of obtaining official recommendations for their sons), and therefore might choose castration for a boy in the hope that the Yellow Gate would open up an alternative road to the top. Both these downward and upwardly mobile groups were likely to be literate and very much at home in the scholarly culture.

That eunuchs might also be immersed in the scholarly culture and share its social and political ideals is an idea which has rarely been given serious consideration. One person who has done so is the remarkable Qing scholar Zhao Yi, who in his essay 'There Were Worthy
Eunuchs Too 宦官亦有賢者 30 praises twelve eunuchs of the Later Han period for actions and accomplishments which indicate that they belonged completely to the scholarly milieu. They include the impressive Cai Lun 蔡倫, who invented a type of paper and was a scholar of such standing that, when in 110 Liu Zhen 劉珍 and Liang Shi 良史 were assigned to the Dongguan Library to collate documents and compile a history of the Han, it was Cai Lun who was ordered to oversee and check their work;31 Liang He 良賀, who when asked by Emperor Shun why he alone had not recommended anyone for office, replied that in the past Shang Yang had been introduced to the ruler of Qin by a eunuch, and lacking knowledge of scholars he did not want to be responsible for another disaster like that;32 Lu Qiang 陸強, who declined Emperor Ling's offer of a marquisate on the grounds that he did not consider it appropriate for a person in his position, and in his memorials to the throne articulated scholarly ideals;33 and Wu Kang 吳況, who, finding that his talents were ignored, pleaded illness and withdrew to his quarters to 'nourish his ideals' — in other words, becoming, as far as his position allowed him, a hermit.34 Nevertheless, even Zhao Yi was still prepared to assert that nine out of ten Later Han eunuchs were bad, and to describe at length the evils they perpetrated.35 Yet there is nothing to substantiate the claim that, in comparison with scholars, eunuchs as a group lacked moral sense or political idealism,36 and unless we are prepared to identify the testicles as the seat of morality, there are no grounds for assuming it ever will be established that eunuchs were more prone than scholars to moral degeneracy.

Politics in the last part of the Han dynasty was indeed dominated by a three-way power struggle between scholar-officials, imperial relatives and eunuchs, and this struggle was a major factor in the
ultimate disintegration of the dynasty. As I suggested earlier, however, the growing power of the imperial relatives and eunuchs is better regarded as something to be explained than as an explanation of dynastic decline.

Central to any explanation of the political power of the imperial relatives and eunuchs must be the institution of imperial autocracy itself. The emperor was the supreme authority, the 'One Man', and as such could not help but be conscious that the various groups with access to him did their utmost to influence his decisions in order to further the interests and concerns they represented. It took a strong ruler to be able to neutralise these interest groups. Particularly when the emperor came to the throne as a minor, as was the case with every Later Han ruler after Emperor Zhang, the imperial relatives and eunuchs were able to increase their influence. One way of neutralising their power was to play them off against each other, supporting a weaker group to win it as an ally against the stronger. Thus Emperor Huan relied on the eunuchs to help him destroy the domination of the Liang family. Of course this could result in the newly powerful group becoming as much of a threat as the one it had overthrown.

The main motivation behind the quest for influence over the emperor and political power on the part of imperial relatives and eunuchs (as well as the majority of officials) was the protection and furtherance of their family interests. The conflict between family loyalties and duties toward the state is an element which recurs throughout Chinese history. Any adequate account of the role of the extended family in shaping that history would have to consider its significance both as an integrating and as a destabilising factor, its
role in determining both China's characteristic cultural resilience and her equally characteristic form of political fragility. Stress on family interests and loyalties was not a Confucian innovation, any more than was the basic religious institution of ancestor worship, but Confucian teachings did insist on the psychological and ethical priority of the individual's duties towards his family.37 Hence one of the themes in philosophical works critical of Confucians was the need to eradicate partiality (si 迷 ) or the pursuit of private interests, and to establish impartiality (gong 公 ) or public-mindedness.38 This was especially true of the Legalists, and it is hardly surprising that a number of major thinkers of the Later Han concerned about the political decline they were witnessing were attracted by Legalist ideas.39 If the families related to the Han emperors by marriage sometimes furthered their private interests in excessive and extravagant ways, this was not because members of those families as individuals tended to be more unscrupulous than the rest of the educated elite, but because their unique position in the socio-political structure enabled them to pursue those private interests further than other families. It was this which made them a potential threat to the stability of the empire.

Officials no less than other members of society had a tendency to pursue family interests at the expense of the interests of the state. Inevitably this undermined the bureaucracy's effectiveness and exacerbated many of the social and economic problems the government faced. But the bureaucracy's ability to function was further reduced by the problem of factionalism, a problem which steadily became more acute with time. Factionalism and the pursuit of family interests were closely related: factions were formed largely to protect and enhance family interests. But as a political concept factionalism
concerns the collusion of individuals holding public office in order to further private (family) and anti-government interests. As I have already indicated, there is considerable evidence that this was a major problem, so much so that it made a mockery of the recommendatory system and reduced the imperial bureaucracy to a mire of intrigue and corruption. When eunuchs brought charges of factionalism against officials they were not necessarily being malevolent; when emperors trusted eunuchs they knew personally in preference to officials they suspected of collusion, they were not necessarily being obtuse.

Paradoxically, there is some ground for believing that, as a concurring feature of Chinese political life, factionalism owed something to Confucius' attempts circumscribe the individual's duty towards his family with loftier, more universal ideals.

One important theme in the Lunyu which is rarely commented on is that of the importance of comrades or kindred spirits (you 友), friends who share the same ideals and work towards the same ends. Ultimately such colleagues matter more to a gentleman than his blood relations (though ideally the two categories are not mutually exclusive). When Confucius said, 'The gentleman enters into associations but not cliques; the petty man enters into cliques but not associations', it was such comradeship that he had in mind. The trouble is that in politics inevitably it is always the opposition that forms 'cliques' or 'factions', while members of one's own party associate only for the best of reasons. There is no doubt whatever that scholars of the Later Han were much inclined to form alliances, which we may call 'associations' 'cliques' or 'factions', depending on how we feel about them, and that the webs of loyalties and interests these generated were frequently at odds with the purposes and lines of
authority in the bureaucracy.

To sum up: while the politics of this period was indeed dominated by the struggle for power and influence between scholars, imperial relatives and eunuchs, we must reject the 'explanation' of the decline of the Han in terms of an irruption of evil outsiders into an orderly, efficient bureaucracy, manned by idealistic scholars whose self-awareness crystallised out of their opposition to the evils they faced. What we have to emphasise, rather, is the uninterrupted evolution and elaboration of the scholarly and political culture, a culture which was to varying degrees shared by scholars, imperial relatives and eunuchs alike. That culture did contain high ideals, ideals which were seriously pursued by only a minority of imperial relatives and eunuchs as of scholars. But it also contained negative elements, including family-oriented partiality and factionalism, and these influenced the conduct of many scholars as well as imperial relatives and eunuchs.

Such an account is very different to that given Yu Ying-shih, and requires in particular a rejection of his idea of a new self-awareness developing among scholars of the late Han period. This in turn makes it necessary to reject his argument that this new self-awareness and the individualism it generated led to an upsurge of eremitism which carried on into the Wei-Jin period. 'That the reclusive thought of the end of the Han is in fact a reflection of the subjective aspect of individual self-awareness, and that the eremitic aspirations of the scholar-officials of the Wei-Jin period are largely to be understood in the same way, is beyond doubt', he claims. What truth there is in this idea of new self-awareness relates to the scholarly culture which developed in the Han, but this had began to take shape as early
NOTES


2. Yü, 206-07.

3. Yü, 211-12.


6. Yü, 231-34.


9. See particularly his article 'Gudai zhishi jieceng de xingqi yu fazhan', *Zhongguo zhishi jieceng shilun*, 1-108.

10. Yü gives only one example, that of the hermit Shentu Pan drawing a parallel between the scholars of his own period and those just before the final extinction of all trace of the Zhou dynasty by the forces of Qin Shihuang (HHS 53/1752). But others drew such parallels too. Thus one scholar from the time of Emperor Shun praised another as a latter day Yan Hui (53/1744), and compared himself with Confucius (83/2773), while the charlatan Xiang Xu went as far as to name his followers after Confucius' disciples (81/2693). At the end of the Han dynasty, Ying Shao, like many of his contemporaries, found the Spring and Autumn Period and its characteristic institutions (such as that of the Hegemon) particularly relevant to his own time. For an account of this aspect of Ying Shao's thought see Michael Nylan, 'Ying Shao's "Feng Su T'ung Yi": An Exploration of the Problems in Han Dynasty Political, Philosophical and Social Unity' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1982).

11. HHS 83/2761; HHJ 5/8b-9b.

12. HHS 83/2762. Jìn Fagen 'Dong Han danggu renwu de fenxi', 517, identifies a number of factors which encouraged 'factionalism' among Han scholars, including: shared scholarly interests; association in office; marital connections; the patronage involved in official recommendations and summonses; and being
fellow students of a given teacher. Obviously these things were just as characteristic of the early part as of the later part of the dynasty. It was not for nothing that Emperor Ming issued an edict in the first year as his reign ordering that abuses and manipulation of the recommendatory system be stopped (HHS 2/98). But this decree seems to have had little effect, for Emperor Zhang had to issue a very similar one soon after he came to the throne (HHS 3/133), and Wang Chong, writing during his reign, complained that it was connections and factions rather than personal merit that led to recommendation for office (LH 27/1b).

13. LY 15.20.
14. As suggested in Chapter One, note 121, possibly the best example was Sima Qian.
18. Sanfu juelu zhu, cited in the commentary to HHS 64/2121. DHJ 12/5b also makes this assessment of Ma Rong. On Ma Rong's rather opportunistic approach to eremitism see HHS 60A/1953 and HHJ 19/3b-4a. For an attempt to clear Ma Rong's name of this and other alleged improprieties, including the far more serious matter of his implication in Li Gu's death, see Wang Yong "Ma Rong bian", Dalu zazhi 36.3 (1968), 87-91.
19. In the HHJ 5/8b version Yan Guang emphasises the difference between men such as himself and ordinary scholars: 'There truly are scholars who retain their integrity'.
21. Wang Fu, Qianfu lun 1/10a-b, 2/4b-5a, 11b-12a, 14b-15a, 3/11b-12a, 8/2a-3b, 3b-6b.
22. Xu Gan, Zhong lun 中論 (SBCK ed.) B/7a-14a.
23. Yu Ying-shih, who refers to Xu Gan's work on pp.211-12, is perfectly well aware of prevalence of 'vulgar scholars' in the Han period, yet in his account of the rise the supposedly new scholarly self-awareness they disappear from view, with the result that individual and group scholarly consciousness he describes pertains only to a small minority. On the other hand, the general lack of idealism among scholars of the late Han period is stressed by Chen Dongyuan, 'Dong Han zhi shiqi'.
24. On Liang Ji's control over scholars and officials, see particularly his biography in HHS 34/1178-87; also Rafe de Crespigny, 'Political Protest in Imperial China', and 'The Harem of Emperor Huan: A Study of Court Politics in Later Han', Papers in Far Eastern History, 12 (Sept. 1975), 3-18.
26. See, for example, Yang Liansheng, 'Dong Han de haozu', Qinghua xuebao, 11 (1936), 1007-63, translated as 'Great Families of the Eastern Han', in Chun-shu Chang, The Making of China (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), esp. 131-32; Balazs, 'Political Philosophy and Social Crisis at the End of the Han Dynasty', Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy, 188-89. This point is also taken up by de Crespigny, 'Political Protest in Imperial China', 4-5 (note 1). Certainly there is no evidence in the chapters on empresses in the Hou Han shu (juan 10A-B) that a significant number came from vulgar stock.

27. Balazs makes this assertion in 'Political Philosophy and Social Crisis at the End of the Han Dynasty', 189. In 'Two Songs by Ts'ao Ts'ao', Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy, 174, he says rather more cautiously that 'some' eunuchs were of 'plebian origin'. His more sweeping assertion is questioned by Nylan, 'Ying Shao's "Feng Su T'ung Yi"', 234 (note 47).


29. HHS 78/2524. Three eunuchs of the Former Han known to have been reduced to that status for real or alleged offences against the law were Shi Xian, Hong Gong and Li Yannian (HS 93/10-14).


32. HHS 78/2518.

33. HHS 78/2528.

34. HHS 78/2533-34.


36. Balazs was prepared to make such wild generalisations as 'Naturally the greed of the eunuchs and their low moral standards were in direct proportion to the opportunities available to them', and to condemn 'the exactions, corruption, and veniality of the eunuchs', but nevertheless had to admit they 'were by no means entirely without culture' ('Political Philosophy and Social Crisis', 190-91). Yang Liansheng, 'Great Families of Eastern
Hant, 131, also makes much of the ignorance of eunuchs.

37. For example, see LY 1.2, 1.6, 1.9, 1.11, 1.13, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 13.18.

38. For example, see Mozi 8/20-21; Han Feizi 2/2b, 4a, 19/4b-5a. Both the Moist doctrine of universal love and the Legalist notion of rule by law were of course both formulated in opposition to what was seen as Confucian 'partiality'. On the conflict between duty towards the family and duty to the emperor, see also Rafe de Crespigny, 'Politics and Philosophy Under the Government of Emperor Huan', 53.

39. For example, Wang Fu, Cui Shi, Zhongchang Tong, and Xun Yue. See Balazs, 'Political Philosophy and Social Crisis', 198-225; Ch'en, Hsun Yüeh, 148-61; Fu Lecheng, 'Hanfa yu Hanru', 459-60.

40. The term you appears nineteen times in the Lunyu on its own and seven times in the compound pengyou.

41. LY 2.14.

42. Yu, 'Han Jin zhi ji shi', 255.
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