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HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY IN MODERN CHINA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE RESEARCH SCHOOL OF PACIFIC STUDIES
EAST ASIAN HISTORY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

BRIAN MOLOUGHNEY

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of history and biography in modern China. It is historiographical in focus, examining one way in which the writing of history has changed during the course of the twentieth century. As a biographical perspective was central to traditional Chinese historical writing, such a study of the relationship of biography and history can help reveal what it is that distinguishes modern historical writing from the tradition out of which it has emerged.

The first chapter looks at the origins of biographical writing in China, the traditional relationship between biography and history, and the dominance of a biographical perspective on the past. Chapter Two provides an assessment of how that traditional relationship between history and biography changed during the early twentieth century, the transition from the traditional practice of biographical history to the writing of modern historical biographies. Chapter Three then looks in detail at the work of Zhu Dongrun, at his views on what modern biography should be and at his biography of the late Ming scholar and statesman Zhang Juzheng. In Chapter Four the focus shifts to a consideration of the re-evaluation of biography and of the role of the individual in history during the early years of the People's Republic. Chapter Five is devoted to the historical and biographical writing of Wu Han, and, in particular, to the way political changes influenced his biography of the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang. Finally, in the Epilogue, brief consideration is given to the revival of biographical writing during the 1980s. By exploring the evolving relationship between history and biography, it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to an appreciation of how modern Chinese have reshaped their past in order to give it new significance.

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從列傳到傳記

The drawing of characters is one of the most splendid, and, at the same time, one of the most difficult ornaments of historical composition.

Hugh Blair *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London:W. Creech, 1783) vol. 2. p.281.

Preface

Do you know that since the creation of heaven and earth
there have always been ghosts who remain deathless?
The sage, the virtuous, the faithful and the filial
have their deeds written in books...
and they live on eternally.[1]

One of the principal ways to establish a permanent presence in Chinese culture, to live on beyond death in the minds of others, was to find favour with the official historians. Inclusion in an official history carried such status that the record of an individual life might then attract the attention of storytellers and dramatists, and in this way filter out beyond the world of the literate elite and enter the collective memory of the society at large. This myth-making process, the creation of "ghosts who remain deathless," grew up largely around the records of individual lives, lives enshrined in the official histories. In China, historians were biographers. The writing of biography was an integral part of traditional historical writing. But how did this change in the twentieth century? How did the creation of a new sense of the past and the search for new myths affect this traditional relationship between history and biography? These are the questions that provide the focus for this study.

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1 Zhong Sicheng *Lu gui bu* [Register of ghosts] (Shanghai:Gudian wenxue reprint, 1957) preface, p.2.

The changes that have occurred in Chinese historical writing during the twentieth century have perhaps received less attention than they deserve. When compared with the interest that has been shown in literature, this lack of attention seems even more pronounced. Each year studies appear in English uncovering and examining aspects of twentieth century Chinese literature, especially the poetry and fiction of the May Fourth period. Much less attention is given to the historical writing of this period. The reason for this cannot be that the changes were less significant; they were not. And it seems all that much more puzzling considering the authoritative status which historical writing always enjoyed in the Chinese tradition. With the collapse of institutional Confucianism went the collapse of traditional historiography, and the subsequent attempt to refashion the world, to make it new, was just as prominent in historical writing during the twentieth century as it was in poetry and fiction.

The development of a Marxist historiography in China is the feature of modern historical writing which has received the most attention, which is perhaps only natural. Yet this was but one aspect only of the many changes that came to Chinese historical writing as a consequence of the collapse of the Confucian tradition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A characteristic of the new history that emerged during this period was its great diversity. Marxist historical writing developed amidst this diversity and even once it became the new orthodoxy it was far from static. Historians interpreted Marxist ideas about the past within the context of the wider changes and developments that had occurred in historical writing since the beginning of the twentieth century. The intention in this thesis, therefore, is to look at those wider changes, not just focus on the consequences of the adoption of Marxist-inspired perceptions of the past.

The particluar focus of the thesis, its concern with the relationship between history and biography in the modern period, is a reflection of the nature of the tradition of historical writing in China. It was biography that dominated in traditional historical compilations; but did this continue to be the case with modern historical writing? If the biographical perspective was central to traditional historical writing, how did this change in the twentieth century? How did perceptions of both biography and history alter? In what way did changes in the understanding of what history was affect biographical writing, and how did changes in the understanding of what biography was affect historical writing? Did biography continue to be seen primarily as the work of the historian, or did modern biographers perceive of their craft as distinct from history? These are the sorts of questions that lie at the heart of this study. In reflecting on these questions it is hoped that something of the diversity of modern Chinese perceptions of the past will be revealed, and that this will add to our understanding of what was 'new' in the practice of both modern historical writing and the craft of modern biography.

The first chapter of the thesis examines the tradition of Chinese historical writing, and the place of biography in that tradition. By looking at the development of this tradition a better understanding can be gained of the significance of the changes that came in the twentieth century. Chapter Two then turns to the transformation of historical writing that came with the spread of new ideas about the past from the late nineteenth century onwards. These new perceptions of the past not only affected the way people viewed the historical tradition, they also influenced their understanding of how the past should be portrayed. Biography lost the status it had enjoyed in traditional historiography as new narrative perspectives were developed to respond to the new questions that were being asked about the past. Chapter Three then

focuses on the work of one scholar who saw these changes as beneficial to biographical writing. He wished to see biography freed from the constraints which the requirements of historiography had imposed. The transformation from traditional biographical history to modern historical biography, which was discussed in general in Chapter Two, is looked at in more specific detail in this third chapter.

Chapter Four deals with the changes that came after 1949 and the attempts to define what was required of history under the People's Republic. One of the central issues debated during these years was the role of the individual in history and the place of biography in historical writing. These debates are discussed within the context of earlier perceptions of these same issues. The fifth chapter then looks in more detail at the work of a single historian who wished to see some continuity between traditional China and the China of the People's Republic, and who was an outspoken advocate of the value of a biographical perspective on the past. Thus, this chapter is concerned with the politics of historical biography as seen through the writing of one historian. Finally, in the Epilogue, consideration is given to the revival and popularity of biographical writing in the 1980s. Despite the debates of the early years of the People's Republic, it seems that biography is now accepted as an integral part of the historian's work. The principal form which this biographical writing takes, the independent study of a 'life and times' nature, was a product not of Marxist historiography itself but of the wider changes that had occurred in historical writing during the first part of the twentieth century. The thesis is thus concerned with the way the Chinese tradition of biographical history was transformed, leading to a situation where independent historical biographies are seen as just one sub-genre, and not the dominant form, of modern historical writing.

The thesis is a study in historiography, a study of the history of historical writing. But the focus is on the developing relationship between history and biography, and on the extent to which biography is seen to exist independently of history. When specific examples of biographical writing are introduced, the discussion is centred less on the subject of the biography and more on the way the work reflects changing developments in the relationship between history and biography in modern China. With such a focus, the aims of the historian or biographer, they way they perceive biography and its place in the historian's work, are more of interest than what they have to contribute to an understanding of the particular person or period about which they write.

Similarly, this is a study of the changing nature of modern Chinese perceptions of themselves and their tradition. It is not concerned with how they have seen the history of other places and peoples. For this reason, the historical and biographical writing discussed relates solely to the Chinese tradition, to Chinese people and Chinese events only. Chinese biographical and historical writing about foreign peoples and places is not considered. Nevertheless, the volume of material encompassed by such a study is large. Not all of it could be covered. The focus is therefore on that writing which is either representative of general trends or is of considerable significance in itself.

Where known, the dates for individuals are given at the time they first appear in the text. All Chinese and Japanese names, titles and terms mentioned in the text are included in the character glossary.

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Chapter One

The Tradition of Biographical History

The duty of the official historian lies in encouraging goodness and reproving evil, documenting the achievements and virtues of the dynasty with honesty, narrating the careers of loyal ministers and eminent persons and recording the shameful conduct of traitorous officials and obsequious people, and conveying these things for posterity.[1]

The biographical essay provided the core to traditional Chinese historical writing. The success of a dynasty was thought to be dependent upon the virtues of its emperors, ministers and officials and thus a principal concern of the historian was the recording of exemplary lives, the writing of biography. And as the art of classical Chinese prose lay in succinctness, it was the essay that became the vehicle for this biographical

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[1] Li Ao "Baiguan xingzhuang zou" [Memorial on obituaries for officials] (819 A.D.) in *Li wen gong ji* [The collected works of Li Ao] (1875 edition) juan 10, pp.1a-b. Beginning his memorial in this way, Li Ao is restating the ethos of traditional historiography, an ethos that has its origins in interpretations of *Chunqiu* [The spring and autumn annals]. For early expression of this ethos see the *Zuozhuan* [The Zuo commentary] for the years Cheng gong 14 and Zhao gong 31 in Du Yu *Chunqiu jing zhuan jijie* [Collected interpretations of *The spring and autumn annals* and its commentaries] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe reprint, 1978) vol.1, p.735 and vol.2, p.1,592. In his autobiographical postface to *Shiji* [Historical records], Sima Qian describes the 'virtues' of *Chunqiu* in a similar way: "It calls good good and bad bad, honours the worthy and condemns the unworthy." See *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju reprint, 1959) juan 130, p.3297. Denis Twitchett has recently provided a complete translation of Li Ao's memorial in *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp.71-74.

writing.[2] Such a close association of biography and history ensured that biographical writing displayed all the characteristics of traditional Confucian historiography. History was seen as a record of the working out in the lives of people of the principles of political morality that were thought to govern the state and society, principles enshrined in the Confucian classics.[3] This was to change with the collapse of institutional Confucianism in the late nineteenth century, and with it the collapse of traditional historiography, when a new and radically different relationship between the writing of history and biography was sought. In order to appreciate the nature of this transition, however, it is first necessary to understand something of the tradition of biographical history.

The Emergence of Biographical Writing

Biographical writing probably had its origins in the desire to establish a presence beyond death. The *Zuozhuan* [Zuo commentary] states that such a presence could be achieved in one or more of three ways; through moral force, distinguished service, or the power of words. When knowledge of such distinction did not fade this was what was meant by achieving immortality, "to die yet not perish."[4] Without a

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[2] "It is when the text is concise while the events are rich that we have narrative writing at its best." Liu Zhiji *Shi tong* [Understanding history] (Guizhou:Renmin chubanshe reprint, 1985) vol.1, p.217. This translation is from Stuart H. Sargent "Understanding History: the Narration of Events," *Renditions* 15 (Spring, 1981) p.31. For further discussion on how the laborious task of inscribing characters on bamboo or stone encouraged succinctness and how the narrative economy displayed in texts such as *Chunqiu* constrained Chinese prose, see Qian Zhongshu *Guanzhui bian* [Pipe-awl chapters] (Hong Kong:Zhonghua shuju, 1980) vol.1, pp.163-164.

[3] "The classics are the principles of governance, the histories the evidence." Zhao Yi *Nianer shi zhaji* [Notebook on the twenty-two standard histories] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju reprint, 1987) preface, p.2.

[4] *Zuozhuan*: Xiang gong 24. See Du, *Chunqiu*, vol. 2, p.1011. Such criteria of distinction continued to be influential down into the twentieth century. One example of this is Lin Yutang's use of the *Zuozhuan* categories in assessing the achievement of

belief in an after-life yet with a strong commitment to the continuity of the family and the clan, there evolved very early in the Confucian tradition the notion that the only way to establish a presence beyond death was through the power of the written word. The earliest writings devoted to ensuring that knowledge of the worth of an individual's life did not fade were probably records of funerary orations, records that were to develop into a diverse genre of writing as the ritual veneration of ancestors came to be seen as an important social duty.[5] Liu Xie (c. 465-522) suggests that elegies (lei) were written during the Western Zhou period (c.1025-722 B.C.), although it is not until the *Zuozhuan* that we find the earliest recorded example. But Duke Ai's outpouring of grief on the death of Confucius tells us little of its subject, only that he was much admired and would be greatly missed.[6]

The move away from such expressions of grief to a more extensive record of an individual's life is difficult to trace. In the Graeco-Roman

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Sun Yatsen: see Lin Taiyi *Lin Yutang zhuan* [A biography of Lin Yutang] (Taibei:Lianjing chubanshe, 1989) pp.63-64.

[5] Three common forms of necrology or funerary writing were: the grave record (muzhi) which was buried with or near the coffin; the grave notice (mubiao) placed above the ground near the grave; and the spirit road tablet (shen-dao-biao), a more extensive form of grave notice usually written only for people of high social standing. The prose section of these inscriptions was often followed by a short eulogy in verse (ming). The sacrificial ode or requiem (jiwen) was generally shorter than an inscription, written solely in verse and often burnt after being read aloud at the burial ceremony. For a list of some twenty different names for various forms of grave record, as well as a variety of different names for funerary tablets (bei) and grave notices see Li Shaoyong *Sima Qian zhuanji wenxue lungao* [An essay on Sima Qian's biographical literature] (Chongqing:Chongqing chubanshe, 1987) pp.57-58. See also James Hightower "The Wen Hsüan and Genre Theory," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 20 (1957):512-533.

[6] Liu Xie/Yang Mingzhao *Wen xin diao long jiaozhu* [A annotated commentary on *Wen xin diao long*] (Shanghai:Gudian chubanshe, 1958) p.80. For Duke Ai's elegy upon the death of Confucius see *Zuozhuan*: Liang gong 16 in Du, *Chunqiu*, vol. 2, p.1818. The elegy reads:

> Compassionate Heaven vouchsafes me no comfort, and has not left
> me the aged man, to support me, the One man, on my seat.
> Dispirtited I am, and full of distress. Woe is me! Alas! O Ne-foo!
> There is none [now] to be a rule to me!

For this translation see James Legge *The Chinese Classics* (Taibei:Southern Materials Centre reprint, 1985) vol.5, p.846.

world this process seems to have been gradual, from the early encomia of Isocrates to the work of Xenephon, Aristoxenus and Cornelius Nepos, culminating eventually in the 'lives' by Plutarch, Tacitus and Suetonius. In discussing this gradual process, Momigliano argues it was the social and political changes of the fourth century B.C. that were of primary importance in the emergence of Greek biography.[7] The new power that individual political leaders obtained during the century, combined with changes in the nature of philosophy and rhetoric which saw greater emphasis on individual education, performance and self control, focused attention upon the lives of individuals in a way that had not been the case before.

It is possible that such social and political changes were also of importance in the emergence of Chinese biographical writing. The late Zhou, Qin and early Han period is known as a time of great upheaval, a period that allowed individuals of differing social classes unprecedented influence, in particular the group known as shi (men of service).[8] The political and philosophical debates of the period and the greater emphasis placed on rhetorical skills, as evidenced in *Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu* [Conversations from the states] and *Zhanguo ce* [Intrigues of the Warring States] as well as the numerous *zhuzi baijia* writings [Various masters and the hundred schools], saw greater interest in and respect for the

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[7] A. Momigliano *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) pp.43-46. For a fascinating discussion of the place of the epitaphios logos, or funeral oration, in the civic life of Athens see Nicole Loraux *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City* translated by Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1986). Also of value on the development of Greek and Roman biography are Duane Reed Stuart *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography* (New York:Biblio and Tannen reprint, 1967); T.A. Dorey (ed.) *Latin Biography* (London:Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967); and Patricia Cox *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1983).

[8] For a discussion of the difficulties of translating this term see Benjamin I. Schwartz *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass.:Belknap Press, 1985) pp.57-58 and J.I. Crump, Jnr. *Intrigues: Studies of the Chan-kuo Ts'e* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1964) pp.1-9.

individual. There was opportunity for the able, the adventurous and the arrogant to make a name for themselves. Some Chinese scholars have argued that it was this period of great social change that was of paramount importance in the emergence of Chinese biographical writing.[9]

Indeed, some of the accounts of character in the early narratives of this time, such as the famous story of the conflict between the two brothers of Zheng told at the beginning of *Zuozhuan*, could be seen as indicating a shift toward biographical writing.[10] With an emphasis on revealing aspects of character, such as the virtues of filial piety as in the abovementioned story, these anecdotes show many of the characteristics of early Chinese biographical writing. But they are isolated anecdotes, embedded in a body of text devoted to the narration of event. The lives of the individuals concerned are not central to the story. True biography emerges as a radical departure from these earlier texts.

The compilers of the great eighteenth century compendium of Chinese literature, the *Siku quanshu* [The complete collection of the Four Treasuries], considered the *Yanzi chunqiu* [The annals of Master Yan], a collection of moral injunctions supposedly delivered by Yan Ying who served as prime minister of the state of Qi in the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C., to be China's first biography.[11] These anecdotes were probably collected during the fourth century B.C., although the present

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[9] Li Shaoyong *Sima Qian* pp.16-43, Ji Zhenhuai *Sima Qian* (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1979) p.83, Chen Lancun and Zhang Xinke *Zhongguo gudian zhuanji lungao* [An essay on traditional Chinese biography] (Xian:Shanxi renmin, 1991) pp.152-201 and Shigesawa Toshiro "Shiba sen no shigaku kanken" [My views on Sima Qian's historiography] *Shina gaku* 10, 4 (December, 1942): 568-571.

[10] *Zuozhuan*: Yin gong 1, in Du Yu, *Chunqiu*, vol.1, pp.5-7. A translation of this story is given by Burton Watson in *The Tso Chuan: Selections From China's Oldest Narrative History* (New York:Columbia University Press, 1989) pp.1-4.

[11] Ji Yun et al. *Siku quanshu zongmu* [Catalogue of the complete collection of the Four Treasuries] (Shanghai:Dadong shuju reprint, 1930) juan 57, p.1a.

text dates from the edition put together by Liu Xiang (c.79-6B.C.).[12] Modern critics have tended to disagree with the editors of the *Siku quanshu*.[13] Rather than a work of biography, *Yanzi chunqiu* is seen as little more than a collection of anecdotes, where the character of Master Yan is used simply as a vehicle to convey the doctrine. If *Yanzi chunqiu* were to be considered a work of biography then surely other 'philosophical' texts such as *Lunyu* [The Analects] and *Mengzi* [Mencius] should be considered biography as well. Indeed, some have argued this. Hu Shi (1891-1962), for instance, claimed *Lunyu* to be China's oldest work of biography.[14] It seems more appropriate, however, to consider these works as examples of the genre known as lunbian (essays and arguments), although *Lunyu* and *Mengzi* occupied a distinctive place in the Confucian canon. Until the compilers of the *Siku quanshu* transferred *Yanzi chunqiu* into the biographical section of historical works it was classified as a work of philosophy, a more appropriate designation.

Biography proper only comes with *Shiji* [Historical records] and can be attributed to the genius of Sima Qian (145-90?B.C.). Rather than concentrate on the detailing of event as had been the case with previous

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[12] Wu Zeyu *Yanzi chunqiu jishi* [Collected commentaries of the annals of Master Yan] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1962).

[13] Burton Watson, for instance, writes that although the *Yanzi chunqiu* contains a number of speeches and admonitions supposedly by the famous minister of Qi, it "is actually a philosophical work expounding policies associated with his name and anecdotes in which he figures; it cannot be regarded as a life of the man himself." See his *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China* (New York:Columbia University Press, 1958) p.124. Similar views are expressed by Wang Yun *Zhuanji xue* [A study of biography] (Taibei:Mutong chubanshe reprint, 1977) p.15, and Chen Shih-hsiang "An Innovation in Chinese Biographical Writing," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 13, 1(November, 1953) p.50.

[14] Mao Zishui "Wo duiyu zhuanji wenxuede yixie yijian," [My observations on biographical literature] *Zhuanji wenxue* 1, 1 (June, 1962) pp.5-6, discusses and endorses this view put forward by Hu Shi in a lecture given at the Normal University in Taiwan in 1953. Du Zhengxiang makes similar points in "Zhuanji yu zhuanji wenxue," [Biography and biographical literature] *Zhuanji wenxue* 1, 2 (July, 1962) pp.6-7 and 39.

chronological narratives, Sima Qian produced an account of the past as told through the lives of prominent individuals.[15] With *Shiji*, Sima Qian not only created a new format for Chinese historical writing, he also introduced biography into the Chinese traditon.

Sima Qian divided his history into five sections. The first of these, the twelve benji or basic annals, are accounts of the major public events in the lives of those individuals who exercised paramount authority, whether they be emperors or not.[16] The next section, the ten chapters of biao or tables, provide chronological lists of important events and people. The third section, the eight shu or treatises, are essays on institutional aspects of state administration. The fourth section, the shijia or hereditary houses, consists of thirty chapters devoted to the lives of prominent members of important families, families who exerted considerable influence in the governing of the realm. Lastly there are the seventy liezhuan, or biographies, the largest section of the text. These incorporate an extraordinary variety of material and although a few of the chapters are devoted to accounts of groups of people, such as the Xiongnu, for the most part they are biographies of those whose lives Sima Qian considered exemplary.

There has been much speculation about possible antecedents to *Shiji*, texts which may have influenced the way Sima Qian conceived his history.[17] And while it is probable that the form of one or more of the

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[15] If we accept Li Changzhi's suggestion that Sima Tan wrote certain sections of *Shiji*, then it would be more accurate to say that biographical writing in China was the creation of both father and son -- or as Sima Qian himself states, the text was "the achievement of one family." See *Shiji*, 130, p.3319. For Li Changzhi's discussion of which chapters might be attributed to Sima Tan, see *Sima Qian zhi renge yu fengge* [The personality and style of Sima Qian] (Hong Kong:Taiping shuju reprint, 1962) pp.155-162.

[16] For a discussion of the various sections of *Shiji* see chapter 4 in Watson *Ssu-ma Ch'ien*, pp.101-134.

[17] For the claim that Sima Qian simply integrated pre-existing forms of writing into a composite history see Zhang Shunhui "Lun *Shiji*," in Wang Guowei et al. *Sima Qian -- qiren ji qishu* [Sima Qian -- the man and his work] (Taibei:Changan chubanshe,

five sections that compose the work was based upon portions of earlier texts, this does not negate the radical reformulation of narrative writing that Sima Qian achieved. As Li Shaoyong writes:

> Although the jizhuan (composite) form consists of five sections, its most important sections are the benji, shijia and liezhuan, and while the narrative techniques of these three sections are not identical, fundamentally they all embody the essential characteristics of the jizhuan form --- that is, they are all biographies of one or more people. The basic difference between the biannian (chronological) and the jizhuan form [of writing] is that the former stresses events while the latter emphasizes individuals.[18]

This composite format developed by Sima Qian was adopted as the model for all subsequent standard dynastic histories, the official and authoritative interpretation of the Chinese past, and the biographical sections of these official histories grew to be proportionally larger than the other sections. For instance, in the *Song shi* [History of the Song], of the total 496 chapters there are 47 devoted to benji and 255 to liezhuan (i.e. 302 of the 496 chapters). In the *Yuan shi* [History of the Yuan], out of a total of 210 chapters there are 47 devoted to benji and 97 to liezhuan (144 out of 210), and in *Ming shi* [History of the Ming] out of a total of 332 chapters there are 24 devoted to benji and 220 to liezhuan (244 out of 332).[19] The belief that the success of a dynasty was dependent upon the

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1987) pp.126-140. And for the contrary view, that Sima Qian created the various forms of the work himself, see Xiao Li *Sima Qian pingzhuan* [A critical biography of Sima Qian] (Changchun:Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1986) pp.54-70. These are just two of the more recent contributions to this long debate. A good historical summary of the debate, from Yang Xiong's (53B.C.-18A.D.) association of *Shiji* with the *Huai nan zi* to the views of Liang Qichao and Fan Wenlan in the twentieth century, is given in Li Shaoyong *Sima Qian*, pp.1-15.

[18] Li Shaoyong *Sima Qian*, p.13. Liang Qichao makes a similar point, writing that the greatest difference between *Shiji* and previous historical writing was that it "regarded people as its foundation." See *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa* [Methods for the study of Chinese history] (Shanghai:Shanghai guji chubanshe reprint, 1987) pp.15-16.

[19] See Tuo Tuo et. al. *Song shi* [History of the Song] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju series, 1977), Song Lian et. al. *Yuan shi* [History of the Yuan] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju series, 1976) and Zhang Tingyu et. al. *Ming shi* [History of the Ming] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju series, 1974).

virtues of its emperors, ministers and officials is reflected in this prominence given to individual lives in the official histories, and the authority accorded these official histories meant that biography came to occupy a central place in the writing of history in China. Of course, not all traditional historical writing conformed to the pattern of *Shiji*. One notable genre that differed significantly from the jizhuan format was that of the great institutional histories that were produced from the Tang dynasty onwards and which focused on the process of administration, not the lives of adminstrators and eminent people.[20] Yet it remained the case that from Sima Qian's time the writing of biography became an important part of the historian's work, and the official nature of the standard dynastic histories gave the biographical essay an authoritative status within the Chinese prose tradition that it was to retain into the twentieth century.

The Nature of Traditional Biography

The formal characteristics of traditional biographical writing were established in the liezhuan section of *Shiji*. While some of the benji and shijia chapters were much admired, most notably the biography of Xiang Yu, it was in the seventy chapters of liezhuan that Sima Qian made his great contribution to Chinese biography.

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[20] For studies of these institutional histories see Denis Twitchett *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang*, pp.84-118; Albert B. Mann "Cheng Ch'iao: An Essay in Re-evaluation" in David C. Buxbam and Frederick W. Mote (eds.) *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture. A festschrift in Honor of Dr. Hsiao Kung-ch'uan* (Hong Kong:Cathay Press Ltd., 1972) pp.23-57; Hok-lam Chan "'Comprehensiveness'(T'ung) and 'Change'(Pien) in Ma Tuan-lin's Historical Thought" in Hok-lam Chan and Wm. Theodore de Bary (eds.) *Yuan Thought: Chinese Thought and Religion under the Mongols* (New York:Columbia University Press, 1982) pp.27-87; and Robert M. Hartwell "Historical Analogism, Public Policy, and Social Science in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century China," *The American Historical Review* 76, 3 (1971):692-727.

Finding an adequate translation for the term liezhuan has proved difficult. Interpretations of the term depend on what people conceive Sima Qian's intention to have been in writing these chapters. Liu Zhiji (661-721) felt the liezhuan provided elucidation and explanation of the material included in the benji, just as a commentary (zhuan) sought to explain a classic.[21] Yet most feel that the term zhuan had a much wider meaning than just commentary, encompassing the sense of a body of 'tradition', and that in the liezhuan, Sima Qian selected material from these traditions in order to compose his portraits. This interpretation has the advantage of explaining the great diversity of material which the liezhuan contain.[22] The important position that *Shiji* occupies in the Chinese literary canon is, at least in part, attributable to the inclusion in the liezhuan chapters of this great variety of material from the written and oral traditions.[23] Writers and critics would often use *Shiji* as a standard against which to judge literary achievement, and much of the

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[21] Liu Zhiji *Shitong*, vol.1, p.49.

[22] In advocating such an interpretation, James R. Hightower writes that

> if we consider them [the liezhuan] as collections of material handed down (ch'uan) by tradition - oral and written - materials for which Ssu-ma Ch'ien may have been unwilling to give unqualified endorsement, their lack of homogeneity ceases to be relevant.

See James R. Hightower "Ch'ü Yuan Studies," in *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun Kagaku Kenkyusyo* (Kyoto:Kyoto University, 1954) p.197, n.1. Studies of how Sima Qian incorporated such popular 'traditions' into the liezhuan chapters include Guo Shuangcheng *Shiji renwu zhuanji lunwen* [An essay on the biographies in *Shiji*] (Zhengzhou:Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985) pp.278-294; Miyazaki Ichisada "Miburi to bungaku -- Shiki seiritsu ni tsuite no ichi shiron" [Gestures and literature -- oral tradition in *Shiji*] *Chugoku bungaku hō* 20 (1965):1-27; Timoteus Pokora "Ironical Critics at Ancient Chinese Courts (*Shih chi*, 126)" *Oriens Extremus* 20 (1973):49-64; and Chauncey S. Goodrich "Ssu-ma Ch'ien's Biography of Wu Ch'i" *Monumenta Serica* 35 (1981-83):197-233.

[23] Andrew Plaks writes:

> it might be argued that the historical development of many of the genres of Chinese fiction both began with, and remained inextricably linked to, the prototypes of biographical narrative forged in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Shih-chi*.

See his section 'Terminology and Central Concepts' in David L. Rolston *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1990) p.119. Li Shaoyong studies this relationship of Sima Qian's liezhuan to the subsequent development of Chinese literature in *Sima Qian*, pp.79-204.

fiction produced in later periods had its origins in these liezhuan, or 'ordered traditions', of Sima Qian.

An entirely different interpretation of the term liezhuan has been suggested by Pierre Ryckmans. Instead of reading the character lie as implying 'ordered' or 'rank', he proposes it be read as 'exemplary', thus translating the term liezhuan as 'exemplary lives'.[24] Ryckmans writes that what determined the selection of subjects for the biographies was

> ...not so much the importance of their historical role, as their value as archetypes of human behaviour, and among their actions those which merit his [Sima Qian's] attention are not necessarily those which had a significant impact on history, but those which best reveal a character, a temper, a personality. [25]

Indeed, there are times when such a reading seems justified. Towards the end of his biography of Chancellor Zhang, Sima Qian notes the names of a number of others who had served in the same position yet were not worthy of consideration because they had not distinguished themselves in any way; there was nothing about them that was unique.[26] Ryckmans argues that this importance placed upon the distinctive nature of the subject explains the frequent use of anecdote as a means "to focus our attention upon the exemplary situation, where a typical pattern of behaviour, a specific human character all reveals itself at one blow."[27] Certain distinctive features are associated with different subjects in the biographies, so that we remember Shang Yang for his 'harshness', Li Si as

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[24] For the standard reading of the character lie see *Ciyuan* [The origin of words] (Beijing:Commercial Press, 1986) vol.1, p.344, and Bernhard Karlgren *Grammata Serica Recensa* (Stockholm:Bohusläningens Boktryckeri AB, 1987) pp.89-90.

[25] Pierre Ryckmans "A New Interpretation of the Term lieh-chuan as used in *Shih-chi*," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 5 (March, 1972) p.138. For a similar, though slightly different, interpretation of the criteria Sima Qian employed in selecting subjects for the biographies see Jurij L. Kroll "Ssu-ma Ch'ien's Literary Theory and Literary Practice," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 4 (1976):313-325.

[26] *Shiji*, 96, p.2685.

[27] Ryckmans, p.138.

'corrupt', Han Xin's 'wisdom' and Xiao He's 'firmness'.[28] Yet the biographies included in the liezhuan are not purely anecdotal, concentrating only on what made the subjects exemplary. Sometimes Sima Qian simply provides a chronological account of the main events of an individual's life, such as in the biography of the general Wei Qing.[29]

It would seem, then, that there is no clear translation of liezhuan that will cover the great diversity of material included in these chapters and incorporate all the different meanings that can be associated with the term. There are problems even in reading the term simply as 'biography', as some of the liezhuan contain accounts of territories and peoples.[30] For the most part, however, the liezhuan are biographical. Sima Qian felt the lessons of the past were demonstrated best in the lives of individuals and he moulded existing 'traditions' to create a new form of narrative in which he could portray these 'exemplary lives'. As Zhao Yi (1727-1814) has noted, Sima Qian gave this new meaning of 'the specific record of an individual' to the term zhuan, and from then on it has been used principally in this way, to signify biography.[31]

Despite the close association of biography with historical writing that was established in *Shiji*, notions of what biography represented remained flexible. It was not until after the emergence of a bureaucratic historiography under the control of central government during the early

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[28] These characteristic attributes of the various subjects of Sima Qian's biographies are discussed by Zhang Dake in *Shiji yanjiu* [A Study of *Shiji*] (Lanzhou:Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1985) pp.309-310.

[29] *Shiji*, 111, pp.2921-2948. For this point and a good discussion of the variety of narrative techniques employed by Sima Qian in the liezhuan see Joseph Roe Allen III "An Introductory Study of the Narrative Structure in the *Shi ji*," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 3 (January, 1981):31-66.

[30] See, for instance, the account of Korea and of the Xiongnu in *Shiji*, 115, pp.2985-2990 and *Shiji*, 110, pp.2879-2920.

[31] Zhao Yi *Nianer shi*, p.4. See also the views of the two Ming dynasty critics, Wu Ne and Xu Shi, discussed in Li Shaoyong *Sima Qian*, pp.56-57.

Tang dynasty (618-690) that the standard and uniform character of the zhuan of the official dynastic histories came to dominate traditional biographical writing. Prior to this the term zhuan was used for writing of considerable diversity, much of it never intended for inclusion in historical compilations.

The exemplary nature of early biography was prominent in the brief 'pseudo-biographical' anecdotes collected to form the *Lienü zhuan* [Biographies of exemplary women] (c.16 B.C.).[32] Not only was the text intended for inspiration, but illustrations based on these anecdotes were painted on screens and walls to encourage conformity with the six womanly virtues. Much of the material incorportated in these zhuan was legendary, the term still retaining its sense of 'tradition', and the stories of these women are often considered as examples of the link between biography and the moral and supernatural fiction that began to emerge from the third century A.D. onwards.[33]

Daoist and Buddhist writers also used the zhuan format in their early hagiography. The first Daoist work of this kind being the *Liexian zhuan* [Biographies of immortals], although more extensive biographies are presented in the compilation attributed to Ge Hong (283-343) and entitled *Shenxian zhuan* [Biographies of divine immortals]. The oldest surviving collection of Buddhist biography is the compilation by Hui Jiao

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[32] For a detailed study of this text see Takao Shimoni *Ryukyo 'Retsujo-den' no kenkyu* [A study of Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*] (Tokyo:Tokai daigaku shuppankai, 1989).

[33] Li Shaoyong *Sima Qian*, pp.123-124; and Chen "An Innovation," p.50. Kenneth J. DeWoskin notes the "central importance" of the zhuan in the emergence of this supernatural fiction in his entry on zhiguai (describing anomalies) in William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (ed.) *The Indiana Companion To Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington:Indiana University Press, 1986) pp.280-284. See also the entry for chuanqi (tales), pp.356-360, where the borrowing from historical biography is noted. For a more detailed consideration of the importance of biography for the development of fiction during the six dynasties and early Tang periods see DeWoskin's article "The Six Dynasties Chih-kuai and the Birth of Fiction" in Andrew H. Plaks (ed.) *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton:Princeton Univerity Press, 1977) pp.21-52.

(497-554) entitled *Gaoseng zhuan* [Lives of eminent monks].[34] Considering the wealth of Indian Buddhist literature translated into Chinese it is interesting that Chinese Buddhists should turn to a genre of writing such as the zhuan, with its close association to Confucian historiography, when composing sacred biography. But Indian literature did not provide a tradition of biographical writing to emulate and Arthur Wright has suggested that the use of the zhuan form by Buddhist biographers indicates a desire to rescue sacred biography "from the limbo of the exotic, the bizarre" and to give the lives of its subjects "a place of honor in the cultural history of China."[35] The adoption of the zhuan format for writing that ranged from such sacred biography right through to the fringes of supernatural fiction is testament not only to the authoritative position of historical discourse in the Chinese tradition, but also to the extremely flexible nature of so much of early biographical writing.

The first century A.D. had also seen the emergence of biographical collections with a distinctly regional focus, precursors of what were to be large biographical components in the later local gazetteers. The need to broaden the base of the administrative hierarchy had resulted in a search for talent that reached out into the provinces and regions of the empire in a way that had not occurred before, and this in turn stimulated an increased interest in local achievement and local biography. While most

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[34] See the chapter on Buddhist biography in Chen and Zhang, *gudian zhuanji*, pp.106-124.

[35] Arthur F. Wright "Biography and Hagiography: Hui-chiao's *Lives of Eminent Monks*" *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun kagaku kenkyusyo* (Kyoto:Kyoto University, 1954) p.385. Asvaghosa's poetic description of incidents in the life of the Buddha, the *Buddhacarita*, had been translated by Dharmaksema (fl.385-433), yet this work cannot be considered biography. For a discussion of this text and the general absence of biographical writing in early Indian literature see N.N. Bhattacharyya "Historical Biographies in Early Indian Literature," in S.P. Sen and N. R. Ray (eds.) *Historical Biography in Indian Literature* (Calcutta:Institute of Historical Studies, 1979) pp.29-34.

of these texts have been lost and thus it is impossible to know their nature, it is indicative of the increasing popularity of biographical writing that people whose distinctions were of regional rather than empire-wide significance were considered as suitable subjects for zhuan.[36]

Associated with this greater regional perspective was a growing interest in 'characterology' or 'personality appraisal' (pinti renwu), a method for evaluating and judging the character and ability of individuals so as to assess their value to administrators. It has been argued that this concern with the individual was encouraged by the weakening of collectivist Confucian values that accompanied the decline and eventual collapse of the Han dynasty and that this contributed to a climate in which biography emerged as the most popular form of narrative writing.[37] Perhaps the clearest indication of this is the large number of biezhuan (separate or private biographies) that appeared during the period from the fall of the Han dyansty in the early third century to the reunification of the empire under the Sui in the late sixth century.[38] Although these biographies were often used in historical compilations, as with Pei Songzhi's (372-451) commentary to the *San guo*

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36 A list of a number of collections of such regional biography that appeared during the reign of the Han emperor Guangwu (25-57) can be found in the bibliographical treatise of *Sui shu* and is discussed by Zhu Dongrun in "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxuede guoqu yu jianglai" [The past and future of Chinese biographical literature] *Xuelin*, 8 (June, 1941) p.19.

37 See Zhu "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," pp.19-22 for this and for a discussion of the range of biographical writing produced in this period. For the relationship of 'characterology' to the growth of individualsim see Yü Ying-shih "Individualism and the Neo-Taoist Movement in Wei-Chin China" in Donald J. Munro (ed.) *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values* (Ann Arbor:Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1985) pp.121-153 and Mou Zongsan *Caixing yu xuanli* [Human Talent and Profound Theory] (Hong Kong:Rensheng chubanshe, 1963) pp.43-44.

38 For a good discussion of biezhuan and other forms of non-official biographical writing from this period see the chapter on zazhuan in Chen and Zhang *gudian zhuanji*, pp.229-247. Chen and Zhang follow Ruan Xiaoxu (479-536) in using the term zazhuan to refer to all biographical writing that was written independently of official historical compilations and note that it was during the Wei Jin Nan Bei period that such writing flourished.

zhi [Record of the Three Kingdoms], they seem to have been written as independent 'lives' and sometimes shows signs of an unusually critical perspective.[39] Chen Shih-hsiang argues that it was these "spirited" biezhuan that might have provided the seeds from which independent and "full-fledged biographies close to our modern sense of the genre" could have grown.[40] Perhaps Chen is right. The famous biography of the Buddhist monk Xuan Zang (596-664) composed by his disciples Hui Li and Yan Cong is an example of the way Chinese biographical writing might have developed.[41] Considered by some to be the best biography written in premodern China, it is an independent work and is longer and much more detailed than most traditional biographical writing. But this was an example not to be pursued by other writers.[42] The reorganization of official historiography during the early Tang dynasty, which saw the state bureaucracy assume almost exclusive control over the writing of history, ensured that biography was to retain its close association with

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[39] The most notable example of this is the *Cao man zhuan* [Biography of Cao Cao], extracts from which are quoted in Pei Songzhi's commentary to Cao Cao's biography. See Chen Shou *San guo zhi* [Record of the Three Kingdoms] (Bejing:Zhonghua shuju reprint, 1985) pp.1-55. A list of the sources used by Pei in his commentary, which include a large number of private biographies and family genealogies, is given by Rafe de Crespigny in *The Record of the Three Kingdoms: a study in the Historiography of the San kuo chih* (Canberra:Centre for Oriental Studies, 1970) pp.43-89.

[40] Chen "An Innovation," p.52. For a contrary view see D.C. Twitchett "Chinese Biographical Writing," in W.G. Beasley and E.G. Pulleybank (eds.) *Historians of China and Japan* (London:Oxford University Press, 1961) p.99.

[41] See the recent edition of this text, annotated and punctuated by Sun Yutang and Xie Fang, published as Hui Li and Yan Cong *Da Cien si Sanzang fashi zhuan* [Biography of Master Xuan Zang of the great Cien Temple] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju reprint, 1983). Samuel Beal produced an English translation of this work earlier this century (1911) under the title *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang: By the Shaman Hwui Li* (New Delhi:Munshiram Manoharlal reprint, 1973).

[42] For the view that this work represents perhaps the best in traditional Chinese biographical writing see both Zhu "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.22, and Wu Pei-yi *The Confucian's Progress: Autobiographical Writings in Traditional China* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1990) p.7.

historical writing. This would continue to be so throughout the remainder of the imperial period.[43]

The emergence of this bureaucratic historical enterprise saw the official dynastic histories compiled under the control of central government attain a new status as the most authoritative interpretation of the past. Thus, not only did the zhuan retain its close association with historical writing, it assumed even greater prestige and popularity through this association. Gu Yanwu (1613-1682) would later argue that as the zhuan was a form of historical writing it was inappropriate for anyone other than the officially appointed state historians to compose such biographies.[44] Inappropriate, perhaps, but many more zhuan were written than just those compiled by the official historians, although the status attached to the dynastic histories did produce a remarkable degree of similarity in this writing. As David McMullen notes, "the most coveted eventual destination for a biographical text was not the grave of its subject, or a collection of biographies, but the dynastic history itself."[45] Recognition through inclusion in a dynastic history carried such prestige

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[43] This process of the reorganization of historical writing during the Tang dynasty is discussed by Denis Twitchett in his recent book *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang*. Twitchett shows the diversity and complexity of official historical writing, and explains how its development was a gradual process. David McMullen also discusses these issues in his book *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1988): see pp.159-205, and especially pp.162-170 and pp.191-195.

[44] "The term liezhuan began with the Grand Historian. It is a form of history. Those not commissioned to write official histories, should not write zhuan." Gu Yanwu and Huang Rucheng *Ri zhi lu jishi* [Collected commentaries to *A record of daily learning*] (Shanghai:Shanghai guji, 1985) juan 19, p.1475. A similar view is presented by Zhang Xuecheng, although Zhang recognised the general popularity of biography and also considered it appropriate for compilers of local gazetteers to write zhuan. He notes that when he came to compile a gazetteer for Hubei he modelled the biographies in it on the zhuan of the dynastic histories. See his essay on biography in Zhang Xuecheng and Ye Ying *Wen shi tong yi jiaozhu* [An annotated edition of *General principles of literature and history*] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1985) juan 3, pp.248-250.

[45] McMullen *State and Scholars*, p.193.

that it encouraged conformity with the requirements of official historiography. The bureaucratic nature of official historical writing also meant that the range of subjects thought suitable for a biography in a dynastic history narrowed, so that the zhuan became restricted to recording administrative achievement and status. In the *Ming shi* [History of the Ming] (1368-1644), one hundred and fifty eight of the total two hundred and twenty chapters of zhuan are devoted to recording the public lives of those who had served the state in one way or another, while only a few chapters are devoted to those whose lives were thought distinctive for other reasons, such as the 'filial and just' or the 'obsequious and fawning'. Gone also was the diversity and richness that was such a feature of the biographies in *Shiji*.[46]

Some Tang writers did ignore this trend, producing portraits of 'ordinary' people who would never be considered suitable for inclusion in a dynastic history, yet whose lives they considered exemplary. Others wrote startling parodies of the zhuan form, while in the late Ming period there appeared a greater degree of intimacy in some non-official biographical writing.[47] But these instances were the exceptions to the rule. It was official historiography, with its concern to relate virtue to

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46 The argument that the first four dynastic histories are superior to those compiled after the reorganisation of official historiography under the Tang is well known. The editors of a recent anthology of traditional biographical writing suggest that the restrictions of the historical enterprise were such that not even a great writer like Ouyang Xiu could produce biographies that compare with those of Sima Qian and his immediate successors; see Qiao Xiangzhong et. al. (eds.) *Zhongguo gudian zhuanji* [Traditional Chinese biography] (Shanghai:Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1982) preface, p.2.

47 The exmplary nature of the zhuan composed by Liu Zongyuan is discussed by Yu-shih Chen in *Images and Ideas in Chinese Classical Prose: Studies of Four Masters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) pp.97-102, and Han Yu's parody of the form, "Mao ying zhuan," is discussed by Herbert Franke in "Literary Parody in Traditional Chinese Literature: Descriptive Pseudo-Biographies," *Oriens Extremus* 21, 1(1974):21-31. For the more intimate biographical writing of the late Ming period see the interesting chapter devoted to this period in Chen and Zhang *gudian zhuanji*, pp.278-296.

administrative success, that provided the agenda for biographical writing.[48]

The constraints imposed by offficial historical writing also meant that the structure of these zhuan was basically the same. The preliminary section of the biography listed the various names and ancestral home of the subject, which were occasionally supplemented with information regarding noteable ancestors. Following this the biographer might relate an incident to show how the character of the subject was already evident in childhood, although it was more usual to rely simply on a few familiar phrases for this purpose.[49] The main part of the biography was then built around a list of educational achievements, successive appointments, titles and honours received, and was given substance by descriptions of the subject's involvement in public events, quotations from memorials or literary works, and sometimes the inclusion of anecdotal material intended to reveal character. The final section of the biography would give an account of the subject's death, list any posthumous honours conferred, and might provide the names and brief biographies of children who had also been prominent in public affairs.[50]

As an epilogue, and clearly distinct from the text of the zhuan itself, the biographer would usually provide a brief comment (zan) on what it was about the life of the subject (or subjects, in the case of group

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[48] In his analysis of the 'literary' zhuan included in the great Song anthology, the *Wenyuan yinghua* [Finest flowers from the literary garden], William H. Nienhauser Jr. notes how it was the biographies of the dynastic histories that provided the standard for all such writing: see "A Structural Reading of the Chuan in the *Wen-yuan ying-hua*," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36, 3 (May, 1977):443-456.

[49] For discussion of the use of these formulaic phrases, or topoi, see Herbert Franke "Some Remarks on the Interpretation of Chinese Dynastic Histories," *Oriens* 3 (1950) pp.120-121; and Hans H. Frankel "T'ang Literati: A Composite Biography," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (eds.) *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1962) pp.72-73.

[50] Good brief discussions of the basic structure of the zhuan can be found in Peter Olbricht "Die Biographie in China," *Saeculum* 8(1957) p.226; and Denis Twitchett "Problems of Chinese Biography," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (eds.) *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford:Stanford University Press) p.28.

biographies) that was important, particularly with regard to the ethical principles which it was the writer's task to demonstrate. In describing the past through the perspective of individual lives, writers of biography, whether they be official historians or not, were conciously constructing a body of evidence to demonstrate the operation of the principles of political morality that were thought to govern both the state and society. The audience for these works was the same group of scholar-officials from which the writers came and the biographies functioned as a form of guide to the ethical standards upon which sound public administration was thought to be based.

The importance of metahistorical ethical and political Confucian principles was also obvious in the body of materials which writers drew upon when composing zhuan. This body of material consisted mostly of the commemorative writings produced following the death of an eminent person; the funerary inscriptions, and 'accounts of conduct' or 'obituaries' (xingzhuang), which are to be found in the collected works of almost all Confucian writers.[51] In the case of a senior official the Bureau of Evaluations (Kaogong si) might compile an obituary from government records, but in general it was left to the family of the deceased to commission a well-known writer or prestigious person to prepare a laudatory account of the deceased's life. Such commemorative writing might then be submitted to the government in the hope that the deceased would be granted a biography in an official compilation, in particular, the dynastic history, and writers of zhuan relied extensively

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[51] For evidence of the enormous quantity of this writing see *Qingdai beizhuan quanji* [A complete collection of inscriptions and obituaries from the Qing period] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji reprint, 1987). See also the chapter on tomb inscriptions in Chen and Zhang *gudian zhuanji*, pp.140-151.

on this material, often simply copying extracts directly from a funerary inscription or an obituary.[52]

Underlying all of this writing was a continuing concern with the exemplary. At the level of the family as well as that of the official historians there existed a strong sense that biography ought to provide examples for future generations. The selection of material for inclusion in an epitaph, an obituary, or a zhuan, was governed by the central concern to relate virtue to administrative success. A good writer might produce a portrait that managed to be exemplary and at the same time revealed something of the individuality of the subject, as with Su Shi's unusually long obituary for Sima Guang (1019-1086), but the tendency was for the biographer to ignore materials that did not fit the pattern of behaviour considered appropriate for good government.[53] The didactic aspects central to Confucian writing meant that in all biography, not just the zhuan of the dynastic histories, there was this concern with the exemplary, with the art of praise and blame (baobian). The fact that biography served as the principal narrative vehicle for historical writing simply encouraged this concern, so that the status accorded the dynastic history produced even in the commemorative writing of families an

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[52] Denis Twitchett notes the similarities in purpose and function of funerary writing, obituaries and zhuan in both "Chinese Biographical Writing," pp.103-112; and "Problems of Chinese Biography," pp.27-29. He discusses the way official historians used this material in the chapter on biographies in his recent book *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang*, pp. 62-83. There are few studies comparing a zhuan with other biographical sources for the subject's life, but in a recent article William H. Nienhauser, Jr. notes how the biography of Ouyang Zhan in the *Xin Tang shu* [New Tang history] presents "a homogenized version of the life which obscures both the points-of-view and the biases of its sources." See "Literature as a Source for Traditional History: The Case for Ou-yang Chan," *Chinese Literature; Essays, Articles, Reviews* 12 (1990) p.13.

[53] For example, the biography of the famous dramatist, Tang Xianzu, in *Ming shi* includes a quotation from a memorial Tang submitted to the emperor, yet says nothing of his plays. See *Ming shi* [History of the Ming] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju reprint, 1974), juan 230, pp.6015-6016. For a discussion of this point see Wu Pei-yi *The Confucian's Progress*, p.5. Su Shi's obituary for Sima Guang can be found in *Su Dongpo ji* [The collected works of Su Dongpo] (Shanghai:Commercial Press reprint, 1934) juan 36, pp.67-81.

overriding emphasis on how the public events in an individual's life demonstrated the principles of the Confucian world.

The one form of traditional biography that stood apart from historical writing was that of the nianpu, or chronological biography. The origins of this sub-genre lay not in historical narratives but in the exegetical texts that grew up around China's earliest collection of poetry, the *Shi jing* or Book of Songs, and it was the concern to organise a writer's work in a sequential way, corresponding to the order of composition, that saw the emergence of the first true chronological biographies.[54] Stephen Owen has argued that it was the collected works of a writer that provided the perfect form of autobiography in the Chinese tradition:

> Here editorial exclusions, arrangement, and juxtapositions created a species of interior history, not narrating a life story, but letting a life story unfold in the author's sequence of responses.[55]

With nianpu, the biographer uses similar methods of selection and chronological ordering to present an image of an individual's life; perhaps "not so much a biography as a collection of notes for a

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[54] Zheng Xuan's (127-200) *Shi pu* on the Book of Songs is seen as an antecedent to chronological biography, although true nianpu did not appear until Lu Dafang produced his studies of the work of Du Fu (*Du shi nianpu*) and Han Yu (*Han wen nianpu*) in 1084. For a good brief discussion of the origins of chronological biography see Zhu "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.25. See also the section on nianpu in Liang Qichao *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa*, pp.210-234. Despite its title this edition also includes the supplement (bubian), sometimes published separately, in which Liang Qichao's views on nianpu are found.

[55] See Owen's article "The Self as Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography," in Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (eds.) *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1986) p.73. In an essay on nianpu devoted to Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan, Zhang Xuecheng makes a similar point: that "collected works are histories of individuals." See *Zhangshi yishu* [The literary legacy of Mr. Zhang] (Shanghai:Commercial Press reprint, 1936) juan 8, p.272.

biography."[56] It was a format most suited to the lives of writers and became increasingly popular from the Ming period onwards. Part of this popularity can be attributed to the fact that chronological biographies remained separate from historical writing. Growing dissatisfaction with the restrictions associated with the standard form of biographical writing, the zhuan, encouraged writers to turn to chronological biography instead and private scholars could take advantage of its form to record information and opinions that would not be considered appropriate in a dynastic history.[57] Yet despite this growing popularity of chronological biography, the zhuan would remain the dominant genre of biographical writing in China until the collapse of the official historiographical enterprise at the turn of the twentieth century.

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For the historian, the attraction of biography is not difficult to understand. An individual life represents a natural and manageable perspective from which to view the complexities and confusion of the past, and by selecting subjects of central historical significance it is

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[56] Twitchett "Chinese Biographical Writing," p.113. For an alternate view, which is more sympathetic to the richness of the nianpu form, see Yü Yingshi "Nianpu xue yu xiandai de zhuanji guannian" [The study of chonological biography with regard to modern views of biography] in his *Zhongguo jindai sixiang shi shang de Hu Shi* [Hu Shi in modern Chinese thought] (Taibei:Liangjing chubanshe, (1984) 1990) appendix 2, pp.93-110. Yü Yingshi argues that both the Western and the Chinese traditions of biographical writing can be found wanting from the perspective of modern views of biography, and that a focus on the lack of narrative coherence in nianpu ignores not only the richness of detail that such biographies can provide but also the portrayal of the development of a life that the chronological format allows.

[57] T.C. Liang provides a fairly comprehensive catalogue of nianpu which shows the increasing popularity of the form from the Ming period onwards. See his articles entitled "Nianpu kaolüe," [A bibliography of chronological biographies] *Guoli Beiping tushuguan yuegan* 3, 1 (July, 1929):109-123; 3, 2 (August, 1929):245-276; 3, 3 (September, 1929):419-446; 3, 4 (October, 1929):547-566; and 3, 5 (November, 1929):699-710. For mention of how nianpu could be used to convey opinion and information considered inappropriate for other forms of biographical writing see Wang Yunwu's preface to *Xinbian Zhongguo mingren nianpu jicheng* [A newly edited collection of chronological biographies of famous Chinese] (Taibei: Commercial Press, 1978) preface, p.6.

possible to gain an acute insight into the circumstances of an age. But this does not mean that biography need only be associated with history. In the Graeco-Roman world distinctions were drawn between the two by both historians and biographers, although there remained considerable correspondence in their writing. Plutarch's familiar statement at the beginning of his *Life of Alexander*, that he is writing biography not history, indicates a perceived distance between the two types of narrative, yet, as Albert Cook notes, the 'lives' "envisage comparisons and sequence in the arena of public action," hence they are as much history as biography.[58] Early historical writing was diverse in nature, and Plutarch was probably trying to distinguish his work from the pragmatic, political history advocted by Polybius, not the Isocratean tradition which encompassed material of much greater variety, including the biographical.[59] Cicero made a similar distinction between types of historical writing in a letter asking Lucceius to write a history of his consulate. He wanted the history written not as an annalistic record of events, but in such a way as to arouse the interest and sympathy of readers, using the term fabula to describe such writing, and noting that when such an account is "rounded off by a notable conclusion, our minds as we read are filled with the liveliest gratifiction."[60]

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[58] Albert Cook "The Problematic Emergence of History Writing as a Separate Genre," in his *History/Writing* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.16. For Plutarch's statement, "I am writing biography, not history," see the translation by Ian Scott-Kilvert in *The Age of Alexander* (Harmondsworth:Penguin, 1979) p.252.

[59] This point is made by Bruno Gentili and Giovanni Cerri in *History and Biography in Ancient Thought* (Amsterdam: J.C.Gieben, 1988) passim; but esp. pp.66-68. Gentili and Cerri contest the view put forward by Momigliano in *The Emergence of Greek Biography* that the ancient Greeks clearly distinguished and separated biography from history.

[60] See the translation by D.R.Shackelton Bailey in *Cicero: Selected Letters* (Harmondsworth:Penguin, 1982) p.81. In discussing Cicero's letter, Gentili and Cerri (p.57) write that he uses the term fabula to indicate a historical narrative "of the monographic type, centred on the achievements and the changing fortunes of a highly significant historic personage rich in emotional tension."

Cicero could easily have been describing differences in early Chinese historical writing, the zhuan of *Shiji* being as different from *Chunqiu* [Spring and autumn annals] as the fabula was to be from the annals of Roman historiography. Zhang Xuecheng (1738-1801) notes two main forms of Chinese historical writing: zhuanshu, or narrative, in which the description of event needed to be "rounded off with intuitive projection," and jizhu, or record-exegesis, in which events needed to be "squared," or grounded, in "knowledge."[61] Zhang considers Sima Qian's history as part of the narrative tradition, where the concern was not simply with the documenting of event. Instead, the focus was on moulding the evidence from the past into narratives that would both inspire and instruct, the concern being with what was perennial and thus salutary, and the biographical essay, or zhuan, was seen as the perfect form for this purpose. Similarly, for Plutarch it was the moral principle that was of paramount importance, and he also turned to biographical narrative to convey these lessons from the past.[62]

While this centrality of moral vision, the concern with the allocation of praise and blame, was a feature common to both Sima Qian and Plutarch, there were significant differences in their biographical writing. Plutarch never conceived his biographies as part of a historical compilation and thus there is a tension in his portraits between 'life' and 'times', a tension absent from all traditional Chinese biographical

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61 Zhang *Wen shi tong yi* juan 1, p.49. Li Wai-yee considers Zhang's analysis of historical writing in a fascinating discussion of the nature of different forms of narrative in a thesis entitled *Rhetoric of Fantasy and Rhetoric of Irony: Studies in Liao-chai chih-i and Hong-lou meng* (PhD Dissertation:Princeton University, 1988) pp.38-39.

62 The only comparative study I am aware of that provides an analysis of the biographical writing of both Sima Qian and Plutarch, the essay by Li Shaoyong, "Sima Qian yu Pulutake" [Sima Qian and Plutarch] included in his *Sima Qian*, pp.205-318, notes the importance of moral vision to both. For a discussion of Plutarch's concern with 'praise and blame', see D.A. Russell *Plutarch* (London:Duckworth, 1973) pp.103-106.

writing, not just that of Sima Qian, where the context for an individual life came not in the zhuan itself but from the larger work in which it was included. Frustration at this subservience to official historiography did encourage the writing of more chronological biography and autobiography in late imperial China, although most never considered biography as independent of history and the writing of zhuan continued to be enormously popular. It was not until the collapse of the state-centred historical enterprise that it became possible to conceive and establish a radically different relationship between the writing of history and biography.

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Chapter Two

From Biographical History To Historical Biography

What is most needed in biography is to be able to bring out the subject's true status, his real appearance and tone, so it is as if the reader can see the person and feel they truly are able to know him.[1]

The first calls for a new history, a history radically different from the official historiography of the Confucian state, came in the early years of the twentieth century. These formed an integral part of "the radical erosion," of the Confucian tradition that began in the last decade of the nineteenth century and culminated in the collapse of institutional and scriptural Confucianism.[2] Although the authority of the Qing administration had been challenged much earlier in the century, it was only in the 1890s that the framework of Neo-Confucian discourse began

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[1] Zhang Xiaoruo *Nantong Zhang Jizhi xiansheng zhuanji* [A biography of Mr. Zhang Jizhi of Nantong] (Taibei:Wenxing shudian reprint, 1965) Hu Shi's preface (1929).

[2] The abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905 and then the removal of the Confucian classics from the school curriculum in 1912, as well as the collapse of the imperial state itself in 1911, marked the culmination of this process. Amongst the many studies devoted to this period, I found the most valuable was Hao Chang *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1971), and it is Chang (p.296) who talks of the "radical erosion" of the Confucian world. The concept "scriptural Confucianism" comes from Mark Elvin's discussion of the most important textual evidence of "a deep-seated, and indeed terminal, sickness of the old body of thought," in "The Collapse of Scriptural Confucianism," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 41 (March, 1990):45-76.

to fracture and the legitimacy of a Confucian state was called in to question. The enormous importance attached to history in the Confucian tradition, its function as a storehouse of precedent and as a record of exemplary lives, meant that new perceptions of the past directly challenged and undermined that tradition. Increasing exposure to the radically different world of the West, and in particular to the way Western traditions were perceived in Japan, encouraged a perception of the past that was a far cry from that of "the rationalistic Confucianism which wielded history as philosophy by example."[3] New questions were asked of the past, with different methods employed in response to them. Biography lost its status as the principal narrative perspective in historical writing.

For some, like Hu Shi, this meant that biographical writing could be established for the first time as an independent genre, free from the strictures imposed by traditional historiography.[4] Such freedom allowed biography to be seen in a new light. Much greater interest was shown in portraying the individuality of a subject and approaches were made to a novelist's concern with the artful pursuit of a sense of personality. These changes were reflected in the relationship of biography and history and encouraged the emergence of independent historical biographies as a sub-genre of modern historical writing. It is this transition, from biographical history to historical biography, that is the concern of this chapter.

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3 "The name became hopelessly unrectified." See Joseph Levenson "The Inception and Displacement of Confucianism," *Diogenes* 42 (Summer, 1963) p.77.

4 For Hu Shi's views on biography see his prefatory comments to Zhang Xiaoruo *Nantong*. Discussion of Hu Shi's views on biography can be found in Du Zhengxiang "Zhuanji," pp.6-7 and 39, as well as Zhu Wenhua "Hu Shi yu jindai Zhongguo zhuanji shixue' [Hu Shi and the history of modern Chinese biography] *Jiang-Huai luntan* 2 (1992):36-45.

The 'New History' and Biography

Changes within the world of Confucian historiography itself had already seen a shift in the perception of the historian's task. In the scholarly communities of the mid-Qing, private historians turned away from the explicit concern with praise and blame and emphasized the need to shishi qiu shi (seek truth from facts). Here it was felt that the historian's role was to record events and let them speak for themselves, not be preoccupied with the moral imperative to show that with good leadership came prosperity while bad leadership brought turmoil and decline.[5] In the world of classical studies this emphasis on the methods of evidential research (kaozheng scholarship) undermined the status of orthodox Song Learning and led on to the conflicts between Old Text and New Text scholars, between historicism and classicism, that dominated political discourse in late imperial China.[6] The kaozheng emphasis on the critical use of diverse source materials also provided an important legacy for historians of the early twentieth century, enabling them to find within the Chinese tradition methods similar to those they were discovering in their encounters with modern Western historiography and thus providing an important foundation upon which they could build in their efforts to construct new, post-Confucian approaches to the past. Despite their emphasis on critical scholarship, however, the kaozheng historians themselves remained very much part of the

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5 Emphasis on the need to 'seek truth from facts' and a critique of the use of praise and blame can be found in Wang Mingsheng's well known preface to *Shiqi shi shangque* [Critical discussions of the seventeen histories] (Suzhou:Dong jing caotang zangban, 1787) preface, pp.1-4. For more on kaozheng historiography see Du Weiyun "Qing Qian-Jia shidai zhi lishi kaojuxue" [Historical evidential research during the Qianlong and Jiajing reigns of the Qing dynasty] in his *Qingdai shixue yu shijia* [Historians and historiography of the Qing dynasty] (Beijing:Xinhua shuju, 1988) pp.271-315.

6 This process is discussed in detail by Benjamin A. Elman in *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1990).

Confucian tradition. They did not question the fundamentals of the Confucian world view, nor the authoritative status of the official histories. Their primary concern lay in resolving issues of textual inconsistency.[7] It was not until after the failure of the reform movement in 1898 and the exodus of large numbers of intellectuals to Japan that radically different and explicitly iconoclastic approaches to the past were proposed.

Historical writing in Japan became both more 'scientific' and more 'social' during the years of the Meiji Restoration, and these changes were to have considerable influence over Chinese intellectuals. Evidential research (kōshō gaku) had developed to such an extent in Japan that it became the foundation for the official historical compilation, the *Dai Nippon hennen shi* [Chronological history of Japan], work on which began in 1882.[8] The critical use of source materials that was central to evidential research saw an increasing separation of ethical and political concerns from historical scholarship, something that was encouraged by the growing interest shown by Japanese historians in the methods of contemporary European historiography, and, in particular, those of the German tradition.

In 1887 the German historian, Ludwig Riess (1861-1928), took up a position in the history department of Tokyo Imperial University and began teaching Western techniques of historical research. Riess

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[7] The legacy of Qing historiography for modern historians is discussed in Qi Sihe "Jinbainian lai Zhongguo shixue de fazhan," [The development of Chinese historiography over the last one hundred years] *Yanjing shehui kexue* 2 (1949):1-35; and Wang Fansen *Gu shi bian yundong de xingqi* [The rise of the *Gu shi bian* movement] (Taibei:Yunchen wenhua, 1987).

[8] Ōkubo Toshiaki *Nihon kindai shigaku no seiritsu* [The emergence of modern Japanese historiography] (Tokyo:Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1986), pp.69-92 and Jiro Numata "Shigeno Yasutsugu and the Modern Tokyo Tradition of Historical Writing" in W.G. Beasley and E.G. Pulleybank (eds.) *Historians of China and Japan* (London:Oxford University Press, 1961):264-287.

stayed in Japan until 1902 and was responsible for many Japanese learning the methods of Rankean 'scientific' historiography.[9] German methods of historical research were also taught by Tsuboi Kumazō (1858-1936), who had studied in Europe, and it was through translations from Tsuboi's textbook on methodology, *Shigaku kenkyū hō* [Methods for the study of history], that Chinese readers were first introduced to the methods of German historiography. Extracts from Tsuboi's textbook first appeared in Chinese in 1902, at a time when Chinese were just beginning to talk of a 'new history'.[10] The translation of another influential work, Ukita Kazutami's (1859-1945) lectures on methodology, *Shigaku genron* [Principles of history], was even published in 1903 under the title *Xin shixue* [*New history*].[11] It seems unlikely that there was any clear consensus as to what the term 'new history' meant, except that it signified historical research and writing that was clearly distinct from traditional Confucian historiography and its concern with individuals and ethics. These works on methodology discuss Western techniques for organizing and assessing historical materials and consider history as a science, related to other disciplines such as geography, archaeology and philology. But the term 'new history' meant more than this. It incorporated the notion that history should be the study of the past of all

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[9] Ōkubo *Nihon*, pp.98-100. Prior to the arrival of Riess, the Japanese had commissioned a work on European historiography from the British historian George Zerffi. Although never published, a translation of this work, "The Science of History," was used by the official historians working on the *Dai Nippon Hennen shi* (Ōkubo *Nihon*, pp.96-97).

[10] As well as the Rankean approach to history, Tsuboi Kumezō introduced his readers to the ideas on methodology put forward by Edward Freeman (*The Methods of Historical Study* [1886]) and Ernst Bernheim (*Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* [1889]). See Ōkubo *Nihon*, pp.101-104. For details about the Chinese translation of Tsuboi's work see Yu Danchu "Ershi shiji chunian Zhongguo de xinshixue sichao chukao," [An exploratory study of the new history in China during the early years of the twentieth century] *Shixueshi yanjiu* 3 (1982) pp.56-57 and 58-59.

[11] Yu Danchu "Ershi shiji," p.57. Yu gives a list ("Ershi shiji," pp.58-61) of various works on historical methodology published in China during the first decade of the twentieth century, including translations from Japanese works such as those by Tsuboi and Ukita.

of a society, not just its rulers and administrators. Here also the Chinese were influenced by Japanese writers and historians.

The concern with bunmeishi, or the history of civilisation, was the other main feature of Meiji historiography. The focus here was on society, not methodology, and the bunmeishi writers drew on the ideas of European social theorists such as Herbert Spencer and the histories of civilisation by Henry Buckle and Francois Guizot.[12] The most influential of these writers was Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), and Fukuzawa's ideas were developed in the bunmeishi histories by Taguchi Ukichi (*Nihon kaika shōshi* [A short history of Japanese civilisation] [1877-1882]), Miyake Yonekichi (*Nihon shigaku teiyō* [A manual for the study of Japanese history] [1886]) and Saga Shosaku (*Nihon shikō* [An outline of Japanese history] [1888]).[13] Central to these works was the idea that history was progressive, not cyclical, and that it was in the life of the society as a whole, not just the actions of rulers and administrators, that this progress towards civilisation could be seen. In his *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* [An outline of a theory of civilisation, 1875], Fukuzawa Yukichi discussed how it was the intelligence of a whole people, what he called the 'spirit of the times' (jisei), that moved the society forward.[14] In describing this

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[12] Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England* was translated into Japanese in 1874, and Guizot's *History of Civilisation in Europe* was translated in 1872. Spencer's *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* was available in Japanese translation in 1880. For discussion of how these works influenced bunmeishi historiography, see Ōkubo *Nihon*, pp.39-41 and 109-134.

[13] For some discussion of the histories by Taguchi and Miyake see Stefan Tanaka *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1993), pp.36-40 and 50-54.

[14] Carmen Blacker discusses the relation of this work to the emergence of new notions of history in *The Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) pp.90-100. In 1890 Shiratori Kurakichi expressed similar views to those of Fukuzawa when he wrote in an article called "Rekishi to jinketsu," [History and heroes] about an underlying trend of social progress, stating that "The persons from the past who became famous and are called heroes are merely those who understood the direction of this social power and grasped the opportunity. In other words, heroes are the children and tools of society." See Tanaka *Japan's Orient*, p.59.

notion, Fukuzawa wrote the following:

> When great historical personnages achieved success in their own times, it was not because they advanced the level of knowledge and virtue of the people through their own talents, but rather because the level of the people's knowledge and virtue permitted the successful achievement of their plans.[15]

This perception of the role of the individual in history was very different from the Confucian notion that it was the moral conduct of the elite that determined the fate of a society. The bunmeishi historians who followed Fukuzawa extended their focus out from an exclusive concern with the state and its representatives and included consideration of wider social factors: subjects such as geography, popular customs, religion, literature, and ethnicity featured in their writing. Chinese intellectuals reading these works saw that a 'new history' must involve more than just the use of 'scientific' methods, it also must go beyond the Confucian concern with politics and ethics and address the history of Chinese civilisation in a more comprehensive manner. And it was to be one of the most influential voices of the day, a man who used his command of the new popular press to great effect, who was to do most to bring these ideas before a Chinese audience.

By the first years of the twentieth century Liang Qichao (1873-1929) was arguing from exile in Yokohama the need for everything Chinese to be made anew. He claimed China needed a new citizenry, new fiction and new history. The main thrust of this argument came in his *Xinmin shuo* [Theory of a new citizenry], a powerful critique of the Confucian tradition. Here Liang argued the case for a new nation-state, a state to be built around the collective needs of the Chinese people.

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[15] David Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst (trans.) *Fukuzawa Yukichi's* ***An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*** (Tokyo:Sophia University Press, 1973) p.55.

Essential to this was the requirement that both fiction and history be made to serve the new citizenry.[16]

In 1901 Liang began writing what was to be a general history of China, and although he completed only the first chapter the ideas it contains show how the 'new' history was envisaged as a radical departure from traditional historical writing. Liang wrote that

> The duty of the modern historian is different from that of historians of the past. [Whereas] in the past historians simply recorded events, the modern historian must explain the association of causes and consequences to events. Previously, historians merely narrated events related to one or two influential people. Although this was called history, in fact it was only genealogy. The modern historian must inquire into the advancement of all people, and, moreover, relate this to the total experience of the nation.[17]

Early the next year Liang developed these ideas in an essay published in his new journal *Xinmin congbao* [Collected reports on a new citizenry]. Here Liang argued in more detail his claim that the new history must be concerned with evolutionary change, and with how the lives of the majority of people evolve, not just focus on the court and the lives of a few prominent individuals. Liang stated that such an approach to the past was essential if China was to be made anew: "Without a revolution in historiography, China cannot be saved." [18] The conception of history

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[16] For discussions of Liang's *Xinmin shuo*, see Elvin, "Scriptural Confucianism," pp.64-73; and Hao Chang *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, pp.149-295. And for Liang's ideas on fiction see C.T. Hsia "Yen Fu and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao as Advocates of New Fiction," in Adele Austin Rickett (ed.) *Chinese Approaches to Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) pp.221-257.

[17] Liang Qichao "Zhongguo shi xulun," [An appraisal of Chinese history] *Yinbing shi heji, wenji* [Collected writings from an ice-drinker's studio, literary works] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1936) 6, p.1.

[18] See "Xin shixue" [The new history] *Xinmin congbao* 1 (February 8th, 1902), reprinted in *Yinbing shi heji, wenji* 9, pp.1-11. The quotation is from p.7. Discussions of this 'new history' include Wang Rongzu "Liang Qichao xin shixue shilun" [A preliminary examination of Liang Qichao's new history] *Jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 2 (1971):227-236, and Huang Minlan "Liang Qichao 'xin shixue' de zhenshi yiyi ji lishixue de wujie" [The real meaning of Liang Qichao's 'new history' and the misreading of historical studies] *Jindai shi yanjiu* 2 (1994):219-235.

Liang Qichao articulated in these essays may seem a commonplace today, but in China at the turn of the century it was revolutionary, and it is for this reason that these essays are seen as marking the beginning of modern Chinese historiography.[19]

Liang Qichao's claim that previous historical writing amounted to little more than genealogy was to be repeated often over the coming years as the agenda of the new history was gradually put into practice.[20] Yet while it seemed that Liang was contesting the notion that biography, or at least biography as it was known in its traditional zhuan form, should play such an important part in historical writing, at the very time he was setting out this agenda for the new history he was producing more biography than at any other stage of his life. Underlying his concern that history should be more responsive to the development of Chinese civilisation, to the collective legacy of the Chinese people, was the notion that it was vital to inculcate a greater degree of patriotism amongst people in order for China to confront the new challenges it faced.[21] At this time Liang saw the foundation of European strength and independence in patriotism and believed it was vital that the new

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19 The point that Liang's essays mark the beginning of modern Chinese historiography is made by Zhou Yutong in "Wushi nian lai Zhongguo zhi xin shixue," [China's new history of the last fifty years] *Xuelin yuekan* 4 (February, 1941/reprinted March, 1970) pp.18-20; and Yin Da in *Zhongguo shixue fazhan shi* [A history of the development of Chinese historiography] (Henan:Zhongguo guji chubanshe, 1985) vol.2, p.425. A more detailed study of Liang Qichao's views on history can be found in the chapter devoted to him in Xu Guansan *Xin shixue jiushinian* [Ninety years of the new history] (Hong Kong:The Chinese University Press, 1986) vol.1, pp.9-53.

20 Lu Xun, for instance, wrote how the dynastic histories amounted to "no more than the family chronicles of emperors, kings, generals, and ministers ...". See "Zhongguoren shidiao zixinli le ma" [Have the Chinese lost their self-confidence?] in *Lu Xun quanji* [The complete works of Lu Xun] (Beijing:Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981) 6, p.118.

21 See Liang's 1899 article "Aiguo lun," [On patriotism] in *Yinbing shi heji, wenji* 3, pp.65-77. For a discussion of the contradictions, or "uncongenial propositions," in Liang's conception of the new history see chapter four in Joseph Levenson *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1967), especially pp.132-136.

historical writing engender a similar patriotic nationalism in China. No doubt Liang was also influenced by the considerable popularity of biographical writing in Japan at this time. When he arrived in the country during the 1890s it was experiencing a 'biography boom' (denki būmu), a boom associated with the rapid expansion of journalism and publishing during these years.[22] Thus, although Liang criticised traditional historiography for concentrating only on one or two influential people, he turned to biographies of people he himself considered influential in order to cultivate the kind of patriotic sentiment he felt was essential for China's survival.

In the first of these biographies, the accounts of the six 'patriots' executed following the failure of the 1898 reform movement, Liang used the traditional zhuan format.[23] Of the many biographies he wrote over the next ten years most were brief lives, similar if not identical in form to the zhuan. But Liang also went beyond the tradition, experimenting with new ways of writing biography. He did this first in 1901 in his biographies of Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) and Kang Youwei (1858-1927), and also in his most significant piece of biographical writing, the study of Wang Anshi (1021-1086) he had published in 1908.[24]

In the biography of Li Hongzhang, Liang begins by announcing his intention to depart from the zhuan format and follow the style of Western biographical writing, and in its structure this biography does

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[22] For discussion of this see Marvin Marcus *Paragons of the Ordinary: The Biographical Literature of Mori Ōgai* (Honolulu:University of Hawaii Press, 1993) p.22.

[23] See "Xunnan liu lieshi zhuan," [Biographies of six martyrs] *Yinbing shi heji, zhuanji* 1, pp.95-112.

[24] See "Nanhai Kang xiansheng zhuan," [A biography of Mister Kang of Nanhai] *Yinbing shi heji, wenji* 6, pp.57-89; "Zhongguo sishi nian lai dashi ji: yiming Li Hongzhang," [A record of the major events in China over the last forty years: the famous Li Hongzhang] *Yinbing shi heji, zhuanji* 3, pp.1-90; and *Wang Anshi pingzhuan* [A critical biography of Wang Anshi] (Hong Kong:Guangzhi shuju reprint, n.d.). This biography of Wang Anshi is also published under the title *Wang Jinggong pingzhuan.*

indeed differ from traditional biography.[25] Liang emphasised the need to see the lives of individuals within the social context in which they lived and thus begins his biographies of Li Hongzhang, Kang Youwei and Wang Anshi with a discussion which relates each subject to the major social and political events of their time. For several years Liang had been contemplating the role of the individual in history, discussing the relationship between 'heroic' individuals and the times in which they lived, and in the biographies written at this time he developed this theme further.[26] It was to be some years before the likes of Guo Moruo (1892-1978) were to show their fascination with Carlyle, and it would be wrong to see Liang Qichao's interest in biography as simply an expression of an emerging 'cult of the hero'.[27] He may well have continued the Confucian concern with the exemplary, seeing particular individuals as the embodiment of certain values or ideals, but his perception of the role of the individual in history was never simply heroic. It was impossible, he argued, to see individuals abstracted from the environment in which they lived, creating the world around them.[28] It is also important to remember that Liang Qichao conceived these biographies as 'independent lives' and that they therefore lacked the context provided for a zhuan by the dynastic history in which it was included. Thus, Liang

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25 See the very first of his prefatory comments to this biography in *Yinbing shi heji, zhuanji* 3, p.1. For recognition of the innovative nature of Liang's biography of Li Hongzhang, see Zeng Zangbo "Lun zhuanji wenxue," [On biographical literature] *Zhuanji wenxue* 1, 3 (August, 1962) p.4.

26 See the section "Yingxiong yu shishi," [Heroes and circumstances] in his 1899 essay "Ziyou shu,"[The book of freedom] *Yinbing shi heji, zhuanji* 2, pp.9-10.

27 Richard C. Howard, in "Modern Chinese Biography," *Journal of Asian Studies* 21, 4 (August, 1962) p.470, argues that Liang Qichao gives a Carlyle-like heroic interpretation of his subjects. For Guo Moruo's reading of Carlyle in late 1919, and his subsequent perception of himself as poet-hero, see David Tod Roy *Kuo Mo-jo: The Early Years* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1971) pp.99-100. A translation of Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, by Zheng Xubai, was published in 1932: see *Yingxiong yu yingxiong chongbai* (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1932).

28 See, for instance, the emphasis Liang places on this when introducing the life of Li Hongzhang: *Yinbing shi heji, zhuanji* 3, pp.4-5.

felt it was essential to incorporate within each biography the social and historical background for the subject's life. It was here, in this new emphasis on the tension between 'life' and 'times', a tension central to biographical writing in the West, that Liang made his great contribution to Chinese biography.

These 'new' biographies by Liang Qichao also reflected the changes that were occurring within the structure of narrative prose, with a shift away from the segmented narrative of traditional historical writing and towards more unified monographs. Behind these changes lay the increasing influence of the ideas about evolutionary change that played such an important part in undermining the authority of Confucianism.[29] These ideas led to the questioning of the notions of historical atrophy (lishi tuihua), the falling away from a Golden Age in the past, and the cyclical view of dynastic change (zhiluan xunhuan) that were fundamental to traditional historiography. With the 'new' history came instead an emphasis on the progressive development of society, and this encouraged a greater concern in accounts of the past with continuous, linear development.

The narrative structure of traditional historiography was segmented in character, with texts compiled from numerous interrelated essays.[30] Because of the nature of such works, information regarding an

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[29] Du Weiyun "Xifang shixue shuru Zhongguo kao," [A study of the introduction of western historiography to China] in his *Yu Xifang shijia lun Zhongguo shixue* [Western historians and Chinese historiography] (Taibei:Dongda reprint, 1988) pp.291-296. See also Satō Shin'ichi "*Ten'en ron* izen no shinkaron: Shinmatsu chishikijin no rekishi ishiki o megutte," [Views on evolution before *Tianyan lun*: historical consciousness among intellectuals in the late Qing] *Shisō* 6 (1990):241-254 and Hao Chang *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search For Order and Meaning (1890-1911)* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1987) pp.50-53.

[30] For use of the term 'segmented narrative' to decribe traditional historical writing, see Jaroslav Prusek "History and Epics in China and the West," *Diogenes*, 42 (Summer, 1963) pp.20-43. Andrew H. Plaks makes a similar point, that the "format of the dynastic histories serve to militate against any sense of continuous narration of

individual would not necessarily be confined to a single biographical essay. For example, Sima Qian devotes much of one of the biographical essays in *Shiji* to the life of Tian Fen, the Marquis of Wu'an, yet relates different information about the Marquis in other parts of his history, in biographical essays devoted to other subjects.[31] To appreciate all that Sima Qian has to say about Tian Fen it is necessary to read the full history, not just the biography devoted to him. This was common to all biographical writing in traditional Chinese historiography, and one of the characteristics of modern biography is its move away from such segmented narrative.[32]

This transition from the segmented narrative of traditional historiography and towards more unified historical monographs can be seen in the new general histories of Chinese civilization which began to appear as the 'new' history took hold. In these works the traditional narrative forms of biannian, jizhuan and jishi benmo (record of events in great detail) were abandoned in favour of a continuous and integrated narrative.[33] Initially, it was the work of the Japanese scholar, Naka

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discrete units," in "Towards a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative," Andrew H. Plaks (ed.) *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1977) p.316.

[31] For the main biography of Tian Fen see *Shiji*, juan 107, pp.2839-2856, while other accounts of him can be found in juan 29, p.1409, and juan 113, p.2980. This example is given by Zhu Dongrun in his discussion of how the segmented nature of historical narrative affected traditional biographical writing. See "Zhongguo zhuanxu," p.19. More general consideration of Sima Qian's use of this narrative technique (also known as hujian fa) can be found in Zhang Dake *Shiji yanjiu*, pp.290-307.

[32] Similar changes were occurring in fictional narrative. Although there had been an increasing coherence within works of fiction since the late Ming, Milena Dolezelová-Velingerová notes that in the last decades of the Qing dynasty the traditional plot pattern of the novel, "where relatively self-contained episodes were organized in a 'string' sequence," was being discarded in favour of shorter works with a tighter more coherent structure. See her article "The Origins of Modern Chinese Literature," in Merle Goldman (ed.) *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1977) p.33.

[33] Of these three forms, the benmo (beginning-to-end) allowed the greatest narrative coherence. In the various essays that composed a benmo text, particular social, economic and political developments could be traced over time. Quinton Gwynne Priest has suggested that the increasing popularity of this genre in the late imperial period "may have been part of a renewed emphasis upon the nature of narrative,

Michiyo (1851-1908), that showed what a new comprehensive history of China might look like.[34] But it was in the general history by Liang Qichao's friend and colleague, Xia Zengyou, that the break with traditional narrative structure was made.[35] In his prefatory comments to the work Xia states that his central concern was to "explain the origins of contemporary society," and rather than relate aspects of the past in distinct units he provides an integrated discussion of the gradual evolution of the Chinese people.[36] It was the narrative coherence that resulted from such a focus that distinguished this general history from traditional historical writing. Xia's book was extremely influential and was adopted as a principal text in history courses in secondary schools and some universities during the first decades of the twentieth century. The emergence of such new histories encouraged the move away from the liezhuan of traditional historiography and towards the modern, independent biographical monograph.

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engendered by the appearance of the novel and short story on the literary scene." See *Historiography and Statecraft in Eighteenth Century China: The life and times of Chao I (1727-1814)* (PhD dissertation: University of Arizona, 1982) p.130. This linking of literary trends and historiographical developments is important, but it was not until the early years of the twentieth century that the transition from segmented histories composed of distinct essays to integrated historical monographs occurred.

[34] Naka Michiyo *Shina tsūshi* [A comprehensive history of China] (Tokyo:Dai Nihon tosho, 1888-1890). Although this only went as far as the Song period, it was written in Chinese and had a great influence over Chinese scholars. See Zhou Yutong, "Wushi nian," pp.16-17.

[35] First published by the Commercial Press between 1904 and 1921 under the title *Zhongguo lishi jiaokeshu* [A textbook of Chinese history], this work was later reissued under the title *Zhongguo gudai shi* [A history of traditional China] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1933). Xia Zengyou was not the only scholar stimulated to write a general history through reading the work of Japanese historians such as Naka Michiyo. Liang Qichao and Zhang Binglin both set down outlines for such works, but never completed them. See Liang Qichao *Yinbing shi heji, wenji*, 6, p.1, and Zhang Binglin "Zhongguo tongshi lueli," [Guidelines for a comprehensive history of China] in his *Qiushu* [Compelled writings] (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue reprint, 1958) pp.158-163. The extent of the transition to a unified and coherent narrative structure in historical writing can be seen in the later and much admired general histories by Qian Mu, *Guoshi dagang* [Outline of the nation's history] (Hong Kong:Commercial Press, 1940) and Zhang Yinlin *Zhongguo shigang* [An outline history of China] (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1946).

[36] Xia Zengyou *Zhongguo gudai shi*, dier pian, "fanli," p.2.

For Liang Qichao the political importance of the subjects he wrote about was more important than any experiment with narrative structure, yet in deliberately seeking alternatives to the liezhuan format he began the transition to modern biographical writing. With his study of Li Hongzhang he self-consciously sought to write what he thought was a Western-style biography, and he certainly achieved a much more detailed and critical portrait of Li than would have been possible had he written in the traditional zhuan style. With his longest and most important biography, the study of Wang Anshi published in 1908, Liang adapted the format of the traditional nianpu in order to develop the kind of detailed portrait he desired, quoting extensively from Wang's letters and other contemporary sources. But rather than simply ordering this material in chronological sequence, Liang rearranged it in different chapters so as to bring out aspects of Wang's career he considered of political importance. This extensive quotation from source materials may have been in part a consequence of the influence that Cai Shangxiang's earlier nianpu of Wang Anshi had over Liang, but his adaptation of the techniques of traditional chronological biography suggested how aspects of the tradition might be refined in order to be more responsive to the needs of the 'new' history.[37] New did not simply imply Western, and this concern with adapting traditional forms to meet modern needs would be something Liang returned to in the famous lectures on historical methodolgy which he gave at Nankai and Qinghua universities in the 1920s. Following this biography of Wang Anshi, however, Liang Qichao turned his attention to

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[37] Cai Shangxiang's *Wang Jinggong nianpu kaolüe* [A chronological biography of Wang Jinggong] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju reprint,1959), completed in 1804, was little known before Liang Qichao gave it prominence. For a study of the relationship between the interest in political reformers and the emergence of modern Chinese biography see Wang Gungwu "The Rebel-Reformer and Modern Chinese Biography," in Wang Gungwu (ed.) *Self and Biography: Essays on the Individual and Society in Asia* (Sydney:Sydney University Press, 1974) pp.185-206.

other things. Biography did not seem a high priority, and what he did write was restricted to traditional forms, funerary writing and nianpu.[38] Despite this, he had not abandoned his interest in the relationship of biography to the 'new' history, and this was to be a major focus of the second series of his lectures on historical methodology.[39]

In these lectures Liang described the five categories which he felt ought to constitute the core of the modern historical enterprise, categories he called 'specialized history' (zhuanshi). The first of these five categories, the history of individuals, would include various forms of biographical writing, biography thus retaining its place at the heart of the historian's work.[40] Four of the five forms of biographical writing which comprised the history of individuals Liang retained from traditional historiography: the liezhuan, the nianpu, hezhuan (group biography), and renbiao (biographical tables). Liang felt that each of these forms of biographical writing fulfilled unique functions and thus each should remain as integral to modern historical writing.[41] But more important than any of these traditional forms of biography, Liang argued, was the 'biographical monograph' (zhuanpian), or 'special biography' (zhuanzhuan). What Liang Qichao meant when he talked of a special biography, or biographical monograph, was the type of study he had been heading towards with his own biographies of Li Hongzhang and Wang Anshi.

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[38] For the funerary inscriptions see *Yinbing shi heji, wenji* 15, and for the nianpu of Tao Qian, Zhu Shunshui and Xin Jiaxuan written in the 1920s, see *Yinbing shi heji, zhuanji* 96-98.

[39] These two series of lectures were extremely influential and were reprinted often after their first publication by the Commercial Press. Tang Zhijun gives an account of the publishing history of the lectures in his introductory comments to a recent edition of them: see "Liang Qichao he *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa*," in Liang Qichao *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa*, p.4.

[40] The other categories, or zhuanshi, included the histories of events (shi), cultural artifacts (wenwu), regions (difang), and particular periods or dynasties (duandai). See Liang Qichao *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa*, pp.145-147.

[41] Ibid, pp.182-185.

For Liang Qichao the biographical monograph was to provide the core to the important category of historical writing he called the history of individuals. Such monographs were vital, he argued, because they would focus on individuals who were of central significance to the time in which they lived and, unlike a liezhuan, they would give detailed consideration to the individual's life. Again, Liang's emphasis remains on the tension between 'life' and 'times', with the subject of the biography serving as a pivot around which could be built a discussion of the significant events of the period. Liang was not interested in the interior life of an individual; rather, he believed it was their involvement in affairs of public importance which ought to concern the historian.

Biographical monographs were also seen as different from nianpu in that they would entail not just a chronological detailing of the events of a life, with copious quotations from source materials, but rather should provide a critical interpretation of a life and its significance to the modern world.[42] Liang went on to consider how a series of biographical monographs, one hundred of them, each devoted to figures of intellectual, political or artistic significance from different periods of the past, might offer a unique and valuable insight into the Chinese past: "if written well, they could provide, through the perspective of individual lives, a comprehensive history of Chinese civilization in one hundred monographs."[43]

It was to be some time before Liang Qichao's suggestions about the importance of a new form of historical biography were taken up and developed by others. Many did believe that biography remained very

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[42] Ibid, p.183.

[43] Ibid, p.235. In the 1940s such a suggestion was followed up by the Shengli publishing company with its series of historical biographies on major figures from the Chinese past. For more on this project see below, pp.72-73.

much a part of the historian's work, but it was the traditional forms of biographical history which occupied them. Such writing remained popular with some writers in the early twentieth century. The projected dynastic history for the Qing period involved historians for whom the liezhuan form retained its authoritative status as an integral part of the historiographical tradition.[44] And private scholars continued the traditional practice of bringing together compilations of biographical essays and funerary writing.[45] More importantly, the gradual shift of biography away from its almost exclusive subservience to historiography, as seen in the increasing popularity of nianpu during the Qing period, continued during the early years of the twentieth century.[46] For most historians, however, the agenda of the new history provided different and more compelling questions about the past than those encompassed by the tradition, and the writing of biography no longer seemed of great importance.

At the same time Liang Qichao had been lecturing on the relationship of traditional historiography to the new history, others, such as He Bingsong (1890-1946), were introducing Chinese students to a very different conception of what the new history should be. Texts on

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[44]See *Qingshi liezhuan* [Biographies (prepared) for the Qing history] (Taibei: Zhonghua shuju reprint, 1964) 10 vols. For general comments on the draft history for the Qing period, compiled under the general direction of Zhao Ersun and first published in 1928, see Jin Yufu *Zhongguo shixue shi* [A history of Chinese historiography] (Taibei:Dingwen shuju reprint, 1974) pp.136-138. For more detailed information relating to the project see Xu Shishen *Youguan **Qing shi gao** bianyin jingguoji gefang yijian huibian* [A collection of documents and opinions pertaining to the compilation and publication of the *Draft history of the Qing dynasty*] (Taibei, 1979).

[45] See the 24 volume collection edited by Min Erchang and entitled *Beizhuan jibu* [A supplement to the collection of inscriptions and biographies] (Beijing:Yanjing daxue chubanshe, 1932).

[46] See Liang "Nianpu Kaolüe," for bibliographical evidence of the continuing popularity of nianpu. A brief discussion of the continuing popularity of traditional forms of biographical writing can be found in Howard "Modern Chinese Biography," pp.466-468.

historical methodology, many of them translations of Western works, were extremely popular during the 1920s and early 1930s. He Bingsong used his own translation of one such text, James Harvey Robinson's influential collection of essays, *The New History,* in his lectures on methodology at Beijing University.[47] A characteristic of such methodologies was the emphasis placed on the need to turn away from an exclusive concern with politics and to consider social and economic issues which may have been of greater long-term significance for a society. A new problem-centred approach to the past was encouraged and the narrative perspective provided by biography was seen as being of little value to such an enterprise.

The "reorganization of the national past" (zhengli guogu) became a major focus for historians intent on implementing the agenda of the new history. These historians turned their attention to the foundations of Chinese civilisation, re-assessing classical texts and traditional views of early Chinese history.[48] Their critical perspective led them to question the exemplary nature of biographical writing in traditional historiography, where the focus was not on the specifics of an

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47 James Harvey Robinson *The New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook* (New York:Macmillan,1912). He Bingsong's translation was published under the title *Xin shixue* [The new history] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1925). For discussion of the translation of this, and other Western works on historical methodology, and of the influence these texts had in China, see Qi Sihe "Jin bannian lai," pp.23-25. For a fascinating discussion of the intellectual context for the emergence of the 'new history' movement in North America see Peter Novick's social history of the American historical profession, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp.87-92.

48 Hu Shi's editorial in the first issue of *Guoxue jikan* [National studies quarterly] (January, 1923) set out the aims of the zhengli guogu movement. See *Hu Shi wen cun* [The literary legacy of Hu Shi] (Taibei:Yuandong tushu gongsi, 1953) vol.2, pp.1-18. But see also Arthur W. Hummel (trans.) *The Autobiography of a Chinese Historian: Being the Preface to A Symposium on Ancient Chinese History (Ku Shih Pien)* (Leyden:E.J. Brill, 1931) p.150, and Laurence A. Schneider's fine study on the author of this autobiography: *Ku Chieh-kang and China's New History: Nationalism and the Quest For Alternative Traditions* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1971).

individual life but rather on the position which a subject was thought to occupy within the moral spectrum of the Confucian world.[49] Such scrutiny of core aspects of traditional historiography was an essential part of the process of establishing the foundations for new, post-Confucian interpretations of the Chinese past. It also served further to undermine the status that biography had in traditional historical writing. The increasing emphasis on social and economic issues during the late 1920s and early 1930s encouraged this turn away from biography. This emphasis was seen not only in the highly polemical contributions to the social history debates of the early 1930s but also in the more considered work of academic historians, most of whom had either trained overseas or had been influenced by Western historical methodology.[50] The influence of these ideas can be seen in the substantial body of historical research published during the 1930s and 1940s in such journals as *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi jikan* [Chinese social and economic history review].[51]

The scope of historical research had expanded enormously during the early decades of the twentieth century. The need to look at the tradition anew in the wake of the collapse of the Confucian foundations to Chinese civilization saw historians ask entirely new questions of the past and the discovery of archeological materials encouraged a critical re-assessment of traditional perceptions of China's early history. As well as

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[49] See Gu Jiegang's discussion of this in his study of the legendary bad last emperor in "Zhou e qishi shide fasheng cidi," [The order of occurrence of the seven evil deeds of the Zhou emperor] in Gu Jiegang (ed.) *Gu shi bian* [Discussions of ancient history] (Beiping:Pu she, 1930) vol. 2, pp.82-93.

[50] The most detailed study of the social history debates is Arif Dirlik *Revolution and History: Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

[51] This journal was first published under the title *Zhongguo jindai jingji shi yanjiu jikan* [Studies in the modern economic history of China] in 1932. Its editorial board included Tao Menghe, Tang Xianglong, Zhu Qingyong, Yu Jiguang, Wu Han, Xia Nai, Zhang Yinlin and Luo Ergang. The journal has been revived recently by the history department at Xiamen University.

the new interest in social and economic aspects of the past, historians also turned their attention to the question of China's foreign relations, particularly during the period of the Yuan dynasty. Western ideas on historical methodology were absorbed and new national and cultural histories were produced.[52]

With the focus of historical enquiry extended well beyond the traditional concern with ethics and the administrative world of the elite, biography could no longer command the attention of historians in the same as it had with the official historiography of the past. This would change with the outbreak of war with Japan and the emergence of a more militantly nationalistic history which sought inspiration from 'heroes' of the past, but when historians turned back to biography in the late 1930s and 1940s few sought to revive the zhuan of traditional historiography. This was a consequence not only of the spread of vernacular prose, but also of the fact that during the first part of the twentieth century biography had begun to emerge as an independent genre, free from its traditional subservience to historical writing, and this led historians into a new form of biographical writing.

The Emergence of Modern Biography

The new and increasingly diverse interests of historians did much to undermine the status of traditional biographical writing, and this was reinforced by the widespread criticism of tradition that was so much a part of the May Fourth years (1917-1927). It was one of the most

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[52] For surveys of the historical writing of the early twentieth century see Gu Jiegang's bibliographical overview *Dangdai Zhongguo shixue mulu* [A catalogue of contemporary Chinese historical scholarship] (Hong Kong:Longmen shudian reprint, 1964); and S.Y. Teng "Chinese Historiography in the Last Fifty Years," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 8, 2(1949):131-156.

prominent writers of this period, Lu Xun (1881-1936), who produced the most powerful and influential critique of traditional biography. In his famous story of Ah Q, Lu Xun has the narrator search the tradition for a genre of biographical writing suitable for the modern life-story he has to tell, all to no avail. From the liezhuan of the official histories to the biographies included in family genealogies, each of the various genres is found wanting:

> What kind of biography was it to be? As Confucius once said, "Be the title not just so - Then the words refuse to flow." You really do have to be pretty darned careful about titles. But there are so many! Why, just for biography alone there are enough titles hanging around to make your head swim: narrative biography, autobiography, private biography, public biography, supplementary biography, family biography, biographical sketch. Trouble is -- not one of them fits.[53]

Lu Xun goes on to give an eloquent parody of the formalized rigidity of these traditional forms of biographical writing, a parody which served to reinforce the notion that biography must escape its subservience to historiography and find a more flexible format than the tradition allowed.

While such criticism of traditional biography was widespread at this time, much of it was not new. For instance, when Hu Shi complained of how so much of traditional biographical writing consisted of meaningless, ornamental phrases, phrases that obscured rather than revealed the subject's character, he was simply repeating a criticism that had been made frequently from the Tang period onwards.[54] Li Ao, in his

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[53] Lu Xun *Ah Q zhengzhuan* [The true story of Ah Q] in *Lu Xun quanji* 1, p.359. The translation used here is that by William A Lyell, from *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories* (Honolulu:University of Hawaii Press, 1990) pp.101-102. For a recent discussion of the considerable influence of this story following its first publication in late 1921 see Gloria Davies "The Problematic Modernity of *Ah Q*," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 13 (1991):57-76.

[54] While Hu Shi's interest in biography seems to date from 1914, it was in the prefatory comments he wrote in 1929 for Zhang Xiaoruo's biography of Zhang Jian that this critique of traditional biography was made. See Zhang Xiaoruo *Nantong*,

"Memorial on Obituaries for Officials" submitted to the throne in 819, complains of how such writing tended to be full of extravagant and unfounded claims praising the virtuous and filial behaviour of the deceased.[55] Similar criticisms were made in a memorial submitted to the History Office during the Five Dynasties period, and Gu Yanwu was one of many in the late imperial period who argued that writers should restrict assessment to the arrangement of detail and refrain from making explicit moral judgements.[56]

Hu Shi's views on traditional biographical writing were probably most influenced by an essay of Zhang Xuecheng's entitled "Ten Faults of Classical Prose."[57] In this essay Zhang identifies what he considered were problems within the tradition of classical prose writing, problems such as literary embellishment, distortion, exaggeration and fabrication. In almost all instances he uses examples from biographical writing to illustrate these problems. Zhang criticized the widespread practice of adding superfluous and inaccurate material in order to make biographical accounts appear more 'literary', stating that "in a biography the writing should reflect the person, [just as in] a narrative of events the writing should reflect those events. That is all that is required."[58] Similarly, Hu Shi wrote that the most important feature of biographical

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preface. Hu Shi's criticism of traditional biographical writing reflects his more general concerns about the need for literary reform, which are discussed in Chow Tse-tung *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Reform in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1960) pp.273-279.

55 Li Ao, "Baiguan xingzhuang zou," pp.2a-3b. McMullen, *State and Scholars*, p.193, notes that in order to try to prevent the compilation of exaggerated and distorted accounts, instructions were issued periodically requiring that obituaries not be written by the deceased's family members or disciples.

56 Wang Gungwu "The *Chiu wu-tai shih* and History-writing during the five dynasties," *Asia Major* 6 (1957) pp.11-12. Gu Yanwu, *Ri zhi lu*, juan 26, pp.1884-1185. Gu's critique of the explicit emphasis upon praise and blame in historical writing was to be reinforced by the kaozheng historians of the eighteenth century.

57 Zhang Xuecheng "Guwen shi bi," [Ten Faults of Classical Prose] in *Wen shi tongyi*, juan 5, pp.504-522.

58 Ibid, p.508.

writing was a simple and accurate account of the events of a life, and this was where traditional biography was most deficient.[59]

But the modern critique of biographical writing went beyond these traditional concerns. It was felt that the Confucian emphasis on the exemplary produced portraits that were static, portraits that lacked individuality and were unconcerned to show a dynamic and changing personality.[60] Increasingly it was felt that a biography ought not portray character as simply the manifestation of an ideal which was present at birth, but as something that changes and develops during the course of a life. In part this emphasis on change within an individual life reflected a growing interest in ideas about evolution; the notion that an individual's life is subject to change and development just as is the life of a society. It also reflected the increasing concern with the individual that was so much a part of the May Fourth years.[61]

The self-centred 'romantic individualism' of these years saw not so much an interest in biography and new ways of writing biography as a passion for autobiography.[62] Writers and scholars were encouraged to produce an autobiographical record of their lives in one form or another, and many did so.[63] Some chose to continue the tradition,

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59 Zhang Xiaoruo, *Nantong*, preface p.1. For a discussion of Hu Shi's views on biography see Du Zhengxiang, "Zhuanji," pp.6-7 and 39, as well as Zhu Wenhua "Hu Shi yu jindai Zhongguo zhuanji shixue," pp.36-45.

60 Du Zhengxiang, "Zhuanji," pp.6-7.

61 For studies of various aspects of this phenomenon see Jaroslav Prusek "Subjectivism and Individualism in Modern Chinese Literature," *Archiv Orientalni* 25 (1957):261-286: Leo Ou-fan Lee *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1974); and Mau-sang Ng *The Russian Hero in Modern Chinese Fiction* (Hong Kong:The Chinese University Press, 1988).

62 For the use of this term see Leo Ou-fan Lee "Romantic Individualism in Modern Chinese Literature: Some General Explorations," in D. Munro (ed.) *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values* (Ann Arbor:The University of Michigan Press, 1985) pp.239-256.

63 "During the past ten years or so I have been deeply concerned about the paucity of biographical literarture in China and have thus encouraged my older friends to write their autobiographies." Hu Shi *Sishi zishu* [Autobiography at forty] (Hong Kong:Shijie wenzhai reprint, 1954) preface, p.1.

writing in such popular forms as the nianpu or the autobiographical preface, while others were more experimental, hoping their efforts would open up what Hu Shi described as "a new path for literature."[64]

This search for new forms of autobiographical writing led to an interest in Western autobiography, a reflection of the considerable popularity of foreign literature in the 1920s and early 1930s. In 1930 the journal *Xinyue yuekan* [Crescent Monthly] published a translation of a talk on the difficult art of autobiographical writing by André Maurois (1885-1967). This talk was one of six lectures, entitled *Aspects of Biography*, which Maurois had given at Cambridge University in 1928, and the translation of this particular lecture, rather than one of the other five specifically on biographical writing, is a reflection of the much greater interest that there was in autobiography.[65] Perhaps the long association in the Chinese tradition of biography with the work of the historian meant that writers felt a greater ambivalence towards biographical writing in general. This did not mean, however, that no interest was shown in Western biography.

The year before the publication of the translation of Maurois' views on autobiography the overseas book review section of *Xinyue*

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[64] For an example of the use of the autobiographical preface, albeit in a much expanded form, see Arthur Hummel's translation of Gu Jiegang's famous account of his progress toward involvement in the *Gu shi bian* movement (entitled *The Autobiography of a Chinese Historian*). And for one of many autobiographies written in the nianpu form see Zhang Taiyan *Zhang Taiyan xiansheng ziding nianpu* [A chronological autobiography of Zhang Taiyan] (Shanghai:Shanghai shudian reprint, 1986). For Hu Shi's hopes for autobiography see his *Sishi zishu*, preface p.4. Perhaps the most significant of the early 'experimental' autobiographies was Guo Moruo's *Wo de younian* [The years of my youth] (Shanghai: Guanghua shuju, 1929). Both Hu Shi's and Guo Moruo's autobiographies are discussed in Wendy Larson *Literary Authority and the Modern Chinese Writer: Ambivalence and Autobiography* (Durham:Duke University Press, 1991).

[65] *Aspects of Biography* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1929). Shao Xunmei's translation of the the lecture on autobiography was published under the title "Tan zizhuan" [On autobiography] in *Xinyue yuekan* 4, 8 (1930). The only full translation of all the lectures I have found is that by Chen Cangduo, published under the title *Zhuanji mianmianguan* (Taibei:Commercial Press, 1986).

yuekan carried a brief description of the "new biographical literature."[66] This article introduced readers to the latest in biographical writing from Europe, in particular the work of André Maurois, Emil Ludwig (1881-1948) and Lytton Strachey (1880-1932).[67] Then, following Strachey's death, the journal carried a long article describing his importance in establishing the guidelines for what was considered to be 'modern' biography.[68] Through these articles came a description of how the art of modern biography lay in the use of the telling anecdote, how it was the duty of the biographer to relieve readers of "the burden of useless material." This was a reaction against the mutli-volume biographies of the nineteenth century, what Strachey had described as "those two fat volumes, with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead."[69] While some nianpu might approach the detailed density of Victorian biography, for the most part traditional Chinese biographical writing was brief and circumspect. But the long association of biography with official historiography gave this writing a predictable formality which seemed

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66 Liang Yuchun "Xin zhuanji wenxue tan" [On the new biographical literature] *Xinyue yuekan* 2, 3 (1929): "haiwai chubanjie," pp.1-4.

67 These biographies included André Maurois *La Vie de Disraeli* (Paris:Librairie Gallimard, 1927), which was immediately translated into English by Hamish Miles and published under the title *Disraeli: A Picture of the Victorian Age* (London:John Lane and The Bodley Head, 1927); Lytton Strachey *Eminent Victorians* (London:Chatto and Windus reprint, 1918); Lytton Strachey *Queen Victoria* (London:Chatto and Windus, 1921), which would be translated into Chinese by Bian Zhilin and published under the title *Weiduoliya nüwang zhuan* (Changsha:Commercial Press, 1938); Emil Ludwig *Napoleon* (Berlin:Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1925), which was translated into English by Eden and Cedar Paul and published as *Napoleon* (London:George Allen and Unwin, 1927); and Emil Ludwig *Bismark, Geschichte eines kampfers* (1926), translated into English by Eden and Cedar Paul and published as *Bismark: The Story of a Fighter* (London:George Allen and Unwin, 1927), and later translated into Chinese by Wu Guangjian and published as *Bisimai* (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1931).

68 Qiu Xin (Liang Yuchun) "Giles Lytton Strachey (1880-1932)" *Xinyue yuekan* 4,3 (1932):1-17. Wu Fuhui discusses Liang Yuchun's role in introducing such writing to a Chinese audience and the pseudonyms he wrote under in "Liang Yuchun," *Dushu* 3 (1992):137-146.

69 For "the burden of useless material," see André Maurois "Biography as a Work of Art," in *Aspects of Biography*, p.55. For Strachey's comment about "those two fat volumes," see *Eminent Victorians* (Chatto and Windus reprint, 1921) preface, p.viii.

stultifying to modern writers. Thus, the emphasis which biographers such as Maurois and Strachey placed on capturing the spirit of a subject, and their approach to the novelist's concern with the development of character, were attractive to those interested in bringing new life to Chinese biographical writing.

Although such ideas came from the West, there was a sense that they involved a return to the essence of Chinese biographical writing as it had been practised by Sima Qian. Some critics would argue that only this writing, the biographical art of Sima Qian, could be called 'biographical literature' (zhuanji wenxue). Almost all other traditional Chinese biography, and especially that in the post-Tang official histories, could not be considered literature and must simply be called 'biography' (zhuanji). It was in the ability to convey something of the spirit of the subject, the ability to provide a dynamic rather than a static portrait, that biographical literature was seen to differ from mere biography.[70]

Strachey argued that modern biography should be concerned with "a brevity which excludes everything that is redundant and nothing that is significant," and the emphasis he placed on capturing the spirit of a subject through the use of brief but telling anecdotes was attractive to those Chinese writers who retained an interest in "self-expression" and who resisted the trend of the late 1920s and early 1930s towards a more explicit involvement in social issues and social reform.[71] Amongst these writers there was an interest in continuing those aspects of the Chinese

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[70] This assessment, made by Hu Shi, is discussed in Du Zhengxiang "Zhuanji," pp.6-7. Zhang Mosheng makes the same point in the introduction to his first collection of biographies: *Yixing zhuan* [Biograhies of the extraordinary] (Shanghai:Dongfang shushe reprint, 1948) zixu, p.6.

[71] Strachey *Eminent Victorians*, pp.viii-ix. For a detailed study of an artist and writer who resisted the increasingly didactic and proselytizing tendencies of Chinese literature from the late 1920s onwards, see Geremie Barmé *Feng Zikai: A Biographical and Critical Study* (PhD Dissertation:The Australian National University, 1989).

tradition which encouraged self-expression: the brief and casual genre of the biji, or 'brush notes', and the xiaopinwen, or 'informal essay'. In particular, there was a sense of association with the writers of the late Ming period who had placed such importance on the spirit of individuality.[72] In the journals to which these writers contributed, such as those edited by Lin Yutang (1895-1976) in the 1930s, *Lunyu, Renjianshi* and *Yuzhou feng,* autobiography featured more prominently than did biography, although both genres of life-writing were represented.[73] And in one of the contributions to *Yuzhou feng* the difficult question of the relationship of biography and history was raised.

The discussion of this issue came in the translation of an article on the nature of biography by the Japanese writer Tsurumi Yusuke.[74] There had been some interest in Japan during the early twentieth century about the nature of biographical writing, but Japanese writers did not provide the same sort of stimulus for the Chinese with regard to biography as they had done with the new history at the turn of the century. Tsurumi himself found little of interest in the Japanese tradition

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[72] For studies of this sense of continuity with the writers of the late Ming, see Yi De *Lin Yutang sixiang yu shenghuo* [Lin Yutang's life and thought] (Hong Kong: Xinwenhua chubanshe, 1954) pp.171-180; and David E. Pollard *A Chinese Look at Literature: The Literary Values of Chou Tso-jen in Relation to the Tradition* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1973). Wu Pei-yi's discussion of the late Ming as being "the golden age of Chinese autobiography," (*The Confucians's Progress*, p.197 and passim), helps explain the interest in this period by those modern writers attracted to the art of "self-expression." For examples of Ming autobiographical writing see Du Lianzhe (ed.) *Mingren zizhuan wenchao* [A collection of autobiographies by people of the Ming period] (Taibei:Wenyin shuguan, 1977).

[73] Some of those who contributed autobiographical essays to these journals include Yu Dafu (*Renjianshi*), Chen Duxiu, Feng Yuxiang, Xie Bingrong, He Xiangning, Chen Gongbo, Wang Yunsheng and Cai Yuanpei (all in *Yuzhou feng*). There were regular sections ("jinren zhi' and "renwu") in *Renjianshi* devoted to short biographical sketches, which included essays on both contemporary and historical figures, and occasional book reviews which dealt with life-writing, such as the review of Strachey's *Characters and Commentaries* in *Renjianshi* 16 (November, 1934):41-42.

[74] This article was translated by Qi Zai and published seriatim under the title "Zhuanji de yiyi" [The meaning of biography] in *Yuzhou feng* 51 (16 November, 1937):93-98; 52 (21 November, 1937):132-138; 53 (1 December, 1937):174-178; 54 (11 December, 1937):208-210

and focused his attention instead on Western biographical writing, and, in particular, the recent development of what he called "new historical biography" (xin shi zhuan).[75] What Tsurumi meant by this was what others had prefered simply to call the new biography; the work of people like André Maurois and Lytton Strachey. In describing this biographical writing as "new historical biography", Tsurumi raised the issue of the relationship of such biography to the craft of the historian, and in discussing this made the following comments:

> At the heart of the new historical biography lies an account of the development of character. This focus on individual character makes biography quite distinct from history. History is the record of the life of a society or a people, while biography is concerned with the traces of an individual life; therefore biography is beyond the sphere of the historian and, most recently, the new historical biography has become the work of the novelist. But the new historical biography and historical novels are completely different. Historcial novels, being novels, are based on imaginative creation, on the writer's conception of a certain person and, irrespective of the actual historical events, the writer is at liberty to portray [that person] as they please. Biography, however, cannot in the end escape the confines of actual events and the creativity of the biographer must be restricted to the

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75 Tsurumi "Zhuanji de yiyi, *Yuzhou feng* 52 (November, 1937) p.136. Apart from the translation of this piece by Tsurumi, and the translation of some of Tsurumi's own biographical writing, I have been unable to find any evidence that Japanese writing on biography had any direct influence over Chinese writers and scholars. Between 1916 and 1921 Mori Ogai published his famous biographies of medical figures from the late Tokugawa period, and then in the period from 1934 until 1944 a journal devoted to biographical writing, *Denki* [Biography], appeared. But aside from the writing by Tsurumi, there seems to have been little interest in what the Japanese were doing. By the 1920s the period of major Japanese influence had passed. For translations of Tsurumi's biographical writing see Zhao Nanrou's *Bisimai* [Bismark] (Shanghai:Zhengzhong shuju, 1941); and Chen Qiuzi *Bailun zhuan* [A biography of Byron] (Guilin:Guilin yuanfang shudian, 1943). For a study of Mori Ogai's biographies see Marvin Marcus "Mori Ogai and the Biographical Quest," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51, 1 (June, 1991):233-262; and for a more general account of biographical writing in Japan see Daniel R. Zoll "The Study of Life-Writing in Japan: A Partially Annotated Bibliography of Japanese Books and Articles on Biography and Autobiography, 1922-1979, with an Introduction," *Biography* 2, 4 (Fall, 1979):348-358.

> sphere of the selection, arrangement and structuring of source materials, that is all.[76]

Tsurumi's claim that biography was distinct from both history and literature, combining an interest in the portrayal of character with fidelity to evidence, was perhaps new to many Chinese readers. It may have helped in establishing the belief that biography should be seen as an independent genre of writing, incorporating aspects of the historian's craft with the writer's interest in personality, yet for most readers of *Yuzhou feng* it was the latter, the emphasis placed on biography as an account of development of character, that was of greater importance.

Zhang Mosheng (b.1897) was one of the contributors to *Yuzhou feng* whose writing demonstrates best this overrriding concern with the portrayal of character. In the essays Zhang had published in the journal he reveals the features that were to be common to all his subsequent biographical writing. Zhang had known personally almost all of the subjects he chose to write about and he always began his biographies by describing his own relationship with the subject and why he had decided to write about them.[77] These introductory comments would be followed by the substance of the biography, which consisted simply of a series of anecdotes intended to portray the particular and unique character of the subject. This simple framework enabled Zhang to produce distinctive biographies renown for their literary quality.

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[76] Ibid.

[77] For instance, Zhang had worked with the May Fourth poet Xu Yunuo at a college in Henan and much of his biography of Xu deals with the friendship that developed between the two men. See "Ji guai shiren Xu Yunuo," [A record of the unusual poet Xu Yunuo] *Yuzhou feng* 35 (February, 1937):568-572. A slightly revised version of this essay was included in the first volume of Zhang's *Yixing zhuan*, pp.103-116. Another essay which Zhang first had published in the same journal, "Lao gan" *Yuzhou feng* 62 (March, 1938):70-72, underwent more substantial revision and was included in *Yixing zhuan* as a much longer essay entitled "Xin Gusou zhuan" (pp.85-102).

Encouraged by the reception that his essays in *Yuzhou feng* had received, Zhang put together a collection of biographies which he had published in 1943 under the title *Yixing zhuan* [Biographies of the extraordinary].[78] This was to be the first of a series of volumes devoted to biography and the very title he chose for the volume gives some indication of the type of people he wrote about. None of the subjects of the biographies were particularly famous, yet Zhang portrays them as being unusual and distinctive individuals.[79]

In the introduction to the volume Zhang discusses his understanding of what biography should be. He notes that his interest in biography was part of a wider fascination with something he called 'the study of manners' (taixue).[80] Zhang found it difficult to explain this term, but suggested that it meant a study of the way innate characteristics and early education combine to produce unique and distinctive individuals. There are strong moral connotations in Zhang's explanation of what he

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[78] Yao Xueyin acknowledged the literary merit of Zhang Mosheng's biographies when the debate about the nature of biographical writing was revived in the early 1980s, yet he claimed that the unusual nature of the subjects Zhang chose to write about meant that his biographies were inappropraite as models for the 1980s. See his article "Guanyu xie renwu zhuanji," [On the writing of biographies] *Renwu* 1 (1981) p.10. For the debate to which Tao Xueyin was contributing see the Epilogue.

[79] As well as the essays mentioned above, the study of Xu Yunuo and "Xin Gusou zhuan" [A biography of the new blind man], this volume includes the following biographies: "Miao Laoye zhuan" [A biography of grandfather Miao], "Feng jiu zhuan" [A biography of mad nine], "Niaowang Zhang zhuan" [A biography of pheonix Zhang], "Yi pu zhuan" [A biography of an unusual servant], "Song Bozhuang xiansheng zhuan" [A biography of Mister Song Bozhuang], "Yigai Wu Xun zhuan" [A biography of the virtuous beggar Wu Xun], "Xiandai xueshujie guaijie Wu Qiuhui xiansheng" [Mister Wu Qiuhui, an outstanding figure in modern scholarship] and "Tuixing minzhong duwu de xianqu - Song laoxiansheng," [A pioneer in the pursuit of popular literature - old Mister Song]. Following the publication of this first volume of *Yixing zhuan* in 1943 it was republished many times. I have used the sixth reprint, published in 1948.

[80] Zhang's first interest was in pre-Qin philosophy and his fascination with the study of manners and with biography grew out of this earlier interest. See Zhang's autobiography *Moseng zishu* [An autobiography of Moseng] (Shanghai:Dongfang shushe, 1948) pp.9-10, 21-24 and 154-159. See also Zhang's publications in this field, which include *Xian-Qin zhuzi wenxuan* [Selections from the literature of the pre-Qin Hundred Schools] (Chongqing:Renmin chubanshe reprint, 1957), and *Zhuangzi xinshi* [A new interpretation of *Zhuangzi*] (Taibei: Letian chubanshe reprint, 1972).

means by tai (charm or manner). It is associated with notions of virtue and sincerity, and the way these ineffable characteristics are expressed in people's behaviour. Zhang felt it was the first and foremost duty of the biographer to somehow capture this tai, the 'spirit' or 'character' of an individual, hence the emphasis on the use of anecdote rather than the detailed description of the events of a life.[81] In some of his biographical essays Zhang focuses on turning points in a person's life, transformative experiences which demonstrate a distinctive response to certain circumstances, such as the way imprisonment turned Miao Laoye to a life of Christian benevolence, or the way Song Bozhuang's father was able to channel his son's carefree and wanton spirit to produce a remarkable calligrapher.[82] Zhang believed that anecdotes about such experiences could succeed in capturing what is unique and essential about an individual in a way that a narrative of the major events of a life may not.

In preparing to write these biographies Zhang Mosheng read widely. He at least knew of the major works in the western tradition, including the biographies by Plutarch and Boswell, as well as the more recent work of Maurois, Ludwig and Strachey.[83] His approach to biography could be compared to that of Strachey and the 'new' biographers, yet his most obvious debt is to the Chinese tradition. Some

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[81] To try to explain tai, Zhang refers to Li Yu's discussion of 'charm' (taidu) when describing female operatic roles in *Xianqing ouji* [Casual expressions of idle feeling] (see the commentary on this in Huang Lizhen *Li Yu yanjiu* [A study of Li Yu] (Taibei:Chun wenxue, 1974) p.112.), and Pu Songling's story "Heng Niang," where a wife is encouraged to use psychological ploys to recapture the attention of her husband (in *Liaozhai zhiyi* [Tales of the unusual from the leisure studio] (Hangzhou:Zhejiang guji reprint, 1989) pp.119-121.). In both Pu Songling's story and Li Yu's discussion emphasis is placed on the expression of the ineffable, on 'spirit', and Zhang feels the biographer must try to capture this. See *Yixing zhuan*, zixu, especially pp.2-4, 11-13 and 21-22. In his autobiography Zhang also discusses how these ideas came to him and he gives an outline of his proposed study of manners (taixue): see *Moseng zishu*, pp.74-76 and 156-158.

[82] See "Miao Laoye zhuan" and "Song Bozhuang zhuan" in *Yixing zhuan*, pp.1-10 and pp.36-40.

[83] Ibid, zixu, p.8.

of his biographies show an affinity with the work of classical prose writers such as Liu Zongyuan (773-819), but the clearest influence is from Sima Qian.[84] Zhang felt most of the liezhuan in the official histories were 'stereotypical' and 'lifeless', but he admired the biographies by Sima Qian, especially "Xiangyu benji".[85] Like Sima Qian, Zhang creates conversational dialogue within his biographies to help give a sense of intimacy to his portraits. Even though Zhang wrote mostly about people he himself knew, this dialogue was not meant to be a record of actual conversation. It was a deliberate literary embellishment, just as it had been for Sima Qian. Zhang also continued Sima Qian's interest in exemplary lives, writing portraits he hoped would be both educative and edifying. But rather than use the zhuan format, which he felt had been rendered lifeless through its long association with official historiography, Zhang chose to write informal essays (xiaopinwen). One of his motivations in writing *Yixing zhuan* was to help reform biographical writing and he believed the informal essay provided the best means to achieve this.[86]

While most of the biographies included in the first volume of *Yixing zhuan* are restricted to this essay format the one that comes closest to historical biography is not. This is the biography of Wu Xun (1838-1896), the beggar who devoted his life to raising money to build schools for the poor. Not only is this a longer piece of biographical writing than the other essays, its nature was such that Zhang was encouraged to have

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[84] For instance, Zhang Mosheng's "Yi pu zhuan" [A biography of an unusual servant] (*Yixing zhuan*, pp.33-35) has much in common with Liu Zongyuan's zhuan, particularly a work like "Zhongshu Guo tuotuo zhuan" [A biography of Camel Guo, the tree planter] in *Li Zongyuan ji* [The writings of Liu Zongyuan] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju reprint, 1979) pp.473-475.

[85] *Yixing zhuan*, zixu, 5-6. The other biography from the Chinese tradition which Zhang Mosheng particularly admired was the life of Xuan Zang by Hui Li and Yan Cong (zixu, p.7).

[86] Ibid, pp.12-14.

it republished as an independent work.[87] Here for the first time Zhang relates a life story in chronological sequence, but the basis of the biography remains anecdotal material and it includes conversational dialogue which was purely fictional. This adds to the literary impact of the life story and was a major reason for its great popularity.[88] Unlike his other biographical writing, Zhang does include a list of sources upon which he based his account of Wu Xun's life, yet no attempt is made to relate particular incidents in the biography to those parts of this source material from which the incidents were developed. In the introduction to *Yixing zhuan* Zhang had reinforced Liang Qichao's call for the need for special biographical monographs, and in its length and chronological sequence this biography of Wu Xun approaches such a form, yet it retains much of the literary elegance and impact of the essay style from which it was developed.[89]

Zhang Mosheng's longest and most important biography was devoted to the life of the eccentric Sichuanese philosopher and educationalist Li Zongwu (1879-1943) and occupies the entire second volume of *Yixing zhuan*.[90] Although this is one of the finest intellectual biographies produced in China this century, it suffers to the extent that Zhang felt he had to reproduce <u>verbatim</u> almost all of Li Zongwu's writing. Li had produced a critical reinterpretation of the Chinese

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87 "Yigai Wu Xun zhuan" [A biography of the virtuous beggar Wu Xun] *Yixing zhuan*, pp.41-84; published separately under the title *Wu Xun zhuan* [A biography of Wu Xun] (Shanghai:Dongfang shushe, 1947).

88 Zhang's biography inspired the director Sun Yu to make a film about Wu Xun's life, a film which was extremely popular but which became a pawn in a rectification movement launched against intellectuals in 1951. Zhou Yang led the campaign which criticized the film for its suggestion that change could come through education and reform, not through class struggle and revolution. For details of this rectification campaign see Merle Goldman *Literary Dissent in Communist China* New York:Atheneum, 1971) pp.90-91. See also Chapter Four.

89 *Yixing zhuan*, zixu, pp.6-9.

90 "Hou hei jiaozhu zhuan" [A biography of the teacher of the thick of skin and the black of heart] *Yixing zhuan II* (Shanghai:Dongfang shushe, 1947).

tradition and most of what he had written had either been banned, confined to a limited readership or never published. Hence, Zhang's aim in writing this biography was not only to tell the story of Li's life, but also to introduce his ideas to a wider audience.[91]

The biography is divided into three sections, each of which is given a title adapted from traditional biographical writing. In the first section, entitled biezhuan (private or separate biography), Zhang tells of how he came to know Li Zongwu and of the friendship that developed between the two men. The personal nature of such writing, the way Zhang Mosheng writes of himself as well as the subject of the biography, accounts for much of the engaging intimacy of his biographies.[92] In the main section of the biography, the zhengzhuan (official biography), Zhang relates in some detail the story of Li Zongwu's life, quoting liberally from Li's philosophical and educational writings as well as the autobiographical essays which Zhang had encouraged him to write. The narrative is interspersed with the sort of anecdotal material Zhang always

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[91] The subsequent interest in Li Zongwu's philosophical writing was largely due Zhang Mosheng's biography. Recent reprints of Li Zongwu's writing even include large and unacknowledged sections from the biography. See, for instance, *Hou hei xue daquan* [Collected studies of being thick of skin and black of heart] (Hong Kong:Xuelin shudian, n.d.) and the subsequent reprints of this work in Taiwan and China under the title *Hou hei xue* (such as the edition published by Qiushi chubanshe in Beijing in 1989). For an interesting, if brief, account of the radical nature of Li Zongwu's philosophy see Wolfgang Bauer "The Problem of Individualism and Egoism in Chinese Thought," in Wolfgang Bauer (ed.) *Studia Sino-Mongolica: Festschrift Für Herbert Franke* (Weisbaden:Franz Steiner, 1979) pp.427-442.

[92] Such intimacy was uncommon in traditional biographical writing, although it was not unknown. Much of attraction in Yuan Hongdao's (1568-1610) famous biography of Xu Wei (1521-1593) comes from the way Yuan begins the biography, relating his own delight upon the chance discovery of Xu's poetry. The formal part of the biography, beginning with the subject's names and native place etc., comes only after Yuan has told of his own relationship with Xu. Perhaps such intimacy is the reason why this biography has often been included in anthologies, such as *Guwen guanzhi* [The finest of classical prose], despite the fact that it is known to be an unreliable record of Xu Wei's life: See "Xu Wenchang zhuan" [A biography of Xu Wei] in Yuan Hongdao and Qian Bocheng *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao* [An annotated edition of Yuan Hongdao's collected works] (Shanghai:Shanghai guji, 1979) pp.715-719. For an interesting reading of this biography see Duncan Campbell "Madman or Genius; Yuan Hongdao's "Biography of Xu Wei'," in D. Bing et. al. (eds.) *Asia 2000: Modern China in Transition* (Hamilton:Outrigger Publishers, 1993) pp.196-220.

turned to when trying to convey character.[93] In the final section of the biography, entitled waizhuan (unofficial biography), Zhang discusses some interesting but unpublished writing by Li, such as the satirical look at the emphasis on filial piety in the Chinese tradition in his "Palaopo de zhexue" [Philosophy of the hen-pecked], and also tries to convey some of his own feelings toward Li Zongwu.[94]

Through these three sections of the biography Zhang Mosheng develops a detailed and absorbing portrait of an very interesting man. Much of the attraction of the biography lies in the intimate way Zhang relates his own intellectual and personal encounter with Li Zongwu. Such intimacy is not possible with historical biography, yet the emphasis which Zhang placed on the need for a biography to convey something of the character of its subject, and his own success in doing this, suggested ways in which the writing of historical biography might be enriched. Zhang's writing also showed that it was not necessary to abandon completely the tradition of Chinese biographical writing. Like Liang Qichao, Zhang believed it was possible to transform the tradition to suit the needs of modern biography and he demonstrated how this could be done. There are similarities between his approach to biography and the writing of the 'new' Western biographers like Lytton Strachey, yet this was not a case of imitation of a Western model. Zhang drew directly on the Chinese tradition and adapted it to develop the kind of format for biography and biographical essays which he required.

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[93] See, for instance, chapter eight, where Zhang tells of the way Li performed his duties as a school inspector in Sichuan: "Hou hei xue jiaozhu zhuan," pp.140-165.
[94] For the "Philosophy of the Hen-pecked," see Ibid, pp.311-317.

Modern Historical Biography

By the early 1940s biography had become extremely popular once more. In part this reflected the new life being given the genre by writers such as Zhang Mosheng, but it was also a consequence of changed political circumstances. The patriotism sparked by the war against Japan generated renewed interest in figures from the past, particularly those who were considered to have been martyrs in the cause of national defense. Many temples and memorial halls devoted to such people, buildings which had been neglected for years, suddenly became the focus of renewed attention, with restoration undertaken and memorial services held.[95] Then, in 1939, the Education Department of the Chongqing-based Guomindang government issued directions that universites and colleges should begin the teaching of courses on biography and the study of biography, courses which had not previously been part of the curriculum. These courses played a major part in the renewal of interest in biographical writing that came in the 1940s.[96]

While traditional forms of biography continued to be very popular, it was the new form of the independent monograph that became the focus for most historical biography.[97] With his biography of Wang Anshi, Liang Qichao had shown that the critical biography, or pingzhuan,

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95 This flurry of activity generated by the war with Japan is discussed by L.C. Arlington in "China's Heroes of the Past," *T'ien Hsia Monthly* 5, 5 (December, 1937):467-476.

96 Wang Yun notes that it was as a result of this directive that he taught courses on biographical writing at Wenli College and Zhongshan University in Canton. See his *Zhuanji xue*, preface pp.1-2. His book is based on the lectures he gave in these courses. Similarly, Zhu Dongrun notes that his interest in biographical writing arose as a direct consequence of the government's directive that a course on biography be taught at Wuhan University. See "Zhu Dongrun zizhuan," [An Autobiography of Zhu Dongrun] in volume three of *Zhongguo xiandai shehui kexuejia zhuanlüe* [Brief biographies of modern Chinese social scientists] (Xi'an:Shaanxi renmin, 1987) p.137.

97 At this time the History Office of the Guomindang government was involved in the compilation of liezhuan for a national history. This has been continued by the Republican government in Taiwan and such liezhuan are published regularly in the journal *Guo shi guan guankan*. [The journal of the Institute of National History].

might provide a new direction for Chinese biographical writing, and by the late 1930s this type of biography was becoming increasingly popular.[98] But while this format allowed a far greater degree of critical assessment than had been the case with traditional biographical writing, many felt it encouraged too much subjective commentary, with the events of a subject's life often emerging, if at all, only through the biographer's critique.[99] Chronological biographies were generally more attentive to providing an exposition of the main events of a subject's life, yet even though these might be less subjective than a critical biography and, in some recent cases, were written in the vernacular, as with Hu Shi's fine study of Zhang Xuecheng, they were still unable to escape the disjointed narrative imposed by the nature of the nianpu form.[100] The biographical monograph provided a release from such restrictions without encouraging the subjugation of the narrative to a primary concern with critical commentary, as was the case in a pingzhuan. Chronological sequence remained important in the monograph, but this was developed through a continuous narrative which allowed greater freedom than did the disjointed year by year format of the nianpu. Similarly, while the

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98 Two of the more well known pingzhuan from this period are Chen Yilin's *Zhang Juzheng pingzhuan* [A critical biography of Zhang Juzheng] (Shanghai:Zhonghua shuju, 1934) and Rong Shaozu's *Li Zhuowu pingzhuan* [A critical biography of Li Zhi] (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1937).

99 For one instance of such criticism of pingzhuan see Ye Shengtao's review of Zhu Dongrun's first biography in *Wenyi fuxing* 1, 4 (1946) p.506.

100 Hu Shi and Yao Mingda *Zhang Shizhai xiansheng nianpu* [A chronological biography of Zhang Xuecheng] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1929). Hu Shi had earlier written a laudatory account of the life and intellectual achievements of the Qing scholar Dai Zhen (1724-1777), which was entitled *Dai Dongyuan de zhexue* [The philosophy of Dai Dongyuan] (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1927). While this work did not have a major influence over the subsequent writing of biography in China, it was to be important for the development of the study of Chinese intellectual history, which is acknowledged in later works devoted to Dai Zhen, such as Yu Yingshi (Yü Ying-shih) *Lun Dai Zhen yu Zhang Xuecheng* [A study of Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng] (Hong Kong:Longmen shudian, 1976) and Ann-ping Chin and Mansfield Freeman *Tai Chen on Mencius: Explorations in Words and Meaning* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1990). Hu Shi's other major piece of biographical writing came later, in "Ding Wenjiang de zhuanji" [A biography of Ding Wenjiang] *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan yuankan* 3 (1956).

monograph could accomodate crtitcal commentary, the focus remained with the narrative account of a subject's life. Liang Qichao had used the term zhuanzhuan (special biography) or zhuanpian (biographical monograph) to refer to this new type of biography, but by the 1940s such writing was increasingly refered to as zhuanji (biography).[101] The term itself was far from new, the first recorded use of it being to two works entitled "Wu xing zhuanji" [An account of the five phases] in the bibliographical treatise of *Han shu* [*History of the Han*], but it was only in the eighteenth century that it began to be used exclusively to refer to biography and not to a diversity of prose writing devoted to both events and individuals.[102] This increasing restriction of the term to biographical writing continued during the early twentieth century and by the 1940s it had become the most popular term for modern biography. The term is often used in a generic way, to refer to all biographical writing, yet it has also the more specific sense of the modern biographical monograph.

The potential value of the biographical monograph had been shown in Zhang Xiaoruo's life of his father, Zhang Jian (1853-1926), which had been published in 1930.[103] Zhang provides a detailed although uncritical account of his father's life and the biography lacks narrative coherence, nevertheless as a piece of continuous narrative written in the vernacular it was important in helping to establish the monographic form of modern biographical writing. Hu Shi noted in his preface to the work that it marked the beginning of a new era in the

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[101] See, for instance, how Yang Honglie uses the term in *Lishi yanjiu fa* [Methods for the study of history] (Changsha: Commercial Press, 1939) pp.224-225, to distinguish modern biography from liezhuan.

[102] For a discussion of the gradual transition in the use of this term zhuanji see Chen and Zhang *gudian zhuanji*, pp.34-37. Also of value is Zhu Xizu's discussion of terminology in his *Zhongguo shixue tonglun* [A general discussion of Chinese historiography] (Taibei:Zhuangyan reprint, 1977) p.38. And for Zhang Xuecheng's comparatively 'modern' use of the term in the eighteenth century see his essay entitled "zhuanji" in *Wen shi tong yi*, juan 3, pp.248-250.

[103] Zhang Xiaoruo *Nantong*.

writing of jiazhuan or family biography in China and, as with Zhang Mosheng's biography of Li Zongwu, Zhang Xiaoruo showed the benefits for biographical writing that came from an intimate relationship between biographer and subject.[104] Such intimacy was not possible in historical biography, where the biographer did not enjoy the advantages that came from personal knowledge of a subject, nevertheless such works did indicate the potential richness that might come from a greater attention to detail in the narrative account of historical lives.

While there was still much ambiguity as to the exact nature of the modern biographical monograph, the work of writers such as Zhang Mosheng suggested that there should be more to this biography than simply a dour account of the main events of a life. Thus, while the monographic form of modern biography had emerged by the early 1940s, the potential existed for a considerable diversity of writing within that form. And it was from such potential diversity that modern historical biography finally began to take shape.

It was in the 1940s that the transition period from the biographical history of the liezhuan to the modern historical biography of the zhuanji ended.[105] The publication of a number of biographies during this decade marked the end of this transition period. These publications included a series of biographical monographs put out under the auspices of the Guomindang government entitled *Zhongguo lidai mingxian gushi ji* [A collection of stories of celebrated and outstanding people in Chinese history] This was a series of books directed at a wide readership and was first undertaken by the Shengli publishing company. The series

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104 Ibid, preface p.4.

105 The transition with regard to literary biography only really ended in 1952 with the publication of Feng Zhi's *Du Fu zhuan* [A biography of Du Fu] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1952). But by this time the very writing of biography itself was being called into question. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

was divided into three sections and amounted to thirty three separate biographies. The first section was devoted to major political figures, particularly prominent emperors such as Qin Shihuangdi (259-210 B.C.), but it also included other major figures like Confucius and Sun Yatsen (1866-1925).[106] The second section comprised biographies of prominent individuals such as Zhuge Liang (181-234), Wen Tianxiang (1236-1283), Zheng Chenggong (1624-1662) and Hong Xiuquan (1814-1864).[107] The final section was devoted to scholars and thinkers and included biographies of Mozi (c.490-c.403 B.C.), Han Yu (768-824), Wang Shouren (1472-1528), Zeng Guofan (1811-1872) and Liang Qichao.[108]

With this series Liang Qichao's suggestion regarding the need for a number of biographies of major figures from the Chinese past was brought to fruition, and the whole project marked a significant contribution toward the establishment of the biographical monograph as part of modern Chinese historiography.[109] But the finest modern historical biography from these years did not come out of this project. It was a distinctive work, undertaken independently, and because of its

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[106] Included amongst these biographies were Gu Jiegang's *Qin Shihuangdi* [Emperor Qin Shihuang] (Chongqing:Shengli chubanshe, 1944) and Wu Han's *Ming Taizu* (Chongqing:Shengli chubanshe, 1944). A modern and revisionist biography of Qin Shihuang published a few years before was not part of this series: see Ma Yuancai *Qin Shihuangdi zhuan* [A biography of emperor Qin Shihuang] (Chongqing:Commercial Press, 1941). The reverence for Sun Yatsen had resulted in a number of earlier reverential biographies, such as Xu Quxuan's *Sun Zhongshan shenghuo* [The life of Sun Yatsen] (Shanghai:World Press, 1929) and Cai Nanqiao's *Zhongshan xianzheng zhuanji* [A biography of Mr. Zhongshan] (Shangai:Commercial Press, 1937).

[107] Another biography from this section was Deng Guangming's *Yue Fei* (Chongqing:Shengli chubanshe, 1945).

[108] Zhang Mosheng's *Laozi* (Chongqing:Shengli chubanshe, 1944) was also part of this section. Some of the biographies mentioned here will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

[109] A previous work inspired by Liang Qichao's suggestion was the compilation put together by Chen Qitian and entitled *Zhongguo renwu zhuan xuan* [A selection of biographies of Chinese figures] (Shanghai:Zhonghua shuju, 1935). But this was simply a compilation of liezhuan from the dynastic histories and thus did not fulfil Liang's suggestion for a series of independent biographical monographs.

significance will be the subject of separate consideration in the next chapter.

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Chapter Three

Zhu Dongrun and the Craft of Modern Historical Biography

> Sometimes friends have put the question: Why did you wish to write *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*?" The answer is very simple. Firstly, I felt we needed to do something about biography.[1]

Zhu Dongrun (1896-1988) once said that he wished simply to be known as a biographer.[2] He was much admired as a classical scholar, and particularly for his knowledge of the literature of the Song period, but his principal concern had been to try to transform Chinese biographical writing. With his first biography, a study of the sixteenth century scholar-official Zhang Juzheng (1525-1582), he made a self-conscious attempt to establish what he felt to be a new model for biographical writing, and although his subsequent published biographies of Lu You (1125-1210), Mei Yaochen (1002-1060), Du Fu (712-770) and Chen Zilong (1608-1647) show variations and refinements of this model, he remained committed

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1 Zhu Dongrun "Wo weishenme xie *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*" [Why I wrote *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*] *Wenhua xianfeng* 6, 24 (1947) p.18.

2 "After I die, I only want people to say one thing - 'Our biographer Zhu Dongrun has died' - and my hopes will be fulfilled." See Luo Yunming "Zhongguo zhuanji wenxuejia Zhu Dongrun" [A Chinese biographer, Zhu Dongrun] *Dushu* 8 (1990) p.112.

to the idea that modern biography ought to be a detailed study of both life and times written in continuous narrative prose.[3] While the transition to this form of biography, what Liang Qichao had termed the zhuanpian or biographical monograph, was well under way by the 1940s, Zhu's biography of Zhang Juzheng (originally published in 1945) showed for the first time the potential richness of the form and this work was instrumental in helping to define a new relationship between history and biography. Zhu Dongrun wrote extensively about the nature of biography, on the history of biographical writing in both China and the West, and on the position biography occupied between imaginative literature and history.[4] Thus, before going on to look at the significance of his biographical writing, it is important to consider how Zhu Dongrun's ideas about the nature of biography developed.

Zhu Dongrun on Biography

For Zhu Dongrun, an interest in biography came only in mid-life, after a long period spent teaching English in secondary schools in south and central China.[5] As a student in London during the First World War

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[3] See *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan* [A major biography of Zhang Juzheng] (Chongqing: Kaiming Shudian, 1945/Wuhan:Hubei Renmin reprints, 1957 & 1981); *Lu You zhuan* [A biography of Lu You] (Beijing:Zhonghua Shuju, 1960); *Mei Yaochen zhuan* [A biography of Mei Yaochen] (Beijing:Zhonghua Shuju, 1979); *Du Fu shulun* [A narrative account of Du Fu] (Beijing:Renmin Wenxue, 1981) and *Chen Zilong ji qi shidai* [Chen Zilong and his times] (Shanghai:Shanghai Guji, 1984). The draft of a biography of Wang Yangming (1472-1528) written not long after the publication of *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan* was lost and never published. In 1986, at the age of 90, Zhu began a biography of Yuan Haowen (1190-1257) and had completed a first draft by the end of 1987, but this remains unpublished. A biography Zhu wrote of his wife, Zou Lianfang, also remains unpublished. For details of these unpublished works see Luo Yunming "... Zhu Dongrun," pp.112-119.

[4] I have been able to locate only some of Zhu Dongrun's writing about biography and base the following discussion on this. At the beginning of an article or in the preface to a book Zhu sometimes refers to other of his works by title, but he usually provides no publication details. I have been able to track down only some of this work.

[5] A brief outline of Zhu's career can be found in his autobiographical essays, both "Zhu Dongrun zizhuan," and "Zizhuan: Zhu Dongrun" [An autobiography: Zhu Dongrun] in *Zhongguo dangdai shehui kexuejia* [Contemporary Chinese social

he had read Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* and was much impressed by it. But it was to be many years later before he returned to this famous work as part of an intensive study of the nature of biography, a study that was to be greatly enriched by this ability to go beyond the Chinese tradition.

In 1929 Zhu Dongrun had been appointed to teach English at the newly established Wuhan University. Not long after this, however, he decided to give up the teaching of English and transfered to the Chinese Department of the University. This change came following an invitation from the then head of the Chinese Department, Wen Yiduo (1899-1946), to establish a new course in the history of Chinese literary criticism.[6] From the lectures that Zhu wrote for this course he produced one of the first modern studies of the history of literary criticism, a work notable for its distinctive biographical perspective. While Zhu did acknowledge the important influences of a period or literary tradition on a writer or critic, he felt that only by focusing on the writing of particular individuals could the diversity and richness of Chinese literary criticism be revealed.[7] This inclination towards the biographical was no doubt reinforced by the fact that from 1939 onwards he became increasingly interested in the nature of biographical writing, both Western and Chinese.

Because of the war with Japan, Wuhan University had been forced to shift its campus inland to Sichuan, and the Chinese Department, situated in Leshan, was only able to offer a few courses. Despite this

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scientists] (Beijing:Shumu Wenxian, 1982) vol.1, pp.49-61. See also Luo Yunming "... Zhu Dongrun."

6 Zhu Dongrun "Zizhuan: Zhu Dongrun," pp.49-50. For an account of Wen Yiduo's brief but influential period as head of the Chinese Department at Wuhan University see Liu Xuan *Wen Yiduo pingzhuan* [A critical biography of Wen Yiduo] (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1983) pp.183-185.

7 For Zhu Dongrun's explanation of this deliberate emphasis on individuals rather than different periods or particular literary schools see *Zhongguo wenxue piping shi dagang* [An outline of the history of Chinese literary criticism] (Shanghai:Kaiming Shudian, 1944) preface, p.3.

disruption, the 1939 directive from the Education Ministry in Chongqing to begin a course in the study of biography was taken up and those responsible for the new course decided that students should begin with the work of the great classical prose writers of the Tang dynasty, Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan. Zhu Dongrun had not been asked to be involved in teaching the course and he found this proposal extraordinary.

> It was of course quite all right to begin [teaching] the writings of Han and Liu, but why call this "A Study of Biography"? This posed a problem for me: what exactly is "biographical literature"?[8]

Thus began a devotion to the study and writing of biography that was to last until the end of Zhu Dongrun's life.

To answer his question about the nature of biography and its relevance in the modern world, Zhu turned first to the origins of biographical writing in China, to the writing of Sima Qian and his immediate successors in the early dynastic histories. It was with this writing, and not the funerary essays of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan, that Zhu felt a course on Chinese biographical writing should begin. He saw little point in looking back beyond Sima Qian to the possible origins of biographical writing, but felt there was much of value in the liezhuan of these early historians.[9]

During the early 1940s Zhu wrote detailed textual studies of the first three of the dynastic histories and it was from this work that he drew what he felt to be important lessons for the writing of biography in the twentieth century.[10] He admired the use of dialogue in these histories,

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[8] Zhu Dongrun "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi" [The beginning of my study of biographical literature] *Zhuanji wenxue* 1(1984) p.178. See also "Zhu Dongrun zizhuan," p.137 and "Zizhuan," p.54.

[9] See, for instance, his argument that *Yanzi chunqiu* should not be considered as biography in "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.26.

[10] Zhu Dongrun *Shiji kaosuo* [A Study of *Shiji*] (Chongqing: Kaiming Shudian, 1940). The other two works, "*Hanshu* kaosuo" and "*Hou Hanshu* kaosuo," were

particularly Sima Qian's, and would return to this point when he came to write his own first major biography, but his primary concern was with the way inclusion in a dynastic history affected the form of early Chinese biographical writing. Because a biography was an integral part of a larger text, aspects of any particular individual's life could be related in different places so as to meet the overall structural demands of the history. Despite his admiration for much of this early biographical writing, Zhu felt that this practice, which came to be known as hujian fa. or the reciprocal method, was inappropriate for modern biography. He began a discussion of biographical writing by noting:

> Historians in traditional China were frequently biographers, with "The Basic Annals of Xiang Yu" and "The Biographies of the Marquises of Weiqi and Wuan" in *Shiji* and "The Biography of Su Wu" and "The Biographies of Yang, Hu, Zhu, Mei and Yun" in *Hanshu* all being excellent examples of biographical writing. However, because historians used the reciprocal method, it is often not possible to see a complete character in a single chapter [biography]. This is particularly obvious in *Shiji*, with the example of Tian Fen, who in "The Biographies of the Marquises of Weiqi and Wuan" is seen only as a powerful and influential villain. But if we remember what is recorded for the yuanguang years [134-129 B.C.] in "The Treatise of Rivers and Canals," when the Yellow River burst its banks, Tian Fen said: "Breaks in the banks of the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers are all the work of Heaven. It is not easy to stop up riverbanks by human effort." Also, in "The Biography of the Eastern Yue" it is recorded that in jianyuan 3 [138 B.C.], when troops were sent out from Min and Yue to surround [the city of] Eastern Ou, Eastern Ou requested assistance, and Tian Fen said: "The people of Yue often attack each other. This is not sufficient reason for China to go to the trouble of assisting them." [Rather than a villain, these instances allow us] to know he was a loyal minister. What sort of person was he then? If we were simply to rely on the account in the main biography, we

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never published. For some discussion of these three studies see ""Zizhuan: Zhu Dongrun," pp.52-54.

> would not obtain a true picture [of him]. We know then that from this use of the reciprocal method, and from the painstaking efforts of historians, they [the zhuan] are not independent biographies but form an integral part of the overall text, and it is not possible to carve off one section. Thus, historical biographies are not true biographical literature.[11]

The selective nature of this reciprocal method was a direct consequence of the emphasis placed upon the exemplary in traditional historical writing. In the main biography devoted to Tian Fen, "The Biographies of the Marquises of Weiqi and Wuan," Sima Qian wished to warn against the corruption that could result from the arrogant abuse of status and power, thus incidents in the man's life that did not exemplify this were either ignored or consigned to other chapters of the history. To produce a full and accurate account of a life, which for Zhu was the central aim of modern biography, it was necessary to draw all the information about an individual together and avoid this selectivity that was such a feature of biographies written for historical compilations. To this extent, Zhu felt that the liezhuan form that was so dominant in traditional biographical writing was not an appropriate model for the modern biographer to follow.[12]

If the rich vein of biographical writing in traditional historiography was found wanting, what of the great wealth of Chinese funerary writing, the obituaries, grave records and notices, and the spirit-road tablets that could be found in the collected works of almost every writer and scholar? Was there anything of value in this for someone looking to give new life to Chinese biographical writing? Zhu Dongrun

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11 Zhu Dongrun "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.19. Zhu reiterates this view of the hujian method, providing further examples, in other articles. In particular see "Zhuanji wenxue neng cong *Shiji* xuedao xie shenme" [What biographical literature can learn from *Shiji*] *Renwu* 1 (1983):65-71.

12 Coming back to this point in a later autobiographical essay, Zhu wrote that "...although there is much of value in the biographies of traditional histories, in the way that they are written they are of no help for modern biography." See "Zizhuan; Zhu Dongrun," p.54.

did not think so, and that is why he found the decision to begin the course on biography at Wuhan University with the work of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan so incomprehensible. Zhu bemoans the fact that Han Yu turned his back on biography, considering it to be the work only of historians, and instead chose to confine his literary talents to funerary writing.[13] Like many historians and writers of the early twentieth century, Zhu had little regard for funerary writing, seeing in it nothing more than obsequious flattery.[14] It seemed that even a writer of Han Yu's stature could not avoid the pitfalls of the genre, the distortion of truth to suit the eulogistic nature of the writing, and Zhu notes that because these inscriptions were often produced "in response to a request from the decendents of the deceased, it was, of course, difficult to avoid a 'crooked brush'."[15] The necessary independence that was vital for objective biography was lacking.

Zhu Dongrun was not dismissive of all traditional funerary writing, however, noting that unlike grave records, which were either buried with the deceased or placed near the grave, family biographies

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[13] In discussing this, Zhu notes Han Yu's reticence to accept the commission he was given to compile the second shilu (veritable records) for the brief reign of emperor Shenzong (805 A.D.), and quotes from Liu Zongyuan's famous letter chastising Han Yu for his timidity. Zhu feels that this reluctance to become involved in an historical compilation, and the associated avoidance of biographical writing, by such an outstanding literary figure as Han Yu created a precedent which other writers followed: "Because of this it became established as common practice that men of letters did not write biography, which was a great loss for Chinese literature." In making such a claim, Zhu of course ignores the significant biographical writing by other of the so-called great masters of classical prose, such as Ouyang Xiu. For Zhu's views on this see "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.23. And for Liu Zongyuan's letter to Han Yu, which Zhu quotes from, see Wu Wenzhi (ed.) *Han Yu ziliao huibian* [A compendium of materials on Han Yu] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983) vol.1, pp.18-19.

[14] For similar views from the early twentieth century see Hu Shi's preface to Zhang Xiaoruo *Nantong*, pp.1-2, and Yu Dafu "Zhuanji wenxue" [Biographical literature], which was published originally in the newspaper *Shen bao* (4.9.1933), but is reprinted in *Yu Dafu wenji* [The collected works of Yu Dafu] (Hong Kong:Sanlian, 1982) vol.6, p.201. For an assessment that is more responsive to the diversity and richness of some funerary writing see Ronald C. Egan *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu (1007-72)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) pp.49-63.

[15] "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.23. See also "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," pp.178-179.

(jiazhuan) and obituaries (xingzhuang) were written for submission to the History Office in the hope that they might be incorporated into the liezhuan of the official histories and that the language used in them therefore tended not to be excessive.[16] Some of this writing Zhu felt to be of value to modern students of biography, and, in particular, there were three obituaries written during the Song period which he felt to be major pieces of Chinese biographical writing. These works were Su Shi's (1037-1101) obituary for the great scholar and historian Sima Guang (1019-1086), "Sima Wengong xingzhuang", Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) obituary for the 'loyalist' commander Zhang Jun (1097-1164), "Zhang Weigong xingzhuang", and Huang Gan's (1152-1221) obituary for Zhu Xi himself, "Zhuxi xingzhuang".[17] It was the detail in these works that Zhu Dongrun admired. Not only were they longer than most biographical writing, but each provides a comparatively detailed narrative account of the life of its subject. At around 9,500 characters, Su Shi's obituary for Sima Guang was "exceptional," not only in terms of its length, but also for its unusually objective perspective and richness of content.[18] Then, around eighty years later, Zhu Xi produced an obituary for Zhang Jun that was four and a half times as long again and even richer in detail. Zhu Dongrun was particularly impressed by the account Zhu Xi provided of Zhang Jun's involvement in preventing the usurpation of Emperor Gaozong from the throne in 1129:

> For an obituary to devote 4,000 characters of narrative to a day by day account of the experience of this twenty five day period was something rarely seen in Chinese biographical writing.[19]

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16 Ibid.

17 Ibid, pp.23-25. Zhu returns to these three obituaries in much of his later writing about biography. See, for instance, "Lun zhuanji wenxue" [On biographical literature] *Fudan xuebao* 3 (1980):5-10, which reproduces much of the earlier discussion but provides more extensive quotation from the obituaries themselves.

18 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.24.

19 Ibid, p.24.

It was something Zhu Dongrun wished there was more of and he felt modern biographical writing should develop on this aspect of the tradition, providing a detailed narrative account of key political events in which the subject of the biography was involved.

While these obituaries written by Su Shi and Zhu Xi were notable for their attention to detail, it was Huang Gan's account of the life of Zhu Xi that Zhu Dongrun considered the most outstanding work of its kind in the Chinese tradition. Not only did Huang obviously take enormous care in compiling and assessing information about Zhu Xi's life, he also appended a postscript to the obituary in which he explained his selection of material. Zhu Dongrun felt this postcript to be a fine exposition of the biographer's craft.[20] Over a period of many years Huang had passed his draft of the obituary around the friends and pupils of Zhu Xi to try to ensure as fair and comprehensive an assessment of his life as was possible.[21] Even though Huang Gan was Zhu Xi's son-in-law, this obituary contains none of the empty and meaningless phraseology that was characteristic of so much funerary writing. It was this careful, deliberate approach to the narrative that Zhu Dongrun admired, and it was for this reason that he placed it with the two other great Song obituaries as works which he felt came "comparatively close to true biographical literature."[22] Here was an aspect of the tradition which he thought the modern Chinese biographer could build upon.

But it was the biographical writing of an earlier period, the time of the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern dynasties (from the third through until the late sixth century), that Zhu Dongrun identified as the

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20 "Lun zhuanji wenxue," p.7.

21 In a recent discussion of this obituary Wing-Tsit Chan provides a similar assessment to that of Zhu Dongrun, noting that "There has never been a Hsing-chuang that was written with such great care," and that when we read it "we seem to be facing the man." See his *Chu Hsi: New Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989) pp.1-11.

22 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.23.

richest in the tradition and thus of most importance for the modern biographer. This was a period noted for the brilliance of its literature; poetry in particular. It was also a time when biographical writing was extremely popular.[23] This writing took many forms, from the various types of genealogy and family chronicle through to the zhuan of official historical compilations. From a modern viewpoint, however, what Zhu Dongrun felt to be of most value were the 'separate' or 'private' biographies mostly known as biezhuan. The term bie is often seen as implying that these biographies were supplementary to an existing zhuan in an official compilation, but Zhu argues convincingly that the term was used to indicate the independence of the works, that they were separate from but not necessarily supplementary to any other biography. It was this independence which Zhu felt gave such biographical writing its value.[24]

While much of this writing survives only in fragments, and in particular only through Liu Jun's (462-521) commentary to *Shishuo xinyu* [A New Account of Tales of the World] and Pei Songzhi's commentary to *San guo zhi*, what there is suggests a richness and independence of spirit that encouraged Zhu to claim it represented the very best of Chinese biographical writing. Not only that, he believed that of the various traditional forms of biographical writing these biezhuan were closest in nature to modern biography.[25] He particularly admired the biography of Cao Cao (155-220) entitled *Cao Man zhuan* [A Biography of Cao Man], noting that "of all the biographies quoted in the

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23 For a good recent assessment of the biographical writing of this period see Chen and Zhang *gudian zhuanji*, pp.229-247.

24 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.20. Chen Shih-hsiang supports this interpretation, noting that the term bie "is to be taken in the stronger attributive sense as 'separate' or 'distinct,' thus suggesting the severance from the overbearing framework of history, and ideally its distinction on its own merit." See "An Innovation," p.52.

25 "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," p.179.

commentary to *San guo zhi,* that which comes closest to modern biographical literature is *Cao Man zhuan.*"[26] Although only a part of this biography survives, it is nevertheless famous for its unflattering portrait, the main source for the Cao Cao who is so prominent in popular tradition: an unscrupulous, deceitful villain, a Sheriff of Nottingham, whom people love to hate.[27] For Zhu Dongrun, critical of the eulogistic and laudatory nature of so much traditional biographical writing, this fragmentary portrait represented a fine example of the independent perspective he felt was vital for good biography. Not only were such biezhuan distinct from historical compilations, some, like the *Cao Man zhuan,* showed a much less reverential attitude towards the subject than was the case with most traditional biography. Here, then, was another aspect of the tradition that Zhu felt the modern biographer should build on. [28]

While this period when biezhuan flourished is recognized as a time of signifcant Buddhist influence, Zhu Dongrun warns against making too much of this with regard to biography. He did admire the monk Fa Xian's autobiographical account of his travels through Central Asia to India and beyond (399-414), believing it to contain some much neglected yet very fine narrative writing which reveals as much about its

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26 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.21.

27 For an excellent study of Cao Cao lore see Paul William Kroll *Portraits of Ts'ao Ts'ao: Literary Studies on the Man and the Myth* (PhD. Dissertation:University of Michigan, 1976). He provides translations of the surviving fragments of *Cao Man zhuan* on pages 122-124 and in Appendix 2, pp.271-281. The text itself can be found interspersed throughout Pei Songzhi's commentary to Chen Shou *San guo zhi,* pp.1-55.

28 Of course the real value of *Cao Man zhuan* lies not so much in the biography itself, but in the commentray of which it forms a part. It is in the diversity of interpretations provided by the various texts included in this commentary, not just the *Cao Man zhuan,* that the source of so much interest in Cao Cao lies. As Kroll notes, just as we should be wary of the laudatory portrait given in Wang Chen's *Wei Shu,* another text quoted from in the commentary, we should be just as "skeptical of the depiction of Ts'ao as an utterly sinister bête noire" in *Cao Man zhuan* (see Kroll *Portraits of Ts'ao Ts'ao,* p.121).

author as it does about the countries he travelled through.[29] But he felt that when it came to the Buddhist biographies of the period, such as those in Hui Jiao's *Gaoseng zhuan*, there was little in them that was new to Chinese biographical writing, especially as they were written in the the standard zhuan format. Zhu believed that because biographical writing was already well established in China by the time Buddhism became influential, any changes to prose writing that came with that influence had little effect on biography, being "of secondary importance only and not very obvious."[30] Nevertheless, Zhu Dongrun did acknowledge that from the richness of the Buddhist canon, and from the search for scripture, came the finest biography to appear in China prior to this century.

This biography was of the Buddhist monk Xuan Zang. Written by Xuan Zang's disciples, Hui Li and Yan Cong, and entitled *Dacien si sanzang fashi zhuan* [Biography of Master Xuan Zang of the Dacien Temple], this was one of the most detailed pieces of biographical writing ever produced in China.[31] At around eighty thousand characters it is almost twice as long as Zhu Xi's unusually lengthy obituary for Zhang Jun, and Zhu Dongrun notes that while length is hardly the most important of criteria for assessing a biography, only with a work of this scope is it possible to produce such a richly detailed portrait.[32] He considered the biography of value not only for its length and detail but also because it provides much insight into the intellectual world of

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29 For Zhu Dongrun's comments on the *Fa Xian xing zhuan* [An account of Fa Xian's travels], or *Fo guo ji* [A record of Buddhist countries] as it is also called, see "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.21 and "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," p.180. James Legge's translation of the text is published under the title *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms* (Cambridge, 1923; and New York: Paragon reprint, 1965).

30 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue, p.21. For a more recent assessment of Buddhist biographical writing in China see Chen and Zhuang *gudian zhuanji*, pp.106-124.

31 Sun Yutang and Xie Fang/Hui Li and Yan Cong *Dacien si sanzang fashi zhuan.*

32 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.22.

seventh century China, as well as invaluable information about the countries through which Xuan Zang travelled in his search for scriptures and contact with the heartland of Buddhism. Zhu writes that even though this work was very different to what he would expect of modern biography, for a product of the seventh century it is of incomparable value and thus worthy of consideration in any study of Chinese biographical writing.[33]

But the example provided by this biography of Xuan Zang was not followed by others, and Zhu notes that perceptions of biography were already beginning to change by the time it appeared in the seventh century.

> From the Three Kingdoms until the Six Dynasties biographical literature flourished, then with the early Tang dynasty and the "Biography of Master Xuan Zang of Dacien Temple" came its most glorious age. But the Tang period also saw biographical literature begin to degenerate. During the Tang, Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan were the finest and most influential literati of the age, yet they did not dare write biography, considering it to be a matter for the History Office. It was from this time onwards the tradition began that literati ought not to write biographies.[34]

Zhu Dongrun believed that with the reorganization of the History Office under the Tang it was increasingly the case that people associated the writing of biography with the compilation of official histories. While many more of the 'literati' than just the official historians did in fact write biography, Zhu is undoubtedly correct to emphasize that the status attached to the official histories became such that it encouraged a remarkable degree of uniformity in the zhuan that were produced. The age of the 'separate' or 'private' biographies, the biezhuan, had passed,

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33 Ibid.

34 Ibid, p.23. Liu Zongyuan did of course compose zhuan, although not very many, and Zhu Dongrun is probably dismissing these as not being 'proper' biographies. For the few zhuan that Liu did write see *Liu Zongyuan ji* [The collected works of Liu Zongyuan] (Beijing:Zhonghua Shuju, 1979) pp.471-485.

and for Zhu Dongrun this meant the passing of the 'golden age' of Chinese biographical writing.

Of the nianpu which appeared from the Song period onwards, and which became increasingly popular during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Zhu says little. He does note the most important contribution of the nianpu form, the emphasis on chronology, yet feels that "nianpu are really not biography." Even in a comparatively detailed nianpu, such as Hong Xingzu's (1090-1155) *Hanzi nianpu* [A Chronological Biography of Han Yu], Zhu feels the limits of the genre are obvious: many years in Han Yu's life are left unaccounted for, only a selection of his poetry and prose is included, and while some attempt is made to convey Han's feelings at the time he wrote particular works it remains impossible to obtain an overall prespective on his life.[35] Perhaps Zhu was aware of the greater potential of this form of biographical writing, as was to be shown in many later nianpu, but he placed more emphasis on the constraints which the disjointed, strictly chronological format imposed upon the biographer. This perception of the limits of nianpu simply reinforced for Zhu Dongrun his opinion that Chinese biographical writing needed to move in a new direction.

For some indication of what this new direction might be Zhu Dongrun turned to the biographical writing of the West. He believed Chinese biography had stagnated from the thirteenth century onwards. Prior to this he had found much to admire, from the original and brilliant writing of Sima Qian through until what he felt was the finest articulation of the ethos of Chinese biographical writing in Huang Gan's obituary for Zhu Xi.[36] But beyond the Song period he saw nothing of value. Zhu shared the common belief that Chinese literature in general

35 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.25.
36 Ibid, p.26.

went into decline at this time, and he felt that biographical writing suffered this decline just as much as poetry and other forms of prose.[37] He argued that during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties the writing of biography had continued along the same old paths, that there was nothing innovative in this writing, and that this traditional legacy which still governed the writing of biography in the early twentieth century must be broken.[38] The way to do this, he suggested, was to draw stimulus from the many changes that had been occurring in Western biographical writing in recent years:

> In the past Chinese people certainly have produced some successful works in the field of biographical literature, works which when compared with those of the West give no cause for shame. But with the glorious times already gone, can the brilliance of such ancestry compensate for the impoverishment of its descendents? When we think of the advances in biographical literature in the West over the last two or three hundred years do we not feel ashamed? In terms of structural arrangement and boldness of vision, in terms of the authoritativeness that comes through fine attention to source materials and of the detailed analysis of character, can our [writing] compare?[39]

Zhu Dongrun believed that modern Chinese biography should incorporate aspects of the tradition, those things he admired such as the critical perspective which some biezhuan displayed and the

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37 In his history of literary criticism (*Zhongguo wenxue piping shi dagang*), Zhu devotes considerable attention to the writers and critics of the Yuan, Ming and Qing. But when it came to biography he expressed the same prejudices as many others did about the literature of these later periods. This of course meant that he ignored much that is valued, such as the many fine zhuan by Song Lian (1310-1381) and others, as well as the writing produced by those associated with the Gongan school which was popular with many of Zhu's contemporaries in the early twentieth century. For examples of some of this writing see the second volume in the collection edited by Qiao Xiangzhong et. al. *Zhongguo gudian zhuanji*, and for a discussion of the biographical writing of those associated with the Gongan school see Chen and Zhang *gudian zhuanji*, pp.278-296.

38 Zhu Dongrun *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.2. This and subsequent references are to the 1981 edition reprinted by Hubei Renmin chubanshe.

39 "Wo weishenme xie *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*," p.18.

attention to detail shown in the best of obituary writing, but if new life and new direction were to be given to Chinese biographical writing he felt it was essential to learn more about Western biography.

Very few works of Western biography were translated into Chinese during the early twentieth century, and Zhu Dongrun showed little interest in some of those that were. For example, he makes no mention of the work of the French writer Romain Rolland (1866-1944), whose biographies of Beethoven (1770-1827), Michaelangelo (1475-1564) and Tolstoy (1828-1910) were all available to Chinese readers by 1940.[40] Zhu Dongrun's concerns lay not with biographies such as these but with the more mainstream works in the Western tradition, and his command of English meant he was not restricted to just what had been translated.

As part of his study of Western biography and biographical theory Zhu Dongrun claimed to have read "from Plutarch's famous lives to the work of recent writers" and "from Theophrastus' discussions of character to André Maurois' summation of biography."[41] Despite the isolation of wartime Leshan, Zhu was able to pursue this reading in the Western tradition because much of the Wuhan University library had been transferred inland to Sichuan. This enabled him to read some of the multi-volume works of Victorian biography. In particular, he read the

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40 See Luoman Luolan *Beiduowen zhuan* [Vie de Beethoven (1903)] Yang Hui trans. (Shanghai: Beixin Shuju, 1927); *Migailangqiluo zhuan* [Vie de Michel-Ange (1906)] Fu Lei trans. (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1935) and Tuoersitai zhuan [Vie de Tolstoi (1911)] Xu Maoyong trans. (Shanghai:Huatong Shuju, 1933). Subsequent translations of the biography of Beethoven were done by Chen Zhanyuan (1944) and Fu Lei (1948), and Fu Lei also produced a translation of the biography of Tolstoy (1935). As a 'fellow traveller' Rolland enjoyed considerable support in the Soviet Union, where his work was widely translated. In China, the poet and essayist He Qifang was one of a number of writers who in the 1930s were influenced by Rolland's work: see Bonnie S. McDougall (translator and editor) *Paths in Dreams: Selected Prose and Poetry of Ho Ch'i-fang* (St Lucia:University of Queensland Press, 1976) pp.18-19 and 128-133. For an instance of the continuing influence in China of Rolland's biographical writing see Chen and Zhang *gudian zhuanji*, p.6.

41 *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.1.

three volumes by John Morley of *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* and the six volumes by Monypenny and Buckle of *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*. In addition to reading other political biographies of this sort, Zhu returned again to Boswell's famous *Life of Samuel Johnson*, which he had read many years before during his studies in London.[42] But what did he make of these works? What was it in them that was of value for someone trying to establish a new direction in Chinese biographical writing?

Plutarch's writing appealed, yet from a technical viewpoint Zhu Dongrun found nothing new in the parallel lives, the famous comparisons of Greek and Roman figures. Zhu noted how Sima Qian had employed similar methods in *Shiji*: where "The biographies of the Marquises of Weiqi and Wuan" provide a comparison of two completely different individuals, "The biographies of General Wei and the Cavalry General [He]" provide a comparison of two roughly similar individuals and "The biographies of Qu Yuan and Master Jia" provide a comparison of two similar individuals from different periods. But while Zhu felt the technique of comparative biography that was found in the parallel lives was not new to Chinese readers, he noted that "when it comes to Plutarch's carefully integrated and appropriately modulated [writing] then there is much we can learn from."[43] Zhu says little more beyond

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42 "Zhu Dongrun zizhuan," pp.137-138. The main biographies which Zhu mentions were James Boswell *The Life of Samuel Johnson LlD* (London:Blackwood, 1807); John Morley *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1903); and William Flavelle Monypenny and George Earle Buckle *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli: Earl of Beaconsfield* 6 vols. (London:John Murray, 1910-1920). Zhu states there were eight volumes to this biography of Disraeli, but the edition I have referred to contains only six. Monypenny conceived of the project and wrote the first two volumes, then died during the writing of volume three. Buckle took over and completed the project. As well as these works Zhu says he read many other biographies of people like Napoleon, Washington and Lincoln.

43 "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," p.181. The biographies by Sima Qian which Zhu is referring to are "Weiqi Wuan hou liezhuan," *Shiji*, 107, pp.2839-2856; "Wei jiangjun piaoji liezhuan," *Shiji*, 111, pp.2921-2947 and "Qu Yuan Jia sheng liezhuan," *Shiji*, 84, pp. 2481-2504.

this, yet it seems he is suggesting here, as he does elsewhere with regard to Western biography in general, that it is the narrative coherence in Plutarch's writing that he admires and which Chinese readers can learn from.

In Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* it was the detail and intimacy of the portrait which impressed Zhu Dongrun, an impression shared by many other readers of this famous biography. In the preface to his own first biography Zhu wrote about Boswell's art, stating that in the *Life*

> we see a slovenly doctor and his many friends, we hear their discussions of literature and politics, and even of such petty things as growing trees and selling fruit. At times Johnson would produce wicked taunts, roaring with laughter and ridiculing Boswell for always complaining of his misfortunes ... [But] this is life, and because of this the work has become a classic. To write a work such as this, however, requires an intimate relationship between the author and the subject ...[44]

As in most cases the biographer did not enjoy such a close relationship with the subject, such intimacy was difficult to emulate. Nevertheless, Zhu argued that Chinese biographers could learn from the way Boswell created a detailed portrait of Johnson, where "nothing was concealed, [yet] nothing was fabricated." [45] Most importantly, there were none of the meaningless phrases found so often in Chinese biographical writing, phrases such as "a young genius" (shao er cong ying) or "of high ambition" (you you da zhi), which, Zhu claimed, "reveal nothing but the writer's ignorance of the subject of the biography."[46] Instead of falling back upon hollow phrases such as these, Boswell wrote in a language that was both fresh and unique and thus was able to bring out the

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[44] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, pp.2-3. For one of a multitude of studies of Boswell and his biography see Richard B. Schwartz *Boswell's Johnson: A Preface to the Life* (Madison:The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

[45] "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," p.181.

[46] "Wo weishenme xie *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*," p.18.

individuality of his subject. For Zhu Dongrun this was a clear demonstration of the art of biographical writing, an art which he felt Chinese writers needed to emulate.

While Zhu Dongrun felt that Plutarch and Boswell both provided valuable examples for modern Chinese biographers to learn from, it was really the more recent Western biographical writing that he considered to be of greatest importance. What particularly interested him was the relationship between the so-called 'new' biographical writing of people like Lytton Strachey and the earlier tradition of multi-volume nineteenth century biographies that Strachey and others were reacting against. [47] In the preface to his own first biography, *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan* [A major biography of Zhang Juzheng], Zhu Dongrun notes how it was Strachey's biography *Queen Victoria* that marked the breakthrough to a new kind of biographical writing in the West.[48] Unlike the great multi-volume Victorian biographies, this was a single volume work of only just over two hundred pages. Despite this brevity, however, Strachey manages to create a powerful portrait of Victoria. Zhu remarks on the way Strachey deliberately focuses not just on Victoria's public life, her involvement in the world of politics and diplomacy, but also on her family life, and particularly her relationship with her husband Albert. What most distinguishes the work from previous biographies, however, was the fact that Strachey did not indulge in "long-winded quotations from sources, nor in pedantic textual criticism."[49] It was not that Strachey

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[47] See Chapter Two for more on this.

[48] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, pp.3-4. Lytton Strachey *Queen Victoria* (London:Chatto and Windus, 1921).

[49] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.3. Elsewhere Zhu remarks that Strachey "opposed the practice followed since the eighteenth century whereby biographers used extensive quotations, considering such works to be tedious and verbose..." See "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," p.181. For an analysis of Strachey's biographical writing and assessment of the reception it received in the West, including the criticisms to which it was subjected by those who considered it superficial and 'half-fictional', see Michael Holroyd *Lytton Strachey: A Critical Biography, volume 2, The Years of Achievement (1910-1932)* (New York:Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968)

had not bothered to research thoroughly Queen Victoria's life, but rather that he chose to include in his biography only that material which he considered critical for an insight into the personality of his subject. In the preface to his earlier work, *Eminent Victorians*, Strachey had described how it was the biographer's task to

> "row out over that great ocean of material, and lower down into it, here and there, a little bucket, which will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen, from those far depths, to be examined with a careful curiosity." [50]

Zhu notes that while a biography like William Flavelle Monypenny's *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli* might include in its "six fat volumes" virtually every piece of material relevant to a study of Disraeli's life, the result was a work that was "extremely unsatisfying."[51] In *Queen Victoria*, by contrast, Strachey had not smothered his subject in a mountain of detail and instead produced a portrait Zhu found to be absorbing and extremely interesting. The new direction Strachey gave to biographical writing came through this shift away from an emphasis on the exhaustive collection of material and on to the shaping of that material into the portrait of a life. Yet despite Zhu Dongrun's admiration for Strachey's art, he had reservations about its relevance in helping to give a new direction to Chinese biographical writing.

For Chinese readers there was much about Strachey's biographical method that reminded them of the better liezhuan from their own tradition, particularly the writing of Sima Qian.[52] But it was the different contexts from which this writing came that concerned Zhu Dongrun.

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pp.261-325 and 401-438. See also Virginia Woolf "The Art of Biography," in her collection of essays entitled *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (London:The Hogarth Press, 1942) pp.119-126, and Ruth Hoberman *Modernizing Lives: Experiments in English Biography, 1918-1939* (Carbondale:Southern Illinois University Press, 1986).

[50] *Eminent Victorians*, preface, p.vii.

[51] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.10.

[52] Ibid, preface, p.3.

Strachey's style was not simply a departure from Victorian biography, it was also a development of that tradition. The brevity and 'lightness' of his biographical writing was deceptive, concealing the same sort of detailed and meticulous research that had been the hallmark of the great biographies of the nineteenth century. Zhu Dongrun felt such a tradition was lacking in China and therefore he cautioned against a simple attempt to imitate the style of *Queen Victoria*:

> Even though many people commend this method, in my opinion, if Strachey was in China he would have decided he could not write such a famous work. If Chinese were to imitate this method they would only be able to produce supercilious works, [books that] resembled novels yet were not novels, and which resembled history yet were not history. In the past twenty or thirty years the Chinese literary world has gone through many changes but it still has not produced attitudes of such care and precision.[53]

Zhu Dongrun believed it was important for Chinese biographers to learn more about the context out of which the so-called 'new' biography had developed, not just try to imitate the elegant style of Lytton Strachey. Developing this point, he noted that:

> Works since the mid-nineteenth century have frequently been tedious and long-winded, yet all show the sources [on which they were based] and [provide a] detailed analysis of evidence. They are undoubtedly cumbersome, yet this in itself provided a solid foundation, and we require such a solid and reliable foundation, even if we must admit that the foundation is cumbersome. People have come to detest these works, but this is not because they are cumbersome, rather it is due to the lack of selectivity shown in obtaining materials and the inappropriateness of the discussion. With regard to both of these aspects we can learn much from Strachey...

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[53] Ibid. In a later article Zhu Dongrun repeated this concern, noting that if Chinese writers were to imitate the style of *Queen Victoria* it would be "very easy to slip back into the rut of traditional biography," and that this would gradually undermine efforts to establish a new direction for Chinese biographical writing. See "Lun zhuanji wenxue," p.9.

> The biographical literature that China needs is that which traces souces and provides evidence, not that which is tedious or laudatory. As for the selection of source materials and the appropriateness of the discussion, these are matters related to the author's ability.[54]

Elsewhere Zhu Dongrun wrote that "the problem with Chinese writers throughout the ages has not been rambling prolixity but rather narrative brevity."[55] Zhu was concerned that if Chinese biographers were simply to adopt in a superficial way the methodology of Lytton Strachey they would just be perpetuating a problem that lay at the heart of the Chinese literary tradition. What was needed instead, he argued, was a willingness to undertake the same sort of detailed historical research that was the basis to the best of nineteenth century Western biography. As well as reading the published writings and public statements relating to a subject, the biographer must also become immersed in archival materials, the letters, diaries and unpublished writings which were the 'foundation' of good biography.[56] Such research was vital, Zhu believed, if a new direction was to be given to Chinese biographical writing. Only then could Chinese writers begin to appreciate properly the art of Lytton Strachey. Without the 'solid foundation' provided by detailed research, the emphasis which the 'new' biographers placed on the importance of the selection of materials and the development of narrative were meaningless.

André Maurois was another of the so-called 'new' biographers in the West who Zhu Dongrun showed an interest in.[57] He admired *La Vie de Disraeli*, but was more influenced by the lectures which Maurois had given on the nature of biographical writing at Cambridge University in

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[54] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.4.
[55] "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," p.181.
[56] "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.28.
[57] The two works by André Maurois which Zhu Dongrun showed an interest in were *La Vie de Disraeli* and *Aspects of Biography*.

1928. Zhu compares Maurois' perspective on biography with that of traditional Chinese biographical writing, noting that

> The idea in traditional historical biographies was usually to emphasize events. "The basic annals of Xiang Yu" and "The basic annals of Gaozu" both emphasize the war between Chu and Han, as do "The Biography of Qing Bu" and "The Biography of the Marquis of Huaiyin."[58] Only through this perspective on events is it possible to see the individuals, as the narrative is devoted to the development of events and thus it was sufficient to mention [individuals] only where convenient. Thus, in the work of historians, the focus is on events. In a section of a historical text it is often the case that preconceived ideas lead to the belief that certain major incidents are representative of an official career and the individual's involvement in those events is naturally included in the liezhuan. But what is recorded in the zhuan is limited to the relation of these incidents, all other things being ignored. [59]

Zhu Dongrun does acknowledge that occasionally in traditional biography there is an attempt to convey something of the character of the subject, as with Sima Qian's famous 'Song at Gaixia' in "The basic annals of Xiang Yu," but he believed such instances to be exceptional.[60]

Zhu contrasted this focus on events with the perspective on biography presented by André Maurois, writing that

> The idea in the new biography is that emphasis ought to be given to the individual. It ought to provide a complete account of the individual's character, with everything relating to the development of that character being material for the biographer. If major historical events are to be included, they should be used only to help develop the biographical narrative. All circumstances exist because individuals exist. In

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[58] The biographies which Zhu Dongrun refers to here, "Xiang Yu benji," "Gaozu benji," "Qing Bu liezhuan," and "Huaiyin hou liezhuan," all come from Sima Qian's *Historical Records*. See *Shiji* , juan 7, pp.295-339, juan 8, pp.341-394, juan 91, pp.2597-2608, and juan 92, pp. 2609-2630.

[59] "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.27.

[60] Ibid. For a study of this famous lament from "Xiang Yu benji," see Yoshikawa Kōjirō "Kō U no gaika ka ni tsuite," [Xiang Yu's Song at Gaixia] *Chūgoko bungaku hō* 1 (1954):1-18.

> other words, events should be seen through individuals, individuals should not be seen through events. Very obviously, those events relating to the development of character are not necessarily major historical events. The materials a biographer uses, therefore, are different to the materials a historian uses, and the end results they obtain naturally cannot be the same. In *Aspects of Biography* Maurois states: "The modern biographer, if he is honest, will not allow himself to think: 'Here is a great king, a great statesman, a great writer; round his name a legend has been built; it is on the legend, and on the legend alone, that I wish to dwell.' No. He thinks rather: 'Here is a man. I possess a certain number of documents, a certain amount of evidence about him. I am going to attempt to draw a true portrait. What will this portrait be? I have no idea. I don't want to know before I have actually drawn it. I am prepared to accept whatever a prolonged contemplation of my subject may reveal to me, and to correct it in proportion to such new facts as I discover.'"[61]

Zhu Dongrun did not accept the 'great man' theory of history, nor did he believe that all events were simply the result of individual action. What he was trying to do here was delineate what he felt to be the different spheres of the historian and the biographer. It was important, he argued, for Chinese to see biography as separate from history; both were valuable, yet each was distinct. This had not been the case with traditional biographical writing, which had always been seen as the work of the historian. It was this perception which Zhu wished to change.[62] Like Hu Shi, he wanted to see biography recognised as an independent genre, and he used the ideas presented by André Maurois in his lectures at Cambridge University to this end.

Another aspect of the 'new' biography in the West which Zhu Dongrun believed Chinese writers could learn from was the critical perspective which these works displayed. When the subject of a

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[61] "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.27. For the section quoted from Maurois, see *Aspects of Biography*, p.12.
[62] Luo Yunming "... Zhu Dongrun," p.114.

biography is portrayed as perfect, as was so often the case in Chinese biographical writing, it was difficult for readers, particularly modern readers, to believe that the biography was of a real person. Here again Zhu turned to Lytton Strachey to demonstrate the point he was trying to make. In *Queen Victoria* Strachey tells of how after her husband Albert died Victoria tried "to impress the true nature of his genius and character upon the minds of her subjects." Her efforts failed because

> she did not understand that the picture of an embodied perfection is distasteful to the majority of mankind. The cause of this is not so much an envy of the perfect being as a suspicion that he must be inhuman; and thus it happened that the public, when it saw displayed for its admiration a figure resembling the sugary hero of a moral story-book rather than a fellow of flesh and blood, turned away with a shrug, a smile, and a flippant ejaculation.[63]

Zhu notes that the critical attitude that underlay "this kind of biographical method gave rise to a transformation in English biography during the beginning of this century, and as we are close to this period it is hoped that our writers will pay attention to this point."[64]

A concern for historical accuracy and the development of a critical perspective were both important lessons which Zhu Dongrun believed Chinese readers should draw from recent Western biographical writing.

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63 *Queen Victoria*, pp.231-233.

64 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.29. André Maurois makes a similar point to that of Lytton Strachey, stating that "The biography of standardised panegyric had no educative value, because no one any longer believed in it. A generation trained to respect scientific truth demanded sincerity in a biographer before it would give itself up to enthusiasm. Moreover, the greatness of a character comes home the more closely in proportion as we feel the character to be human and akin to our own." Later Maurois notes how what readers look for in a biography had changed, and that "moral treatises" in the "manner of Plutarch" were no longer much appreciated. Instead, the modern reader is more restless: "Troubled by his instincts, deprived in many instances of the firm faith which might help him to resist them, he longs, in the course of his reading of fiction or of history, to find brothers who share his troubles. He longs to believe that others have known the struggles which he endures, the long and painful meditations in which he himself has indulged. So he is grateful to those more human biographies for showing him that even the hero is a divided being." See *Aspects of Biography*, pp.21 and 31.

Yet in themselves these things did not get to the heart of what was 'new' about this biographical writing. Just as important, but perhaps more difficult to achieve, was the need to bring the subject of the biography to life. To do this the biographer had to move beyond the accurate descripion of the details of a life and try to present something of the personality, character and individuality of the subject. It was in this distinction that the difference between the writing of history and the writing of biography was seen to lay.[65] Zhu recognised this and stressed that Chinese biographers should also strive to develop realistic portraits of the subjects they chose to write about. After emphasising the importance of historical accuracy, Zhu wrote that

> In fact, in order to have a clear understanding of the subject, literary and archival materials are not in themselves sufficient. Sometimes, the smallest thing can be of most interest, and is of most value in helping us understand the character of the subject...
> The essential things for understanding a person are concrete details; his manner, his attitude in those things in which he is practised, his voice, his smile, his most commonly used expressions, these are the things we want in a biography in order to bring the subject back to life. This is the most difficult task for the historical biographer. The person conveyed through an archive is only an abstraction. Beyond his behaviour towards others what is there? If the biographer cannot let us see the flesh and blood human being beyond the veil of archives, actions and discussions, then his work is wasted.[66]

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[65] John Garraty *The Nature of Biography* (London:Jonathan Cape, 1957) p.23.

[66] "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.28. Zhu Dongrun takes most of this passage almost directly from Maurois' *Aspects of Biography*, p.57. Maurois' text reads "...the biographer must not lose sight of the fact that the smallest details are often the most interesting. Everything that can give us an idea of what the man actually looked like, the tone of the voice, the style of his conversation, is essential. The part played by the body in helping to form our ideas of the character of our acquaintances should always be borne in mind. For us a man primarily consists of a certain physical aspect, a certain look, familiar gestures, a voice, a smile, a series of habitual expressions; all these must be made to live again for us in the man who is presented through the medium of a book. It is the historian's most difficult task. The personality transmitted through documents is above all things an abstract personality, hardly known except by his actions towards his fellow-men. If he is not capable of making us see a being of flesh and blood behind the clouds of papers and speeches and actions, he is lost." In

Zhu Dongrun goes on to emphasise how it is important for the biographer to show how the subject's character differs from that of other people, and here he argues again against the use of the standard phrases employed so often in traditional biography. These phrases, he claimed, did nothing more than disguise the individuality of the subject. While they may have been acceptable to official historians intent on perpetuating Confucian moral norms, they were not appropriate for biography in the twentieth century. What was required instead was that the biographer demonstrate what it was that was distinctive about the particular individual who was the subject of the biography. Further to this, he believed it was important to show how an individual's character developed and changed throughout the course of a life.

> We have become accustomed to considering that an individual's character is in youth already fully formed, forgetting that all people are the same, undergoing continuous change from youth until old age. We forget that people do not have a ready-made character, but that their characters are always changing.[67]

This concern with the portrayal of the development of character meant that Zhu Dongrun accepted Maurois' claim that the biographer should concentrate on a chronological account of the subject's life.[68] Only through chronological sequence, he believed, was it possible to portray

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most cases when Zhu Dongrun quotes directly from material he indicates that he is doing so, but here he simply refers to Maurois, despite the fact that much of the passage comes directly from *Aspects of Biography*. Also, despite the fact that Zhu stresses the importance of accurate references to source material, here he usually only indicates the book on which his discussion is based or from which he is quoting. Page references are not provided.

67 "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," pp.28-29.

68 "Perhaps we may feel the need for chronological sequence more keenly than the old biographers because we do not believe, as they did, in the existence of unchangeable characters." *Aspects of Biography*, p.52.

the way an individual grew and changed, and such a portrayal was central if biography was to be "a work of art."[69]

As has been mentioned already, the need for chronological sequence did not encourage Zhu to try to adapt the nianpu form and make it a vehicle for modern biography. He continued to see the nianpu as not representative of true biography, but simply as a collection of materials about a life. The form lacked the narrative coherence which he regarded as critical for modern biography. Instead of using the more common term zhuanji to refer to biography, Zhu chose instead to use the term zhuanxu. The reason he did this was that he felt the character xu more clearly conveyed the sense of narrative sequence than did the character ji. Zhu would later abandon the use of this term as it failed to gain widespread acceptance, but his attempt to introduce it in the early 1940s demonstrated further his belief that modern biography ought to be an account of a life presented in chronological sequence and written in continuous narrative prose.[70]

Zhu Dongrun's conception of the direction in which Chinese biography should move owed much to his understanding of Western biographical writing. While his reading in the Western tradition was more extensive than that of most other Chinese of the time, it was far from comprehensive and was concentrated almost exclusively on those major works which were available in Chinese libraries. For instance, beyond the major works mentioned above, Zhu showed little recognition of the richness and diversity of the writing that had been produced in

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[69] "It is difficult to make biography a work of art if the influence of events and people on the hero's character is not shown progressively and as they appeared to him." *Aspects of Biography*, p.53.

[70] "Zhongguo zhuanxu wenxue," p.19. In this article Zhu refers to another essay which deals in more detail with this point. This was entitled "Guanyu zhuanxu wenxue de jige mingci" [Regarding the terminology of biographical literature], and appeared in the Chongqing journal *Xingqi pinglun* 15 (March 14, 1941). Unfortunately I have not been able to obtain this essay.

English since the great upsurge in biography in the seventeenth century.[71] Nevertheless, the reading he did do was important. It helped to shape his ideas about the nature of biography and convinced him that it was the independent biographical monograph that was needed if there was to be a transformation in Chinese biographical writing.[72]

Many of the concerns Zhu had about the nature of Chinese biography had, of course, been expressed already by others such as Liang Qichao and Hu Shi. Yet Zhu believed that despite their concern to see a radical change in Chinese biography they had not been able to achieve this. For instance, Zhu felt that while some of Liang Qichao's early biographical writing did help break down the formal rigidity of the tradition, they did not really mark the emergence of a new direction. He was even more critical of Liang Qichao's biography of Wang Anshi, *Wang Anshi pingzhuan*, which he claimed was a step backwards. Zhu believed that a pingzhuan, or critical biography, should enable the reader to understand the life of the subject through their writing, but with Liang's biography of Wang Anshi the disjointed arrangement of text only confused the reader and made it difficult to establish the relationship

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71 For discussion of this Western biographical writing see Harold Nicolson *The Development of English Biography* (London:The Hogarth Press, 1929), Paul Murray Kendall *The Art of Biography* (London:George Allen and Unwin, 1965), David Novarr *The Making of Walton's Lives* (Ithaca:Cornell University Press, 1958) and David Novarr *The Lines of Life: Theories of Biography, 1880-1970* (West Lafayette, Indiana:Purdue University Press, 1986).

72 In commenting on Zhu Dongrun's reading of Western biography, Chen Shih-hsiang notes that Zhu did not just slavishly imitate Western models. Rather, his study of Western biography made him "more aware of the different nature of his materials, and the peculiar responsibility of a modern Chinese biographer in treating a historical figure. He seems to feel the materials are rawer, and the responsibility is doubled. He admires the works of Strachey and Maurois, but recognises them as refined, elegant flowers grown upon the heavier trunks and sturdier roots of the bulky 19th century biographies of Gladstone and Disraeli. His idea for modern Chinese biography, where such roots are lacking, is that it should consist of rich, well-organized data, careful, dispassionate documentation in the older European manner, balanced with the pointed perspectives and liveliness of modern biographical art. Wherever necessary, he sacrifices elegance of form in favor of presenting the variety of substance." See "An Innovation," p.55.

between life and works.[73] Zhu viewed all previous efforts to transform Chinese biographical writing as akin to those of Liang Qichao. He believed that a new direction had not been established and it was for this reason the he himself decided to write a biography.

The Biography of Zhang Juzheng

Zhu Dongrun did not begin his first biography, *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, because he had a great desire to relate the life of Zhang Juzheng. His primary motive in undertaking the biography was quite different and he makes this explicit in his preface:

> My intention from the beginning was to provide an example for ordinary people of how Western biography was written, and to introduce [such biography] to China.[74]

This desire to transform the nature of Chinese biographical writing was of paramount importance to Zhu Dongrun, and thus the choice of a subject for the biography came only as a secondary consideration.

Why, then, did Zhu choose to write about Zhang Juzheng and not someone else? The reasons for this were both pragmatic and political. He noted that while ideally it was possible, even desirable, to write the life of an ordinary person, in practice only certain prominent people were really suitable as subjects for biography. It was not just that the subject's life had to be interesting enough to engage readers. With historical figures it was necessary to have a sufficient body of documentary evidence on which to base the biography, and this was usually only available for prominent people from the past.[75] As well as this, the circumstances of the war years,

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[73] "Lun zhuanji wenxue," pp.8-9. Luo Yuming supports Zhu's opinion of earlier efforts to transform biographical writing in "...Zhu Dongrun," p.113.
[74] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.14.
[75] Ibid, pp.4-5.

with the relocation of university life inland to Sichuan, meant that access to source materials was difficult and thus the scope for a biographer was even more restricted. While some historical figures might in themselves be considered potentially interesting subjects, it was often impossible to obtain a sufficient body of material on which to base a detailed biography.[76] Such circumstances meant that it was sometime before Zhu found a subject whose life he considered to be of intrinsic interest and for whom the available documentary record was sufficiently rich to sustain the type of biography he wished to write. Eventually he decided he had found such a subject in Zhang Juzheng. He had access to most of the important sources for a study of the period of Zhang's life, although he did regret not being able to consult the 500 odd volumes of the *Ming shilu* [The veritable records of the Ming dynasty].[77] But the essential core of material on which the biography was based came from Zhang Juzheng's own writing; his letters, memorials, essays and poems, all of which were contained in Zhang's collected works.[78]

As well as these practical considerations of the availability of source materials, the political situation of the time influenced Zhu Dongrun's decision regarding the choice of an appropriate subject for a

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[76] Ibid.

[77] In discussing source materials the main texts Zhu mentions are Zhang Tingyu et. al. *Ming shi* [History of the Ming], Gu Yingtai *Ming shi jishi benmo* [A detailed record of Ming history], Chen He *Ming ji* [A record of the Ming], Wan Sitong and Wang Hongxu et. al. *Ming shi gao* [A draft history of the Ming] and the *Da Ming huidian* [Collected statutes of the Ming]. See *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.7. These are not the only sources Zhu quotes from or refers to throughout the biography, just the main ones he identified in this prefatory discussion of sources.

[78] Zhu used the Guoxue jiben congshu edition; see Zhang Juzheng *Zhang wenzhong gong quanji* [The complete collection of the cultured and loyal duke Zhang] (Shanghai:Commercial Press reprint, 1937), which was the same as the Ming dynasty edition of Zhang's collected works entitled *Taiyue ji* [The collected works of Taiyue]. See also the more recent edition, *Zhang Taiyue ji* [The collected works of Zhang Taiyue] (Shanghai:Shanghai guji, 1984). These editions also include the biographical essay of Zhang Juzheng written by his son, Zhang Jingxiu, entitled "Zhang wenzhong gong xingshi" [The true account of the cultured and loyal duke Zhang]. This essay was an important source for the life of Zhang Juzheng. For Zhu Dongrun's discussion of the ordering and dating of the material included in Zhang's collected works see *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, pp.7-9.

biography. The war against Japan generated a patriotism that permeated all aspects of Chinese life. This patriotism had contributed to the general revival of interest in biographical writing in the early 1940s and, like many others, Zhu wished to use the past to reflect upon the present situation in which the Chinese found themselves. The subject of his biography needed to be of contemporary relevance. This was one of the main reasons he chose to write about the late Ming scholar-official Zhang Juzheng.[79] There were, he argued, many similarities between the late Ming period and the situation China now found itself in. During the mid-fifteenth century the Mongols were threatening China's territorial integrity once more, just as the Japanese were in the 1930s and 1940s.[80] Zhu Dongrun argued that Zhang Juzheng's response to those threats and, in particular, his exemplary patriotism, his 'selfless devotion to the state', could provide an important example for Chinese in the twentieth century.[81] Thus, for both pragmatic and political reasons, Zhu decided to devote his first biography to the life of Zhang Juzheng.

Zhang Juzheng's life had been one of considerable controversy and assessments of him varied markedly. Some claimed he was a politician of rare distinction, while others saw him as a scoundrel, a 'legalist' whose treachery was such that "even dogs and pigs would not eat his remains."[82] In part, it was this sharp polarity in attitudes that encouraged

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[79] "Wo weishenme xie *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*," p.19

[80] Ibid, pp.21-22. For discussion of the Mongol threat see the chapter by James Geiss on the reign of the Jiajing emperor in Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett (eds.) *The Cambridge History of China, volume 7, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644 Part 1* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1988), especially pp.466-479.

[81] "Wo weishenme xie *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, p.22.

[82] The charge of treachery was levelled at Zhang Juzheng for allegedly plotting with the eunuch Feng Bao to have senior grand secretary Gao Gong dismissed in 1572 so that together they might take control of the administration under the new Wanli emperor. For discussion of this, including the claim that even animals would not eat Zhang Juzheng's flesh, see Gu Yingtai *Ming shi jishi benmo* [A detailed record of Ming history] (Shanghai:Commercial Press reprint, 1936) juan 61, p.669. See also Ray Huang's discussion of the attacks made on Zhang Juzheng in *1587, A Year of*

Zhu Dongrun to see in Zhang Juzheng an attractive subject for a biography.[83] But Zhu was certainly not the first writer in the twentieth century to show an interest in this late Ming official. Liang Qichao had earlier identified Zhang as one of China's greatest statesmen and suggested that he was an ideal subject for the new form of biographical writing he was promoting, the zhuanpian or independent biographical monograph.[84] This positive interpretation by Liang encouraged others to study Zhang Juzheng's life, and there were two important biographies of him published in the 1930s. The impetus for these new biographies came from Liang's call for further re-assessment of Zhang Juzheng's career, not from his proposal for the adoption of a new format for biographical writing, and thus it is probable that neither of them would have

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No Significance: The Ming Dyansty in Decline (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1981) pp.35-41. A collection of some of the more noteable assessments of Zhang Juzheng's life and character, such as the critical comments of his contemporary Wang Shizhen, is provided by Yang Duo in an appendix to his *Zhang Jiangling nianpu* [A chronological biography of Zhang Jiangling] (Changsha:Commercial Press, 1938); see " Pinglun ji yao" [An essential collection of appraisals], pp.95-113. For a good historiographical discussion of the contoversial issues surrounding interpretations of Zhang Juzheng's life and career see Su Tongbing "Zhang Juzheng de shifei yu enyuan" [Assessments and opinions of Zhang Juzheng] in his *Renwu yu zhanggu congtan* [A collection of discussions on individuals and anecdotes] (Taibei:Haoshi chubanshe, 1974) pp.95-155. The final chapter in Chen Yilin's *Zhang Juzheng pingzhuan* (pp.181-192) is also devoted to consideration of various assessments of Zhang Juzheng, ranging from those of his contemporaries through to the opinions of early twentieth century scholars. Scholars in the West have also provided various interpretations of Zhang Juzheng's life. For one of the most recent of these, see the chapter by Ray Huang in Mote and Twitchett (eds.) *The Cambridge History of China, volume 7*, pp.518-532.

[83] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.6.

[84] Liang Qichao had first proclaimed Zhang Juzheng to be one of China's six great statesmen in his journal *Xinmin congbao*. Then later, in the lectures he gave on Chinese historical writing in the 1920s, he included Zhang amongst those statesmen for whom he felt new and independent biographies were warranted. See *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa*, pp.241-242. Along with Zhang Juzheng, those Liang considered to have been China's six greatest statesmen included Guanzi, Shang Yang, Zhuge Liang, Li Deyu and Wang Anshi. Modern biographies of these men would eventually be collected together in a single volume published under the title *Zhongguo liu da zhengzhijia* [Six great Chinese statesmen] (Taibei:Zhengzhong Shuju, 1963). The biographies of Wang Anshi and Guanzi were both by Liang Qichao himself, while the biography of Shang Yue was by Mai Menghua, and those of Zhuge Liang and Li Deyu were by Li Yuerui. Yu Shoude's biography of Zhang Juzheng, *Zhang Jiangling zhuan* [A biography of Zhang Jiangling] (Chongqing:Zhengzhong shuju, 1944), was the last one in the series to be completed.

persuaded Zhu that there was not the need for another, radically different, biography. Although Zhu Dongrun makes no mention of either of these books, his views on biography suggest that he would have found both of them unsatisfactory. One of them was a standard nianpu, compiled by Yang Duo from extracts taken from Zhang Juzheng's own writings, as well as other texts relating to his life.[85] The contributions of the 'author' of this chronological biography are basically restricted to the selection of the extracts and the introduction of the texts from which the extracts have been taken.[86] This work would only have confirmed Zhu Dongrun's view that nianpu provided little more than the materials for a biography, that they lacked the narrative coherence to be considered true biography.

The other important biography of Zhang Juzheng published in the 1930s was the pingzhuan, or critical biography, by Chen Yilin.[87] This was a far more innovative work than Yang Duo's nianpu. Chen's text resembles the chronological biography to the extent that it is based around substantial quotations both from Zhang's own writings as well as from other works about his life. Unlike the nianpu, however, Chen's critical biography does not rely solely on these extracts. There is a much greater degree of interpretative narrative, linking the quotations and providing a context for them. Like other critical biographies written at this time, Chen 's pingzhuan owes much to Liang Qichao's earlier critical

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85 Yang Duo *Zhang Jiangling nianpu.*

86 The selection of extracts to be included in the nianpu in itself required an interpretation of the life of the subject, yet Zhu Dongrun believed that the disjointed narrative structure inherent in the form of chronological biography rendered it inappropriate for the modern biographer.

87 Chen Yilin *Zhang Juzheng pingzhuan.* Chen Yilin's biography is one of the best critical biographies written during the early twentieth century and was well received by readers. Yu Shoude admired it so much that, in 1941, when he was commissioned by the Zhengzhong publishing house to write a biography of Zhang Juzheng so as to complete the abovementioned series of biographies of Liang Qichao's 'six great statesmen', he copied Chen's structure and incorporated much of Chen's text directly into his own 'new' biography. In fact, the debt is so great that it is hard to call Yu Shoude's biography a separate work.

biography of Wang Anshi, and because of this it is possible Zhu Dongrun would have had the same criticisms of it as he did of Liang's biography. Zhu disliked the 'disjointed' arrangement of Liang's text, which he felt inhibited an understanding of the development of Wang Anshi's life and thought.[88] Chen Yilin does to some extent avoid the possibility of such criticism by devoting the first half of the biography to a chronological account of the main events in Zhang's life. Only in the second half of the biography does he devote separate chapters to analyzing Zhang's opinions and actions on specific issues such as personnel management, military affairs and the nature of government. This structure allows Chen to develop an interesting and at times enlightening account of Zhang Juzheng's life, but it was not the sort of structure which Zhu Dongrun had in mind when he wrote of the need for a new direction in biographical writing.[89] As Zhu makes no mention of Chen's biography we cannot know what he thought of it, but even if he had read it the likelihood is he would not have been dissuaded from beginning his own life of Zhang Juzheng. Zhu's primary aim was to direct the attention of Chinese readers to new ways of approaching the craft of biographical writing and he believed that no previous biographies, including those of Zhang Juzheng, had done this.

The question of the extent to which Zhu Dongrun may have benefitted from these previous biographies in his understanding of

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[88] For more on this point see Chapter Two.

[89] In discussing Zhang Juzheng's views on the nature of government, Chen makes some interesting comments about how the Daoist 'extremism' of the Jiajing reign (1522-1566) created a political climate that required a greater emphasis upon legalist practice than would otherwise have been the case, and he argues that Zhang Juzheng understood this and acted accordingly. See *Zhang Juzheng pingzhuan*, pp.111-128. Chen Yilin was not the first to raise the issue of 'legalist' policies with regard to Zhang Juzheng, some of Zhang's own contemporaries had done so, but Chen's discussion of the political context of this is interesting. For a more detailed discussion of the issue see Robert Crawford ""Chang Chü-cheng's Confucian Legalism," in Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.) *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York:Columbia University Press, 1970) pp.367-413.

Zhang Juzheng is difficult to determine. In his own biography Zhu refers directly to the primary sources about Zhang's life and he does not engage with the substantial body of interpretative material that had grown up around this controversial figure. At times he quotes from the same passages in Zhang's writing that previous biographers and commentators had used. Yet this does not necessarily imply he took his direction from this previous work. Certain apsects of Zhang Juzheng's writing were of central importance in an account of his life and any biographer would have been drawn to them. What was of primary interest to Zhu Dongrun was how this material was presented, the way the biography was written, and in this he felt he had nothing to learn from previous biographers.

In order to emphasize the innovative nature of his biography, Zhu Dongrun decided to call it a dazhuan, a 'major biography', a term which, he said, some people found puzzling. It was certainly a longer and much more detailed study of Zhang Juzheng's life than any previous work, yet he used the term dazhuan to signify more than just this.[90] The term itself had classical origins. It was used as an alternative title for the "Xi ci zhuan" [Commentary on the attached verbalizations], the third appendix of the *Yijing*, or *Book of Change*. In *Shiji*, Sima Qian had referred to this appendix as the "da zhuan," the "great commentary," and ever since the term had been used primarily in this way.[91] This association with classical texts and canonical exegesis continued down into the twentieth century and that is why some people found Zhu Dongrun's use of it in the title of his biography puzzling. But just as the term zhuan had come

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90 *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.14.

91 Sima Qian *Shiji* 130, p.3288. For discussion and analysis of this 'commentray' see Willard J. Peterson "Making Connections: 'Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations' of the Book of Change," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42, 1 (June 1982):67-116. Peterson (p.68) reads the term zhuan, or commentary, as implying "an argument intended to persuade its readers and transform their way of looking at the world rather than confirm what they already know," This sort of reading may well have appealed to Zhu Dongrun, as he hoped his use of the the term dazhuan would help transform people's perceptions of biography.

to mean not only 'commentary' but also 'biography', so Zhu argued that the term dazhuan could be expanded to mean not only 'great commentary' but also 'major biography'.[92] He abandoned it in his later biographical writing, yet in the early 1940s it seemed to him entirely appropriate to use this 'new' term to describe what he believed to be a radically different form of biography.[93] An innovative biography required a distinctive title.

How innovative was this biography then? It was certainly less so than Zhu Dongrun imagined. As was shown in the last chapter, there were other biographies published during the early 1940s that added momentum to the transition towards the new form of biographical monograph which Zhu wished to see established. Others had listened to Liang Qichao and also wished to continue the move away from the liezhuan of traditional historical writing. Yet few of these other biographies were the result of such a self-consciously directed effort at establishing a new type of biographical writing. Zhu Dongrun had a very clear conception of what a modern biography should be: i.e., a detailed study of both the life and time of the subject written in continuous narrative prose. Perhaps it was because Zhu had such a clear idea of the type of biography he wanted to write that he was able to produce such a distinctive work. And while it may not have been as innovative a work as he himself imagined, the overall coherence of the biography and the

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[92] Chen Shih-hsiang suggests magna vita as a possible translation of dazhuan, but while this conveys the meaning there seems little point in simply transposing a Latin term for the Chinese one. For that reason I have translated the term into English as 'major biography', although I acknowledge that this does not convey the many associations which the Chinese term carries. For Chen Shih-hsiang's discussion of this see "An Innovation," p.54.

[93] The term has not disappeared. It was used in a recent biography of Kang Youwei: see Ma Honglin *Kang Youwei dazhuan* [A major biography of Kang Youwei] (Shenyang:Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1988).

detailed portrayal of the subject which it provides distinguish it from the other biographical writing of the time.

Throughout the fourteen chapters of the biography Zhu develops his account of Zhang Juzheng's life in chronological sequence, from youth through to old age, and along the borders of each page are listed the date, the reign year and Zhang's age at the time of the events which are being narrated in the text.[94] Chronological sequence thus provides the basic structure of the biography, but within that structure Zhu develops a richly detailed narrative which conveys much about the institutional world of late imperial China and the realm of elite politics. This was the world which Zhang Juzheng dominated from 1572 until his death in 1582, the period during which he served the new Wanli emperor as his senior grand secretary and instituted significant policy reforms. The detail which Zhu provides is essential to enable readers to understand the nature of Zhang's reforms and his involvement in the major issues of the day.[95] For instance, in 1573 Zhang Juzheng sought to improve the system of reporting between the provinces and the capital so as to enable central government to ensure that policy directions were implemented as instructed. This was important, Zhang believed, not only to improve the efficiency of the administration, but also to help control corruption and to minimise the cost of government. In order to achieve these things he introduced a policy reform known as the kaochengfa (evaluating

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[94] In addition to the main text of the biography Zhu provides a genealogical table for Zhang Juzheng's family and a list of senior administrative personnel, with the positions they held during the main years of Zhang's life. These are valuable additions to the text as many of the people listed are central characters in the biography and the tables provide a ready reference to remind readers of their position in the administrative hierarchy.

[95] In his preface Zhu notes that because Zhang Juzheng's world was the world of politics it was essential to include detailed analysis of the political situation of the time in the narrative of the biography. And because he could not assume that this world would be familiar he felt he needed to go into some detail in order to provide the necessary context so that readers could appreciate the significance of Zhang Juzheng's life as a politician. See *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, pp.6-7.

achievement regulation). As Zhu Dongrun notes, this was "one of the most important political undertaking's of [Zhang] Juzheng's life."[96] In order that readers might appreciate the significance of the reforms, Zhu begins by quoting in full the relevant memorial which led to the introduction of the reforms.[97] He then goes on to explain the context and consequences of the policy changes associated with these reforms. In this way Zhu provides not only an understanding of the reform proposals themselves, but also of how the machinery of government operated in the late sixteenth century and, most importantly, of Zhang Juzheng's own ideas about the nature of good government and how it might be achieved. Detailed analysis of this sort is interspersed throughout the narrative of the biography and it is the combination of analysis and narrative that makes Zhu Dongrun's account of Zhang's life so much richer than either Yang Duo's nianpu or Chen Yilin's pingzhuan. Liang Qichao had introduced the notion of the 'life and times' biography to a Chinese audience back around the turn of the century, but it was really only with Zhu's biography of Zhang Juzheng that the potential richness of this type of biographical writing was clearly demonstrated.

The biography focuses very much on the public life of Zhang Juzheng, on his involvement in the elite world of power-broking and decision-making, and thus it is primarily a political biography. We learn little, for instance, of Zhang's relationship with either of his wives. The death of his first wife did contribute to his decision to retire temporarily in 1554, yet beyond this Zhu is unable to convey much about Zhang's family life.[98] Zhang Juzheng's own writing reveals little of this private

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[96] For Zhu Dongrun's discussion of the Kaochengfa see *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, pp.168-173. The quotation comes from p.168.

[97] For the memorial which Zhu quotes see *Zhang Taiyue ji*, pp.482-483. A punctuated and annotated version is available in Zhang Shunhui (ed.) *Zhang Juzheng ji* [The collected works of Zhang Juzheng] volume one, memorials, pp.131-134.

[98] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, pp.32-33. Zhang went 'home' in 1550 to bury his first wife, but soon returned to Beijing. He remarried not long after, but the loss of his first

world and thus a biographer can say little about it without indulging in speculation. This was a frustration for Zhu as he knew that it was often through the small and intimate details of a life that most could be revealed about the subject's character, yet it was something he could do little about.[99] But the fact that Zhang Juzheng's own writing concentrates almost exclusively on the public world of politics was in itself an indication of the character of the man, and this is something Zhu brings out very well in his biography. In fact, he makes this a central thesis of the biography, arguing that from very early on in his life Zhang Juzheng saw his role as one of absolute commitment to the affairs of the state.

Zhu shows how early frustrations with the faction-ridden politics of the time tested Zhang's desire to serve the state, but that after his temporary retirement in the 1550s he returned to Beijing with only one intention, to emerge as the dominant figure in the bureaucracy so that he would be in a position to begin reforming the administration and

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wife seems to have been a contributing factor, along with illness and frustration at his inability to gain an influential political position, in his decision to retire in 1554. In discussing this Zhu notes that Wang Shizhen's claim that Zhang sought leave in order to bury his wife is mistaken. Wang confuses Zhang's return to bury his wife in 1550 with his decision to retire in 1554. Throughout his biography Zhu indicates were his own reading of the sources differs from that of others who have written about Zhang Juzheng. In doing this Zhu concentrates on issues where he believes the sources, particularly Zhang's own writings, indicate that other interpreters are mistaken. For other instances of this see *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, pp.69 and 133. Zhu generally ignores the more outrageous and unsubstantiated insinuations about Zhang, such as Wang Shizhen's claim that he died from taking too much aphrodisiac. Wang Shizhen's biography of Zhang Juzheng is contained in his *Jiajing yilai neige shoufu zhuan* [Biographies of senior grand secretaries since the Jiajing reign] (Taibei:Wenhai shuju reprint, 1967) juan7-8.

[99] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.6. In a review article Ogawa Tamaki suggests Zhu might have done more to convey the private world of Zhang Juzheng. He compares Zhu's work with Lin Yutang's later English language biography of the Song dyansty poet Su Dongpo, which provides a more diverse and intimate portrait of its subject. Ogawa suggests that although one is the biography of a politician and the other of a poet, Lin Yutang's portrayal of the 'politician' Wang Anshi in his life of Su Dongpo indicates that Zhu might have made more of the private life of Zhang Juzheng. See Ogawa Tamaki "Shu Tōjun *Riku Yū den*" [Zhu Dongrun's *Biography of Lu You*] *Chūgoku bungaku hō* 13 (October, 1960):114-123. Lin Yutang's biography was published in the West a few years after Zhu Dongrun's appeared in China: see *The Gay Genius: The Life and Times of Su Tungpo* (London:William Heinemann, 1948).

reviving the dynasty. This powerful motivation drove Zhang Juzheng forward and absorbed all his energy. Zhu notes that having made the decision to return from retirement

> [Zhang] Juzheng resolutely abandoned everything. From this time onwards he had no family life, no love life, only the state. He embraced political power and right up until the time he died he did not abandon it for even one day. Yet he embraced political power only in order that he might serve the state. He sacrificed friends, abandoned teachers and even went grovelling to eunuchs, all so that he could keep hold of power. He did all these things because in keeping hold of power he had the opportunity to serve the state.[100]

Politics, Zhu argues, was all of Zhang Juzheng's life. He had no time for a private life beyond the affairs of the state.[101] Because of this any biography of Zhang Juzheng must inevitably concentrate on the public world of power and politics. Thus, the core of Zhu Dongrun's biography is taken up with a detailed anaysis of Zhang's involvement in this political world and the implementation of his reform agenda. But the focus always remains on Zhang Juzheng and the political story is told through the perspective of his memorials, essays, letters and poetry. One of the advantages of this is the way Zhu is able to convey the extent to which politics is dominated by personality conflicts and competition for power. Zhu's account of the conflicts between Yan Song (1480-1565) and Xu Jie (1503-1583), and between Gao Gong (1512-1578) and the eunuch Feng Bao (fl.1530-1582), convey much about the nature of late Ming political life. Not only that, Zhu is able to show the way Zhang Juzheng grew into this political world, slowly finding his feet, and then gradually coming to dominate it. He suggests how events early in Zhang's life, such

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100 *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, p.45.

101 This unbending commitment to the affairs of the state led to considerable controversy when Zhang failed to 'retire' and observe the normal period of mourning following the death of his father in 1577. See *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, pp.263-308.

as his relationship with his great grandfather, may have been the inspiration for this commitment to public life, but his focus is primarily on showing the development of Zhang's character through his involvement in the political world.[102] This portrayal of the development of character is well achieved. [103]

One of the things that attracted Zhu Dongrun to the life of Zhang Juzheng was Zhang's willingness to devote himself to the service of the state, a characteristic which Zhu felt to be of contemporary relevance. He begins the biography by discussing the fall of the Song and the Mongol conquest of China, and then devotes considerable attention to Zhang's involvement in containing the continued Mongol threat to China's territorial integrity.[104] Zhu believed that Zhang Juzheng's commitment to resolving not only the domestic issues of corruption and instability in government, but also these threats that came from beyond China's borders, was a salutory lesson for Chinese facing domestic fragmentation and foreign invasion in the twentieth century.[105] Thus, despite his

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[102] For the possible formative influence of Zhang's great grandfather see *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, p.4. Zhu Dongrun makes no mention of the possible influence of Freudian ideas on his understanding of character development. In discussing the general lack of interest in Freud in early twentieth century China, Leo Ou-fan Lee notes that "Despite its early introduction in China in 1913, the theory of Freud, unlike that of Darwin or Bergson, failed to make profound inroads..." Lee suggests that a possible reason for this may have been that "the external demands of the era - unceasing social and political turmoils - were such that modern Chinese writers turned their obsessions outward: they could ill afford to indulge in introspective psychoanalysis." See "In Search of Modernity: Some Reflections on a new mode of Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Chinese History and Literature," in Paul A. Cohen and Merle Goldman (eds.) *Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin Schwartz* (Cambridge Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1990) p.127.

[103] For appreciation of this aspect of the biography see Ye Shengtao's review in *Wenyi fuxing* 1, 4 (1946):506-508.

[104] See, for instance, *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, pp.1-3, 15-18, 25-31, and 101-116.

[105] In an article published soon after the release of the biography, Zhu wrote that it was Zhang Juzheng's spirit of selfless devotion to the state which "prompted me to write this dazhuan." See "Wo weishenme xie *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*," p.22. While Zhu Dongrun found much to admire in this commitment to the state, Western readers of the biography may find it a less appealing characteristic. For instance, Czeslaw Milosz notes how the perception of Dostoevsky in Russia and the West differs markedly, with Western intellectuals often being troubled that such a perceptive novelist could also hold 'reactionary' political views. Milosz argues that this is

criticisms of traditional biographical writing, Zhu shared with his Confucian forebears the same concern that the subject of a biography ought to be of contemporary relevance, that they ought in some way to be exemplary. Indeed, later in life, Zhu Dongrun would criticize Chen Yinke (1890-1969) for having written a biography of the seventeenth century courtesan-artist Liu Shi, a woman he considered to be entirely inappropriate as a subject for a biography.[106] Such an attitude may seem particularly narrow-minded for someone who argued so strongly the need to transform Chinese biographical writing, yet it indicates that Zhu's concerns lay primarily with the way biography was written. In this Zhu Dongrun was like Liang Qichao. Both were concerned to see Chinese biographical writing develop in new ways, yet both continued to believe that biography ought to focus on people who had led lives of public significance.

Another important feature of this biography is the way Zhu Dongrun intersperses dialogue throughout the narrative. This was important, he believed, in order to make the biography engaging and give it a sense of life. "Dialogue," Zhu wrote, "was the essence of biographical literature," because with dialogue "readers can feel that the

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because "not one of them ... places the interests of the state at the centre of his concerns." By contrast, "the Russians understood Dostoevsky's political worries, for they, just as he himself, thought in terms of statemanship; i.e., they attached importance to the consequences of a given idea for the existence of the state, whether counterrevolutionary or revolutionary. Their Western colleagues were concerned with the individual, not with France, England or America." see "Dostoevsky and Western Intellectuals," in Robert Kostrzewa (ed.) *Between East and West: Writings From* ***Kultura*** (New York:Hill and Wang, 1990) pp.146-147.

[106] One instance of Zhu Dongrun's reference to Confucian values occurs when he discusses Zhang's return from temporary retirement and he notes the Confucian injunction that all educated men should engage in the world and show a patriotic concern for the affairs of the state. For this see *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, p.37. For discussion of Zhu's 'Confucian' attitudes and, in particular, his comments about Chen Yinke's biography of Liu Shi, see Luo Yunming "...Zhu Dongrun," p.112. The biography in question was *Liu Rushi biezhuan* [A separate biography of Liu Rushi] 3 vols. (Shanghai:Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980). N.B. It is common for people in China to read the ke (恪) in Chen's name as que (i.e. Chen Yinque), but the common scholarly rendering of his name is Chen Yinke. I have followed this practice.

subject of the biography is there before their eyes."[107] In this Zhu Dongrun looked back to the origins of biographical writing in China. He believed that modern biographers had much to learn from the artful use that Sima Qian had made of dialogue, especially in his famous biography of Xiang Yu.[108] And it was in the use of dialogue, he argued, that biography shared similarities with literature. Nevertheless, biography was not fiction and dialogue could not just be created by the biographer out of thin air. It had to based on what the historical materials about the subject allowed. In this Zhu was fortunate, as there are many instances of speech recorded in Zhang Juzheng's memorials and letters.[109] Zhu used this material throughout the biography, yet he did not just simply incorporate it into his narrative. He adapted it to create what he believed to be a fair reflection of the vernacular spoken in the court and amongst the elite during late Ming times.[110] Zhu uses this material adeptly and shows very well how historical documents can be brought to life in a modern text. The narrative of the biography itself is written in baihua, the modern vernacular, yet the text is interspersed not only with

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[107] *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, preface, p.11.

[108] Ibid. See also Zhu's later article "Zhuanji wenxue neng cong *Shiji* xuedao xie shenme," pp.65-66. Brief discussion on the use of dialogue in traditional biographical writing can also be found in Chan and Zhang *gudian zhuanji*, pp.61-62.

[109] See, for instance, the instances of daily speech recorded in the memorial entitled "Xie zhao jian shu," in *Zhang Taiyue ji* on pp.464-465. For Zhu's discussion of this and other memorials which record speech, and his remarks on how he used this material, see *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan* preface, p.13. Lin Yutang would later use dialogue in a similar way, basing it on the historical record, in *The Gay Genius: The Life and Times of Su Tungpo*.

[110] For one of many instances of this see Zhu Dongrun's discussion of the famous memorial which Yang Jisheng (1516-1555) submitted protesting the court's decision to trade with the Mongols. In the biography of Yang Jisheng in *Mingshi*, the conversation of senior ministers is preserved in the wenyan, the classical Chinese, of the history text. In other words, in recording the conversation the historians converted it from the vernacular of the time into wenyan. What Zhu does is translate the conversation back into what he believes to be the vernacular of the time. For the source on which Zhu bases this see the biography of Yang Jisheng in *Mingshi*, juan 209, p.5537. For Zhu Dongrun's vernacular version see *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, p.28. Whether or not this dialogue is an accurate reflection of the vernacular spoken in late Ming times I cannot say. Chen Shih-hsiang believes it be so: see "An Innovation," p.61.

dialogue but also with numerous quotations from Zhang's writings and other classical sources. Zhu's skill as biographer is clearly demonstrated in the artful way he integrates all this material to produce a work that is both coherent and engaging. This is where his biography is most successful.[111]

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The biography was well received by readers both in China and the West and it remains the standard account of Zhang Juzheng's life.[112] Later, during the Cultural Revolution, Zhu Dongrun would suffer the same sort of torment as many other scholars and writers, but his biography continued to be widely read. The Cultural Revolution years saw Zhang Juzheng hailed as one of China's great 'legalists', a man whose life should be studied and admired, and numerous articles were published extolling his achievements and class consciousness.[113] In the

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[111] While Zhu Dongrun's biography of Zhang Juzheng was the most self-conscious attempt to reform Chinese biographical writing to appear in the 1940s, there were other biographies that showed the move towards greater attention on narrative coherence and the detailed portrait of a life. For instance, see Li Changzhi *Sima Qian zhi renge yu fengge*, which was first published in 1948. Li went on to write other biographies which were published in the 1950s: see *Tao Yuanming zhuanji* [A biography of Tao Yuanming] (Shanghai: Tongdi chubanshe, 1953) and *Kongzi de gushi* [The story of Confucius] (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1957). Another influential literary biography to appear at this time was Feng Zhi's *Du Fu zhuan* [A biography of Du Fu] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1952).

[112] Reviews of the biography include: Chen Shih-hsiang "An Innovation"; Ye Shengtao "*Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*"; Zhu Chen "*Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*," *Zhongyang zhoukan* 9, 25 (1947):21-24; and Sun ? "Zhang Juzheng dazhuan," *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan guankan (fukan)* 3, 1 (1947):49-50. See also Ray Huang's comments about the biography in *The Cambridge History of China, volume 7, The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 Part 1*, p.804. All of these reviews express admiration for the biography. In particular, the reviewers praise the way that Zhu appears to let the story of Zhang Juzheng's life unfold without obvious authorial intrusion, as is usually the case in a pingzhuan. Reviewers also admire the way Zhang Juzheng emerges from the biography as a real person, something they felt was rarely the case with previous Chinese biographical writing. Tang Xin's later biography, *Zhang Jiangling zhuan* [A biography of Zhang Jiangling] (Taibei:Zhonghua shuju, 1968), has not superseded Zhu Dongrun's.

[113] For one of the many pieces written about the 'legalist' Zhang Juzheng during these years of the Cultural Revolution see Zhongwenxi gudian wenxue jiaoyuzu "Mingdai jianchi fajia luxian de zhengzhijia Zhang Juzheng" [The politician Zhang Juzheng's

more recent years of 'reform' people have been encouraged instead to see Zhang as a great reformer and, partly because of this, he continues to be considered as a historical figure whose life is of contemporary relevance.[114] It would seem that Zhu Dongrun chose wisely in selecting Zhang Juzheng as a subject to advance his new style of biographical writing.

Zhu Dongrun continued throughout the remainder of his long life to build on this foundation which he had established with *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*. As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, he went on to write a number of other biographies, lives of outstanding poets from the past.[115] With these he moved from the writing of historical biography to the writing of literary biography, yet all of them can be seen as elaborations and refinements on the basic model of biographical writing which he had introduced with his life of Zhang Juzheng. They all portray their subjects against the background of the times in which they lived. In the later biographies, the lives of Du Fu and Chen Zilong, there is less reference to and quotation from the sources on which they were based. Instead, this material is integrated into the narrative of the biography itself. But the basic structure of these biographies remains the same as that laid down in *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*. This first biography was therefore an influential work. It was influential not only because it established the pattern for Zhu Dongrun's own later biographical writing, but also because its publication in 1945 marked the end of the transition away from the biographical history of the past. A number of other modern historical biographies were published around the same time as *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan*, but it was

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upholding the legalist road during the Ming period] *Wuhan shiyuan xuebao* 2 (1974):104-117.

[114] See, for instance, Xiao Saoqiu *Zhang Juzheng gaige* [Zhang Juzheng's reforms] (Beijing:Qiushi chubanshe, 1987).

[115] See note 3 for details of these later biographies.

Zhu Dongrun's biography which most clearly demonstrated what the new biographical monograph could be. It also showed how such biography could play an important place in the work of modern historians. Yet within a few years of its publication the political circumstances within China changed in a way which dramatically affected all aspects of Chinese life, including understandings of the nature of biography and its relationship to historical writing.

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Chapter Four

The Role of the Individual in History

Prior to the emergence of Marxism, the heroic conception of history was deeply engraved in the public mind. One of the basic duties for Marxist-Leninist history is therefore to convey the laws of historical development, bringing to light and demonstrating that it is the masses who make history.[1]

The transition away from the biographical history of traditional historiography was a long process, taking up much of the early part of the twentieth century, yet just as it seemed to be over and a new form of biographical writing was emerging as an integral part of the modern historical enterprise the whole relationship between biography and history was again called into question. The Chinese Communist Party (C.C.P.) came to power in 1949 with a radical vision for both the state and society. Everything was to be made anew, including perceptions of the past and the way that past was interpreted. The independent nature of the historical profession was repudiated and historians were required to demonstrate the 'laws' of historical process which had brought the C.C.P.

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[1] Wu Ze and Xie Tianyou "Guanyu lishi renwu pingjia de ruogan lilun wenti" [Some theoretical problems regarding the evaluation of historical figures] in Ge Maochun and Xiang Guangqi (eds.) *Lishi kexue gailun cankao ziliao* [An introduction to reference materials on historical science] (Jinan:Shandong Jiaoyu chubanshe, 1985) vol. 2, p.1225. This article originally appeared in *Xueshu yuekan* 1 (1960).

to power. As inheritors of the Marxist tradition the new regime sought legitimacy from the past through the materialist conception of history and historians were directed to establish that legitimacy in their work. Prior to 1949 Chinese and Soviet Marxists had debated how the Chinese past should be understood. But once the new regime was in power debate was discouraged and the so-called 'five-stage' view of history, which held that all societies evolved through various modes of production, from primitive communism to slavery, feudalism, capitalism and then socialism, was enshrined as the new orthodoxy. Textual authority for such a view came from the famous preface by Karl Marx (1818-1883) to *A Contributuion to the Critique of Political Economy,* which stated that there was a dynamic relationship between the forces and relations of production and that it was this relationship which provided the key to historical change.[2] Such a view of the past appeared to leave little scope for consideration of individual lives. History, it seemed, had nothing to do with biography. Nevertheless, historians and writers did continue to see significance in the lives of individual historical figures. But while some historical biographies were published during the 1950s, the

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2 "In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relationships that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of the relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness... At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression of the same thing - with the property relations within which they had been at work before... With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed..." See Karl Marx *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* translated by N.I. Stone (Chicago:Charles H. Kerr, 1904) pp.12-13. Not all interpreters of Marx accept that he insisted all societies must pass through the five modes of production in a fixed order. Eric Hobsbawm, for instance, argues against such a view, interpreting historical materialism to mean only that "there should be a succession of modes of production, though not necessarily any particular modes, and perhaps not in any particular predetermined order." See Hobsbawm's introduction to Karl Marx *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (London:Lawrence and Wishart, 1964) pp.19-20.

momentum of the preceeding decade was lost. Instead, the focus of attention shifted away from biographical writing itself to more theoretical issues, the question of the role of the individual in history and the very validity of a biographical perspective on the past, as people sought to establish the ground rules for scholarship under the new regime.

Precepts For Practice

Marxist views on the nature of historical change had gained increasing influence in China during the early twentieth century, particularly once the 'social history controversy' erupted in 1927. It was only with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, however, that these views were given the necessary government and institutional support to enable them to emerge as the only acceptable interpretation of the past.[3] This meant that not only the writing of history but also perceptions of the relationship between history and biography had to be refashioned in order to conform with the new regime's interpretation of the materialist conception of the past. Direction here was taken from the Soviet Union and the process of translation of key Soviet works, which had already begun in the 'liberated areas' prior to 1949, was continued and expanded.[4]

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[3] For a detailed assessment of the origins of Marxist historical writing in China, see Arif Dirlik *Revolution and History*. One of the earliest discussions of the materialist view of history was Li Dazhao's "Weiwu shiguan zai xiandai shixue shang de jiazhi" [The value of the materialist conception of history in modern historical studies] *Xin qingnian* 8, 4 (December 1, 1920):515-520, but, as Dirlik argues, it was not until 1927 and the 'social history controversy' that Marxist historians began producing work that was important and influential. For an analysis of Li Dazhao's contribution to the Chinese understanding of Marxist interpretations of the past see Maurice Meisner "Li Ta-chao and the Chinese Communist Treatment of the Materialist Conception of History," in Albert Feuerwerker (ed.) *History in Communist China* (Cambridge Mass.:The M.I.T. Press, 1968) pp.277-305.

[4] Wang Gungwu "Juxtaposing Past and Present in China Today," *China Quarterly* 61 (March, 1975) pp.5-6.

It was expected that this energy put into the translation of key Marxist and Soviet texts would enable Chinese writers and historians to understand the 'scientific laws' underlying the historical process and thus accept Party direction in interpreting the past, just as people were being expected to accept Party direction in all other matters. Non-Marxist, or 'bourgeois', historians who resisted this direction were subjected to the same sort of rectification campaigns that had been well tested during the years of relative isolation in Yan'an and which were to become such a feature of C.C.P. rule. The instructions to such people were: "take down your pants in public, cut your tails and endure the pain."[5] A similar process of enforcing Party direction in matters of historical judgement had been undertaken in the Soviet Union during the late 1920s and early 1930s and the engineered consensus that emerged from that process, particularly as expressed in the work which Stalin (1879-1953) himself was said to have helped edit, the *Short Course*, was used in China to provide guidance on the correct way to interpret historical issues.[6] In themselves, history and historical writing may not have been a high

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[5] Wu Qiang "Zhishifenzi de piping yu ziwo piping wenti" [Problems concerning the criticism and self-criticism of intellectuals] *Xuexi* 2, 9 (July 16, 1950) p.23. Studies of the rectification campaigns during these early years of the P.R.C. include Theodore H. E. Chen *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals* (Hong Kong:Oxford University Press, 1960) and Frederic Teiwes *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms* (White Plains:M.E. Sharpe, 1979).

[6] Chinese historians were encouraged to learn the 'historical methods of the pioneering Russians'. For the official English language translation of the *Short Course*, a work first published in Russian in 1938, see *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course* (Moscow:Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1942). For the Chinese translation see *Sulian gongchandang (Bu) lishi jianyao duben* (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1949). Konstantin F. Shteppa provides a detailed analysis of the process of increased state control over the historical profession in *Russian Historians and the Soviet State* (New Jersey:Rutgers University Press, 1962): in particular, see pp.88ff. Also of interest is George M. Eteen *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat: M.N. Pokrovskii and the Society of Marxist Historians* (University Park:Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978) and Nancy Whittier Heer *Politics and History in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge Mass.:The M.I.T. Press, 1971). For a interesting discussion of how Mao Zedong interpretated these Soviet texts through the perspective of his understanding of the Chinese historical legacy, see Nick Knight "Political Vision: Historical Time and the Future in Mao Zedong's Thought, 1936-1945," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 29, 2 (1991):139-171.

priority for the Chinese Communist Party during these early years of the People's Republic, with attention directed to the more important issues of rebuilding the state, the economy and society after the long years of war and civil conflict. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the new state ignored the work of historians. On the contrary, the materialist conception of history was invoked to interpret the experiences of the past in a way that was believed to establish the legitimacy of the new regime. Historians were thus instructed by the state to engage in teaching, research and writing that would help consolidate that legitimacy.

Guo Moruo, one of the leading figures from the social history debates of the late 1920s and early 1930s, was appointed as the first President of both the Academy of Sciences and the Historical Society of China. Under his guidance the state provided the institutional direction which encouraged historians to concentrate their energies on particular topics that were considered appropriate for the new society and were consistent with its view of the world. Some of these topics had engaged the attention of Marxist historians in the 1930s and 1940s, others were new. These topics, often referred to as the 'five flowers' of historical interpretation, included the question of the formation of the Han nation, the nature of peasant uprisings, the 'feudal' land system, the problem of dividing the Chinese past into periods that were seen as being consistent with the five stages of the materialist conception of history and the problem of the 'sprouts of capitalism'.[7]

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[7] For discussion of these 'five flowers' of historical interpretation see: Deng Guangming et. al. "Shinian lai de Zhongguo shi yanjiu gaishu" [A brief outline of research on Chinese history during the last ten years] *Guangming Ribao* 29 October, 1959; Lu Yau-tung "An Analysis of Chinese Communist Interpretations of History," *Chinese Culture* 6, 1 (October, 1964):47-54; Albert Feuerwerker "China's History in Marxian Dress," *The American Historical Review* 66, 2 (January, 1961):323-353; and Joseph Levenson "The Past Made to Measure: History Under Chairman Mao," *Soviet Survey* 24 (April/June, 1958):32-37. Other issues, such as the question of imperialism, also attracted attention. But much of the writing on imperialism fell within the bounds of the debate over the problem of the sprouts of capitalism, foreign

While the question of the nature of peasant uprisings might lead historians into a consideration of the role of individual peasant leaders, none of these topics involved historians in directly confronting the issue of the relationship between history and biography or the possible role that a biographical perspective might play in historical writing. Indeed, historical materialism, with its emphasis on the inexorable rise of productive forces, seemed to suggest that the role of individual historical figures was inconsequential, that biography was not something the historian should be concerned with. But this was not the case. The question of the role of the individual in history was not ignored. It may not have been considered one of the 'five flowers', but it did attract the attention of historians and teachers from the very first years of the People's Republic.

One of the first to address this issue of the role of the individual in history was Rong Mengyuan (1913-1985).[8] During the Anti-Rightist movement of 1957 Rong was attacked for being a 'reactionary', 'bourgeois' historian, but these attacks focused on his interpretation of

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aggression being seen as the reason why those sprouts did not develop into full-blown capitalism. Direction on this issue, as on others, came from statements attributed to Mao Zedong. In "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," a work said to have been written jointly by Mao and 'several others comrades in Yenan in the winter of 1939', it stated: "As China's feudal society had developed a commodity economy, and so carried within itself the seeds of capitalism, China would of herself have developed slowly into a capitalist society even without the impact of foreign capitalism. Penetration by foreign capitalism accelerated this process. Foreign capitalism played an important part in the disintegration of China's social economy ..." See *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing:Foreign Languages Press, 1965) vol. 2, p.309. This statement, added to the post-1949 version of this text, provided the stimulus for a huge number of articles and discussions on this issue. In fact, an extensive body of writing soon grew up for each of the 'five flowers' of historical interpretation. For some indication of the extent of this for just one of the issues, see Foon Ming Liew "Debates on the Birth of Capitalism in China During the Past three Decades," *Ming Studies* 26 (Fall, 1988):61-76.

[8] Not long before he died Rong brought out a collection of his articles under the title *Lishi biji* [Jottings on history] (Beijing:Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1983). Most of the articles included in this collection were written during the early 1950s.

issues in modern history, not his views on the individual in history.[9] In fact, in his discussions of this question of the role of the individual Rong had introduced most of the standard Marxist and Soviet interpretations to a Chinese audience. He did this first when he gave a lecture on the topic at a study conference for secondary school history teachers held during the summer of 1950. The conference was one of many held during the early years of the People's Republic and its purpose was to provide guidelines for the teaching of history under the new regime. To ensure that these new guidelines were well understood some of the more important lectures from the conference, including Rong Mengyuan's, were published and circulated around schools throughout the country. Later Rong developed in greater detail the ideas which he had introduced in the lecture and published a separate book specifically devoted to the question of the role of the individual in history.[10]

Rong began his lecture by noting that this question of the role of the individual was one aspect of the study of the laws of historical development.[11] He then proceeded to give a brief outline of how he believed Chinese society had progressed through the various modes of

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[9] Some of these attacks on Rong, including Cai Meibiao "Rong Mengyuan de fandong de lishixue 'jianshe' de pouxi' [An analysis of the reactionary historical 'construction' of the Rong Mengyuan], Fan Baichun et. al. "Pipan Rong Mengyuan zai duidai shiliao shang de elie zuofeng' [A critique of the abominable behaviour of Rong Mengyuan in handling historical materials] and Shang Mingxuan "Jiechuan Rong Mengyuan chaoxi piaoqie de choue mianmu' [Expose the ugly features of the Rong Mengyuan's plagarism], are included in *Fandui zichan jieji shehui kexue fubi* [Oppose the restoration of bourgeois social science] (Beijing:Kexue chubanshe, 1958). See pp.151-157, 158-184 and 185-195 respectively. The article by Rong which was the primary focus of attack, "Jianshe bianxuan xinhai geming yilai de lishi ziliao' [Establish the selection and editing of historical materials (for the period) since the 1911 Revolution], is also included in this volume; see pp.264-268.

[10] For the lecture, see Rong Mengyuan "Geren zai lishi shang de zuoyong" [The role of the individual in history] in *Lishi jiaoxue jiangzuo* [Lectures on the teaching of history] (Beijing:Dazhong shudian, 1950) pp.14-29. For his book, see *Lishi renwu de pingjia wenti* [Problems in the appraisal of historical figures] (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1954).

[11] Rong Mengyuan "Geren zai lishi shang," p.14. He discusses the same issues in slightly more detail in *Lishi renwu*, pp.3-8.

production and eventually arrived at the point where the old feudal and bourgeois ruling classes had been overthrown and the proletariat had assumed power in a new society. He then claimed that this demonstrated that "history progresses in accordance with the laws of social development, and cannot wilfully be created or changed by any individual or group of individuals."[12] Understanding of this only developed, he states, after the May Fourth movement and the introduction of the scientific methodology of Marxism. Rong then quotes Mao Zedong's comments that the motive force in Chinese historical development came from peasant uprisings and peasant wars, a view which, he says, shows, in a scientific way, that "in studying the reasons for change in Chinese history, [people] ought to look at the course of material production and the nature of class relations, not at particular individuals."[13]

Both the lecture and the book begin in this way, with Rong presenting an outline of the materialist conception of history.[14] But Marx did not develop an explicit theory regarding the role of the individual in history, nor did he explain the relationship between individual activity and his conception of historical change, thus Rong had to turn to other

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[12] Ibid, p.16. Rong Mengyuan draws much of his argument here from Stalin's essay of September 1938 on "Dialectical and Historical Materialism," where he argues that it is not population growth or geography that provide "the chief force of development of society, the force which determines the character of the social system, the physiognomy of society." Rather it is, Stalin writes, "the method of procuring the means of life necessary for human existence, the mode of production of material values - food, clothing, footwear, houses, fuel, instruments of production, etc. - which are indispensable for the life and development of society." See *Problems of Leninism* (Moscow:Foreign Languages Press, 1945) p.583. Rong quotes this last passage in *Lishi renwu*, p.4.

[13] Ibid, p.17. The passage Rong Mengyuan quotes here comes from "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," where it states that "The class struggles of the peasants, the peasant uprisings and peasant wars constituted the real motive force of historical development in Chinese feudal society." See *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol.2, p.308.

[14] Rong Mengyuan ends this section of his book with a long quotation from Marx's preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. See *Lishi renwu*, p.7.

writers for direction on this matter.[15] Historical materialism seems to present a rather deterministic view of social development, with history so governed by immutable laws that individual human beings are little more than actors playing out roles in the pre-ordained drama. But this was not the way Li Dazhao (1889-1927) had interpreted historical materialism. He had argued that social development was the result of collective human effort, not simply a consequence of natural material change. For Li, Marxism showed that people could, and should, change the world in which they lived, and he disagreed with those who saw a contradiction between the economic basis of historical materialism and his more voluntarist interpretation of it.[16] This would be a tension running through most Chinese discussions of the motive force for historical change. All proclaimed that the primary agent for change was the rise of productive forces, but emphasis was usually given to collective action, to the interests of the people, to the view that it was the masses that made history.[17]

Rong Mengyuan develops this same view, arguing that it is the broad mass of people in a society and not just one or two individuals

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[15] One of Marx's only statements on this comes from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, where he wrote that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under cicumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past." See L.S. Feuer (ed.) *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy - Karl Marx and Frederich Engels* (Garden City:Doubleday, 1959) p.320. For a general discussion of Marxist and Soviet interpretations on this issue see Leo Yaresh "The Role of the Individual in History," in C.E. Black (ed.) *Rewriting Russian History: Soviet Interpretations of Russia's Past* (New York:Frederick A. Praeger, 1956) pp.78-106.

[16] Li Dazhao "Weiwu shiguan," pp.515-520. In his discussion of Li's interpretation of historical materialism Maurice Meisner writes "It would be impossible to explain the appeals of the materialist conception of history, or the role that it has played in Chinese Communist ideology, if it is seen as no more than a method to analyze historical reality upon the basis of objective economic criteria and without reference to its utopian goals." See "Li Ta-chao and the Chinese Communist Treatment of the Materialist Conception of History," p.281.

[17] For some discussion of this tension with regard to the study of peasant uprisings, see James P. Harrison *The Communists and Chinese Peasant rebellions; A Study in the Rewriting of Chinese History* (New York:Atheneum, 1969) pp.121-122.

who provide the real historical direction for that society.[18] Liang Qichao had, of course, made similar claims much earlier in the century, but Rong focused the attention of his readers on the Marxist articulation of this viewpoint, not that of Liang Qichao.[19] In this instance, Rong drew his textual support from Stalin's essay "Dialectical and Historical Materialism," quoting the following passages:

> ...the history of social development is at the same time the history of the producers of material values themselves, the history of the labouring masses, who are all the chief force in the process of production and who carry on the production of material values necessary for the existence of society.
> Hence, if historical science is to be a real science, it can no longer reduce the history of social development to the actions of kings and generals, to the actions of 'conquerors' and 'subjugators' of states, but must above all devote itself to the history of the producers of material values, the history of the labouring masses, the history of peoples.[20]

But while this emphasis on the masses as the makers of history might provide authoritative support for the study of peasant activity, and peasant rebellion in particular, it did not really address the issue of the role of the individual in history.[21] For this, Rong Mengyuan had to turn elsewhere.

The most important Marxist work on the role of the individual in history was by the Russian theorist G.V. Plekhanov (1856-1918). Plekhanov developed Marx's exposition of historical materialism in such

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18 See *Lishi renwu*, pp.17-25.

19 For discussion of Liang Qichao's call for a new history, a history more representative of the broad mass of people, see Chapter Two.

20 *Problems of Leninism*, p.586. For Rong Mengyuan's use of these passages, see *Lishi renwu*, pp.18-19 and p.26.

21 Despite this, discussions of the individual in history usually devoted considerable attention to explaining that it was the 'masses who made history'. Chen Xulu, for instance, ends his short book on this subject with a chapter entitled "The masses are the true makers of history." See *Lun lishi renwu pingjia wenti* [Problems in the appraisal of historical figures] (Shanghai:Xinshizhi chubanshe, 1955) pp.45-50.

a way that allowed individual action to be seen as being influential over the course of events. All was not pre-determined, he argued, this being a view he described as narrow and fatalistic. He contrasted this 'fatalistic' view with what he called the 'idealistic', 'heroic', view which placed emphasis on individuals and individuals alone. Both interpretations, he argued, were mistaken. Instead, he saw the role of the individual as being potentially significant, but only within the limits set by the productive relations of a society.[22] Developing this point, he states, at various places throughout his essay, the following:

> It follows, then, that individuals can influence the fate of society by virtue of definite traits of their nature. Their influence is sometimes very considerable but the possibility of its being exercised and its extent are determined by society's organisation and the alignment of its forces. An individual's character is a 'factor' in social development only where, when, and to the extent that social relations permit it to be...
> It has long been noted that great talents appear always and everywhere, whenever and wherever there exist social conditions favourable for their development. That means that any talent that actually manifests itself, i.e., any talent that becomes a social force, is a product of social relations. But if that is so, one can understand why people of talent can, as we have said, alter only the individual features of events, not their overall trend; they themselves exist only thanks to that trend; but for the latter, they would have never crossed the threshold between the potential and the actual...
> Thus the personal qualities of leaders determine the individual features of historical events, and the element of chance in the sense that we have indicated always has some part to play in the course of events, whose direction is ultimately determined by what are termed overall causes, i.e., in fact, by the development of the productive

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[22] Georgi Plekhanov "On the Question of the Individual's Role in History," in his *Selected Philosophical Works* (Moscow:Progress Publishers, 1976) vol. 2, pp.283-315. Chinese translations of this include the official Soviet translation, Puliehannuofu *Lun geren zai lishi shang de zuoyong* (Sulian:Waiguo wenshuji chubanshe, 1950), as well as Puliehannuofu *Lungeren zai lishishang de zuoyong wenti* (Beijing:Sanlian, 1961).

> forces and the consequent mutual relations between men in the socio-economic process of production. [23]

At different stages during his lecture and in his book Rong Mengyuan quotes these and other passages directly from Plekhanov's essay.[24] Like Plekhanov, he argues that while human action could not change the laws governing the nature of social development, individuals were able to act in ways that could hasten or retard the course of that development. Rong adds nothing new to Plekhanov's interpretation of the role of the individual in history, and it seems that his aim was simply to introduce these ideas to a Chinese audience.

To emphasize the authority of this interpretation of the role of the individual Rong also refers his audience to the official Soviet interpretation of Plekhanov's essay. Although he had been the founder of Marxism in Russia, Plekhanov's philosophical ideas became the focus of criticism in the Soviet Union. Yet, despite this, his ideas about the role of the individual were accepted and were incorporated into the key texts of the Stalin era.[25] These texts were extremely influential in directing Chinese thought during the early years of the People's Republic and Rong Mengyuan quotes extensively from them, more so than from either Plekhanov or Marx. For instance, several times he quotes extracts from the following passage in the *Short Course*, a passage which would recur often in various Chinese discussions of this issue. It was this

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[23] Plekhanov "On the Question of the Individual's Role in History," pp.304, 310 and 311.

[24] Rong "Geren zai lishi shang," pp.18-21 and *Lishi renwu*, pp.9-16 and 26-27

[25] Yaresh "The Role of the Individual in History," p.83. Plekhanov's ideas also were subject to criticism in China. In 1970, during the Cultural Revolution, Chen Boda attacked Plekhanov and created the 'Plekhanov incident', which led to a prohibition on his writings. For the introduction of Plekhanov's ideas on literature to a Chinese audience earlier in the twentieth century see Paul G. Pickowicz *Marxist Literary Thought in China: The Influence of Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1981) pp.140-142. And for one example of the revival of Chinese interest in Plekhanov's thought during the early 1980s, see Chen Zhongxiong "Shilun Puliehannuofu' [An essay on Plekhanov] *Henan Shida xuebao* 4 (1980):21-29.

passage that really set the agenda for Chinese interpretations of the role of the individual in history during the early 1950s:

> Plekhanov expounded and substantiated the view of Marxist materialism. In conformity with Marxist materialism, he showed that in the long run the development of society is determined not by the wishes and ideas of outstanding individuals, but by the development of the material conditions of existence of society, by the changes in the mode of production of the material wealth required for the existence of society, by the changes in the mutual relations of classes in the production of material wealth, by the struggle of classes for place and position in the production and distribution of material wealth. It was not ideas that determined the social and economic status of men, but the social and economic status of men that determined their ideas. Outstanding individuals may become nonentities if their ideas and wishes run counter to the economic development of society, to the needs of the foremost class; and vice versa, outstanding people may really become outstanding individuals if their ideas and wishes correctly express the needs of the economic development of society, the needs of the foremost class...
> Heroes, outstanding individuals, may play an important part in the life of society only in so far as they are capable of correctly understanding the conditions of development of society and the ways of changing them for the better. Heroes, outstanding individuals, may become ridiculous and useless failures if they do not correctly understand the conditions of development of society and go counter to the historical needs of society in the conceited belief that they are the 'makers' of history.[26]

Stalin also addressed this question of the role of the individual in history in an interview he gave to the German writer and biographer Emil Ludwig, a man whose views on biography had influenced non-Marxist historians and biographers in China prior to 1949.[27] In this

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[26] *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course*, p.14. Rong quotes this passage in "Geren zai lishi shang," pp.20-21 and *Lishi renwu*, pp.30-31 and 63.

[27] See Chapter Two for discussion of the influence of Ludwig on Chinese perceptions of the nature of biography.

interview, held on December 13, 1931, Ludwig put the following question to Stalin:

> Marxism denies that personalities play an important role in history. Do you not see any contradiction between the materialistic conception of history and the fact that you, after all, admit the important role played by historical personalities?

Stalin's response to the question was widely published and was proclaimed as the definitive statement on the issue. It reads:

> No, there is no contradiction. Marxism does not deny that prominent personalities play an important role, nor the fact that history is made by people. In *The Poverty of Philosophy* and in other works of Marx you will find it stated that it is people who make history. But of course, people do not make history according to their own fancy or the promptings of their imagination. Every new generation encounters definite conditions already existing, ready-made, when the generation is born. And if great men are worth anything at all, it is only to the extent that they correctly understand these conditions and know how to alter them. If they fail to understand these conditions and try to change them according to their own fancies, they will put themselves in a quixotic position. So you will see that precisely according to Marx, people must not be contrasted with conditions. It is people who make history, but they make it only to the extent that they correctly understand the conditions they found ready-made, and to the extent that they know how to change these conditions. That, at least, is the way we Russian Bolsheviks understand Marx. And we have been studying Marx for a good many years.[28]

What Stalin seems to be saying here, as was Plekhanov before him, is nothing more than that the influence of individuals is conditioned by the times in which they live. This was neither startlingly new, nor particularly Marxist, yet it did allow followers of the Marxist tradition to escape the apparent straitjacket of historical materialism and find a place

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[28] Joseph Stalin *An Interview With the German Author Emil Ludwig* (Moscow:The Foreign Languages Publishing House,1932) pp.4-5. Rong Mengyuan quotes this passage in *Lishi renwu*, p.15

for individual action.[29] And because it was the way 'we Russian Bolsheviks' understood Marx, it was therefore also the way that Chinese in the early 1950s should understand Marx.[30] Plekhanov and Stalin were the 'authoritative' voices which Rong Mengyuan turned to in order to offer direction on this issue of the role of the individual in history. In this he was not unique; all other Chinese writers who addressed this issue in the period after 1949 took direction from these same voices.[31]

Rong Mengyuan was not alone in believing that there was much to do to rectify the "falseness and misinterpretation of old

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[29] For a critique of the problems and contradictions associated with Marxist and Soviet perceptions of the role of the individual in history see Sidney Hook *The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility* (London:Secker and Warburg, 1945) pp.58-74. Although *War and Peace* had been available in Chinese translation since 1931 it was perhaps not surprising that Chinese Marxists chose to ignore the distinctive interpretation of the role of the individual in history which Tolstoy had developed in the latter sections of his novel, even though this shared some similarities with the Marxist position. For a sympathetic interpretation of Tolstoy's view on this issue see Isaiah Berlin *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (London:Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), and for a more critical interpretation see F.F. Seely "Tolstoy's philosophy of history," in Malcolm Jones (ed.) *New Essays on Tolstoy* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1978) pp.175-193. For the translation of Tolstoy into Chinese see Mau-sang Ng *The Russian Hero in Modern Chinese Fiction*, pp.21, 49-51 and 60-61.

[30] A survey of the historical profession during the first ten years of the People's Republic acknowledges this direction taken from the Soviet Union. The beginning of the article reads: "In historical science, as in all other matters, the last ten years has seen great and magnificent achievements, with continuous and rapid advances. These magnificent achievements are due to the correct leadership of the Party and under that leadership the entire historical profession has studied the history of social development and the history of modern revolution, as well as Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. In particular, the publication of Mao Zedong's selected works has had an extremely profound and great influence on the development of historical science. We also must thank the Soviet Union, because due to the experience of the Soviet Union's advanced historical workers we have been able to follow a broad path," See Liu Yaoting et. al. "Cong sixiang zhanxian douzheng kan shinianlai lishikexue de fazhan" [The development of historical science over the last ten years as seen from the perspective of ideological struggle] *Shixue yuekan* 10 (1959) p.5. By the time this article was published, however, the influence of the Soviet Union was no longer as great as it had been in the early 1950s when Rong Mengyuan had written on the role of the individual in history.

[31] The 'authority' of these interpretations survived the later conflict with the Soviet Union. See, for instance, Shi Suyuan *Lishi renwu pingjia lungao* [An essay on the evaluation of historical figures] (Zhengzhou:Henan renmin chubanshe, 1986), a detailed study of over 200 pages which is still based on the interpretations contained in the writing of Marx, Engels, Stalin and Plekhanov.

historical books," and that "these distortions need to be exposed so that we can understand the true nature of individuals in history."[32] Many others shared this concern. But just how complex and difficult a task this would be was revealed soon after the release in December 1950 of a film devoted to the life of the nineteenth century beggar-turned-educationalist Wu Xun.[33] Initially the film had been well received and many thought that the life story of this man who had devoted himself to raising money to build schools for the poor was one that was appropriate for the new China of the People's Republic. But the film soon became a pawn in the efforts by the Party to ensure the compliance of the intellectual and artistic community. It was attacked for implying that beneficial change could come through reform and education, not revolution and class struggle. From his position in the Propoganda Department, Zhou Yang (1908-1989) directed this campaign, which dominated the Chinese media throughout much of 1951, and prominent people who had previously endorsed the film were forced to make public self-criticisms.[34] It was obvious to historians and writers interested in the problem of how to assess individual historical figures that translating the theoretical guidelines gleaned from Marxist and Soviet writings into actual studies of particular figures was not going to be an easy task.

The film had portrayed Wu Xun as a beggar and someone who devoted his life to serving the poor, attributes which seemed to be consistent with the new morality of Marxism, yet these very attributes were being attacked. In historical circles the campaign was seen as being of considerable significance and individual historians were quick to note

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32 "Geren zai lishi shang," p.21.

33 For discussion of Zhang Mosheng's earlier biography of Wu Xun, see Chapter Two.

34 Guo Moruo and Fan Wenlan were two of the more influential intellectuals who were forced to submit self-criticisms during this campaign. For discussion of the campaign see Merle Goldamn *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, pp.90-93.

what they should learn from it.[35] Rong Mengyuan, for instance, wrote that the articles produced in this campaign "provided a model on how to use the position, perspective and methodology of Marxism-Leninism to assess historical figures."[36] Another contributor to the debate on how to assess historical figures, Chen Xulu, endorsed this view, claiming that the case of Wu Xun demonstrated how historians should use class analysis to assess historical figures. Chen argued that like Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty, Wu Xun was a traitor to his class. Both had been beggars, but after leading a rebellion against the Mongol Yuan dynasty Zhu Yuanzhang became a despotic emperor, while Wu Xun was transformed into someone who put on "Manchu robes" and acted against the interest of the labouring massess.[37] Such behaviour was critical, Chen argued, in the assessment of any historical figure and this was the great value of the campaign against the film of Wu Xun's life, it revealed the fundamental importance of class analysis.

A slightly different perspective came from Ji Wenfu (1895-1963). He, of course, agreed that Wu Xun should be seen as a "feudal lackey," someone who "because he acted on behalf of his feudal masters in cheating people, from early on had left the ranks of the people and betrayed them."[38] According to Ji, however, what this showed was that it

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[35] See, for instance, the survey published in 1959 of the previous ten years of historical writing, which devotes considerable attention to discussing the important lessons which historians had learned from this campaign. The most important lesson, the writers of this survey claim, is that historians must never depart from the fundamental leadership given by the Party. This, of course, was exactly what the campaign was intended to achieve; the compliance of intellectuals and the acceptance of Party direction in all matters. See Liu Yaoting et. al. "Cong sixiang zhanxian douzheng kan shinianlai lishi kexue de fazhan," pp.7-11.

[36] *Lishi renwu*, p.61.

[37] Chen Xulu *Lun lishi renwu pingjia wenti*, pp.8-9 and 21-22. I have not been able to find out when Chen was born.

[38] Ji Wenfu *Guanyu lishi pingjia wenti* [Regarding questions of historical evaluation] (Beijing:Sanlian chubanshe reprint, 1979). This book was first published in 1956, but Ji began writing about the question of evaluating historical figures from the early 1950s. He gave a lecture on the subject to the Henan branch of the New History Society in 1951 and this lecture, entitled "Lishi renwu de pingjia wenti" [Problems in

was not possible to rely simply on class analysis when seeking to determine the role which a particular individual had played in history. Just as someone like Wu Xun could act in a way that 'betrayed' his own class, so members of the old ruling class should not just be dismissed out of hand. Amongst them there were those who had acted in ways that were of benefit to the population at large.[39] Class was important, Ji argued, but what was fundamental was whether or not a particular person had acted in a way that was of benefit to the masses.[40]

Another who warned against overemphasis on the class affiliation of historical figures was Jian Bozan (1898-1968). Jian had been contributing to a Marxist re-evaluation of the Chinese tradition for some years and in an article published in 1952 he welcomed the attempts that had been made over the previous year or so to reinterpret the lives of various historical figures. Yet he was also concerned about the way some people went about this, stating that

> In the evaluation of historical figures there is often a tendancy to ignore the specific historical context and to place excessive demands on the historical figures, even to the extent of expecting those historical figures to meet today's standards.[41]

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the evaluation of historical figures], was subsequently published in *Xinshixue tongxun* 1, 2 (1951). The ideas presented in that lecture are developed in his later book from which the quotation used here is taken. For a brief biography of Ji Wenfu see Ji Daozhi "Ji Wenfu" in Chen Qingchuan et. al. (eds.) *Zhongguo shixuejia pingzhuan* [Critical biographies of Chinese historians] (Henan:Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985) vol.3, pp.1503-1518.

39 Ibid, pp.4-5.

40 Ibid, p.7. Guo Moruo claimed to take the same perspective in a book of essays on historical figures which he had published in 1950. In the preface to this book he states that the standard he used to assess the figures who were the subjects of the essays was that of the people, renmin benwei, although it is difficult to determine from the essays just exactly what this term is supposed to mean. See Guo Moruo *Lishi renwu* [Historical figures] (Shanghai:Haiyan shudian, 1950).

41 Jian Bozan "Guanyu lishi renwu pinglun zhong de ruogan wenti" [Several questions regardingthe assessment of historical figures] in Ge Maochun and Xiang Guangqi (eds.) *Lishi kexue gailun cankao ziliao* [An introduction to reference materials on historical science] (Jinan:Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1985) p.1196. This article first appeared in *Xin jianshe* 48 (August, 1952). Although written after the

This expectation that historical figures should somehow live up to the standards of the present was for Jian Bozan not only unrealistic but also inconsistent with the requirements of historical materialsim. Explaining this, he wrote that it was important for historians to stand with the working class but this did not require that they use standards entirely inappropriate for the times in which the particular historical figures had lived:

> From the perspective of historical materialism, it is obvious that we are not required to use today's standards to assess historical figures; rather [we should] rigorously relate the person to the historical period and the historical events of their time and engage in concrete anaylsis. It is in the very nature of history that a particular period can only produce certain historical figures. If this is ignored or considered to be inadequate then it will not be possible to assess historical figures correctly.[42]

There was much more to evaluating historical figures, Jian argued, than just reversing the judgements of the past and simply condemning people for being members of the ruling class.

Jian would later come under attack for continuing to stress the importance of trying to understand individuals and events from the past in terms of the times in which they lived and the period in which they occurred, a perspective referred to as historicism (lishi zhuyi). These attacks became increasingly prevalent as the emphasis on class viewpoint (jieji guandian) became more strident during the 1960s.[43] But it would be

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campaign against Sun Yu's film version of Wu Xun's life, Jian does not comment directly on the campaign in this article.

[42] Ibid, p.1197.

[43] For discussion of the debate over these two perspectives during the early 1960s see Arif Dirlik "The Problem of Class Viewpoint versus Historicism in Chinese Historiography," *Modern China* 3, 4 (October, 1977):465-488. Assessment of Jian's involvement in this debate, and of his historical writing in more general, can be found in Wu An-chia "The CCP's Criticism of Chien Po-tsan," *Issues and Studies* 15, 9 (September, 1979):75-92, and Clifford Edmunds "The Politics of Historiography: Jian Bozan's Historicism," in Merle Goldman, C.L. Hamrin and Timothy Cheek

wrong to see those who during the early and mid fifties contributed to the attempts to articulate guidelines for assessing the role of the individual in history as being sharply divided over the issue of class viewpoint and historicism. The distinction between these two perspective would not be argued strongly until after the Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957 and the views put forward by Jian Bozan in 1952 were shared by most writers on this issue.

For instance, although Chen Xulu argued that the principal lesson to come out of the debates over the film about Wu Xun was the importance of class analysis, he also argued that it was essential to assess individual historical figures according to the particular circumstances that prevailed during the period in which they had lived. He noted that

> If we require of historical figures that they comply with the standards of social production and political culture that have been reached today, not only will we not find such people but we also will be defying the objective laws of historical development, equating the society of those historical figures with our own new society, and this would not be in accord with historical materialism.[44]

Chen obviously did not see any contradiction between these two positions, and neither did the other writers on the issue who endorsed this perspective.[45]

Similarly, all argued that one of the most important criteria for assessing historical figures was whether or not their actions could be considered as having facilitated social development and been of benefit to the broad mass of the people of the time. Individuals who acted in ways that facilitated social development and were beneficial to the masses were to be evaluated positively, while those who did not were to be evaluated

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(eds.) *China's Intellectuals and the State: The Search for a New Relationship* (Cambridge Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1987) pp.65-106.

[44] Chen Xulu *Lun lishi renwu pingjia wenti*, p.8.

[45] For similar arguments, see Rong Mengyuan "Geren zai lishi shang," pp.24-25 and *Lishi renwu*, pp.41-48, as well as Ji Wenfu *Guanyu lishi pingjia wenti*, pp.23-29.

negatively. Rong Mengyuan summarized this point in the following way:

> In evaluating historical figures we ought to use the standard of whether or not their thought and actions promoted or inhibited social development, faciltated or disrupted social production, and were beneficial or harmful to working people, not the abstract standard of whether or not they were 'good' or 'bad'.[46]

Such simplistic precepts were endorsed by all who wrote on this issue.[47] The problem with these guidelines, however, was that they were so vague that they offered little real help to those historians engaged in the difficult task of trying to reconcile the demands of historical materialism with the inherited legacy of the Chinese past. Apparent consensus amongst those who wrote on the issue of the re-assessment of historical figures and the role of the individual in history did not disguise the difficulty of the issues involved. When so much emphasis was placed on the notion that it was the masses who made history, how was it possible to approach the life of an individual historical figure? How should the historian decide whether or not a particular historical figure had contributed to the overall development of society? These were not easy questions to answer.

The Case of Yue Fei

While the Wu Xun campaign had shown how difficult interpreting the new guidelines about historical figures could be, historians encountered the same sorts of problems in attempting to re-assess historical figures who were not the subject of such focused, state-

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[46] Rong Mengyuan "Geren zai lishi shang," p.22. The same point is made in more detail by Rong in *Lishi renwu*, pp.32-40.

[47] Chen Xulu *Lun lishi renwu pingjia wenti*, pp.10-13, and Ji Wenfu *Guanyu lishi pingjia wenti*, pp.3-4.

directed attention. One example of this, an example referred to often by those engaged in trying to articulate the new guidelines for the evaluation of historical figures, was the attempt to reconsider the life of the southern Song general and great symbol of patriotism Yue Fei (1103-1141). For hundreds of years Yue Fei had been portrayed as a great "national hero" (minzu yingxiong), a man who was "utterly faithful in his commitment to the country" (jinzhong baoguo), devoting his life to the fight against those who had invaded the north China plain.[48] Like the 'God of War', Guan Yu (162-219), Yue Fei came to be perceived as one of China's great military heroes, the archetypal patriot. The symbolic significance of this had, of course, seemed all the more important to historians and writers in the 1930s and 1940s who saw themselves as facing a similar threat and thus sought to draw on these patriotic sentiments associated with Yue Fei in their own battle to defend China.[49]

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[48] Deng Guangming *Yue Fei zhuan* [A biography of Yue Fei] (Beijing:Xinhua shuju, revised edition, 1983) pp.391-409. In this biography Deng also discusses the problems associated with the sources for Yue Fei's life (see pp.432-451), as does Harold Edward Kaplan in "Yüeh Fei and the Founding of the Southern Sung," (PhD. Dissertation:University of Iowa, 1970) pp.1-4 and 525-606. Other discussions of interpretations of Yue Fei's life and the myths that have built up around it include Hellmut Wilhelm "From Myth to Myth: The Case of Yüeh Fei's Biography," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (eds.) *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1962) pp.146-161, Liu Zijian (James T.C.) "Yue fei - Cong shixue he sixiang shi lai kan" [Yue Fei - as seen from historiography and intellectual history] *Zhongguo xueren* 2 (August, 1970):43-58, James T.C. Liu "Yüeh Fei (1103-41) and China's Heritage of Loyalty," *Journal of Asian Studies* 31, 2 (1972):291-297 and Jochen Degkwitz *Yue Fei und sein Mythos* (Bochum:Studienverlag Brockmeyer, 1983).

[49] For instance, in an article published in 1947 Lin Yizi claimed there were four great 'sages' in traditional China, Confucius, Mencius, Guan Yu and Yue Fei. See "Yue Fei lunlüe" [A brief note on Yue Fei] *Renwu zazhi* 2, 12 (November, 1947):30-31. Other articles on Yue Fei from this time include Jin Yufu "Yue Fei zhi si yu Qin Gui" [Qin Gui and the death of Yue Fei] *Wenshi zazhi* 1, 6 (June, 1941):11-14, and Jin Yufu "Yue Fei zhangong kaoshi [A study of Yue Fei's military achievements] *Zhilin* (Guoli Dongbei Daxue) 6 (1944):1161-1182. See also Peng Guodong *Yue Fei pingzhuan* [A critical biography of Yue Fei] (Chongqing:Commercial Press, 1945). Both Yuan Shikai and Chiang Kaishek compared themselves with Yue Fei. For discussion of Yuan Shikai's interest in Yue Fei see R.F. Johnston "The Cult of Military Heroes in China," *New China Review* 3 (April, 1921):79-91, while for that of Chiang Kaishek see John Israel *Student Nationalism in China, 1927-1937* (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1966) p.61. And for a brief but interesting

But could this image of a loyal and patriotic Yue Fei survive in the new enviroment of the People's Republic?

Even before 1949 there had been suggestions that this might not be the case, that the popular image of Yue Fei might need to be revised in light of the new world-view of the C.C.P. In his famous interpretation of Marxist philosophy, *Dazhong zhexue* [The philosophy of the masses], Ai Siqi (1910-1966) had questioned the exclusive concentration on the 'patriotic' Yue Fei, suggesting that there were other aspects to the man's life which needed to be addressed.[50] Between 1131 and 1134 Yue Fei had been involved in consolidating Song control over south and central China, combating groups of people referred to previously in the historical record as liukou (roving bandits) or tufei (local bandits).[51] For the C.C.P., however, these were not bandits but peasant farmers, people forced to rebel due to the exactions visited upon them by the 'feudal landlord class'. Ai Siqi argued that attention needed to be focused on the part Yue Fei had played in suppressing these peasant rebellions during the early years of the southern Song.[52] He felt that Yue Fei should be seen not only as a 'national hero', but also as a 'slave of his

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comparison of the southern Song period with the China of the 1930s see James T.C. Liu "Accomodation Politics: Sung China and 1930's China, " *Sung Studies Newsletter* 4 (October, 1971):3-6. The extensive bibliography compiled recently by Li Fan gives an indication of the considerable amount of interest that Yue Fei's life has attracted: see *Yue Fei yanjiu* [Studies on Yue Fei] (Hangzhou:Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1988) pp.424-459.

[50] Ai Siqi *Dazhong zhexue* [The philosophy of the masses] (Beijing:Xinhua shudian reprint, 1950) pp.123-133. For discussion of this book, first published in 1936 and reprinted many times thereafter, see Joshua A. Fogel *Ai Ssu-ch'i's Contribution to the Development of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1987) and Laszlo Ladany *The Communist Party of China and Marxism, 1921-1985: A Self-Portrait* (London:C. Hurst and Company, 1988) pp.100-101.

[51] For discussion of Yue Fei's involvement in these campaigns, especially that against the forces led by Yang Yao, see Kaplan "Yüeh Fei and the Founding of the Southern Sung," pp.163-224 and 238-286.

[52] Ai Siqi *Dazhong zhexue*, pp.124-125. Throughout the book Ai Siqi uses popular stories and anecdotes to demonstrate aspects of Marxist philosophy. His discussion of Yue Fei serves to introduce 'The Law of the Unity of Opposites', and Ai argues that it was part of the tragedy of Yue Fei that he acted both on behalf of 'the masses' and on behalf of his 'fedual masters'.

feudal lords', a contradictory character whose life was more tragic than heroic.

Such arguments became more frequent during the first few years of the People's Republic, with attempts to reverse the popular perception of Yue Fei.[53] In response others defended the popular perception, arguing that the commitment to a Marxist historiography did not undermine the traditional image of Yue Fei as a patriotic martyr. For Jian Bozan, Yue Fei's commitment to fighting for the re-unification of China was in itself of such significance that it overrode all other considerations, and thus he argued that he should still be considered a national hero.[54] Others who contributed to the attempts to provide guidelines for the evaluation of historical figures tended to support this view, arguing that the battle to regain control of north China was one which had the support of the peasantry and was in their long-term interest. It was, they argued, a battle that was in accord with the nature of social development and therefore of primary importance.[55] Yet despite these attempts to justify Yue Fei's actions, it was obvious to all that the issue of class affiliation was very problematic. Not only did it throw into doubt long-held perceptions of the past, it also served to undermine the confidence of those historians and writers who were interested in studying the lives of historical figures such as Yue Fei.

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53 For a review of the various arguments see Ning Ke "Guanyu Yue Fei pingjia de jige wenti" [Regarding some problems in the evaluation of Yue Fei] *Wenshizhi* 5 (1957):40-46. See also Chen Tianqi "Yue Fei de minzu yingxiong bense" [The true nature national hero Yue Fei] *Lishi jiaoxue* 2, 3 (1951):20-22, and Lai Jiadu and Li Guangbi "Yue Fei de beifa he beifang zhongyijun" [Yue Fei's northern expedition and the northern loyalist army] *Lishi jiaoxue* 3 (1954):30-35.

54 Jian Bozan "Guanyu lishi renwu pinglun zhong de ruogan wenti," p.1199.

55 Rong Mengyuan "Geren zai lishi shang," p.20 and *Lishi renwu*, pp.27-28; and Chen Xulu *Lun lishi renwu pingjia wenti*, p.10. See also Chen Tianqi "Yue fei de minzu yingxiong bense," pp.20-22.

Further evidence of the difficulty of applying the new guidelines for assessment of historical figures came in 1955 with the publication of Deng Guangming's (b.1907) biography of Yue Fei, *Yue Fei zhuan* [A biography of Yue Fei], one of the few historical biographies to appear during the early years of the People's Republic.[56] An earlier version of this book had been published in 1945 as part of the important series of historical biographies of 'outstanding people in Chinese history' released by the Shengli publishing company during the 1940s.[57] Deng claims that his main reason for revising the biography was because when he wrote the earlier version he only half understood "Marxism, dialectical materialism and historical materialism" and he wished to make amends for this.[58] It is probable that he was also stimulated to revise the biography by the debate that had going on during the early 1950s over how to assess Yue Fei's life in terms of the new guidelines for the evaluation of historical figures. But while these may have been the underlying reasons for the revision of the biography, the end result merely served to confirm the difficulty of trying to relate the new guidelines to the actual craft of writing about historical figures, particularly in the detail required of such a historical biography. Even in its revised form this biography of Yue Fei owed much more to the changes that had been going on within biographical and historical writing prior to 1949 than it did to any of the new decrees about how to evaluate historical figures.

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56 Deng Guangming *Yue Fei zhuan* [A biography of Yue Fei] (Beijing:Sanlian shudian, 1955).

57 Deng Guangming *Yue Fei* (Chongqing:Shengli chubanshe, 1945). A third and substantially revised version of the biography was published in 1983. To avoid confusion I will include the date when referring to each of three different versions of the biography. For more on the Shengli publishing venture see the end of Chapter Two.

58 For Deng Guangming's views on why he revised the 1945 text of the biography see *Yue Fei zhuan* (1983), pp.1-2.

As a student at Beijing University Deng Guangming had been introduced by Hu Shi to the work of Western biographers like André Maurois and Lytton Strachey.[59] He had also learned the skills of detailed research and analysis which had been taught at the university during the late 1920s and 1930s. Deng became a specialist in the history, philosophy and literature of the Song period, but was attracted to biography because he believed that through the perspective of an individual life difficult material could be presented in a way that readers found both engaging and interesting. He believed that biography helped make the past accessible to more than just a scholarly audience and for this reason wrote biographies of a number of different Song dynasty figures.[60] The dilemma Deng faced after 1949, however, was how to make these ideas about the nature of historical and biographical writing compatible with the new orthodoxy. It was a dilemma faced by many of Deng's generation and was far from easy to resolve.

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[59] This information comes from an interview conducted with Deng Guangming and his daughter Deng Xiaonan in Deng's home at Beijing University on September 27, 1989.

[60] These biographies include Deng Gongsan (Guangming) *Chen Longquan zhuan* [A biography of Chen Longquan (Liang)] (Chongqing:Duli chubanshe, 1944); Deng Guangming *Xin Jiaxuan xiansheng nianpu* [A chronological biography of Mr. Xin Jiaxuan] (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1947/reprinted in Shanghai by Guji wenxue chubanshe in 1957), and Deng Guangming *Xin Qiji (Jiaxuan) zhuan* [A biography of Xin Qiji (Jiaxuan)] (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1956); Deng Guangming *Wang Anshi* (Beijing:Sanlian shudian, 1953), and a revised edition of this also entitled *Wang Anshi* (Beijing:Sanlian shudian, 1975). Deng came under attack for this biographical writing, especially the studies of the southern Song 'patriotic' poet Xin Jiaxuan, during the Cultural Revolution. For an example of these attacks see Chen Ming "Zhe shi yizhong shenmeyang de lishi guandian he fangfa? - ping Deng Guangming tongzhi zai Xin Qiji jiqi ci de yanjiu zhong de ruogan wenti," [What kind of historical perspective and methodology is this? - criticism of some problems in comrade Deng Guangming's study of Xin Qiji and his poetry] *Guangming Ribao* February 13, 1966. A more apprecitive response to Deng Guanming's work can be found in Chen Yinque *Jinming guan zonggao erbian* [The second volume of collected drafts from Jinming studio] (Shanghai:Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980) pp.245-246; Chen Jiao "Du *Yue Fei zhuan*" [Reading *A biography of Yue Fei*] *Dushu yuebao* 7 (1956):10-11; and more recently with the Party theoretician Li Honglin's "Babainian qian qiyuan - du *Yue Fei zhuan*" [An extraordinary injustice of eight hundred years ago - reading *A biography of Yue Fei*] in *Lilun fengyun* [Theoretical storms] (Beijing:Sanlian shudian, 1985) pp.427-438.

A superficial look at Deng Guangming's revised 1955 version of the biography of Yue Fei might suggest that he had made the transition to a Marxist historiography. But the differences between this and the earlier 1945 version of the biography are only superficial, the substance of work remained the same. In fact, Deng did little to alter the earlier text and the changes he did make were confined primarily to the terms used. For instance, the 'rebels' (zeiren or zeizhong) of the 1945 version become an 'insurrectionary army' (qiyi jun) in the later version, yet the discussion in which these terms are used remains almost exactly the same.[61] The most significant attempt to accomodate the requirements of the new orthodoxy does not come in the biography itself but in a new section attached to the end of the main part of the text.[62] Here Deng deals with the questions about Yue Fei's involvement in the suppression of 'insurrectionary peasant armies' (nongmin qiyi jun). He rejects a simplistic analysis along class lines, noting that there were conflicts and contradictions within the ruling class of the time, especially between the 'peace faction' and the 'war faction', between those who wished to continue the war against the Jurchen and those who advocated compromise. Deng acknowledges that Yue Fei put loyalty to the dynasty ahead of loyalty to the people when leading troops against the 'insurrectionary armies', but he argues that this was to the long-term benefit of all. Most important of all, Deng believed, was Yue Fei's commitment to the cause of national defense, a commitment which, in the final analysis, overrides all other considerations.[63] The traditional view of Yue Fei is thus reinforced. The new precepts for practice, the

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61 For examples of the use of the terms zeiren and zeizhong see *Yue Fei* (1945) pp.132 and 144, and for their transformation into qiyi jun see *Yue Fei zhuan* (1955) pp.126 and 138.

62 For this section see *Yue Fei zhuan* (1955) pp.257-272 and 286-287.

63 Ibid, pp.261-262.

guidelines for the assessment of historical figures, play little part in Deng Guangming's new biography. The debate over Yue Fei did prompt him to add this new final section to the text, yet he didn't believe it to be of sufficient force to merit a complete rewriting of the main part of the biography itself. The substance of the work remained the same.

Futhermore, many of the changes that Deng did make to his biography of Yue Fei were attributable more to what he had learned from the other historical biographies published in the 1940s than to the requirements of Marxist historiography. For instance, the 1955 version contains more quotation from and reference to source material than does its predecessor.[64] The quotations themselves are generally rendered into a more colloquial language, as was the case in Zhu Dongrun's biography of Zhang Juzheng, and more detail is provided to add substance to the text.

The book remained a detailed study of Yue Fei's life as seen through the major political and military events of the time. This concentration on Yue Fei's public life was consistent with one of the precepts for practice outlined by Rong Mengyuan in his lecture on the role of the individual in history.[65] But this focus was not something new to the evaluations of historical figures that came after 1949; it was also a feature of the historical biographies of the previous decade. Like those earlier works, Deng Guangming's revised study of Yue Fei was very much a 'life and times' biography, intended to provide a detailed portrait of its subject based on thorough historical research. The influence of the

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[64] In the 1945 version of the biography no direct reference is made to sources through the use of footnotes, which was the case with all the biographies in the Shengli series. The 1955 version does use footnotes, yet only for the unsual references. The main souces, from which most quotations are taken and around which the substance of the biography is built, are not referred to in each instance. They are simply discussed in the postscript. See *Yue Fei zhuan* (1955) pp.273-288.

[65] Rong Mengyuan "Geren zai lishi shang," p.25.

debates about how to evaluate historical figures is minimal, with only superficial changes made in order to accomadate some of the new criteria. In substance, the biography remains much more a product of the earlier changes that had occurred in both historical and biographical writing. The implication of this, whether intentional or not, was that the new guidelines for assessing the role of the individual in history were difficult to relate in any meaningful way to the actual task of writing the life of a historical figure.[66]

Reversing Verdicts

The difficulties associated with implementing the theoretical guidelines about the role of the individual in history meant that many historians and writers simply avoided writing about historical figures. This was remarked on a few years later in an article submitted to the theoretical journal *Shixue yuekan* [Historiography monthly], in which the author noted that

> Since historical figures have considerable significance in the teaching of history, why is it that individual historians have no interest in historical figures and in compiling teaching outlines and materials they avoid

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66 Interest in Yue Fei has not declined. With the revival of scholarship after the Cultural Revolution years interest in Yue Fei also revived. Deng Guangming produced a third version of his biography [*Yue Fei zhuan* (1983)], and other new biographies appeared, such as Gong Yangming *Yue Fei* (Hangzhou:Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1980) and Wang Cengyu *Yue Fei xinzhuan* [A new biography of Yue Fei] (Shanghai:Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983). In addition to this, the main sources for the study of Yue Fei's life, two detailed biographies by his grandson, have been released in a new punctuated edition: see Yue Ke and Wang Cengyu *Eguo jintuo cuibian xubian jiaozhu* [An annotated edition of *Eguo jintuo cuibian* and *Eguo jintuo xubian*] (Beijing:Zhongguo shuju reprint, 1989). Outside of the mainland biographies and studies of Yue Fei have continued to appear. See, for instance, the frequently reprinted chronological biography by the former Guomindang general Li Hanhun *Yue Wumu nianpu* [A chronological biography of Yue Wumu] (Taibei:Commercial Press reprint, (1948) 1973), as well as Li Tang *Yue Fei xinzhuan* [A new biography of Yue Fei] (Hong Kong:Shanghai shuju chubanshe, 1961) and any of the many studies by Li An, such as *Yue Fei shiji kao* [A study of historical materials about Yue Fei] (Taibei:Zhengzhong shuju, 1969).

> historical figures? The reason is very simple, and is primarily due to a fear of making the mistake of employing the heroic viewpoint. Yes, we need to oppose the heroic view of history. We need to oppose the idealistic standpoint of the bourgeoisie; but it must be pointed out that opposing the heroic viewpoint is very different from saying that it is not possible to produce interesting lessons about historical figures. The heroic view of history and producing interesting lessons about historical figures are not one and the same thing. The mistake of bourgeois idealistic scholars is not that they produce interesting narrative accounts of historical figures, but rather that they overemphasize the effect of such figures on history.[67]

The same journal, however, also contained other articles warning of the potential problems confronting those who chose to concentrate on the individual in history.[68] Hu Shi, one of the key figures in the reform of Chinese historical and biographical writing, had been the focus of sustained attack throughout the 1950s, criticised for being an advocate of the bourgeoisie and a bourgeois view of the past.[69] And in the wake of the Anti-Rightist Movement historians were constantly directed towards the need to "emphasize the present and de-emphasize

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[67] Liu Yaoting "Zai lishi jiaoxue zhong ruhe duidai lishi renwu wenti" [How to handle the question of historical figures in the teaching of history] *Shixue yuekan* 7 (1959) p.13. To give authority to this view the author referred readers to Mao Zedong's statement that the Chinese tradition contained a rich record of "great thinkers, scientists, inventors, statesmen, soldiers, men of letters and artists." For this see, Mao Zedong "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," p.306. Similar concerns to those expressed by Liu Yaoting, regarding the fact that many people avoided writing about historical figures, can be found in Jian Bozan "Muqian lishi jiaoxue zhong de jige wenti" [Several problems in current history teaching] in *Jian Bozan lishi lunwen xuanji* [A selection of Jian Bozan's historical articles] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1980) pp.36-37. This article was originally published in *Hongqi* 10 (1959).

[68] See, for instance, Zhao Xiding "Gaogui lishi jiaoxue zhong de zichan jieji gerenzhuyi" [The mischief of bourgeois individualism in the teaching of history] *Shixue yuekan* 7 (1958):3-6 and Wang Xingya "Suqing lishi yanjiu he jiaoxue zhong fandong de yingxiong shiguan" [Eliminate from the study and teaching of history the reactionary heroic viewpoint] *Shixue yuekan* 10 (1958):7-10.

[69] These attacks on Hu Shi are contained in the eight volume collection *Hu Shi sixiang pipan* [Criticism of Hu Shi's thought] (Beijing:Sanlian shudian, 1955). See also Charlmers A. Johnson *Communist Policies Towards the Intellectual Class* (Hong Kong:The Union Research Institute, 1959) pp.88-90 and Chan Lien "Chinese Communism Versus Pragmatism: The Criticism of Hu Shih's Philosophy, 1950-1958," *Journal of Asian Studies* 27, 3 (May, 1968):551-570.

the past" (houjin bogu), as well as the need to eradicate all traces of "bourgeois individualism" (zichanjieji gerenzhuyi) from their work.[70] The demands that historians focus their attention on class struggle, the issue that would be made to dominate all others in the 1960s, became increasingly more strident in the latter part of the 1950s. In such circumstances writing about historical figures became even more problematic and it is understandable that many writers and historians chose to avoid an area fraught with so many potential difficulties.[71]

The heightening of factional conflict within the senior Party elite had only served to compound these difficulties. Attacks on Stalin and the 'cult of personality' at the twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in early 1956 had spilled over into other parts of the communist world, prompting Chinese leaders to raise the issue at their own Eighth National Congress held in September of the same year.[72] In his speech on the revision of the constitution of the C.C.P., Deng Xiaoping (b.1903) had raised this very issue:

> While recognizing that history is made by the people, Marxism never denies the role that outstanding

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[70] See the special edition of the journal *Historical Research* which was devoted to proclaiming the need for emphasis on the present: Fan Wenlan et. al. "Yanjiu lishi yingdang houjin bogu" [The study of history ought to emphasize the present and de-emphasize the past] *Lishi yanjiu* 5 (1958):1-14. See also Zhou Yang "Wenyi zhanxian shang de yichang da bianlun" [A Great Debate on the Literary and Art Front] *Wenyi bao* 5 (1958):2-14. Again, authority for such an emphasis could be found in the writing of Mao Zedong. In his poem "Snow," written in 1936, the second stanza reads "This land so rich in beauty/Has made countless heroes bow in homage./But alas! Chin Shih-huang and Han Wu-ti/Were lacking in literary grace,/And Tang Tai-tsung and Sung Tai-tsu/Had little poetry in their souls;/And Genghis Khan,/Proud Son of Heaven for a day,/Knew only shooting eagles, bow outstretched./All are past and gone!/For truly great men/Look to this age alone." See Mao Tsetung *Poems* (Beijing:Foreign Languages Press, 1976) pp.23-24.

[71] Liu Yaoting et. al. "Cong sixiang zhanxian douzheng kan shinianlai lishikexue de fazhan," p.5.

[72] For discussion of the 20th Party Congress in the Soviet Union see Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr M. Nekrich *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union From 1917 to the Present*, translated from the Russian by Phyllis B. Carlos (New York:Summit Books, 1986) pp.529-533. See also Robert C. Tucker "The Rise of Stalin's Personality Cult," *The American Historical Review* 84, 2 (April, 1979):347-366.

> individuals play in history; Marxism only points out that the individual role is, in the final analysis, dependent upon the given social conditions...
> Unlike the leaders of the exploiting classes in the past, the leaders of the working-class party stand not above the masses, but in their midst, not above the Party, but within it. Precisely because of this, they must set an example in maintaining close contact with the masses, in obeying the Party organizations and observing Party discipline. Love for the leader is essentially an expression of love for the interests of the Party, the class and the people, and not the deification of an individual. An important achievement of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union lies in the fact that it showed us what serious consequences can follow from the deification of the individual.[73]

This was the Congress at which Deng Xiaoping and others attempted to put a curb on Mao Zedong's (1893-1976) increasing power; in particular, by excluding him from the Secretariat and thus from influence over day-to-day policy decisions.[74] The experience of the 'cult of the individual' in the Soviet Union was invoked to provide justification for this action. Later, Mao would respond to this by seeking to "salvage a starring role for the charismatic leader."[75] Increasingly, debate about the role of particular historical figures became less concerned with assessment of the historical figures themselves and more a reflection of these factional conflicts amongst the senior Party elite.

One of the ways in which this was done was through the use of campaigns which were initiated to 'reverse the verdict' on a certain historical figure. The term 'verdict reversal' (fan'an) would later be used

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[73] Deng Xiaoping "Report on the Revision of the Constitution of the Communist Party of China," in *Eighth National Congress of the Comminist Party of China (Documents)* (Beijing:Foreign Languages Press, 1981) pp.210-211.

[74] On this point see Laszlo Ladany *The Comminist Party of China and Marxism*, pp.214-219.

[75] Lowell Dittmer *China's Continuous Revolution: The Post-Liberation Epoch 1949-1981* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1989) p.33. For Mao's attempt to distinguish 'correct' and 'incorrect' cults of the individual see "Talks at Chengdu: On the Problem of Stalin," in Stuart Schram (ed.) *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters: 1956-71* (Harmondsworth:Penguin, 1974) pp.99-100.

to refer to the attempt to rehabilitate those who had been the subject of harassment and persecution during campaigns such as the Anti-Rightist Movement, but it was also used more generally to refer to the attempt to re-assess historical figures in a way that was seen to be consistent with the materialist conception of history.[76] Earlier in the 1950s there had been resistance to this practice. Those involved in the debate over how to evaluate historical figures argued against simply seeing the heroes of the past as today's villains and the villains of the past as today's heroes. They argued that such an approach was simple-minded and ignored the complex issues involved in any form of historical analysis, particularly in the difficult issue of evaluating the role of any one individual.[77] But as the political consensus of the early years of the People's Republic collapsed debate over historical issues increasingly became a reflection of the intensifying factional conflict within the senior Party elite.[78] Complex and detailed historical analysis was of little value in such conflicts. Instead, campaigns directed at reversing the verdict on a particular historical figure became the focus of attention. The debate that followed

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[76] On the use of fan'an to rehablitate those who had been the subject of attack during the Anti-Rightist Movement see Frederic Teiwes *Politics and Purges*, pp.481-488. For the use of fan'an in re-assessing historical figures see Huang Chang "Fan'an wenzhang" [Verdict reversal essays] *Dushu* 6 (1991):21-28.

[77] Jian Bozan "Guanyu lishi renwu pinglun zhong de ruogan wenti," pp.1196-1197; Chen Xulu *Lun lishi renwu pingjia wenti*, pp.6-7 and Ji Wenfu *Guanyu lishi pingjia wenti*, p.2.

[78] This point is argued with regard to historical plays by Rudolf G. Wagner in *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama: Four Studies* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1990). In the preface Wagner writes that "The top leaders frequently initiated the debates, which, even though they were organized by the Propoganda Department of the Party, offered rich material for the indirect treatment of contemporary problems, and all sides made use of this opportunity" (see p.xii). The first play which Wagner 'interprets' is Tian Han's *Guan Hanqing*, first performed in 1958 and which Wagner argues was "the first PRC literary work to deal with the battles in the centre and uphold that 'at present', that is, in the present tense of the play, the villains hold the levers of power" (p.24). Another German sinologist has subjected philosophical debates held within the Party during the 1930s to a similarly 'strong' reading: see Werner Meissner *Philosophy and Politics in China: The Controversy over Dialectical Materialism in the 1930s*, translated by Richard Mann (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1990).

in such a campaign might involve a range of historians and writers, yet it was usually initiated by senior leaders for a particular reason. The most significant instance of this came in the early part of 1959 with the attempt to reverse the verdict on Cao Cao, one of the great romantic figures from the Chinese past, a figure prominent not only in historical writing but also in literature and theatre.

Stories about Cao Cao and his contemporaries were enormously popular and had been so for centuries.[79] The Three Kingdoms period was one of the great romantic ages from the Chinese past and it had provided rich fare for story-tellers and dramatists. Cao Cao was portrayed as the archetypal villain in these stories, plays and novels, the man audiences loved to hate. Perhaps it was for this reason that Mao Zedong was attracted to Cao Cao and associated himself with this 'hero' from the past. And in late 1958 it was Mao who indicated that the time was appropriate to reverse the verdict on Cao Cao.[80] Despite the transition to a 'new' China in 1949 popular perceptions of Cao Cao remained as they had been in the past, and plays portraying him as the white-faced villain of the piece continued to reprinted and performed.[81] Mao wished to see an end to this, hoping that people would come to see Cao Cao as a great national hero. Guo Moruo and Jian Bozan soon

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79 Paul William Kroll discusses this enormous body of historical, literary and theatrical material in *Portraits of Ts'ao Ts'ao: Literary Studies of the Man and the Myth.*

80 See the record of the speech Mao gave at the Zhengzhou Conference in November of 1958, contained in Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek and Eugene Wu (eds.) *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Foward* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1989) pp.476-477. And on Mao's admiration for Cao Cao see Laszlo Ladany *The Communist Party of China and Marxism, 1921-1985: A Self Portrait*, p.63.

81 One of the most popular of these plays in which Cao Cao features as the main baimian, or white-faced villain, and which continued to be popular in the early years of the P.R.C., was *Zhuo fang Cao* [The capture and release of Cao Cao]. The scripts of this and other operas dealing with Cao Cao were reprinted in Pan Xiafeng and Fan Tiezheng (eds.) *Jingju: Sanguo xi* [Beijing Opera: Three Kingdom plays] (Beijing:Wenda shuju, 1954) volume 1, pp.1-24. See also Wang Dacao (ed.) *Xi kao* [A study of plays] (Taibei:Rongshi reprint, 1980) vol.1, pp.37-58.

responded to this call and by early 1959 the campaign to reverse the verdict on Cao Cao was well under way.

There were hundreds of contributions to this campaign, essays and articles which appeared in newspapers and journals throughout the country, but the basic parameters of the debate were established very early on in articles published in the national newspaper *Guangming Ribao*.[82] Guo Moruo began the debate by suggesting that Cao Cao was indeed a national hero; not only was he a great politician and military leader but he also was a great poet.[83] He claimed that the popular perception of Cao Cao as a ruthless villain had no basis in fact, that it was a distortion of a "feudal consciousness" inappropriate to the new China.[84] It was necessary, he believed, to reverse this verdict on Cao Cao and show that there was much of relevance in the man's life. In particular, Guo argued that because Cao Cao had lived during a period of turmoil and anarchy his efforts to stabilize society and revive production on the north China plain through the development of 'agricultural garrisons' or 'state farms' (tuntian) had been of fundamental benefit to the population at large and

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[82] A list of some of the major contributions to the debate is given in Guo Moruo et. al. *Cao Cao lunji* [Collected articles on Cao Cao] (Beijing:Sanlian shudian, 1960) pp.434-440. Most of the important contributions to the debate are reprinted in this volume.

[83] See Guo Moruo "Tan Cai Wenji de 'Hujia shiba pai'" [On Cai Wenji's 'Song of the barbarian reed-whistle in eighteen stanzas'] in *Cao Cao lunji*, p.10. The publication of this article in *Guangming Ribao* on January 25, 1959 marked the beginning of the campign to reverse the verdict on Cao Cao. Guo then developed these points in more detail in "Ti Cao Cao fan'an" [On reversing the verdict on Cao Cao] *Cao Cao lunji*, pp.47-63. For a translation of this article see "Kuo Mo-jo: A Reappraisal of the Case of Ts'ao Ts'ao," *Chinese Studies in History and Philosophy* 1, 4 (Summer, 1968):3-30. Guo Moruo also claimed that his play about the poet Cai Wenji, which he wrote at this time, was part of the campiagn as well: see *Cai Wenji* (Beijing:Wenwu chubanshe, 1959) preface pp.1-3 and Zhu Qing "Guo Moruo tongzhi tan *Cai Wenji* de chuangzuo" [Comrade Guo Moruo discusses the writing of *Cai Wenji*] *Xiju bao* 6 (1959) pp.14-15. The writing of the play and these articles is discussed in Gong Jimin and Fang Rennian *Guo Moruo zhuan* [A biography of Guo Moruo] (Beijing:Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 1988) pp.416-424. For an assessment of Guo's views on Cai Yan (Wenji), a poet from the late Han period, see Hans H. Frankel "Cai Yan and the Poems Attributed to Her," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 5, 1 (July, 1983):133-156.

[84] "Ti Cao Cao fan'an," pp.59-60.

were of long-term historical significance. This was an achievement which Guo believed to be of considerable contemporary importance. As Rudolf Wagner has argued, this portryayl of Cao Cao was "a none-too-subtle eulogy to Mao Zedong," and an indirect endorsement of the collectivising of agriculture which was taking place under the Great Leap Forward.[85] It was in this perceived contemporary relevance and the parallels with Mao Zedong that the impetus for this campaign lay.

Jian Bozan entered the debate soon after Guo Moruo and framed his contribution as a critique of the new opera *Chibi zhi zhan* [Battle of the Red Cliffs].[86] Jian expressed muted praise for the opera, noting that its portrayal of Cao Cao was a marked improvement over previous dramatic and theatrical depictions of the man.[87] Jian believed that it was the the famous novel *Sanguo zhi yanyi* [The Romance of the Three Kingdoms] which was responsible for the great popularity of this negative image, arguing that in order to promote "the historical viewpoint of feudal orthodoxy" the author of the novel had distorted the historical record and created a false portrait of Cao Cao. According to this perspective, Jian claimed, Cao Cao was accused of trying to usurp the

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[85] Rudolf G. Wagner "The Chinese Writer in His Own Mirror: Writer, State, and Society - The Literary Evidence," in Merle Goldman, C.L. Hamrin and Timothy Cheek (eds.) *China's Intellectuals and the State: The Search For a New Relationship* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1987) p.209. Guo Moruo himself makes the comparison between Cao Cao and Mao Zedong explicit in "Ti Cao Cao fan'an," p.53.

[86] Jian Bozan "Yinggai ti Cao Cao huifu mingyu - cong *Chibi zhi zhan* shuodao Cao Cao" [(We) ought to restore Cao Cao's good name - comments on Cao Cao stimulated by *Battle of the Red Cliffs*] *Cao Cao lunji*, pp.11-24. When this article originally appeared in *Guangming Ribao* on January 19, 1959, the editors introduced it with a preface inviting others to contribute to the reassessment of Cao Cao. This marked the 'official' beginning of the campaign.

[87] Assessment of the opera, focusing on its portrayal of Cao Cao, also featured in the dramatic journal *Xiju bao*: see "*Chibi zhi zhan* de taolun" [Discussion of *Battle of the Red Cliffs*] *Xiju bao* 2 (1959):3-8, 3 (1959):15-19 and 4 (1959):17-19. This opera was a revision of an earlier one entitled *Chibi aozhan* [Red Cliffs clash]. For discussion of *Battle of the Red Cliffs* within the context of the new historical dramas of the period see Zhao Cong *Zhongguo dalu de xiju gaige* [Drama reform in Mainland China] (Hong Kong:Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1967) pp.125-128.

throne and thus was labelled a 'traitorous official' (jianchen), yet from the perspective of the people such action was of no great importance. What was important were Cao Cao's achievements in bringing stabilty to north China and restoring agricultural production. Jian basically endorses Guo Moruo's view of Cao Cao as being a great politician, military strategist and poet, stating that the negative portrayal of him was biased and undeserved and for that reason it was necessary to 'restore his good name' (huifu mingyu).[88] What was necessary, he argued, was to cut through these distorted perspectives and create an image of the man which would be more faithful to the historical record. He acknowledged that this would be difficult due to the widespread popularity of the negative image of Cao Cao, yet he believed that operas such as *Battle of the Red Cliffs* were a move in the right direction.

These two articles basically set the tenor of the following debate, although not all contributors were willing to accept the perspective of Guo Moruo and Jian Bozan. Liu Yibing, for instance, was astounded at Jian Bozan's suggestion that Cao Cao's involvement in the suppression of peasant rebels such as the Yellow Turbans should be seen as nothing more than a 'shortcoming' and he also disputed the claim that the historical record revealed Cao Cao to be the national hero that Guo Moruo had claimed him to be.[89] Tan Qixiang (1911-1992) went even further and argued that it was completely inappropriate to talk about reversing the verdict on Cao Cao as the issue was far more complicated

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88 Jian Bozan "Yinggai ti Cao Cao huifu mingyu," pp.12-13.

89 Liu Yibing "Yinggai gei Cao Cao yige zhengque de pingjia" [(We) ought to give Cao Cao a correct evaluation] *Cao Cao lunji*, pp.21-24. This article first appeared in *Guangming Ribao* March 5, 1959. Studies of the Yellow Turban rebellion (184 A.D.) include Howard S. Levy "Yellow Turban Religion and Rebellion at the end of the Han," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76 (1956):214-227 and Paul Michaud "The Yellow Turbans," *Monumenta Serica* 17 (1958):47-127.

than either Guo Moruo or Jian Bozan allowed.[90] He argued that there had always been a range of attitudes toward Cao Cao and that the very nature of Pei Songzhi's commentary to the *Sanguo zhi* meant that this would be the case.[91] Tan recognized that the issues surrounding the portrayal of Cao Cao in both the historical record and in literature were extremely complex and he argued that it made no sense to ignore that complexity. He also noted that in the twentieth century Cao Cao had not been uniformly portrayed in a negative light. Jian Bozan himself had recognized this when he quoted Lu Xun's claim that Cao Cao was not the villain he was often portrayed to be but was "a capable person and a great hero."[92] Tan also notes that both "before and after liberation the discussion of Cao Cao in books and articles, whose perspectives and viewpoints were quite different, was generally more positive than negative."[93] For these reasons Tan believed it to be inappropriate to talk of 'reversing the verdict' on Cao Cao.

A few years before the 1959 debate Wang Zhongluo (1913-1986) had also written a new biography of Cao Cao, but this book goes

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[90] Tan Qixiang "Lun Cao Cao" [On Cao Cao] *Cao Cao lunji*, pp.64-78. This article was originally published in *Wenhui bao* March 31, 1959.

[91] A range of traditional opinions about issues raised by Cao Cao's biography in *Sanguo zhi* can be found in Lu Bi ***Sanguo zhi jijie*** [Collected commentaries to the *Sanguo zhi*] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1982) pp.1-66.

[92] Lu Xun "Wei-Jin fengdu ji wehzhang yu cai ji jiu zhi guanxi" [The relation of drugs and alcohol to the style and literature of the Wei-Jin period] in *Lu Xun quanji* 3, pp.486-487. Jian Bozan quotes Lu Xun's views on Cao Cao at the beginning of "Yinggai ti Cao Cao huifu mingyu," p.11. Earlier in the century the Sichuanese philosopher Li Zongwu had also viewed Cao Cao's "black heart" as admirable: see *Hou hei xue* [A study of the thick of skin and black of heart] (Beijing:Qiushi chubanshe reprint, 1989) pp.2-3.

[93] Tan Qixiang "Lun Cao Cao," pp.64-65. See, for instance, Lü Simian's assessment of Cao Cao in *Sanguo shi hua* [Discussions of Three Kingdoms history] originally published by Kaiming shudian in 1940 and reprinted in Lü Simian *Lun xue ji lin* (Shanghai:Jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987) pp.485-584. The assessment of interpretations of Cao Cao is on pp.560-566. Cao Cao is also portrayed in a positive way in Yuan Lingyi "Cao Cao lun" [On Cao Cao] *Guangming Ribao* November 1, 1953. See also Zhang Weihua "Shilun Cao Cao tuntian yu Xi Jin zhantian shang de mouxie wenti" [An essay on some questions about Cao Cao's tuntian and the Western Jin zhantian] *Lishi yanjiu* 9 (1956):29-42.

unmentioned in the debate.[94] It is a brief yet very dense biography and was more a product of the tradition of careful textual analysis than of the changes that had occurred in Chinese biographical writing during the early twentieth century. Wang builds his narrative around extensive quotation from source materials and the work lacks the accessibility which marked much of the biograophical writing of the 1940s.[95] In this dense narrative Wang raises many of the arguments that would later be revisited in the 1959 debate, although his overall assessment of Cao Cao is much less positive than that presented by Guo Moruo and Jian Bozan.[96] Perhaps it was for this reason that Wang's biography of Cao Cao was ignored, despite the fact that he was highly respected as a scholar.[97]

Within the debate itself, others took issue with the claim that the main reason for the popular negative image of Cao Cao was the way he had been portrayed in the novel *Sanguo zhi yanyi*. This introduced the potentially interesting issue of the relationship between history and fiction and how character is portrayed in each, an issue that had been of concern to those invloved in refashioning biographical writing earlier in the century.[98] Li Xifan (b.1927) argued that it was inappropriate to assess a

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94 Wang Zhongluo *Cao Cao* (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1956).

95 Wang was a student of Zhang Binglin, and saw himself as carrying on the traditions of the 'Eastern Zhejiang school'. See Wang Zhongluo "Tantan wo de zhixue jingguo" [A discussion of my experience of scholarship] in *Xue shi ru men* (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1988) pp.34-42.

96 Wang Zhongluo *Cao Cao*, pp.120-27.

97 Wang's revised history of the post-Han period would later receive much acclaim. See *Wei-Jin Nan-Bei chao shi* [A history of the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern dynasties] (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1979). See also the reviews of this book by Chen Linguo in *Shixueshi yanjiu* 4 (1983):61--62 and 37, and by Yuan Yingguang in *Lishi yanjiu* 1 (1982):137-146.

98 This issue has also been of concern to scholars outside Mainland China. See, for instance, Winston L.Y. Yang "The Literary Transformation of Historical Figures in the *San-kuo chih yen-i*: A Study in the Use of the *San-kuo chih* as a Source of the *San-kuo chih yeh-i*," in Winston L.Y. Yang and Curtis P. Adkins (eds.) *Critical Essays on Chinese Fiction* (Hong Kong:The Chinese University Press, 1980) pp.47-84, and, more recently, Andrew H. Plaks *The Four Masterworks of Ming Fiction: Ssu ta ch'i-shu* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1987) pp.368-374 and 455-473.

work of literature such as *Sanguo zhi yanyi* from the perspective of historical veracity, and Liu Yibing contested the view that the portrayal of Cao Cao in the novel was as narrowly negative as Jian Bozan had claimed.[99] The raising of such issues showed how a whole range of complex and interesting issues could arise from the consideration of any one historical figure, particularly someone as controversial as Cao Cao. It also showed the continued value of a biographical perspective on the past.[100]

But the debate had not been initiated to encourage discussion of these potentially interesting issues and they were not pursued. Instead, numerous articles endorsing the earlier views expressed by Jian Bozan and Guo Moruo smothered any further debate.[101] Discussion thus returned to the parameters originally laid down. Cao Cao was praised for his strength in bringing under control the authoritarian forces of his time and for preventing further annexation of Chinese territory. He was also praised for introducing the 'agricultural garrisons' or 'state farms', for restoring production and reducing taxes, for unifying north China and

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99 Liu Yibing "Yinggai gei Cao Cao yige zhengque de pingjia," p.24. Li Xifan "*Sanguo yanyi* he wei Cao Cao fan'an" [*Sanguo yanyi* and reversing the verdict on Cao Cao] *Wenyi bao* 9 (1959):15-30 and Li Xifan "Lishi renwu de Cao Cao he wenxue xingxiang de Cao Cao - zai tan *Sanguo yanyi* he wei Cao Cao fan'an" [Cao Cao the historical figure and Cao Cao the literary image - another discussion on *Sanguo yanyi* and reversing the verdict on Cao Cao] *Wenyi bao* 14 (1959):29-37. This second article is included along with others related to the issue of historical and literary representation in Li Xifan *Lun Zhongguo gudian xiaoshu de yishu xingxiang* [On artistic representation in Chinese classical fiction] (Shanghai:Shanghai Wenyi, 1961).

100 These issues have been raised again in discussions about Cao Cao in recent years. See, for instance, Weng Bainian "Cao Cao san lun" [Three discussions of Cao Cao] in *Sanguo yanyi xuekan* 1 (June, 1985):124-143. Weng makes the same distinction between literary and historical representation as did Li Xifan (see p.132).

101 See, for instance, the criticism of Liu Yibing's article and endorsement of Jian Bozan's views in Liu Chunfan "Dui 'Yinggai gei Cao Cao yige zhengque de pingjia' yiwen de yijian" [A critique of '(We) ought to give Cao Cao a correct evaluation'] *Cao Cao lunji*, pp.79-85, and the criticism of Tao Qixiang in Xia Zongyu "Ping 'Lun Cao Cao'" [A critique of 'On Cao Cao'] *Cao Cao lunji*, pp.165-175. Most of the other subsequent articles were focused on reinforcing one or another of the points made earlier by either Guo Moruo or Jian Bozan.

bringing stability to the region, and for being an outstanding poet whose initiatives saw the emergence of a distinctive 'school' of literature during the Jian'an years (196-220) and whose writing had influenced the later birth of 'realism' during the Tang dynasty.[102] Disagreement with such an evaluation was not encouraged and by the middle of 1959 it became increasingly obvious that there was no longer a debate. But this did not mean a consensus had been reached or that there was agreement that it was unnecessary to reinterpret the life of Cao Cao. Changed political circumstances would foster new perceptions of the man. During the latter stages of the Cultural Revolution he would attract attention again, this time for being a great 'legalist', one of China's new heroes.[103] And in more recent years, dissatisfaction with these earlier accounts of Cao Cao's life has led to new assessments and new biographies.[104]

Those who had resisted the implied praise for Mao Zedong which the campaign to reverse the verdict on Cao Cao was directed at did not abandon their criticism. They simply found other ways to express it. This criticism grew as opposition to the Great Leap Forward gathered intensity during the course of 1959, particularly as Mao became more

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[102] This survey of the main points in this positive evaluation of Cao Cao is contained in a posthumously published article by Li Zegang "Cao Cao de fan'an yu ding'an" [Reversing and settling the verdict on Cao Cao] *Jianghuai luntan* 2 (1981):61-66. See also the popular biography that appeared in 1959, Zhang Xikong *Cao Cao* (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1959), and Wu Ze and Xia Tianyou "Guanyu lishi renwu pingjia de ruogan lilun wenti," pp.1226-1227.

[103] See, for instance, Xiang Luo *Cao Cao* (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1975), Jin Rujie (ed.) *Wei Cao Cao fan'an* [To reverse the verdict on Cao Cao] (Macao:Shenzhou tushu reprint, 1975), *Cao Cao de gushi* [The story of Cao Cao] (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1975) and the annotated reprint of the biography of Cao Cao from *Sanguo zhi*, also produced in Shanghai, and entitled *Cao Cao zhuan zhu* [An annotated biography of Cao Cao] (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1975).

[104] Zhang Yingge *Cao Cao xinzhuan* [A new biography of Cao Cao] (Shanghai:Renmin chubanshe, 1989). Zhang notes that the 1959 debate merely served to "yin'e yangshan" Cao Cao, to cover up his faults and praise his good deeds. This was unsatisfactory hence the need for a new biography (see pp.2-3). See also Zhang Dake *Sanguo shi yanjiu* [Studies of Three Kingdoms history] (Lanzhou:Gansu Renmin chubanshe, 1988) and Kawai Yasuzō *Cao Cao* translated by Zhou Dongping (Xi'an:San-Qin chubanshe, 1989).

intransigent in his commitment to it. And his attack on Peng Dehuai (1898-1974) at the Lushan plenum in August of 1959, simply for expressing concern over the emerging tragedy of the Great Leap, was to become the focus of even greater criticism over the coming years.[105]

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The fundamental question facing historians during the first decade of the People's Republic had been how to relate the requirements of the materialist view of history to the legacy of the Chinese past. With regard to the issue of the role of the individual in history there had been a fair degree of consensus as to what those requirements were. Direction was taken from key Marxists texts, and especially from the interpretation given those texts during the Stalinist era. The problem for Chinese historians, however, lay not so much in articulating these new guidelines but in relating them to the actual practice of writing about particular historical figures. The emphasis given to the view that it was the masses who make history seemed to contradict the idea of focusing on an individual life, especially as most of those individuals were seen as members of the old 'ruling class'. Some had suggested that individuals should be expunged from the pages of all history books, yet no matter how much it was emphasized that "three ordinary people were better than one Zhuge Liang," most people were much more interested in the Zhuge Liang (181-234) than in the three ordinary people.[106] There was

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105 For a detailed account of the background to the Lushan meeting, and of the plenum itself, see Li Rui *Lushan huiyi shilu* [A true record of the Lushan plenum] (Changsha:Chunqiu chubanshe, 1988). And for an assessment of the way some of this criticism of Mao's role at Lushan was expressed through the medium of historical drama, see Rudolf G. Wagner *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama.*

106 A more literal translation of this common phrase, sange choupijiang, hecheng yige Zhuge Liang, is "Three cobblers together equal one Zhuge Liang." For criticism of the

still to be a place for the individual in the new history, but it was far from clear exactly what that place was.

Attempts to carry over the developments in biographical writing from the early twentieth century, such as in Deng Guangming's biography of Yue Fei, suggested that the marriage of those developments with the new guidelines for historical practice was not an easy one. And as writing about the past became more politically charged as the decade progressed, so also did interpretations of historical figures. The campaign to reverse the verdict on Cao Cao highlighted this. But despite the overtly political nature of this campaign, some writers and historians were encouraged to try and push the debate beyond what had originally been intended. They sought to build on the prominence the debate over reversing the verdict on Cao Cao gave to the more general issue of the role of the individual in history. Many still saw this as a difficult yet nevertheless important matter and for this reason they wished to see the debate continued. They believed that a re-assessment of China's rich historical tradition should not be so quickly abandoned.[107] The place of the individual in the historical tradition and the value of biography continued to interest scholars and not long after the debate had subsided a leading historian, writing in the Party's theoretical journal, *Hongqi* [Red Flag], again emphasised the value of a biographical perspective on the past:

> The writing of biography is something we should encourage, and it is a form of writing appropriate for examination or graduation theses. Some suggest that China does not have a tradition of biographical literature,

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view that individuals should be removed from the pages of historical texts, see Wu Ze and Xie Tianyou "Guanyu lishi renwu pingjia de ruogan lilun wenti," p.1226.

[107] Jian Bozan "Muqian lishi jiaoxue zhong de jige wenti," pp.36-39 and Wu Han "Cong Cao Cao wenti de taolun tan lishi renwu pingjia wenti [A discussion on the problem of evaluating historical figures prompted by the debate over the question of Cao Cao] *Lishi jiaoxue* 103 (July, 1959):2-5.

> but in fact the rich store of biographical literature in Chinese historical texts is unparalleled. We should continue this legacy, have students study it well, and use historical biographies as an effective way of spreading and popularizing historical knowledge.[108]

One of those who stressed the value of this biographical approach to the past and who argued for its continued relevance will be the subject of the next chapter.

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[108] Bai Shouyi "Lishi xueke jiben xunlian youguan de jige wenti" [Some questions concerning basic training in historical science] *Hongqi* 18 (1961) p.31.

Chapter Five

Wu Han and the Politics of Historical Biography

> While the form and development of history does not proceed according to fixed natural laws, it is also not simply like a play, where the director can freely plan and freely alter everything. Undoubtedly the contribution which heroes make to history cannot be denied, but the nature of cultural history is such that it is certainly different from the special portrayal of the character of heroes through heroic biography...[1]

Wu Han (1909-1969) was one of the more prominent of the new scholar-bureaucrats of the early years of the People's Republic of China. From his position as Deputy Mayor of Beijing he was involved in establishing and administering cultural policy, and particularly in setting the direction for historical scholarship. Prior to 1949 he had distinguished himself as a leading historian, although increasingly he found himself drawn into political activity. This attraction to the political led him further into the factional world of elite politics during the late 1950s and culminated in the attacks on him which marked the beginning of the

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[1] Wu Han "Li Jihuang yishu de Takakuwa shi *Zhongguo wenhua shi*" [Li Jihuang's translation of Takakuwa's *History of Chinese Civilisation*] *Tushu pinglun* 2, 5 (1934) and reprinted in Beijing shi lishi xuehui (ed.) *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji* [A selection of Wu Han's historical works] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1984) vol.1, p.436.

Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Following the end of the Cultural Revolution he was one of the first people to be given a posthumous 'rehabilitation'. Since this official rehabilitation in 1979, Wu Han has been portrayed as a model intellectual and his life has received considerable attention.[2]

All of this attention means it is difficult to separate the man from the myth. Wu Han's invovlement in both scholarship and politics

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[2] While Wu Han's life has been the subject of a great deal of attention in China since his official rehabilitation, much of this material is of little value to this particular study. I have listed here only some of the writing devoted to Wu Han's life. The best biography to date is that by Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi, entitled *Wu Han zhuan* [A biography of Wu Han] (Beijing:Beijing chubanshe, 1984). Other Chinese-language biographical material includes: Li Youning *Wu Han zhuan* [A biography of Wu Han] (Hong Kong:Mingbao yuekan, 1973); Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi "Wu Han - zhuanji" [Wu Han - a biography] in *Zhongguo dangdai shehui kexuejia* [Contemporary Chinese social scientists] (Beijing:Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1982) vol. 1, pp.127-145; Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi "Wu Han" in *Zhongguo dangshi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of individuals in Chinese (Communist) Party history] (Xi'an:Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1983) vol. 7, pp.244-295; Wang Deyuan "Wu Han" in *Zhongguo shixuejia zhuan* [Biographies of Chinese historians] (Shenyang:Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1984) pp.401-411; Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi "Yiwei xinqin gengyun de shixuejia -- jinian Wu Han dansheng qishiwu zhounian, shishi shiwu zhounian" [An industrious and meticulous historian -- commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of Wu Han's birth and the fifteenth anniversary of his death] *Lishi yanjiu* 3 (June, 1984):136-149; Su Shuangbi "Wu Han" in Chen Qingchuan et. al. (eds.) *Zhongguo shixuejia pingzhuan* [Critical biographies of Chinese historians] (Henan:Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985) vol.3, pp.1664-1689; Wang Hongzhi *Wu Han* (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1987); and Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi "Wu Han zhuanlüe" [A brief biography of Wu Han] in *Zhongguo xiandai shehui kexuejia zhuanlüe* [Brief biographies of modern Chinese social scientists] (Xi'an:Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1987) vol.1, pp.106-125.
Other valuable material can be found in the collections of articles by Wu Han's former colleagues and associates. These collections include: ***Wu Han he Hai Rui baguan*** [Wu Han and *Hai Rui dismissed from office*] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1979); Su Shuangbi and Xia Nai (eds.) *Wu Han de xueshu shengya* [Wu Han's academic career] (Hangzhou:Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1984); and Beijing shi lishi xuehui (ed.) *Wu Han jinian wenji* [A collection of commemorative articles for Wu Han] (Beijing:Beijing chubanshe, 1984).
English-language biographical material includes the essay in Howard Boorman and Richard C. Howard (eds.) *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* (New York:Columbia University Press, 1967) vol.3, pp.425-430; Tom Fisher "The 'Upright Official' as a Model in the Humanities," in Timothy Cheek and Carol Lee Hamrin (eds.) *China's Establishment Intellectuals* (New York:M.E. Sharpe, 1986) pp.155-184; Mary Mazur "Studying Wu Han: the political academic," *Republican China* 15, 2 (April, 1989):17-39; and Mary Mazur "Intellectual Activism in China During the 1940s: Wu Han in the United Front and the Democratic League," *The China Quarterly* 133 (March, 1993):27-55. Mazur's forthcoming biography of Wu Han will provide the most detailed study of his life available in English.

makes this process of disentangling man from myth a complicated one, yet it is also this which makes his life one of considerable interest for a study of the evolving relationship between history and biography in twentieth century China. His major scholarly achievement was a biography of the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398), and it was a biography that went through a number of transformations as Wu Han responded to the challenges which his involvement in the world of politics presented to him. The biography remains the major study of the first Ming emperor and has been influential in shaping understanding of events in China during the fourteenth century. But in its various forms it is also seen as a work that is reflective of the times in which it was written. Before turning to the biography itself, however, it is important to have some appreciation of Wu Han's work as a historian and his understanding of the nature of the relationship between history and biography.

History and Biography

Despite having written one of the major historical biographies of the twentieth century, Wu Han was first and foremost a historian, not a biographer. Unlike Zhu Dongrun, he did not carry with him a great passion to transform Chinese biographical writing. In fact, early in his career he even looked upon biography as an unsuitable genre for the historian. Despite such qualifications, however, Wu Han soon came to see the life of an individual not only as a valuable way to focus the attention of the historian but also as an important vehicle to stimulate an appreciation of the past amongst the wider populace.

Wu Han's questioning of the validity of a biographical perspective on the past came in 1935 in the proclomation of the agenda of

a new historical supplement to be published fortnightly by the Tianjin-based newspaper, *Yishi bao* [Prosperity Daily]. At this time, Wu Han was a leading member of a history study society, the *Shixue yanjiu hui* [Historical Research Association], which brought together like-minded historians keen to implement what they felt to be the aims of the much talked about 'new history'.[3] These were mostly young scholars who were based in the leading universities in Beiping (Beijing) and who shared a common view about the need to establish a new direction in historical research and writing. In 1935 they were approached by the editor-in-chief of *Yishi bao,* Luo Longji (1898-1965), and asked to organize and edit the new historical supplement for the newspaper. The members of this association saw the supplement as an ideal forum to present their research and disseminate their ideas about the new history. As a leading member of the association, Wu Han wrote the forward for the first edition of the supplement, explaining the intentions of the editors and outlining their views on historical scholarship. Contained amongst the various aims of the editors was the following statement:

> The age of biographies of emperors, kings and heroes is past. The ideal of the new history is that it should be concerned with society and with the masses.[4]

Here again we find the same intention to establish a distance from traditional historical writing and the same attempt to define what constituted the 'new history' by contrasting it with what were perceived

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[3] Other members of this research association were Tang Xianglong, Xia Nai, Luo Ergang, Liang Fangzhong, Zhu Qingyong, Sun Yutang, Gu Jiguang, Liu Jun, Luo Yudong, Zhang Yinlin, Yang Shaozhen and Wu Ze. For discussion of the formation of this society, its membership and the involvement of members in the publication of the historical supplement for *Yishi bao,* see Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.36-37 and 65-72.

[4] See the 'fakanci', or foreword, to the *shixue* supplement, *Yishi bao*, April 30, 1935. Wu Han expressed similar reservations about the notion that 'heroes' make history in his review of the translation of Takakuwa Komakichi's history of Chinese civilisation: see "Li Jihuang yishu de Takakuwa shi *Zhongguo wenhua shi*," p.436.

as the limitations of the old biographical perspective on the past. Liang Qichao had done exactly this when he had first talked about the need for a new history much earlier in the century.[5] But just as Liang Qichao would modify his view of the new history to incorporate biographical writing, so Wu Han would also find that a biographical perspective on the past did not necessarily conflict with his views on what history should be, that there was a place for biographies of 'emperors, kings and heroes'. Indeed, he came to see biography as an important part of the historians work. This came later, however, after he had established a reputation as one of the foremost historians of his generation.

Wu Han had in his youth read and been influenced by Liang Qichao, but it was Hu Shi who was to have a more significant impact on him.[6] From 1928 until 1930 Wu Han was a student at the *Zhongguo gongxue* [China Institute] in Wusong, just north of Shanghai. Hu Shi was at the time President of the Institute and Wu Han attended his course on the history of Chinese civilisation.[7] Hu Shi was by this time well known for his advocacy of the need for the "reorganisation of the national past" (zhengli guogu) and for his claim that historical research needed to be based on "bold hypothesis [and] careful research" (dadan de jiashe, xiaoxin de qiuzheng).[8] In using these terms, Hu Shi was arguing for a more critical approach to the study of Chinese history and civilisation. He wished to see the literary legacy of the past organised in a more systematic way, with attempts made to resolve problems of authorship and

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[5] For discussion of Liang Qichao's views on history and biography see Chapter Two.
[6] Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, p.9.
[7] Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi "Wu Han xueshu huodong biannian jianpu" [A brief chronicle of Wu Han's scholarly activity] in Su Shuangbi and Xia Nai (eds.) *Wu Han de xueshu shengya*, p.128.
[8] For discussion of Hu Shi's views on historical research see Irene Eber "Hu Shih and Chinese History: The Problem of *Cheng-li Kuo-ku*," 27 (1968):169-207, and Geng Yunzhi "Ping Hu Shi de lishi xue chengjiu ji qi lilun he fangfa" [An assessment of Hu Shi's achievements in historical research as well as his theory and method] *Lishi yanjiu* 4 (1983):39-54.

authenticity, and he encouraged young historians such as Wu Han to pursue these tasks beyond the course he taught at the Institute. It was partly through Hu Shi's support and assistance that Wu Han made the shift north to Beiping where he eventually became a student and then a teacher at Qinghua University.[9]

Qinghua University provided an ideal enviroment for Wu Han to develop as a historian and he soon emerged as one of the most perceptive and prolific scholars of his generation.[10] Jiang Tingfu (1895-1965) was head of the History Department at this time, and included amongst the teaching staff of the department were Chen Yinque, Zhang Yinlin (1905-1942), and Lei Haizong (1902-1962). All of these historians had trained in the West and under the direction of Jiang Tingfu they encouraged students to combine what were believed to be the best of both the Chinese and Western traditions of historical practice.[11] Jiang saw

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[9] Wu Han "Wo kefule 'chao jieji' guandian" [How I overcame my 'supra-class' viewpoint] *Zhongguo qingnian* 32 (1950) p.16. The long essay which Wu Han wrote for Hu Shi's course, entitled "Xi-Han jingji zhuangkuang" [Economic circumstances of the Western Han], is included in *Wu Han wenji* [The collected works of Wu Han] (Beijing:Beijing chubanshe, 1988) vol.1, pp.1-63. Hu Shi admired this essay and it may have been part of the reason he was keen to help Wu Han make the transition to Beiping. Some of the letters which Wu Han and Hu Shi wrote to each other during this period have been published and they give a good indication of the relationship that grew up between the two men at this time: see *Wu Han wenji* [A collection of Wu Han's writings] (Hong Kong:Cunzhen yinshuguan, 1967) pp.17-72. **Note**: although this single volume book shares the same title as the abovementioned four volume edition of Wu Han's collected works, it is a completely different work.

[10] According to Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi, Wu Han published nearly 50 articles in the period from 1931 to 1934. Some of these articles were brief notes, but many were both substantial and significant. Part of the reason why Wu Han was so prolific at this time was that he needed the extra income which these publications helped generate. For discussion of this see Su and Wang "Wu Han daxuesheng shidai de zuopin he zhixue daolu" [The publications and scholarly pursuits of Wu Han in his student years] in Su and Xia (eds.) *Wu Han de xueshu shengya*, p.17. The articles Wu Han published during this period are contained in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.1, and *Wu Han wenji*, vol.1, pp.66-349.

[11] For brief biographies of Jiang Tingfu, Chen Yinke and Lei Haizong see Boorman and Howard (eds.) *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol.1, pp.354-358 (Jiang), vol.1, pp.259-261 (Chen), and vol.2, pp.283-285 (Lei). For a more detailed biography of Chen Yinque see Wang Rongzu *Shijia Chen Yinque zhuan* [A biography of the historian Chen Yinque] (Taibei:Liangjing chuban shiye, 1984), especially pp.59-75, which deal with Chen's time at Qinghua.

great benefits in the tradition of textual research (kaoju or kaozheng scholarship) which had developed in China since the seventeenth century, but he wanted students to combine these research techniques with the Western emphasis on the synthesis of material and on a problem-centred approach to the past.[12] Just as the *Gu shi bian* [Discussions of ancient history] movement was doing much during this period to lay the foundations for new post-Confucian approaches to the past, so also was this emphasis on integrating Chinese and Western traditions of historical practice.[13] Wu Han obviously absorbed much from this enviroment at Qinghua and, under the direction of Jiang Tingfu, he began to concentrate on becoming a specialist on the Ming period (1368-1644). After he graduated in 1934 he was appointed to the staff of the History Department to teach a course on Ming history .[14]

The historical essays Wu Han wrote during this period at Qinghua University reveal not only the diversity of his interests but also the rich amalgam of research methods which the new history stimulated. Some of his articles, such as the systematic studies of bibliophiles from

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[12] Jiang was a graduate of Columbia University, having written a doctoral thesis on the political impact of imperialism in Britain after 1880, and he returned to China to develop a strong interest in Chinese diplomatic history. His period as head of the History Department at Qinghua is discussed in *Qinghua daxuexiao shigao* [A draft history of Qinghua College and University] (Beijing:Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1981), pp.172-177. See also Su and Wang "Yiwei xinqin gengyun de shixuejia," pp.136-137. For a study of how the tradition of kaoju scholarship influenced the emergence of the 'new' history, see Wang Fansen *Gu shi bian yundong de xingqi*.

[13] The seven volumes comprising the *Gu shi bian* publications were edited by Gu Jiegang and published between 1926 and 1941. For assessments of the significance of this work see Laurence Schneider *Ku Chieh-kang and China's New History*, and Yang Xiangkui "Lun 'Gu shi bian pai'" [On the 'Gu shi bian clique'] in *Zhonghua xueshu lunwen ji* [A collection of essays on Chinese scholarship] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1981) pp.11-35.

[14] Su and Wang "Wu Han xueshu huodong biannian jianpu," pp.133 and 144-145. Two commemorative articles also offer valuable insights into the influence of Jiang Tingfu and the Qinghua History Department over Wu Han at this time: see Luo Ergang "Huai Wu Han" [Remembering Wu Han] in *Wu Han jinian wenji*, pp.25-31 and Xia Nai "Wo suo zhidao de shixuejia Wu Han tongzhi" [The historian I knew, comrade Wu Han] in *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 2 (1984):24-29. Xia Nai's article is reprinted in *Wu Han jinian wenji*, pp.50-62.

Zhejiang and Jiangsu, demonstrate the concern with the reorganisation of the national past which had been encouraged since the early 1920s by Hu Shi.[15] Other articles show the application of the techniques of textual research, of kaoju scholarship, to resolve issues of uncertainty. For instance, Wu Han felt there was confusion over the life of the Ming scholar and bibliophile, Hu Yinglin (1551-1602), whose work on forgeries had found a new audience in the 1920s and 1930s.[16] In order to resolve this confusion Wu Han carried out extensive research in various manuscript collections, reading not only Hu Yinglin's own writings but also gazatteers and poetry anthologies from the period, and then wrote a chronological biography based upon this research.[17] As with most nianpu, this biography contains extensive quotations from source materials, yet it is unusual in that Wu Han added a short bibliography of the main sources used. Apart from this, however, the nianpu does not depart radically from the tradition it grew out of. Perhaps because they had been independent of official historical writing, nianpu were not seen as simply 'biographies of emperors, kings and heroes' as were the zhuan of the standard histories, and thus they were not seen as something to be avoided. The move towards a new history did not mean completely abandoning traditional research techniques and traditional genre. Rather,

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15 See "Liang Zhe cangshujia shilüe" [A brief history of the bibliophiles of Zhejiang] *Qinghua zhoukan* 37, 9/10 (1932); and "Jiangsu cangshujia shilüe" [A brief history of the bibliophiles of Jiangsu] *Tushuguan jikan* 8, 1 (1933). Both of these articles have been published as a single work: see *Jiang-Zhe cangshujia shilüe* [A brief history of the bibliophiles of Jiangsu and Zhejiang] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1980); and are reprinted in this combined form in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.1, pp.81-297.

16 Gu Jiegang was interested in Hu Yinglin's work on forgeries, particularly *Sibu zhenge* [Forgeries in four branches of literature], but Wu Han believed that Gu was wrong to state that Hu lived to be 60. He believed that Hu had died in 1602, aged 52. Wu Han wrote to Hu Shi in 1931 describing his interest in this issue and the work he was doing for the nianpu of Hu Yinglin: see the letters Wu Han wrote to Hu Shi, and Hu's replies, in *Wu Han wenji* (Hong Kong), pp.33-47.

17 See "Hu Yinnglin nianpu" [A chronological biography of Hu Yinglin] *Qinghua xuebao* 9, 1 (1934); which is reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.1, pp.371-428.

it was seen as a process whereby aspects of that tradition were developed and improved.

Developing on the tradition was part of the new history, but it involved more than that. Just as important were the adoption of a problem-centred approach to the past and the synthesis and summarising of complex material in order to present a coherent picture of particular issues. Increasingly, Wu Han began to focus more on developing these aspects of the new history in his work. This can be seen, for instance, in the articles he wrote about the famous novel *Jin ping mei* [The plum in the golden vase]. To begin with Wu Han was concerned to uncover whether or not Wang Shizhen (1526-1590) could be considered to have been the author of the novel. By means of careful textual research, reading many different works from the period in the process, Wu Han showed that Wang Shizhen could not be considered as the author of the novel.[18] These articles demonstrated the careful kaoju methodology that was an important part of the new history, yet they did not go much beyond this. Wu Han then followed these earlier articles with an analysis of broader social and religious issues, looking not just at textual issues but at the wider enviroment in which the novel was produced.[19] This involved

> isolating allusions in the novel to datable Ming institutions and scandals associated with the Wan-li

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[18] See "*Qingming shang hetu* yu *Jin ping mei* de gushi ji qi yanbian" [The story of *Qingming shang hetu* and *Jin ping mei* and its development] *Qinghua zhoukan* 36, 45 (1931); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.1, pp.37-54; and "'*Qingming shang hetu* yu *Jin ping mei* ji qi yanbian' buji" [A correction to 'The story of *Qingming shang hetu* and *Jin ping mei* and its development'] *Qinghua zhoukan* 37, 9 (May, 1932); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.1, pp.75-80.

[19] "*Jin ping mei* de zhusuo shidai ji qi shehui beijing" [The date of the composition of *Jin ping mei* and its social background] *Wenxue jikan* 1, 1 (January, 1934); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue zhulun xuanji*, vol.1, pp.334-370. Wu Han had been invited to join the editorial board of this new literary journal by Zheng Zhenduo, who was impressed by Wu's many contributions to the literary and scholarly journals of the capital. Wu Han joined Ba Jin, Xie Bingxin and Zhu Ziqing on the editorial board, and he wrote this article especially for the first volume: see Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, p.35.

> reign - notably the misappropriation of funds from the treasury of the Imperial Stud and traffic in contraband lumber from the imperial forests - as well as reflections of the resurgence of Buddhist influences in the Wan-li period following a time of increased court patronage of Taoism under the Chia-ching emperor.[20]

By asking these broader questions, Wu Han was able to show not just that Wang Shizhen could not have been the author of the novel, but also that it was probably not written until after the death of Zhang Juzheng in 1582. Extending his focus to questions of the political, social and religious circumstances depicted in the novel, Wu Han was able to argue that these were more likely to be a reflection of this later period than of the years of the Jiajing reign (r.1522-1566).[21] This later article showed clearly the way in which the new history was developing. Scholars like Wu Han were increasingly interested not just in questions of textual inconsistency but also in wider social issues. They began with the methods of textual analysis, then moved on to use those methods to ask these broader questions.

Wu Han and his colleagues formed their Historical Research Association in 1934 with the express purpose of developing further this type of approach to historical inquiry, and many of the articles that were published in the historical supplement to *Yishi bao* reflect this increasing concern with issues of a political, social or economic character.[22] Wu

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[20] Plaks *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, p.59. As Plaks notes, Wu Han's article was a "seminal study" (p.59) which has remained influential to this day.

[21] This view has not gone uncontested, however, and in recent years some scholars have used similar methods to those employed by Wu Han to argue again for the earlier period as the more likely time of composition: see Xu Shuofang "*Jin ping mei* chengshu xintan" [A new study of the composition of *Jin ping mei*] *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 3 (1984):185-187. Xu Shuofang argues that the real author of the novel was the dramatist Li Kaixian (1502-1568).

[22] See the index of articles (which reviewed the contents of the supplement for the previous year) in *Yishi bao* March 31, 1936. The index is divided into four categories: political (6 articles), economic (15), social (3), and textual anaysis (8). Most of the contributions to the supplement came from members of the Historical Research Association.

Han's contributions to this supplement included an article on the introduction of tobacco to China and a study of the peasantry during the Ming period.[23] Following the Japanese invasion in 1937 and the relocation of the northern universities to Kunming, Wu Han continued this interest in social and economic history and he became an editor of one of the leading journals in the field, *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi jikan* [Chinese social and economic history review].[24] But it was not just in the articles he wrote for these journals that he focused his attention in this way. Many of the other articles he wrote from the mid-1930s onwards show this concern to use the techniques of textual analysis not just for the analysis of texts, but to address issues of a political, military, social or economic nature.[25] This type of approach to history was becoming increasingly common during the 1930s, and it was at this time that the modern practice of social and economic history became established in

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[23] See "Yancao chu chuanru Zhongguo de lishi" [The history of the introduction of tobacco to China] *Yishi bao* May 28, 1935; reprinted in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.1, pp.187-192, and "Mingdai zhi nongmin" [Peasants of the Ming period] *Yishi bao* October 15, 1935; reprinted in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.1, pp.256 284, as well as in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.1, pp.576-603.

[24] This journal was first published in 1932 under the title *Zhongguo jindai jinji shi yanjiu jikan* [Studies in the modern economic history of China]. Its name was changed with vol.5, number 1, in March of 1937. Wu Han became an editor of the journal when it was revived in Kunming in June of 1939. Articles Wu Han wrote for this journal include "Mingdai de junbing" [The military system of the Ming period] *Zhongguo shehui jingjishi jikan* 5, 2 (June, 1937); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.2, pp.211-260; "Wang Maoyin yu Xianfeng shidai de xinbizhi" [Wang Maoyin and the new currency system of the Xianfeng period] *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi jikan* 6, 1 (June, 1939); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.2, pp.184-210; and "'*Yuanshi* shihuozhi chaofa' bu" [Corrections to the 'currency regulations in the Shihuo treatise of the *Yuan history*]' *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi jikan* 7, 2 (December, 1944); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.2, pp.433-465. **Note**: the ediors of *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji* have given the wrong dates for the original publication of some of these articles.

[25] See, for example, "Mingchu weisuo zhidu zhi bengkui" [The collapse of the early Ming weisuo system] *Zhongyang Ribao* March 29, 1936; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.1, pp.654-664; "Yuan-Ming liangdai zhi 'jianghu'"['Artisan households' of the Yuan and Ming periods] *Yunnan daxue xuebao* 1 (1938); reprinted in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.1, pp.351-366; and "Mingdai zhi liangchang ji qita" [Tax captains of the Ming period and other things] *Yunnan daxue xuebao* 1 (1938): reprinted in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.1, pp.402-421.

China. Much of the work produced during these years remains of significance today.[26]

Besides this effort to extend historical research in new directions, Wu Han was also concerned with how historians presented their research, with how history was written. Much of the new history was published in scholarly journals and therefore had a very small audience. Wu Han felt that historians ought to try to reach out beyond this retricted sphere and introduce their work to a wider readership. He was influenced in this by his friend and colleague, Zhang Yinlin, who was not only on the teaching staff of the History Department at Qinghua but was also a member of the Historical Research Association which Wu Han belonged to. Zhang's abilities had been recognised when he was a student at Qinghua College in the 1920s, and he was encouraged by teachers like Liang Qichao and Wu Mi (1894-1978).[27] He had studied at Stanford University and then returned to Qinghua, where he taught a course in the history of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Zhang's interests were diverse and he encouraged students to be eclectic in their approach to the past, drawing on ideas and methods from various disciplines. He

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[26] As well as appearing in *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi jikan*, these articles were published in the leading universitiy journals, such as *Qinghua xuebao* and *Yanjing xuebao*, and in other specialist journals such as *Shihuo* and *Yugong*. In recognition of the value of many of these articles, some were translated and made available in English: see E-Tu Zen Sun and John DeFrancis (eds.) *Chinese Social History: Translations of Selected Studies* (Washington D.C.:The American Council of Learned Societies, 1956). See also the bibliographical guide: E-tu Zen Sun and John DeFrancis *Bibliography on Chinese Scoial History: a selected and critical list of Chinese periodical sources* (New Haven:Institute of Far Eastern Languages, 1952).

[27] Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi "Wu Han he Zhang Yinlin de shi youqing" [The friendship of Wu Han and Zhang Yinlin] *Renwu* 2 (March, 1982) p.97. See also the commemorative articles and biographical essays included in the special edition of the Hong Kong journal *Sixiang yu shidai*: Qian Mu and Zhang Qiyun (eds.) *Zhang Yinlin xiansheng jinian zhuankan* [A commemorative volume for Mr. Zhang Yinlin] (Hong Kong:Longmen shudian, 1967). This volume includes (pp.48-52) Wu Han's essay "Ji Zhang Yinlin" [Remembering Zhang Yinlin], which was originally published in *Da gong bao* December 31, 1946. See also the chapter devoted to Zhang Yinlin in Xu Guansan *Xin shixue jiushinian*, vol.1, pp.55-68.

believed history to be both a 'science' and an 'art', encompassing the scientific skills required for the collection and analysis of source materials and the artistic ability to describe the past in a way that was engaging and expressive.[28] Without this concern with the artistic aspect to history, Zhang believed that historians would not be able to convey their research in a way that made it both interesting and accessible to others. These were ideas which Wu Han also increasingly came to share and which would influence his subsequent historical writing.[29]

It was also through Zhang Yinlin that Wu Han became involved in the writing and teaching of general history; history not just for a scholarly audience but directed to the wider public and for use in schools. In 1935 Zhang was given a commission by the Education Department of the Guomindang government to write a general history of China, and Zhang invited Wu Han to contribute to the project.[30] The war with Japan disrupted this project and eventually Zhang was able to complete only part of it before his untimely death in 1942.[31] Nevertheless, this book, *Zhongguo shigang* [An outline history of China],

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[28] Zhang Yinlin "Lun lishixue zhi guoqu yu weilai" [On the past and future of historical studies] *Xueheng* 62 (March, 1928); reprinted in Lun Weiliang (ed.) *Zhang Yinlin wenji* [The collected works of Zhang Yinlin] (Hong Kong:Zhonghua congshu, 1956) pp.201-223.

[29] See Wu Han "Ji Zhang Yinlin," pp.48-52, for an appreciation of the debt Wu Han felt to Zhang Yinlin.

[30] Ibid. p.49. The original plan was that Zhang would write about the early period of Chinese history, Wu Han would concentrate on the period from the Tang dynasty onwards, Qian Jiaju would cover the social transformations following the Opium Wars and Wang Yunsheng the Sino-Japanese War. Bai Shouyi has suggested that in fact it was Wu Han's wife, Yuan Zhen, who was approached first regarding the organisation of this project, but she was too ill and Wu himself was too busy, so it was offered instead to Zhang Yinlin. Bai believes the initiative came from Gu Jiegang, who was involved in various projects to produce popular histories and biographies during the war years. See Bai Shouyi "Ba lishi zhishi jiaogei gengduo de ren" [The spread of historical knowledge] in *Wu Han jinian wenji*, pp.2-3. This view that the project was offered first to Wu Han does not concur with Wu's own description of events, nor that of others.

[31] According to Wu Han, Zhang had to leave the mauscript behind when he left Beiping in 1937 and Wu Han took it south to Kunming. When Zhang later arrived in Kunming he was able to finish revising this first volume of the book. See ibid. pp.49-50.

was immediately recognised and admired as a very fine general history.[32] Zhang believed that it was important not to burden the text of a general history with long quotations from sources and detailed footnotes. He argued that while such methods might be appropriate for textual analysis, they were completely out of place in a work which ought to be engaging and accessible. The author of a general history needed to be thoroughly familiar with the relevant source material and the issues invloved, but the purpose of the work was not to parade that knowledge nor to become absorbed in the detail of particular isssues. Instead, the emphasis in such a work should be on establishing a lively and coherent narrative so as to draw readers into the story being told. Zhang believed that only if history was well written would it be possible to create an interest in the past amongst a general non-scholarly audience. This was a belief which Wu Han came to share and which he carried over into his work in cultural affairs during the early years of the People's Republic. It was also a belief which encouraged him to be more receptive to the idea that 'biographies of emperors, kings and heroes' might have an important place in the historians work.[33]

Wu Han's appointment to the position of Deputy Mayor of Beijing in November of 1949 meant he was placed in a position where he had the potential to influence the direction of scholarship during the early years of the P.R.C., particulary with regard to his concerns about the need to make the work of historians more accessible to a general audience.[34] This appointment came after he had been drawn increasingly

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32 Zhang Yinlin *Zhongguo shigang*. This work covers the period up to and including the Han dynasty. With Zhang Yinlin's death in 1942 the remaining volumes were never completed. For response to this work see the articles included in *Zhang Yinlin xiansheng jinian zhuankan*, especially Chen Mengjia "Ping Zhang Yinlin xiansheng *Zhongguo shigang*" [A review of Mr. Zhang Yinlin's *Outline history of China*], pp.28-32.

33 Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.90 and 98-99.

34 Su and Wang "Wu Han xueshu huodong biannian jianpu," p.194.

into the world of politics during the long years of the Sino-Japanese War and the continuing conflict between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party. Like many others, Wu Han became more politically active during this period. This saw him become involved first in the Democratic League, which he joined in the autumn of 1943, and then in work in support of the C.C.P. Following his return to Beiping after the Sino-Japanese War he became associated with the C.C.P. underground in the city and then in 1948 he left for the 'liberated' areas nearby. On his return to the new capital in the wake of the C.C.P. victory Zhou Enlai (1898-1976) appointed Wu Han to the position of Deputy Mayor of the city.[35] His appointment to this position was probably an attempt by the C.C.P. leadership to garner the support of intellectuals who were not committed Marxists, yet who had been sympathetic to the role the Communists had played during the preceeding years of turmoil. Wu Han thus found himself appointed as one of the new scholar-bureaucrats of the People's Republic of China, in a position not only to influence cultural policy in general but also to give direction regarding the writing of history and biography under the new regime.[36]

One of the concerns which Wu Han and Zhang Yinlin had shared in the 1930s was the need to change the way history was taught in

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[35] The detailing of this process of increasing political involvement is beyond the scope of this study, but it is covered well in Mary Mazur's article "Intellectual Activism in China During the 1940s: Wu Han in the United Front and the Democratic League." See also the articles by people who knew Wu Han during this period: Li Yan "Xinsang, huai Chenbo shi" [A heart in mourning, remembering teacher Chenbo] in *Wu Han jinian wenji*, pp.94-104, and Zhang Youren "Xuezhe he zhanshi" [Scholar and soldier] in *Wu Han de xueshu shengya*, pp.46-70.

[36] Wu Han's role in cultural affairs came not only through his position as Deputy Mayor of Beijing, but also through a number of additional appointments which he was given at this time. These included being head of the editorial committee for the journal *Xin jianshe*, a committee member of the philosophy and social science section of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Director of the Chinese Historical Association and President of the Beijing Historical Association. For discussion of Wu Han's involvement in these and other duties, see Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, p.227. See also Su and Wang "Yiwei xinqin gengyun de shixuejia," pp.142-143.

China.[37] Now Wu Han was in a position to do something about this and one of his most important projects became the editing of a series of books aimed to improve popular understanding about the Chinese past.[38] This was the series entitled *Zhongguo lishi xiao congshu* [A series of small books on Chinese history], which included accounts of famous incidents from the past and brief biographies of famous historical figures.[39] The aim with these books was to make the past accessible and interesting to general readers, and particularly to children. In describing these books, Wu Han wrote that

> This series did not follow the usual dynastic method, but was instead organised around stories children were fond of. Representative figures from history and events of major significance were selected and then written about in story form.[40]

Wu Han believed biography was particularly valuable for this task of stimulating a general interest in the past. Whereas most people found historical research and writing to be both obscure and uninteresting, particularly as it became more 'scientific' with the spread of the new history, they were often very interested in the lives of outstanding historical figures. Wu believed it was crucial for historians to foster this

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[37] Wu Han "Ji Zhang Yinlin," p.50; and Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, p.90.

[38] This was only one of the many projects which Wu Han was involved in during these years. Others included the reprinting of new, punctuated editions of classical texts, the production of historical atlases and the restoration of the Ming tombs. For discussion of these projects, see Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.233-239.

[39] Between 1958, when the project began, and when it was interrupted by the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, around 150 different books were published in this series. The books were published by Zhonghua shuju. The series was revived in the 1980s. See Zhang Xikong "Wu Han tongzhi he *Zhongguo lishi xiao congshu*" [Comrade Wu Han and *A series of small books on Chinese history*] *Xinhua wenzhai* 3 (1979):255-257; Zhang Xikong "Wu Han de zhixue daolu ji qi dui puji lishi kexue de gongxian" [Wu Han's scholarly activity and his contribution to the popularising of historical science] in *Wu Han de xueshu shengya*, pp.95-111; Zhang Xikong "Wu Han tongzhi he wen shi puji gongzuo" [Comrade Wu Han and his work in popularising literature and history] *Wen shi zhishi* 1 (1981):47-51; and Li Kang "Wu Han tongzhi yu Zhonghua shuju" [Comrade Wu Han and the Zhonghua publishing Company] in *Wu Han jinian wenji*, pp.209-218.

[40] Wu Han "Lun lishi zhishi de puji" [On popularising historical knowledge] *Wen hui bao* March 27, 1962; reprinted in *Wu Han lixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, p.420.

interest in historical figures by writing books that encouraged more people to read about the past. These books were not detailed historical biographies - most were only around forty pages in length - but rather they were brief and lively accounts of the main events in an individual's life, and they were written particularly with school-age children in mind.[41]

This was not the first time that biography was used to generate an interest in the past amonst young people. During the 1920s and 1930s the Commercial Press had published a similar series of brief historical biographies.[42] There were many similarities between the life stories published in these two series of books, and underlying both was the belief that it was biography above all else that could stimulate an interest in the past. To hold such a belief during the early years of the People's Republic was, however, a much more political act than it had been earlier in the century. Through his editing of this series of small books, and through his increasingly outspoken belief in the value of studying the lives of individual historical figures, Wu Han was clearly trying to establish a place for biographical writing in the new China. This meant supporting a view which was contested by those who argued that class struggle was the only significant criterion in historical analysis and that historical biographies were an anachronism.

It was after the Anti-Rightist movement and the increasing demand that class analysis take precedence over all else that Wu Han

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41 See, for instance, Zhang Xikong *Cao Cao* (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1959); Hu Zhaojing *Li Gang he Zong Ze* [Li Gang and Zong Ze] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1960); and Shi Chongshu *Yue Fei* (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1965). Wu Han's own contribution to the series, apart from his role as editor-in-chief, was *Hai Rui de gushi* [The story of Hai Rui] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1959).

42 These biographies were part of a series of children's books [shaonian congshu] by Sun Yuxiu which included *Zhu Xi* (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1922); *Wang Yangming* (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1924); *Wen Tianxiang* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1925); and *Xuan Zang* (Shanghai:Commercial Press, 1929).

became more forthright in his commitment to the importance of both history and biography. Prior to this he had been absorbed in his cultural and administrative duties, and had published little.[43] From 1958 onwards, however, he began writing a great deal on a whole range of different issues, constantly stressing the value of the past and its significance for the new China. He argued strongly against those who used slogans like "emphasize the present and de-emphasize the past" (houjin bogu) and "make the past serve the present" (gu wei jin yong) to attack all historical activity, including teaching students about the past.[44] For Wu Han this was narrow-minded extremism which would undermine the strength of the Chinese state. As well as this, he was critical of those who denied the value of studying the lives of individual historical figures:

> There are also some who consider that in discussing history it is only possible to discuss the history of the people and the masses, and that to study, analyse and evaluate individual historical figures is to be immersed in the superstitious belief in the individual. This view obviously is not materialist, and is mistaken.[45]

These concerns with the integrity of the past and of the value of studying individual lives were now political issues, and they would be central to Wu Han's writing from 1958 on until the end of his life.

For this reason Wu Han was delighted when in early 1959 the newspapers and journals were devoted to the debate over how to

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[43] Amongst the few things Wu Han had published during the early 1950s were an article on social and economic development in the early Ming period and a contribution to the debate about the 'sprouts of capitalism' in late imperial China: see "Ming chu shehui shengchanli de fazhan" [The development of the social forces of production in the early Ming period] *Lishi yanjiu* 3 (June, 1955); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.1-34; and "Guanyu Zhongguo zibenzhuyi mengya de yixie wenti" [Some questions about the sprouts of capitalism in China] *Guangming Ribao* December 22, 1955; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.35-43.

[44] "Houjin bogu he gu wei jin yong" [Emphasize the present and de-emphasize the past and make the past serve the present] *Wen shi jiaoxue* 1 (1959); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.44-49.

[45] Ibid, p.47.

evaluate Cao Cao. He contributed to the debate, arguing the need to see the complexity of the issues invloved in assessing the life of any one historical individual and stressing that it was foolish to dismiss all historical figures as class enemies, but he also wanted to carry the debate further and see a more general discussion about the role of the individual in history.[46] He again rejected the notion that to study individuals was to become "immersed in the superstitous belief in the individual" and tried to show how the study of historical figures could provide a focus for understanding issues of significance in the present.[47]

Over the next few years Wu Han wrote many articles assessing the significance of various specific historical figures, ranging from the historians Sima Qian, Tan Qian (1593-1657) and Wan Sitong (1638-1702) to the famous Buddhist pilgrim Xuan Zang and the infamous Empress Wu Zetian (624-705).[48] Throughout these articles he was seeking to

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[46] For Wu Han's contribution to this debate, which was discussed in the preceeding chapter, see "Tan Cao Cao" [On Cao Cao] in *Cao Cao lunji*, pp.37-46.

[47] Wu Han "Cong Cao Cao wenti de taolun tan lishi renwu pingjia wenti" [A discussion of the problem of evaluating historical figures prompted by the debate over the question of Cao Cao] *Lishi jiaoxue* 103 (July, 1959); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.116-125; in particular, see pp.124-125.

[48] See "Tan Qian he *Guoque*" [Tan Qian and *Guoque*] *Guangming Ribao* July 23, 1959; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.130-146; "Lun Hai Rui" [On Hai Rui] *Renmin Ribao* September 21, 1959; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.159-180; "Tan Wu Zetian" [On Wu Zetian] *Renmin wenxue* 7 (1960); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.208-214; "Kuang Zhong he Zhou Chen" [Kuang Zhong and Zhou Chen] *Renmin wenxue* 9 (1960); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.215-226; "Xianshen yu Zuguo dili diaocha yanjiu gongzuo de Xu Xiake" [Xu Xiake's devotion to the inquiry and study of China's geogaphy] *Beijing Ribao* May 5, 1961; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.285-290; "Mingdai minzu yingxiong Yu Qian" [The Ming dynasty national hero Yu Qian] *Xin jianshe* 6 (June, 1961); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.291-301; "Jiechu de xuezhe Xuan Zang [The outstanding scholar Xuan Zang] *Renmin wenxue* 6 (June, 1961); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.302-310; "Weida de lishi xuejia Sima Qian" [The Great historian Sima Qian] *Renmin wenxue* 12 (December, 1961); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.350-360; "Aiguo xuezhe Gu Yanwu" [The patriotic scholar Gu Yanwu] *Renmin ribao* February 7, 1962; reprinted in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.4, pp.342-349; "Wen Tianxiang de guqi" [Wen Tianxiang's moral integrity] *Zhongguo qingnian bao* September 4, 1962; reprinted in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.4, pp.288-291; and "Shixuejia Wan Sitong" [The historian Wan Sitong] *Beijing wanbao* November 22, 1961; reprinted in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.4, pp.350-352.

demonstrate the problem with concentrating only upon the issue of class analysis, that much more needed to be taken into account in order that a true appreciation of the importance of these historical figures was achieved. Wu Han also articulated this view in a number of general discussions of how to evaluate and study historical figures, arguing in one such article that

> I consider that it is perilous to negate, without exception, the culture of the past several thousand years of the feudal period, whether it be music, poetry, painting or carving, simply because these are the products of the landlord class. We might well consider which of the great politicians of the past were not from the landlord class. If we dismiss them without exception because of their class background, irrespective of how they behaved toward the populace at large, then there would be not be any great politicians we could endorse. Because of this, in analysing historical figures it is not possible simply to consider their class background. It is important also to consider their opinions, their actions and achievements, and their contribution to their time.[49]

Wu Han was not denying the importance of class, he simply argued that it was only one of many factors that needed to be taken into consideration when assessing historical figures. Similarly, he argued it was wrong to judge historical figures by the standards of the twentieth century. They should be seen within the context of the times in which they lived and assessed on that basis.[50] This meant it was vital to study the period in detail and be familiar with all the source materials concerned, not simply propound theories and classify historical figures without any regard to

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[49] Wu Han "Guanyu pingjia lishi renwu de yixie chubu yijian" [Some tentative ideas regarding the appraisal of historical figures] *Lishi jiaoxue* 108 (December, 1959); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, p.195.

[50] See "Guanyu Lishi renwu pingjia wenti" [On the problem of evaluating historical figures] *Xin jianshe* 1 (January, 1961); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.256-264. Other articles in which Wu Han discussed these issues include "Youguan lishi renwu pingjia he lishi zhishi puji de wenti" [Regarding the problem of evaluating historical figures and the popularising of historical knowledge] *Renmin jiaoyu* 9 (September, 1961); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.329-335; and "Lun lishi renwu pingjia" [On appraising historical figures] *Renmin ribao* March 23, 1962; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.393-409.

evidence.[51] Wu Han's training as a historian meant he could not simply see the records of the past as a repository of information about the actions of class enemies, and he did not believe that a commitment to historical materialism required this.[52] These were views which he argued over and over again in many different forums from the late 1950s onwards as historical scholarship increasingly became a focus for political debate.

The concerns Wu Han expressed over this issue of how to evaluate historical figures were part of a wider debate at this time about the integrity of the past and its place in the new China. For Wu Han and others, the place of the Chinese tradition was important, as they believed it provided the basis on which the new society should be built. They argued that a commitment to historical materialism did not require the abandonment of the cultural legacy of the Chinese tradition. Opponents of this view demanded that the new China be totally new, that there needed to be a complete break with the preceeding 'feudal' and 'capitalist' periods, which, it was argued, had nothing to offer the new 'socialist' society. The debate between these two groups took various manifestations, but, as Arif Dirlik has noted, ulitmately it was

> a product of the tensions created in Chinese historiography after 1957 by efforts to bring historical study into closer conformity with the revolutionary

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[51] Wu Han "Ruhe xuexi lishi" [How to study history] *Guangming ribao* January 4, 1962; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.366-374. This article is the record of a lecture Wu Han gave to the History Department at Beijing Teacher's University in which he crtitcised the tendancy for theory to take precedence over historical analysis in much current historical writing. He argued that the notion that 'theory leads history' (yi lun dai shi) should be replaced by the view that 'theory emerges from history' (lun cong shi chu). For discussion of this article see Zhang Xikong "Wu Han de zhixue daolu ji qi dui puji lishi kexue de gongxian," and Li Yu-ning "Wu Han's View of History" in *Collected Documents of the First Sino-American Conference on Mainland China* (Taibei:The Institute of International Relations, 1971) pp.413-426.

[52] For a Cultural Revolution attack on Wu Han's views on the individual in history, see Wu Rennian "Ping Wu Han de fandang fanshehuizhuyi fanmakesizhuyi de lishi renwu pingjia" [A criticism of Wu Han's anti-party, anti-socialist, anti-marxist evaluation of historical figures] *Lishi yanjiu* 2 (1966):21-37.

outlook that was to emerge victorious in the Cultural revolution.[53]

Wu Han argued strongly against this trend. Along with Jian Bozan and Ning Ke, Wu Han believed that to insist on the priority of class viewpoint (jieji guandian) was to impose the perspectives of their own time upon earlier periods and thus to fail to see the events and the people of those times as they truly were. They felt that it was important to try to free the past from the condescension of the present, to see it in its own terms, a perspective that was called 'historicism' (lishizhuyi).[54] In addition to this, Wu Han also argued that there was much to learn from the past, from the so-called 'feudal' period, and he believed that there were aspects to the morality and ethics of traditional Chinese society which remained of relevance for the new China, particularly something like the Confucian concept of loyalty (zhong).[55]

From 1958 onwards Wu Han used his influence and position to encourage discussion and debate on these cultural and historical

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53 Arif Dirlik "Th Problem of Class Viewpoint versus Historicism in Chinese Historiography," p.470.

54 See Jian Bozan "Muqian lishi jiaoxue zhong de jige wenti" and his "Dui chuli ruogan lishi wenti de chubu yijian" [Some ideas on how to handle certain historical problems] *Guangming ribao* December 22, 1963; reprinted in *Jian Bozan lishi lunwen xuanji*, pp.59-74. Ning Ke's contribution to this debate included "Lun lishizhuyi he jieji guandian" [On historicism and class viewpoint] *Lishi yanjiu* 4 (1963):1-26. For those who argued that class analysis should be given priority, see Lin Ganquan "Lishizhuyi yu jieji guandian" [Historicism and class viewpoint] *Xin jianshe* 5 (1963):1-7, as well as Guan Feng and Lin Yushi "Zai lishi yanjiu zhong yunyong jieji guandian he lishizhuyi de wenti" [On the question of the use of class viewpoint and historicism in historical research] *Lishi yanjiu* 6 (1963):1-18. In his article "The Problem of Class Viewpoint versus Historicism in Chinese Historiography," Arif Dirlik provides a good summary of this debate.

55 Wu Han "Shuo dedao" [A discussion of morality] *Qianxian* 10 (May 25, 1962); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.433-435; "Zai shuo dedao" [Another discussion of morality] *Qianxian* 16 (August 25, 1962); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.480-482; and "San shuo dedao" [A third discussion of morality] *Guangming ribao* August 29, 1963; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.504-511. For a good analysis which places these articles in a wider context, see Kam Louie *Inheriting Tradition: Interpretations of the Classical Philosophers in Communist China, 1949-1966* (Hong Kong:Oxford University Press, 1986) pp.59-61. Also of value is Merle Goldman "The Role of History in Party Struggle, 1962-1964," *China Quarterly* 51 (July/September, 1972):500-519.

issues, but as the emphasis on class struggle intensified during the 1960s his views on the importance of the past and on its continued relevance became increasingly controversial. This was particularly so following the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee which was held in September 1962, and from which emerged the slogan 'never forget class struggle'.[56] But it was Wu Han's involvement in the factional conflicts of these years that eventually brought about his downfall. This involvement was most obvious in the political satire he contributed to the journal *Qianxian* [Frontline] during the early 1960s and in his controversial historical plays.[57] In particular, it was for writing the play *Hai Rui baguan* [Hai Rui dismissed from office], that he came under sustained attack at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.[58] This historical play was extremely successful as "a vehicle of political communication," raising questions about sensitive issues like the abuse of power which could not be made directly in a public forum.[59] These

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[56] Laszlo Ladany *The Communist Party of China and Marxism*," pp.266-269. For discussion of how Wu Han used his influence to encourage debate after 1958, see Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.249-254.

[57] Wu Han's contributions to *Qianxian* joined those from Deng Tuo and Liao Masha in forming the regular column "Notes from the three family village". These satirical articles are available in Wu Nanxing *Sanjia cun zhaji* [Notes from the three family village] (Beijing:Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1979). This volume also includes Yao Wenyuan's Cultural Revolution criticism of the column: see "Ping 'canjia cun'" [A critique of 'the three family village'], pp.213-235. For some discussion of the context in which this writing was produced, see Merle Goldman "Party Policies Toward the Intellectuals: the Unique Blooming and Contending of 1961-2," in John Wilson Lewis (ed.) *Party Leadership and Revolutionary Power in China* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1970) pp.268-303.

[58] Wu Han "Hai Rui baguan" [Hai Rui dismissed from office] *Beijing wenyi* 1 (1961);reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.532-588. Translations of the play include Clive Ansley *The Heresy of Wu Han: His play 'Hai Jui's Dismissal' and its role in China's Cultural Revolution* (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1971) and C.C. Huang (trans.) *Hai Jui Dismissed from Office* (Honolulu:The University Press of Hawaii, 1972). Most of the Cultural Revolution criticism of the play is available in the eight volumes of *Wu Han pipan quanji* [A complete collection of criticism of Wu Han] (Hong Kong:O.K. Newspaper Agency, 1969).

[59] This phrase "a vehicle of political communication" is used by Lin Chen in "*Hai Rui Dismissed From Office* and China's Opposition Movement, 1958-1959" in Constantine Tung and Colin Mackerras (eds.) *Drama in the People's Republic of China* (New York:State University of New York, 1987) pp.30-31.

issues have been well disuccssed elsewhere and are beyond the scope of this particular study.[60] Our concern here is with the development of history and biography in modern China, and Wu Han's main contribution to this was his 'life' of the first Ming emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang.

The Biography of Zhu Yuanzhang

In one of the multitude of critiques that made up the concerted attack on Wu Han in 1965/6, and which signalled the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the following statement appeared. In its focus on the issue of class analysis, this was representative of many of the other criticisms of Wu Han published at this time:

> The fundamental distinction between a proletarian historical perpective and a capitalist historical perspective is the endorsement or the denial of the view that the history of civilisation is a history of class struggle. In Wu Han's writing, there is no mention of the contradictions and conflict between the peasantry and the landlords... Propogating the theory of class reconciliation, and glorifying the policies and representative figures of the feudal ruling class, comrade Wu Han, together with those who share his views, loudly proclaim that the feudal rulers had carried out far-sighted 'concessionary policies' with regard to the peasantry. [Wu Han] states that Zhu Yuanzhang "was able to accept the lessons of history and make some concessions to the peasantry,"[61] and that the social and economic development of the early years of the Western Han, the Eastern Han, the

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60 Rudolph Wagner puts the play within the context of other historical drama of the period and gives it a 'strong' political reading: see *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, pp.251-274, 289-305, 317-323. See also the study by James R. Pusey *Wu Han: Attacking the Present Through the Past* (Cambridge Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1969). Alternative, less political readings, are presented by Tom Fisher in "'The Play's the Thing': Wu Han and Hai Rui Revisited" *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 7 (1982):1-35, and by Su and Wang in *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.308-324.

61 Here Ma Yan is quoting from Wu Han *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* [A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1965) p.300.

> Tang and the Ming dynasties was the result of the 'concessionary policies' carried out by the rulers of the time.
> This is a distortion of the history of class struggle.[62]

While this critique was directed at all of Wu Han's historical writing, the specific focus in this instance was his biography of Zhu Yuanzhang. The nature of the attack should not have surprised Wu Han, considering the climate of the preceeding decade, yet it is ironic that a work that had been so frequently re-written in order to take into account changing political circumstances and changing views of history should end up being the target of such criticism. The biography was published in four distinct forms between 1944 and 1965 and it is this concern continually to refashion the text that makes it such an interesting work.

Unlike Zhu Dongrun, who first decided to write a biography and then searched for a subject, Wu Han's familiarity with his subject came first, and it was this which encouraged publishers to request that he write a biography of the Ming emperor.[63] The first of these commissions came from the political scientist Lin Tongji (1906-1980), who wanted the biography to be part of a series he had planned called *Zhanguo congshu* [The Warring States collection].[64] Lin was a leading member of a group that came to be known as the 'Zhanguo clique' [Warring States clique],

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[62] Ma Yan "Ping Wu Han tongzhi de zichanjieji lishi guan" [A critique of comrade Wu Han's bourgeois view of history] *Hongqi* 2 (February 11, 1966) pp.45-46. Similar attacks can be found in Yang Guozhen "Lun Mingchu tongzhijieji de neibu douzheng" [On the conflicts within the ruling class at the beginning of the Ming period] *Guangming ribao* March 23, 1966; and Hong Chao "Chedi chanchu Wu Han *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* zhe zhu da ducao" [Thoroughly eradicate the great poisonous weed of Wu Han's *Biography of Zhu Yuanzhang*] *Guangming ribao* June 15, 1966.

[63] It is possible that Wu Han had already been considering writing such a biography, but it was not until a publisher requested he do so that he actually began work on it. See Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, p.110, for this suggestion that Wu Han had already been considering writing a biography of Zhu Yuanzhang.

[64] Lin Tongji would later change the name of this series from *Zhanguo congshu* to *Zaichuang shulin*.

primarily because they published a magazine entitled *Zhanguo ce* [Annals of the Warring States]. This group brought together people who shared a belief that the Warring States era (c.450-221 B.C.) was remarkably similar to the current situation which they saw facing the world. Such times, they argued, called for heroic action. They believed that biographies of great political and military figures could help encourage strong government and foster the type of patriotic attitudes which they argued were absolutely necessary for China's survival.[65] To opponents of the clique such views were representative of the fascism which they increasingly associated with the Guomindang regime. For writing a biography published by this 'Zhanguo clique', Wu Han would later find that his Cultural Revolution critics would add 'fascist' to the multitude of other criticisms which they directed at him.[66] But many leading academics and intellectuals who were not members of the so-called clique and who could not be considered fascists contributed to the various publications sponsored by Lin Tongji and his associates during the war years. As Michael Godley notes, most did so out of "a genuine effort to confront the national crisis."[67] Wu Han must be considered one such figure, although he admitted that the 10,000 yuan fee he received for the biography was also a considerable attraction during this period when inflation was rampant and academic salaries low.[68]

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[65] In April of 1940 Lin Tongji and Lei Haizong lauched the magazine *Zhanguo ce* [Annals of the Warring States] in which they put forward these ideas: see Michael R. Godley "Politics from History: Lei Haizong and the *Zhanguo Ce* Clique," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 40 (September, 1989):95-122. Chen Quan, a member of the group, discusses the role of the 'hero' in history in "Lun yingxiong chongpai" [On hero worship] *Zhanguo ce* 4 (May 15, 1940):1-10.

[66] Feng Lei "Wu Han weishenme dapeng tepeng Zhu Yuanzhang" [Why has Wu Han glorified Zhu Yuanzhang?] *Guangming ribao* May 4, 1966.

[67] Godley "Politics from History," p.106.

[68] Wu Han "*Ming Taizu* he *Cong sengbo dao huangquan*" [*Ming Taizu* and *From Begging bowl to imperial power*] *Wenhui bao* August 1, 1946; reprinted in his *Shishi yu renwu* [Historical events and figures] (Shanghai:Shenghuo shudian, 1948) pp.111-120. Wu Han's wife, Yuan Zhen, suffered from tuberculosis and medical

Wu Han had wanted to call this first biography *Ming Taizu zhuan* [A biography of Ming Taizu], but Lin Tongji changed the title to *You sengbo dao huangquan* [From begging bowl to imperial power].[69] The biography was to be short, around 80,000 characters, and it took only two months to write. Not long after Wu Han received another request for a biography of Zhu Yuanzhang, this time from Pan Gongzhan (1895-1975) and the editors of the series of biographical monographs sponsored by the Shengli Publishing Company entitled *Zhongguo lidai mingxian gushi ji* [A collection of stories of celebrated and outstanding people in Chinese history].[70] Wu Han was reluctant to write another biography of Zhu Yuanzhang and had intended to decline the request, but his wife, Yuan Zhen, was attracted by the project and undertook to produce a reduced and modified version of the earlier biography that would confrom to the requirements stipulated by the series editors.[71] But this second biography by Yuan Zhen was never published. Lin Tongji had negotiated an arrangement with Pan Gongzhan and the editors of the Shengli series whereby the original text written by Wu Han was used for both publications. A few months after *You sengbo dao huangquan* was published the same text appeared in the Shengli series under the title *Ming Taizu*.[72] The only substantial difference between these two works

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expenses were a significant drain on the family economy. The money for the biography was therefore much appreciated.

[69] Wu Han *You sengbo dao hunagquan* [From begging bowl to imperial power] (Chongqing:Zaichuang chubanshe, 1944). Note: this book is also referred to as *Cong sengbo dao huangquan* [From begging bowl to imperial power]. For the intention to call the biography *Ming Taizu zhuan*, see Wu Han "*Ming taizu* he *Cong sengbo dao huangquan*," pp.119-120.

[70] Pan Gongzhan and Yin Weilian were the general editors of the series, which was spopnsored by the Guomindang government. For more on this project see Chapter Two.

[71] In "*Ming Taizu* he *Cong sengbo dao huangquan*," Wu Han discusses the convoluted arrangements associated with these two biographies. See also Li Youning *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.76-80.

[72] Wu Han *Ming Taizu* (Chongqing:Shengli chubanshe, December 1944); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, pp.98-218.

was that *Ming Taizu* had appended to the text a nianbiao, or chronological table, whereas *You sengbo dao huangquan* did not. Wu Han had not agreed to this arrangement, yet there was little he could do about it. The dissatisfaction he felt about this dual publication of the first version of his biography of Zhu Yuanzhang was one of the reasons why he began to rewrite the biography soon afterwards.[73]

Another reason why Wu Han wished to rewrite the biography was that when he wrote the first version in Kunming he did not have access to all the source materials he would have liked to refer to. His historical training meant he felt uncomfortable being unable to read as widely as possible, and particularly in not being able to consult archival material. In the preface to *Ming Taizu* Wu Han gives an extensive list of sources which he had used in the past but which were unavailable at the time of writing the biography. Perhaps the most important of these unavailable sources for a biographer were Zhu Yuanzhang's own writings. Instead, Wu Han was forced to rely on generally available official histories, such as *Yuan shi* [History of the Yuan dynasty], *Ming shi* [History of the Ming dynasty], and Gu Yingtai's (d.1689) *Ming shi jishi benmo* [A detailed record of Ming history].[74] These sources could be supplemented by the extensive research notes and many articles which Wu Han had produced in over ten years of research into Ming history. In later versions of the biography these early problems with source

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73 Wu Han *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* [A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang] (Shanghai:Sanlian shudian, 1949); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, pp.219-445. See the postface, p.443.

74 In particular, it was the *Ming shilu* [The veritable records of the Ming dynasty] which Wu Han regretted not being able to refer to, although he did have Qian Qianyi's "Taizu shilu bianzheng" [A textual study of the veritable records for (the reign of emperor) Taizu]. For this see Qian's *Muzhai chu xueji* [A collection of Muzhai's early writings] (Shanghai:Shanghai guji chubanshe reprint, 1985) vol.3, pp.2098-2152. Apart from the *Ming Shilu*, Wu Han lists more than thirty other titles that were not available to him at this time. See *Ming Taizu*, preface, p.1-2. Note: as with the text of the biography itself, this is exactly the same preface as in *You sengbo dao huangquan*.

materials would be resolved, yet the basic character of the text was established in this first draft which was written over a period of only two months in 1943.

In shaping the text, Wu Han probably drew on the example of Liang Qichao's *Wang Anshi pingzhuan*, although he does not acknowledge that this earlier work was of influence. Like Liang Qichao, Wu Han saw his biography very much as a 'life and times', a study of a figure of political significance. It was this public life which was given priority. The first four chapters of the biography relate Zhu Yuanzhang's involvement in the uprisings of the last years of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), his emergence as a figure of major military and political significance, and his actions and achievements as the founding emperor of a new dynasty. The fifth and last chapter deals briefly with his private world, his family and character.[75] Liang Qichao had used a similar structure for his biography of Wang Anshi, relegating family life and scholarship to the last few chapters of the book.[76]

In the postface to the second version of the biography, which was published in 1949, Wu Han described the way he went about the process of research and writing, stating that

> [My] method of writing was first to gather all the materials on a particular issue and then write about it. The second step was to prepare articles on special topics. The third step [involved] synthesising the various

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[75] The first chapter deals with Zhu Yuanzhang's life as a mendicant monk and the beginning of his involvement in the uprisings of the late Yuan years; the second deals with his transformation from common soldier to commander-in-chief of the rebel forces; the third discusses the beginning of his reign as the first emperor of the new Ming dynasty; and the fourth, which is entitled "Kongbu zhengzhi" [Reign of terror], deals with the latter and more autocratic period of his rule.Together these chapters comprise one hundred and sixty two pages. The last chapter, which deals with Zhu Yuanzhang's family life, his character, and his final years, comprises only thirty two pages.

[76] Liang Qichao *Wang Anshi pingzhuan*, in which the first eighteen chapters deal with Wang's public life and achievements, while only the last four discuss his family life, scholarship and writings.

> articles, and thus, through such comprehensive study, finish writing the book.[77]

This process was undoubtedly much shorter for the first version of the biography, when Wu Han relied on articles already written during his early years as a historian, but the basic methodology remained the same throughout the twenty year period he worked on the text.[78] A good example of this is the way Wu incorporated into the text of the biography research done earlier on the question of Manichaeism. A few years before Wu Han had written an article suggesting that Zhu Yuanzhang had used the term ming [brilliance or light] as the title of his new dynasty because he had been influenced by the ideas of Manichaeism which were prevalent at the time.[79] Although when writing the first version of the biography Wu Han no longer had access to the materials on which this article was based, he was able to incorporate the findings of that research directly from the article into the text of the biography. The later and much longer versions of the biography add more of the detail from the original article, but the basic character of this part of the text remains the same.[80]

Wu Han lists eighteen similar articles, all written prior to the time he first began work on the biography in 1943, and all of which provided the basis for the original text. While these articles helped

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[77] Wu Han *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949) in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, p.444.

[78] For discussion of this method of composition, see Qiu Shusen "Chongdu *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan*" [Re-reading *A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang*] *Nanjing daxue xuebao* 3 (1979) p.61.

[79] Wu Han "Mingjiao yu da-Ming diguo" [The teaching of light and the great Ming empire] *Qinghua xuebao* 13, 1 (1941); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.2, pp.382-418. Samuel N.C. Lieu, in *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester:Manchester University Press, 1985) pp.259-264, contests Wu Han's argument about the link between Manichaeism and the title of the dynasty. See also John D. Langlois Jr. and Sun K'o-k'uan "Three Teachings Syncretism and the Thought of Ming T'ai-tsu" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43, 1 (1983):97-139.

[80] See both *Ming Taizu*, pp.9-13, 50-53 and 91-94, and *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949), in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, pp.234-239, 278-279 and 315-321.

resolve the problem of the paucity of source materials, using them to build up the biography was in itself a problemtaic issue.[81] A biography should focus clearly on the life of its subject. It is not a history of a particular period, but rather a view of that period as seen through the perspective of an individual life. In discussing the first version of the biography, Wu Han noted that "before writing [he] had secretly read *Queen Victoria* and the work of Maurois."[82] No doubt he would also have read other Chinese biographical writing, not just translations of the work of these so-called 'new' biographers from the West. It is difficult, however, to determine what influence this writing may have had on him. The first version of his biography of Zhu Yuanzhang reads more like a historical account of an era than the life of an individual. Particular historical issues, such as the problem of establishing a capital, the unification of the empire and defense policy are all dealt with very well, yet the focus is more on the issues themselves rather than on the life of Zhu Yuanzhang.

This problem of individual focus was one which Wu Han openly acknowledged in his original preface to the biography. A friend who was given a draft to read suggested that rather than *Ming Taizu zhuan*, the working title of the book, it would be better to call it *Da-Ming diguo kaiguo shi* [A history of the beginning of the geat Ming dynasty], because so little of the book dealt directly with Zhu Yuanzhang.[83] This was always going to be a problem due to the way Wu Han approached the

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[81] See the postface to *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949) in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, pp.444-445. No other significant biographies of Zhu Yuanzhang were available to assist Wu Han in his work. There was a short study, designed for school children, but it would have been of little use: see Chen Zuiyun *Ming Taizu* (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1935).

[82] Wu Han "*Ming Taizu* he *Cong sengbo dao huangquan*," p.115.

[83] See *Ming Taizu*, preface, p.2. The friend who Wu Han gave the draft to was Sun Yutang. Sun also remarked that the biography read a little too much like a textbook. For a similar discussion, see also Wu Han "*Ming Taizu* he *Cong sengbo dao huangquan*," pp.114-115.

writing of the biography, and later versions of the text show that he never really overcame it. Compiling a biography from numerous essays that dealt with particular historical issues created special problems of coherence and focus. While these problems are dealt with in a slightly better way in the later versions of the biography they are not resolved. This is not to say that it is a poorly written work; far from it. Wu Han's command of vernacular Chinese and his clear, lucid prose was something others always admired in his writing, and it was certainly a feature of the biography.[84] Nevertheless, the focus throughout the book remains primarily that of a historian, not a biographer. The 'life' tends to be submerged in the 'times'.

It seems Wu Han was planning to rewrite the biography almost as soon as the two different publications of the first version of the book appeared in 1944. Until the war with Japan was over, however, little could be done. The sources which he wished to consult in order to strengthen the book were not available in Kunming. But once back in Beiping in August 1946 he immediately set to work. The process of revision took over a year, much longer than the two months spent on the original version.[85] The end result was a biography that was about twice as long as the original. It was a much richer and more detailed

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[84] See, for instance, Zheng Changgan "Zhu Yuanzhang he *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan*" [Zhu Yuanzhang and *A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang*] *Renwu* 1 (1980) p.186. This is only one of a number of positive reviews of the biography which appeared after Wu Han's official rehabilitation and the republication in 1979 of the 1965 version of the biography. See also Yu Gan "Wu Han he *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan*" [Wu Han and *A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang*] *Dushu* 1 (1980):84-89; Chen Wutong "Yibu youxiu de lishi renwu zhuan - *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan*" [An outstanding biography of a historical figure - *A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang*] *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 3 (1979):157-158 and Chen Wutong "Chongping Wu Han tongzhi de *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan*" [A reappraisal of comrade Wu Han's *Biography of Zhu Yuanzhang*] *Guangming ribao* December 31, 1978. A translation (by Richard T. Wang) of this last article by Chen Wutong was published in *Ming Studies* 11 (Fall, 1980):27-30.

[85] See *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949) in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, p.443.

work. For instance, whereas in the original version Wu Han devoted one chapter to relating Zhu Yuanzhang's involvement in the overthrow of the Yuan dynasty, in the revised version this is divided into two longer chapters. New sections were included, such as an account of the decisive battle of Poyang lake which saw Zhu Yuanzhang defeat his main rival in central China and thereby establish a presence which enabled him to direct all his power against the only other claimant to the 'Mandate of Heaven', and to emerge successful.[86] The book then goes on to set forth the nature of the late-imperial Chinese state which Zhu Yuanzhang established and which accounts for his importance in Chinese history. Factors such as state-control of the economy, the relationship between the throne and the bureaucracy and the use of terror in politics are all dealt with in detail, as is the crucial issue of the nature of absolutism.[87] But while there is much more detail in the discussion of all these issues the overall structure of the work remains fundamentally the same. Wu Han worked on and expanded the existing text to produce a richer historical narrative, but he did not reshape the work to make it more biographical in character.

A considerable part of the revision process was spent locating and identifying references. In accordance with the requirements laid down by the publishers, the original version of the biography had included neither footnotes nor bibliography. The revised work did not stretch as far as a bibliography, but it did include numerous footnotes indicating the sources on which the text was based and the origins of

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[86] The account of this battle occupies only a few paragraphs in the first version, whereas over ten pages are devoted to it in the revised version: see *Ming Taizu*, pp.61-62 and *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949) in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, pp.280-291.

[87] For a good discussion of this issue of absolutism, which includes an assessment of what Wu Han says in the biography, see F. W. Mote "The Growth of Chinese Despotism: A critique of Wittfogel's theory of Oriental Despotism as applied to China," *Oriens Extremus* 8 (1961):1-41.

quotations. More material was quoted directly from the sources, although this was selected in such a way that it did not disrupt the development of the narrative. Overall, it is a far more satisfying work, and it represents better than the original version the many years which Wu Han had spent researching and writing about the period of the early Ming dynasty. This is the version of the biography that has received considerable praise from beyond China. It remains the most important work on the life and times of Zhu Yuanzhang and it was influential in stimulating the study of the early Ming period both in Japan and the West, where it continues to influence understanding of this period.[88] Overall, it is very much a historian's biography, but like Zhu Dongrun's *Zhang Juzheng dazhuan,*

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[88] One of the first to recognise this biography outside of China was Wolfgang Franke, who considered it to be a pioneering achievement which showed how far Chinese historical writing had moved from the liezhuan of traditional historiography: see "Neuere Chinesische arbiten zur geschichte der frühen Ming-zeit," *Asiatica* (1954) pp.134-139. Yamane Yukio claims that it was this 1949 version of Wu Han's biography which stimulated considerable interest in the Ming dynasty amongst Japanese scholars: see "Trends in Postwar Japanese Studies on Ming History: A Bibliographical Introduction," *Acta Asiatica* 38 (1980) p.94. Romeyn Taylor, one of the foremost scholars of the early Ming period in the West, has written that it "is an excellent full-length biography that gets through the veil of official ideology." See the introduction to his translation of *Basic Annals of Ming T'ai-tsu* (San Francisco:Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Centre, 1975) p.11. See also the use Taylor makes of the biography in his articles "Social Origins of the Ming Dynasty, 1351-1360," *Monumenta Serica* 22 (1963):1-78 and "Ming T'ai-tsu's Story of a Dream," *Monumenta Serica* 32 (1976):1-20. John D. Langlois Jr. notes that Wu Han's biography "was the first modern attempt to interpret the founder's life" and that, more generally, his "work on the early Ming is the most important body of secondary literature on the Ming founder's life and times." See Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett (eds.) *The Cambridge History of China, volume 7, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 1*, p.788. Other Western works which show the influence of Wu Han's biography include Hok-lam Chan "The Rise of Ming T'ai-tsu (1368-98): Facts and Fictions in Early Ming Official Historiography," *Journal of the American Oriental Scoiety* 95, 4 (1975):679-715; Edward L. Farmer *Early Ming Government: The Evolution of Dual Capitals* (Cambridge Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1976); Edward L. Dreyer *Early Ming China: A Political History, 1355-1435* (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1982); and John W. Dardess *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites and the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1983). In his earlier article, "The Transformation of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming Dynasty," *Journal of Asian Studies* 29, 3 (1970):539-558, Dardess notes (p.554) that he was "more in debt to Wu Han than specific citations might indicate." Teng Ssu-yü's entry on Zhu Yuanzhang in *The Dictionary of Ming Biography*, vol.1, pp.381-392, also shows the influence of Wu Han's biography, although Teng is perhaps more negative in his assessment of Zhu than Wu Han had been.

it helped to show modern Chinese historians that biography could continue to play a very useful part in their work.[89]

Sections of the book were published independently during 1947 and 1948, yet almost as soon as the draft was completed and dispatched to the publisher Wu Han was contemplating rewriting the biography again.[90] The reasons this time were predominantly political. He had moved into the 'liberated area' of Shijiazhuang in late 1948 and while there was able to discuss the draft of the biography with Mao Zedong. Mao was clearly interested in the subject of the book and seems to have admired most of what he read. He did, however, suggest ways in which he thought it might be improved. Firstly, he queried whether Wu Han had been correct in suggesting that the heretical Buddhist monk and rebel leader, Peng Yingyu (c.1308-c.1352), had simply withdrawn from the anti-Yuan uprising and disappeared without trace.[91] Mao argued that this was not consistent with the actions of a true revolutionary, who would fight

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[89] This 1949 revision is also the version of the biography that has been reprinted most in Hong Kong and Taiwan. See Wu Chenbo *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* [A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang] (Taibei:Landeng wenhua shiye gongsi reprint, 1987); and Wu Han *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* [A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang] (Hong Kong:Zhuanji wenxue she reprint, n.d.).

[90] See, for instance, "Zhu Yuanzhang de tongzhi shu" [Zhu Yuanzhang's method of rule] *Zhongguo jianshe* 6, 3 (July, 1948) and *Zhongguo jianshe* 6, 4 (July, 1948); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.2, pp.602-654. This article, published in two parts, comprised Chapter Four of the biography: see *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949) in *Wu Han shixuelunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, pp.315-363. Wu Han also continued to research particular topics which would later be incorporated into the biography but which would appear first as independent articles. See, for instance, "Ming chu de xuexiao" [Schools of the early Ming period] *Qinghua xuebao* 15, 1 (February, 1948); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.2, pp.531-555. Much of this article was used, word for word, in Chapter Four of the biography: see *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949) in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, pp.328-339.

[91] In describing Peng's involvement in the uprising of 1351, Wu Han had written that "after the uprising he disappeared like smoke, returning amongst the people, so that no matter where you look you will not find this man's name." See *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949) in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, p.280. An assessment of Peng Yingyu's involvement in the uprisings of the late Yuan years can also be found in John W. Dardess "The Transformation of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming," p.543-544.

on to very the end. The problem, he suggested, must lie with the source materials, not Peng Yingyu.[92] For Wu Han, this criticism raised the more general question of the way he had handled the issue of peasant rebellion, and it was something he soon began to turn his attention to.

After returning to Beijing in late 1949 Wu spent more time researching the case of Peng Yingyu and he found that indeed Peng had not simply disappeared, but had been killed in a conflict with Yuan troops.[93] Mao had been proved right and the importance of reassessing this issue was confirmed. The uncovering of this new material and the 'lessons' associaiated with it provided the stimulus for Wu Han to revise the whole section of the biography that dealt with the uprisings of the latter years of the Yuan dynasty.[94] In the proccess, the language used to describe these events became more explicitly Marxist, with statements about exploitation and class conflict now prominent:

> The collapse of the Yuan empire was a consequence of the cruel exploitation and merciless oppression of the mass of the peasantry by the Mongol-Han officials and

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[92] Later, in his article "Wo kefule 'chao jieji' guandian," p.17, Wu Han wrote about this 'instruction' from Mao: "Besides showing where there were many instances of incorrect viewpoint, in particular [he] used the instance of the Buddhist monk Peng to give me an extremely profound class education, removing cancers from my thought and building up in me the perspective of serving the people." This is also discussed in Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.213 and 293-294.

[93] Back in Beijing he "made an effort to re-read sources, and sure enough found material which previously had been ignored [and which showed] that Peng Yingyu was in the conflict to the end, being murdered by Yuan troops." The mistake he attributed to his previous 'supra-class viewpoint': "after entering the liberated areas I become aware of this incorrect viewpoint and now acknowledge my mistake." See *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1965), preface, p.3. His opinion about the place and date of Peng's death did not go uncontested, however. Others believed Peng had died in 1353, not 1352. See Wu Han "Guanyu Yuanmo hongjun zuzhizhe Peng Yinyu heshang zhenwang de shiqi he didian wenti," [On the problem of the date and place when the organiser of the Red Army of the late Yuan period, the Budddhist monk Peng Yingyu, was killed in action] *Xin jianshe* 78 (March, 1955) p.60; and Qiu Shusen "Yuanmo hongjinjun lingxiu Peng Yingyu xisheng de shijian he didian wenti" [The date and place of the sacrifice of Peng Yingyu, leader of the Red Turban army of the late Yuan period] *Yuanshi ji beifang minzu shi yanjiu jikan* 1 (July, 1977):25-28.

[94] This section was published as a separate article under the title "Yuanmo hongjun qiyi - *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* de yijie" [The Red Army uprising of the late Yuan period - a section of *A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang*] *Xin jianshe* 74 (November, 1954):1-9.

> landlords. The peasants were driven beyond the limits of endurance and were forced into a long period of heroic class conflict.[95]

The clear prose and subtle exposition of the earlier version of the biography are replaced by the clichés and slogans of the day. Wu Han spent much of 1954 revising the biography in this way, trying to transform it into a work which he felt was more appropriate to the new intellectual enviroment of the People's Republic.

Mao Zedong's comments on the draft of the 1949 version of the biography also stimulated Wu Han to add a whole new section to the book. When he returned the draft, Mao wrote, very much as teacher to student, that apart from the issue of Peng Yingyu

> there is also the question of methodology; it seems that with regard to the methodology of history you still have not completely accepted historical materialism. If you were to put some more effort into this, your achievements would be considerable.[96]

The consequences of Wu Han's response to this direction were again detrimental to the biography. From this new concern about the nature of historical materialism and the associated question about the rise of productive forces came an article on this topic which was then simply inserted into the biography as a new chapter. No doubt this article needs to be seen in the context of the debate over the 'sprouts of capitalism' which was just beginning to emerge at this time, and on its own the

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95 Wu Han *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1954) in *Wu Han wenji*, vol. 2, p.25. The corresponding section in the 1949 version of the biography carries a similar message but the language is more subtle and less doctrinaire: see *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1949) in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.4, p.241. In their biography of Wu Han, Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi note that Wu's interpretation of this issue of the peasantry and the uprisings of the late Yuan had changed over the period from the mid-thirties to the mid-forties: "In 1935 when he wrote "Peasants of the Ming period," Wu Han still imagined that peasants could flee to mountain villages and enjoy a peaceful life without suffering exploitation. When he wrote *Ming Taizu* [i.e. 1943], he had completely abandoned this sort of fanciful idea." See Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, p.113.

96 For this letter, see *Mao Zedong shuxin xuanji* [A selection of Mao Zedong's letters] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1983) p.310.

article was perhaps of interest. It was completely out of place, however, as a chapter in a biography of Zhu Yuanzhang.[97] While the attempt is made to relate the events described to Zhu Yuanzhang, he hardly figures in the discussion at all, and the overall effect of the insertion of this chapter is a disruption of the narrative coherence of the biography. The 'life' is further submerged in the 'times'.

The other main issue which Wu Han claims concerned him about the earlier versions of the biography, and which he also sought to redress in this 1954 revision, was the way he had used the earlier texts to make an indirect criticism of Chiang Kaishek (1887-1975). In explaining this he wrote that in the previous versions of the biography he had

> used Zhu Yuanzhang to allude to the bandit Chiang. Although on the one hand it was impossible not to affirm Zhu Yuanzhang's place in history, on the other hand, by writing about one thing while referring to another (zhi sang ma huai), [I] had portrayed him in an inappropriate way and assessed his place in history incorrectly.[98]

This assertion raises very difficult issues. Did Wu Han really intend those earlier versions of the biography to be read as an indirect attack on Chiang Kaishek, or was he simply claiming this to be the case in order to enhance his political standing under the new regime? Once readers are directed toward an implied or allegorical reading, how do they then tell the difference between what is meant to be an allusion and what is intended as a genuine account of the past?

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[97] For the article, see "Ming chu shehui shengchanli de fazhan" [The development of the social forces of production in the early Ming period] *Lishi yanjiu* 3 (June, 1955); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.1-34. This article became chapter five of the biography and was entitled "Shehui shengchanli de fazhan" [The development of the social forces of production]: see *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1954) in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.2, pp164-198. For discussion of the issues of the rise of the productive forces and the debate about the 'sprouts of capitalism', see Chapter Four.

[98] See the introductory paragraph attached to the revised section of the biography which was published as "Yuanmo hongjun qiyi," p.1. A similar statement is included in the preface to the 1965 version of the biography, which was based on this earlier introductory paragraph.

The was certainly a long history of the use of innuendo and 'camouflagued' language, of yi gu feng jin (using the past to criticise the present), in the Chinese literary and historical tradition. In poetry, yinyu (enigmatic expression) and feng (remonstrance) had long been used to imply things which could not be stated directly.[99] It seems that the use of these techniques became prominent during the Spring and Autumn period (c.770-c.450 B.C.), and it is *Chunqiu*, or more correctly, the *Gongyang* commentary on the *Annals*, that has been the focus of much discussion about the similar use of language in historical writing.[100] It was believed that through a judicious but subtle use of words Confucius was supposed to have passed judgement on the events which he recorded in the *Annals*, and the term chunqiu bifa (spring and autumn style) has since been employed to refer to the practice of using historical writing to reflect upon contemporary circumstances. Wu Han was thus drawing on a well established tradition in claiming that his biography had been more than just an account of the life of Zhu Yuanzhang.

It is also true that during the 1940s Wu Han had been prolific in writing essays which did indeed reflect on the current political situation in China.[101] Should we then accept Wu's claim that he had used yingshe (allusion) in the biography of Zhu Yuanzhang, that it was

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[99] Li Chi "Yin-yü and Tai-yü in Chinese Poetry" *The Tsinghua Journal of Chinese Studies* 2, 3 (June, 1961):343-359.

[100] Recent Studies of this include Tang Xianquan "Lun 'Taishigong yue' de chunqiu bifa" [On the spring and autumn style of 'The Grand Historian remarks'] *Shanghai shehui kexue yuan xueshu jikan* 2 (1988):168-176 and Qu Lindong "Zhibi yu qubi - shijia zuo shi taidu yu 'xinshu'" [Striaght brush and crooked brush - the approach and 'intention' of historians in writing history] *Wen shi zhishi* 2 (1991):40-46. For the use of *Chunqiu bifa* by writers in the late 1980s see Su Xiaokang "*Heshang* de shangque" [The debate over *River Elegy*] in *Long nian de beichuang* [The distress of a dragon year] (Hong Kong:Sanlian shudian, 1989):168-177 and Geremie Barmé "Using the Past to Serve the Present: Dai Qing's Historiographical Dissent" in *East Asian History* 1 (June, 1991):141-181. Also of interest is William B. Pettus "*The Fine Art of Reviling* by Liang Shih-ch'iu," *Renditions* 7 (Spring, 1978):43-46.

[101] Much of this writing is collected in *Wu Han wenji*, vol.3. See also Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.117-134 and Mazur "Intellectual Activism in China During the 1940s," pp.33-34.

actually not a biography of Zhu at all but an indirect attack on Chiang Kaishek? Certainly there have been those that have argued that this was the case, although most of these people were old colleagues and associates of Wu's who were interested in enhancing his political standing following his official rehabilitation in 1979.[102] Others, however, have seen it as being exactly the opposite, as a paen to Chiang Kai-shek and his 'fascist' administration.[103] These contradictory interpretations highlight the problem with reading into a text a hidden agenda. There may well be a correspondence between the subject of a biography or historical text and the contemporary situation when the text was written, yet it is often difficult to unravel the process of composition and determine whether or not this correspondence was intentional.[104] In Wu Han's case there were obvious political advantages for him in claiming that the earlier versions of the biography were an indirect attack on Chiang Kai-shek. Yet in seeking political kudos he in effect demeaned his own earlier intellectual achievement. By claiming it was more than a life of Zhu Yuanzhang, that it was also an essay of contemporary political criticism, he made it less significant as a historical biography.

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102 See, for instance, Liu Guiwu "Wu Han xiansheng de daibiao zuo *Zhu Yuanzhang*" [Mr Wu Han's representative work: *A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang*] in *Wu Han jinian wenji*, pp.152-170 and Su and Wang *Wu Han zhuan*, pp.110-116. Not only Wu Han's colleagues supported this view, however. Looking back from the 1980s, Zhu Dongrun also stated that when he read Wu Han's biography of Zhu Yuanzhang he said to himself, "this is Chiang Kai-shek." See "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," p.181. Similarly, in his 1954 article, Wolfgang Franke remarked on how easy it was for the reader of the biography to forget that it was the mid-fourteenth century and not the mid-twentieth century that was being described. See "Nuere Chinesische arbeiten zur geschichte der Frühen Ming-zeit," p.136.

103 Feng Lei "Wu Han weishenme dapeng tepeng Zhu Yuanzhang."

104 Pieter Geyl comments here are relevant. He notes that in his work on French interpretations of Napoleon, which was undertaken during the period of the Second World War, although he "had not written a single word in it about Hitler or National Socialism, the parallel with our own times had seemed to the editor a little too pointed in the new circumstances." He admits the parallels, yet concludes by stating that "in the end the book has come to be what I wanted it to be and what the title indicates, a book on Napoleon as seen by French historians." See *Napoleon: For and Against* (Harmmondsworth:Penguin reprint, 1986) preface, pp.7 and 10.

The part of the biography Wu Han had most in mind when he suggested that it had been written in order to criticise Chiang Kai-shek was the chapter entitled "Kongbu zhengzhi" [Reign of terror]. He believed that the indirect criticism that lay behind this chapter was no longer appropriate under the new political circumstances of the People's Republic, and thus this also was a section of the book which he attempted to revise in 1954.[105] The chapter described the extensive purges of the administrative ranks which Zhu Yuanzhang conducted after 1380 and his concentration of considerable power in his own hands as emperor.[106] The difficulty here was that if the account of such autocratic behaviour was to be seen as an indirect attack on Chiang Kai-shek before 1949, it could just as easily be seen as an indirect attack on Mao Zedong after 1949.[107] No matter how Wu Han tried to re-write this section of the biography, the possibility of such a reading always remained.[108] This may have been a reason why he chose not to go ahead with the publication of this third revision of the biography in 1954.[109] It also may have been a

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[105] Wu Han "Yuanmo hongjun qiyi," p.1. See also the similar comment contained in a later article: "Lishi de zhenshi yu wenyi de zhenshi" [Historical truth and artistic truth] *Xiju bao* 20 (October 30, 1959); reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.188-193.

[106] Edward L. Dreyer provides a good discussion of these purges in his chapter on Zhu Yuanzhang's reign in Mote and Twitchett *The Cambridge History of China, volume 7*, pp.139-181.

[107] The suggested correspondence between Zhu Yuanzhang and Mao Zedong was not something that would only be associated with Wu Han's writing. The North American based scholar Yü Yung-shih makes the comparison between the two explicit in his article "Cong Zhongguo shi de guandian kan Mao Zedong de lishi weizhi" [Mao Zedong's historical position as seen from the perspective of Chinese history] in his *Shixue yu chuantong* [History and tradition] (Taibei:Shibao wenhua chubanshe reprint, 1988) pp.290-299. Yü compares Mao Zedong to a number of historical figures, including Qin Shihuangdi and Cao Cao, yet concludes that the person Mao resembled most was Zhu Yuanzhang (p.299).

[108] This section of the book had been the focus of revision for both the unpublished third version of the biography (1954) and for the final 1965 version.

[109] Wu Han had about 100 copies of this third version of the biography distributed to friends, many of whom wrote back commenting on the book. Wu states that on the basis of these comments, most of which suggested he needed to direct more attention to the issue of class analysis, he decided to cancel publication of the book. See *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1965) preface, pp.3-4.

factor in his decision eventually to publish a fourth version of the book ten years later.

This fourth version of the biography, which was published in early 1965, was substantially the same as the third version, although it had been refined in one or two places. In order to improve the narrative coherence of the text parts of it were re-arranged, some of the language was modified, and a new section on landlords and officials was added.[110] At the end of the book Wu also added a few paragraphs summing up Zhu Yuanzhang's place in history.[111] This was similar to what he had been doing in the many articles he wrote on historical figures during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and as with those articles his assessment combined both positive and negative features. He saw the reunification of the empire and the return to a settled and productive life as a significant achievement, yet was critical of the way Zhu allowed his alliance with the peasantry to be subverted by landlord and offcial interests. Overall, however, Wu felt his achievements outweighed his failings, and that therefore there was much to be learned from the study of Zhu's life and times.[112] But the description of the purges and the increasing despotism of the latter years of Zhu Yuanzhang's reign remained, and readers were free to perceive in this the same type of

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110 The new section on landlords and officials appeared first as an article: see "Zhu Yuanzhang de duiwu he zhengquan de xingzhi" [The forces of Zhu Yuanzhang and the nature of political power] *Renmin ribao* April 26, 1964; reprinted in *Wu Han shixue lunzhu xuanji*, vol.3, pp.512-517. For this section in the biography, see *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1965) pp.172-177.

111 *Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* (1965) pp.300-302.

112 The publication of this fourth version of the biography prompted some discussion of the way Wu Han had interpreted the transformation of Zhu Yuanzhang from a peasant leader to a 'feudal' emperor. Some of these articles, which were published in *Wenhui bao*, are brought together in a collection entitled *Ping Wu Han xiansheng suo xie de Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan* [Criticism of *A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang* written by Mr. Wu Han] (Hong Kong:O.K. Newspaper Agency, 1969). For discussion of these articles see Tom Fisher "Wu Han, the Cultural Revolution, and the Biography of Zhu Yuanzhang: An Introduction," *Ming Studies* 11 (Fall, 1980):33-43. Also of peripheral interest here is Frank Münzel "Some Remarks on Ming T'ai-tsu'" *Archiv Orientalni* 37 (1969):377-403.

allegorical intent which Wu had suggested was valid for the earlier version of the biography. This is what happened in the attacks launched against Wu Han at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. But by then the biography had been swallowed up in the wider factional politics of the time. More important issues were at stake as the Cultural Revolution gathered momentum and the biography was soon forgotten.

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With Wu Han's posthumous rehabilitation in 1979, the biography was reprinted, and it has been re-released at least once again since then.[113] Interest has also revived in Zhu Yuanzhang, especially regarding his place in the development of autocratic rule in late imperial China, and Wu's biography has provided an important focus for this discussion.[114] While some new biographies and biographical essays on Zhu Yuanzhang have been published, none has superseded Wu's biography, which, for all its faults, remains the best study of the life and times of the first Ming emperor.[115] But the political overtones associated

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113 These were reprintings of the fourth (1965) version of the biography. The first occurred in 1979, and another reprint followed in 1985. There may have been others since.

114 See, for instance, Shi Yikui and Qiu Shusen "Zailun Zhu Yuanzhang ji qi zhengquan xingzhi de zhuanhua" [Another discussion of Zhu Yuanzhang and the transformation of the nature of political power] *Nanjing daxue xuebao* 3 (1978):71-76; and any of the many articles by Chen Wutong, such as "Lun Zhu Yuanzhang de tuibian" [On the transformation of Zhu Yuanzhang] *Beifang conglun* 3 (1980):89-94 and "Lun Zhu Yuanzhang de fengjian wenhua zhuanzhi" [On the feudal cultural autocracy of Zhu Yuanzhang] *Xueshu yuekan* 4 (1980):7-18. These articles should be seen in the context of the wider debate about 'feudal auocracy', or 'feudal despotism', which has been discussed by Lawrence R. Sullivan "The Controversy over 'Feudal Despotism': Politics and Historiography in China, 1978-1982," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 23 (January 1990):1-31.

115 See Qiu Shusen "Zhu Yuanzhang" in Hong Huanchun (ed.) *Zhongguo minzu jiechu renwu zhuan* [Biographies of outstanding Chinese] (Beijing:Zhongguo changchun chubanshe, 1983) vol.1, pp.227-266; Wan Ming "Kaiguo huangdi Zhu Yuanzhang' [The founding emperor Zhu Yuanzhang] in Xu Daling and Wang Tianyou (eds.) *Mingchao shiliu di* [Sixteen emperors of the Ming dynasty] (Beijing:Zijincheng chubanshe, 1991) pp.5-41; and Guan Yuchun and Lü Wujin *Zhu Yuanzhang* (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1982). For an earlier brief and popular biography, similar in nature to the one by Guan and Lü, see Zhang Hui *Zhu*

with the biography remain and it may well be some time before readers can see the work primarily as a life of Zhu Yuanzhang and not as a reflection on the factional politics of twentieth century China.

Unlike Zhu Dongrun, Wu Han approached the writing of biography primarily from the perspective of a historian. Historical issues and historical questions were of paramount importance for him, and perhaps this is the reason why his biographical writing reflects a strong interest not just in the subject of the biography but also in the events of the period concerned. Sometimes his attention wanders too far from the subject, especially once he felt it was necessary to reflect in the biography issues of contemporary political concern. Nevertheless, his life of Zhu Yuanzhang was an important contribution to the development of the writing of modern historical biography in China. It helped demonstrate to other historians that the biographical perspective could still be of considerable value, even if it must be approached with caution, and in its various forms displayed many of the difficulties of the genre. These were valuable lessons. When scholarship revived again after the Cultural Revolution, and the writing of historical biography began to flourish, Wu Han's long experience of biographical writing would provide an important example for others.

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Yuanzhang (Nanjing:Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1956). Both these books are around forty pages long.

Epilogue

History and Biography in the 1980s

'Biographical literature', as the name implies, ought to be both biographical and literary... The crucial thing is that it must strictly adhere to historical reality, and yet also display a fine literary quality.[1]

Biography emerged in the 1980s as one of the most popular forms of writing in China. This upsurge in biographical writing was stimulated initially by the great wave of political rehabilitation that follwed the Cutlural Revolution. Wu Han was only one of the many, albeit a prominent one, who were officially rehabilitated in the late 1970s. As Geremie Barmé has noted:

> Not only were older cadres who had been purged or maligned during the Cultural Revolution gradually restored to power or posthumously rehabilitated, but entire historical epochs, figures, and even cultural forms, themes and styles were 'rehabilitated'.[2]

Along with the many individuals, both contemporary and historical, who were given such rehabilitation, biography as a genre returned to favour and was taken up with great enthusiasm by writers and

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[1] Lin Mohan "Guanyu zhuanji wenxue" [Regarding biographical literature] *Zhuanji wenxue* 1 (1984) p.5. This comment comes from the lead article of the first issue of a new mainland Chinese journal devoted specifically to publishing biographical writing. It should not be confused with the Taiwanese journal of the same name.

[2] Geremie Barmé "History for the Masses," in Jonathan Unger (ed.) *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China* (New York:M.E. Sharpe, 1993) p.260.

historians. At the official level, the Party attempted to keep control of this process of re-assessing the past, particularly with regard to interpretations of its own history. The 1981 resolution on Party history set out the broad guidelines for both assessing the recent past and determining the way forward.[3] The frenzied emphasis on class analysis, the slogan of the last twenty years, was toned down and there were calls to open up all sorts of historical issues for re-examination.[4]

The question of the role of the individual in history was one of the issues which again attracted attention.[5] There was now little disagreement as to the value of studying particular individuals from the past, although there was discussion over what aspects of any one individual's life should be given emphasis. Class character was no longer seen as being of overriding importance; it was simply one of the many factors that needed to be taken into consideration when evaluating the role of an individual in history. Also considered important was the need to relate the individual to the time in which they had lived. Their behaviour should be assessed in the context of the social conditions that existed at the time when they were alive, not on the basis of criteria that

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[3] See "On Questions of Party History: Resolutions on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," in Liu Suinian and Wu Qungan (eds.) *China's Socialist Economy: An Outline History (1949-1984)* (Beijing:Beijing Review, 1986) pp.578-636.

[4] See, for instance, Li Shu "'Sirenbang' dui Zhongguo lishi xue de da pohuai" [The great damage done to the study of Chinese history by the 'Gang of Four'] *Lishi yanjiu* 2 (1977); reprinted in *Zaisiji* [Reconsiderations] (Beijing:Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1985) pp.1-12. Li Shu was editor of the important historical journal *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical research]. This was only one of many such articles Li published during these years, most of which are brought together in this collection *Zaisij*. For an overview of historical writing in the years immediately after the Cultural Revolution, see Wang Gungwu "Recent Reinterpretations of History" in Lee Ngok and Chi-keung Leung (eds.) *China: Development and Challenge* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press,1979) pp.1-18.

[5] In 1978 a conference held at Shanghai Teacher's University was devoted to the discussion of this issue of evaluating historical figures. Those present included Luo Ergang, Rong Sheng, Tian Changwu, Guan Wenfa, Li Tianyou and Sun Daren. See the report on the discussion and some of the contributions which are included in Zhu Dongrun et. al. (eds.) "Guanyu lishi renwu pingjia wenti" [On the question of evaluating historical figures] *Zhonghua wen shi luncong* 2 (1979):1-30.

had only become of significance in the twentieth century, with its vastly different social and political conditions. It was argued that if the person had shown integrity (qijie) in the way that they had conducted themselves then there was value in a study of their life.[6] The practice of using historical figures simply as a vehicle for yingshe, for the criticism of contemporary figures and contemporary policies, was condemned.[7] Another point emphasised was that it was important to consider all aspects of an individual's life, and the way they had developed throughout their life, not just focus on one incident or one feature of a person's character.[8] The best way to do this, of course, was through the medium of biography. Biographical writing was endorsed and encouraged.

One of the best contributions to these discussions on how to assess historical figures began by reviewing the earlier work of writers and historians like Zhu Dongrun and Wu Han. It was argued that these scholars had shown how biography should be written. It was unfortunate that their legacy had been disrupted by the "extremely mistaken" view that the study individuals from the past was being used as nothing more than a vehicle to criticise the present. This had meant that biographical writing had become forbidden territory. This also went against the rich biographical tradition which existed in China, reaching all the way back

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[6] Su Shuangbi and Xiao Li "Guanyu lishi renwu pingjia de jige wenti" [Some questions regarding the evaluation of historical figures] *Guangming ribao* May 25, 1981. See also Su Shuangbi "Lun lishi renwu pingjia" [On the appraisal of historical figures] *Jindai shi yanjiu* 3 (1980):77-95. For a laboriously exhaustive treatment of this issue, see Shi Suyuan *Lishi renwu pingjia lungao* [An essay on the evaluation of historical figures] (Zhengzhou:Henan renmin chubanshe, 1986).

[7] Luo Ergang "Yinggai keguan de quanmian de pingjia lishi renwu" [(We) ought to evaluate historical figures objectively and completely] in Zhu Dongrun et. al. (eds.) *Zhonghua wen shi luncong* 2 (1979) p.2. See also Zhou Zhenfu "Cong 'sirenbang' de jia pi Kong kan yingshe shixue de pochuan" [Looking at the bankruptcy of allusive history from the perspective of the 'Gang of Four's' false criticism of Confucius] *Lishi yanjiu* 3 (1978):28-34.

[8] Peng Ming "Ruhe pingjia lishi renwu" [How to evaluate historical figures] *Lishi jiaoxue* 6 (1980) p.7.

to Sima Qian, a tradition which the writer of this article suggested should be revived. Biographers like Zhu Dongrun and Wu Han had shown how that tradition could be built on and continued in the twentieth century. Their work should provide the model for the biographical writing of the 1980s.[9]

Such theoretical discussions over the role of the individual in history and on how to assess or evaluate historical figures were soon overshadowed by the upsurge in discussions about biography and in biographical writing itself. Much of this writing focused on the 'rehabilitation' of those who had suffered in the recent past, or was directed towards providing laudatory accounts of great revolutionary 'heroes'. One of the new journals launched to publish articles of this nature, the magazine entitled *Renwu* [Figures], also provided a forum in its early issues for discussions about the nature of biographical writing. For the most part, the contributors to these discussions were concerned about whether biography should be considered as a sub-genre of historical writing, as was traditionally the case in China, or whether it should be seen as an independent genre, combining those skills required of the historian and the writer of fiction.

One of the first contributions to this discussion came from Yao Xueyin (b.1910), who had for many years been involved in writing an enormous historical novel based around the life of the seventeenth-century rebel leader Li Zicheng (1606-1645).[10] Yao began by discussing the rich Chinese tradition of biographical writing, emphasising the value for modern scholars in becoming familiar with that tradition, especially the

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[9] Cheng Yingliu "Tan lishi renwu de yanjiu" [On the study of historical figures] *Lishi yanjiu* 1 (1984):141-147.

[10] Yao Xueyin *Li Zicheng* 5 vols (Beijing:Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1977). For a discussion of the way Yao deals with the subjects of the novel, see Hu Peide ***Li Zicheng renwu tan*** [Discussions of figures in *Li Zicheng*] (Ningxia:Renmin chubanshe, 1981). See also Guy Alitto "Yao Xueyin and his *Li Zicheng*: An Interview," *Modern Chinese Literature* 2, 2 (Fall, 1986):211-216.

work of Sima Qian. By contrast, Yao suggested that the allegorical writing of people like Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan, although presented in the form of a zhuan (biography), should not be used as a model by modern writers. *Shiji* provided a much better model. The reason for this, Yao believed, was that Sima Qian combined the historian's concern with source materials with the writers concern with style:

> The value of Sima Qian's *Shiji* is twofold: both in its collection of source materials and in being a fine literary work; as can be seen in "The Basic Annals of Gaozu," "The Basic Annals of Xiang Yu," "The Hereditary House of Confucius," and in the many fine biographies. On the one hand it enables us to understand history, the times in which historical figures lived, the creativity of social life, their achievements and their suffering, or their experience of defeat. On the other hand, such a fine literary work has great aesthetic value. There will always be a need for this kind of biographical work. We must continue and develop this tradition...[11]

For Yao Xueyin, as for many of the other contributors to this discussion, biography was to be seen as distinct genre, separate from both history and fictional writing, yet combining the historians concern for fidelity to source materials with the writers concern for literary style. Zhu Dongrun had, of course, been arguing the same thing for years.[12]

Others, however, believed that this emphasis on the literary aspects of biographical writing was dangerous. For them what was important was that a biography be well grounded in recorded events.

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[11] Yao Xueyin "Guanyu xie renwu zhuanji" [On the writing of biographies] *Renwu* 1 (1981) p.9. Yao notes (p.10) that not all of the liezhuan in *Shiji* are completely reliable as historical accounts. This was, he says, a consequence of Sima Qian conveying material that was in itself unreliable. In composing the biographies, however, he believes Sima Qian was extremely concientious. It is this attitude he is recommending to his readers.

[12] Zhu was invited to contribute a lead article to the first edition of a new journal entitled *Zhuanji wenxue* [Biographical literature] which endorsed this view of biography. This first issue of the journal also carried a translation of the section on biography from the 1980 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: see Zhu "Wo xuexi zhuanji wenxue de kaishi," and Mei Jianghai and Liu Ke (trans.) "Zhuanji wenxue - *Xin daying baike quanshu* tiaomu" [Biographical literature - entry in the *New Encyclopedia Britannica*] *Zhuanji wenxue* 1 (1984):182-191.

Biography, they argued, should remain the work of historians, as only historians had the necessary training in the use of evidence and source materials, the foundation of good biography. Sun Li (b.1913), for instance, argued that

> The historical method and the literary method are not the same thing; sometimes they are contradictory. History gives emphasis to real events, literature admires fabrication; history gives emphasis to objectivity, while literary people like to express their own views. From these two points it can be seen that people are often unable to believe in the biographies written by writers...
> Some people, when writing historical biographies, display their literary skills to the full, and these very literary aspects, the fancy phrases and distortions, are achieved at the cost of historical aspects...
> Biography, from ancient times to the present, has been a branch of history.[13]

The editors of *Renwu* followed this extract with a section giving the contrasting views of Zhu Dongrun, that biography required a distinctive combination of the skills of the historian and the art of the writer, but as the discussion progressed the majority of contributors found it more important to give emphasis to the historical demands of biographical writring.[14]

In practice, however, biography could not be contained within the realm of historical writing alone. Writers of all kinds turned to biography in the 1980s, and historical biography was only one category of an

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[13] Sun Li et. al. "Zhuanji shi lishi haishi wenxue?" [Is biography history or literature?] Renwu 1 (1982) pp.191-192. For the original essay, from which the editors of *Renwu* extracted the sections translated here, see Sun Li "Yu youren lun zhuanji" [A discussion of biography with a friend] in *Sun Li quanji* [The collected works of Sun Li] (Tianjin:Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1982) vol.4, pp.588-593.

[14] See, for instance, the contributions from Hu Hua, Mei Deming and Huang Xudong in Bao Limin et. al, "Guanyu zhuanji zuopin de xiezuo wenti" [On the question of writing biographies] *Renwu* 2 (1982):3-18. The issues raised in these discussions were complex and difficult. The same questions about the nature of biography have engaged historians, writers and biographers all over the world. For some recent perspectives on these questions from Taiwan see Zhang Hanliang "Zhuanji de jige quanshi wenti" [Some explanatory questions about biography] *Dangdai* (Taibei) 55 (November, 1990):29-35 and Li Shixue "Wenxue shang de 'zhuanji'" ['Biography' in literature] *Dangdai* (Taibei) 55 (November, 1990):54-62.

increasingly diverse genre of writing. In his contribution to the discussions on the nature of biographical writing in *Renwu*, Bao Limin argued that this writing fell into a number of different categories.[15] There were critical biographies, whose origins reached back to the work of Liang Qichao much earlier in the century, and there were also literary biographies, which in recent years were becoming just as popular in China as they were in other parts of the world. Zhu Dongrun had made significant contributions in this area with his studies of traditional literary figures. As well as biographies of traditional figures, however, there were an increasingly large number of biographies devoted to the more well known of twentieth century writers.[16]

Another category of biographical writing, one which Bao Limin noted was now extremely popular, was something he called 'biographical reportage' (xinwen zhuanji), a term used to incorporate a diverse body of essay writing devoted to relating aspects of an individual's life. These essays might include the record of interviews, personal reminiscences, or even autobiographical jottings, and Bao argued that most of the contributions to *Renwu* fell within this category of biographical reportage. For the most part these essays were fairly pedestrian, but there have also been cases where they were of a much more experimental nature, such as Zuo Shula's (b.1954) essay on the writer Wang Shuo (b.1958).[17] Biography might demand the skills of a historian, but many

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[15] Bao Limin et. al. "Guanyu zhuanji zuopin de xiezuo wenti," p.4.

[16] For Zhu Dongrun's biographies of Lu Yu, Mei Yaochen, Du Fu and Chen Zilong see Chapter Three, note 3. Examples of biographies of twentieth century literary figures include Gong Jimin and Fang Rennian *Guo Moruo zhuan*, and Qian Liqun *Zhou Zuoren zhuan* [A biography of Zhou Zuoren] (Beijing:Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 1990).

[17] This essay was both more playful and more engaged than most biographical reportage. See Zuo Shula "Buru 'liu' zide qile, xiexie Wang Shuo" [Glad to be out of it - on Wang Shuo] *Dangdai* (Taibei) 4 (1989):129-133. For a translation of the essay see Geremie Barmé and Linda Jaivin *New Ghosts, Old Dreams: Chinese Rebel Voices* (New Yoek:Times Books, 1992) pp.217-226. See also Barmé's article "Wang Shuo and Liumang ('Hooligan') Culture," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 28 (July, 1992):23-64.

more people than just historians were now involved in writing about individual lives. The genre was too popular to be contained within the restricted realm of historical writing. It had now taken on a life of its own.

Even though biographical writing could no longer be contained within the realm of history, it still remained attractive to those writing about the past. Historians continued to see biography as an important part of their work. As a discipline, history had expanded well beyond the traditional concern with a biographical perspective on the past, but many historians no longer accepted the notion put forward by critics of the tradition that 'the age of biographies of emperors, kings and heroes was past'. Indeed, biographies of such people were very much part of the revival of historical writing in the 1980s. The historical record was richest with regard to those people who had been leading figures in public life and they were therefore natural subjects for historical biography. The political emphasis on the mass of the people and on peasant leaders continued, but it no longer precluded an interest in the lives of emperors and leading statesmen. And while popular biographies continued to be written, particularly for use in schools, major studies of individual historical figures now became much more prominent.[18] These were often extremely detailed biographies, well written and richly documented. For instance, Feng Erkang's biography of the Yongzheng emperor (r.1723-1735) runs to over six hundred pages, while Meng Zhaoxin's biography of the Kangxi emperor (r.1662-1722) and Ma Honglin's life of Kang Youwei (1858-1927) are both nearly seven hundred pages long.[19] The length of a biography is, of course, not everything, but it

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[18] For two examples of such popular historical biography from this period see Guan Yuchun and Lü Wujin *Zhu Yuanzhang* and Hu Rulei *Li Shimin zhuan* [A biography of Li Shimin] (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 1984).

[19] Feng Erkang *Yongzheng zhuan* [A biography of the Yongzheng emperor] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985); Meng Zhaoxin *Kangxi dadi quanzhuan* [A comprehensive

is only in a work of such an extent that a truly detailed historical portrait is possible. These are all 'life and times' biographies, and thus there origins reach back to the work of Liang Qichao much earlier in the century. In form and style they owe much to developments that had occurred prior to 1949 and which were beginning to resurface now that there was less emphasis on the need to make everything new and proletarian. Some studies, such as Yang Guozhen's life of Lin Zexu (1785-1850), are not only very fine and detailed biographies, but they even go so far as to include a bibliography, a feature which remains unusual in most other Chinese historical writing.[20]

The earlier historical biographies written by scholars like Zhu Dongrun and Wu Han were now viewed in a much more positive light than had been the case in the 1960s and 1970s. Others sought to emulate their achievements. In particular, it was the zhuanji form of biography, the independent historical monograph written in continuous narrative prose, a form which which had been established by these writers earlier in the century, that now became the most popular form of biographical writing. Chronological biographies continued to be written, but more often than not they were seen as simply part of the process of working towards a final biography in the zhuanji form.[21] They allowed the biographer to organise source materials and see the subject's life in a chronological format. But most now believed biography involved more

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biography of the great emperor Kangxi] (Changchun:Jilin wen shi chubanshe, 1987); and Ma Honglin *Kang Youwei dazhuan* [A major biography of Kang Youwei] (Shengyang:Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1988).

[20] Yang Guozhen *Lin Zexu zhuan* [A biography of Lin Zexu] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1981). Other historical biographies published in the 1980s include Yan Chongnian's *Nuerhachi* [A biography of Nurhaci] (Beijing:Beijing chubanshe, 1983); Zhao Keyao and Xu Daoxun *Tang Taizong zhuan* [A biography of Tang Taizong] (Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1984); and Yuan Yingguang and Wang Jieyun *Tang Minghuang zhuan* [A biography of Tang Minghuang] (Tianjin:Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1987).

[21] Peng Ming "Ruhe pingjia lishi renwu," p.3.

than this, that the biographer had to go on and present an interpretation of the subject's life, to write a zhuanji.

This dominance of the zhuanji form was true not only for historical biography but for biographical writing in general. There were exceptions, not only with those who saw the nianpu as sufficient in itself, but also in biographies that were truly distinctive.[22] Perhaps the most notable of these was Chen Yinke's biography of the seventeenth century courtesan and poet, Liu Shi (1618-1664). This book, entitled *Liu Rushi biezhuan* [A separate biography of Liu Rushi], was unusual in that it was devoted to the life of a woman and an exploration of the emotional world of the late Ming elite through her relationships and her poetry.[23] These were subjects which many still considered inappropriate to explore in any form, let alone a biography.[24] To move beyond the realm of public life and enter the emotional world of a subject was something which was very unusual for modern Chinese biography. It marked Chen Yinke's biography as distinctive.[25] Perhaps that is part of the reason why he chose to call his work a biezhuan, a separate or private biography. It is a demanding work, lacking the narrative coherence of most zhuanji. Chen

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[22] For a good example of a detailed chronolgical biography, which is of value not only to students of the Kangxi period, but also to students of the great novel of the era, *The Story of the Stone*, see Wang Liqi *Li Shizhen li Xun fuzi nianpu* [A chronological biography of father and son - Li Shizhen and Li Xun] (Beijing:Beijing chubanshe, 1983)

[23] Chen Yinke *Liu Rushi biezhuan* [A separate biography of Liu Rushi] 3 vols. (Shanghai:Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980). Rushi was the style name which Liu Shi adopted.

[24] Zhu Dongrun, for instance, felt Liu Shi to be an inappropriate subject for a biography. See Luo Yunming "...Zhu Dongrun," p.112.

[25] For appreciation of the biography see Wang Rongzu "Rushi jian xianü de He Dongjun - Chen Yinke zhu *Liu Rushi biezhuan* shuhou" [He Dongjun:both Confucian scholar and chivalrous woman - after reading Chen Yinke's *Separate biography of Liu Rushi*] *Mingshi yanjiu zhuankan* 5 (December, 1982):339-348 and He Lingxiu "*Liu Rushi biezhuan* duhou" [After reading *A separate biography of Liu Rushi*] in *Jinian Chen Yinke jiaoshou guoji xueshu taolunhui wenji* [A collection of articles from an international academic symposium held to commemorate Professor Chen Yinke] (Guangzhou: Zhongshan daxue chubanshe, 1989) pp.618-658. See also the use which Kang-i Sun Chang makes of the rich resevoir of material in Chen's biography in her book *The Late Ming Poet Ch'en Tzu-lung: Crises of Love and Loyalism* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1991).

builds up his portrait of Liu Rushi and her world through extensive quotation from source materials, and in this way the biography has something of the feel of a nianpu. Yet the material is not simply arranged chronologically. Chen develops the biography around various questions he asks about Liu's life and her relationships with other prominent poets and with leading officials of the day. At times it almost reads like a detective story, as Chen marshals the source material to answer the various questions he asks. And like much good biography, Chen blurs the distinction between a literary and a historical perpsective, using poetry and literature to reveal a great deal that is of interest to any student of the period. It is a fascinating and absorbing portrait that will undoubtedly continue to have much influence over our understanding of the seventeenth century world. Whether it will encourage others to follow Chen's example remains to be seen.

Most Chinese biographical writing was not as adventurous nor as imaginative as that of Chen Yinke. The lives of prominent men, and particularly of those men considered to have been great and 'patriotic' figures, were generally more preferred as subjects for biography, especially historical biography. Nevertheless, by the 1980s there was a widespread appreciation and acceptance of the value of a biographical perspective on the past. Biography, especially the modern zhuanji form of biography, was now as popular in China as it was elsewhere in the world. And biography had returned to be a vital part of modern Chinese historical writing.

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Conclusion

> It is really not so difficult to know a man dead a thousand years ago. Considering how incomplete our knowledge usually is of the people who live in the same city with us, or even of the private life of the mayor, it seems sometimes easier to know a dead man than a living one.[1]

Perhaps it is rather more difficult to know someone from a thousand years ago than Lin Yutang suggests. The passage of time may help bring perspective to our understanding of another's life, yet it is still a formidable task to write the biography of someone whose life is separated from our own by such a passage of time. To recreate a person's life from a bundle of documents and scattered stories is never easy, no matter how large that person may loom in the collective memory of a society. Nevertheless, the desire to understand how people in the past have lived their lives has always encouraged historians to confront such difficulties. But for Chinese historians, a biographical perspective on the past was traditionally valued not just because it was of intrinsic interest. It was believed that historical writing should convey the ethical and moral principles of the Confucian world-view. The welfare of the state and its people were thought to be dependent on individual conduct, on

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[1] Lin Yutang *The Gay Genius: The Life and Times of Su Tungpo*, p.3.

the behaviour of emperors, ministers and other eminent people. Such people were encouraged to lead by example and in doing so lay the foundations for an ordered society. Historians had an important role to play in this process, recording exemplary lives for the benefit of others so that they might be clear as to what behaviour was valued and what was not. Biography thus served an important function in official historical writing, providing the best narrative vehicle for educating others in the moral values which were thought to be the basis of the Chinese world. In this way, traditional biographical writing was thought to be of perennial value, and it was only called into question when the traditional Confucian values themselves were undermined.

The collapse of the institutional and scriptural foundation of the Confucian state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw many Chinese begin to question the value of a biographical perspective on the past. Biography was so closely associated with traditional Confucian historiography that it was seen as just one aspect of that troublesome legacy which seemed to be frustrating the emergence of a modern China. A new society would require new ways of understanding the past, and new ways of conveying that understanding. Biography no longer seemed to offer the insight it once had. New historical pespectives seemed more cogent, of greater relevance to the modern world in which Chinese now found themselves. Despite this, individual historical figures still commanded attention and the study of such people seemed to offer a particularly compelling way to bring the past alive and make it relevant in the modern world. Perhaps, then, it was not so much the biographical perpective on the past that was the problem, but rather the particular form of biographical writing that had been employed in the official histories and which dominated the tradition. As this belief took hold new styles of life-writing became popular, especially the

independent monograph, or zhuanji, and by the 1940s this type of biography had replaced the traditional liezhuan as the dominant form of biographical writing in China. Historians played an important part in the emergence of this zhuanji form of biographical writing, yet they no longer had a monopoly over such writing. The authoritative status attached to historical writing, a status which had enabled official historians to dominate the writing of liezhuan, was now gone. Historians might write biography, but so did others. Biography had now emerged as an indepedent genre.

With the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 the issue of the relationship of history and biography was again called into question. If, as it was argued, the masses made history, then biographies of individual historical figures would be superfluous, unrelated to the needs of the new China. This was not the case, however. Different interpretations might be sought about the role of particular individuals, but the value of the rich tradition of biographical writing could not be ignored. It seemed there was still much to learn from that tradition and efforts were put into establishing guidelines for assessing historical figures in a way that was believed to be consistent with the new official morality. Such attempts to redefine the role of a biographical perspective on the past became lost in the increasing ideological fervour that marked the onset of the Cultural Revolution. The overriding emphasis on class and class analysis meant that any historical writing became problematic, not just writing about historical figures. But with the end of the Cultural Revolution biographical writing re-emerged and soon became extremely popular. Exemplary lives retained their appeal and much could be learned about the past through the detailed analysis that was possible in the modern biographical monograph. Aspects of traditional biographical writing might be retained, but the liezhuan style of essay was no longer

popular. Thus, by the 1980s, the transition away from the long Chinese tradition of biographical history seemed to be well and truly over. A new form of biographical writing, the zhuanji, was now established as an integral part of modern Chinese historical writing. The biographical perspective no longer dominated historical writing as it had in the official histories, but biography was still seen as an important part of the historian's work.

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Glossary

This glossary includes all Chinese and Japanese names and terms included in the main text only. Names, terms and titles from the footnotes are not included.

A

Ai (Duke)	哀公
Ai Siqi	艾思奇

B

baihua (vernacular)	白話
Bao Limin	包立民
baobian (praise and blame)	褒貶
Beijing	北京
Beiping	北平
benji (annals)	本紀
biji (brush notes)	筆紀
biannian (chronological)	編年
biao (tables)	表
bie (separate)	別
biezhuan (separate/private biography)	別傳

bunmeishi 文明史
(history of civilization)

Bunmeiron no gairyaku 文明論の概略
[An outline of a theory of civilization]

C

Cai Shangxiang 蔡上翔

Cao Cao 曹操

Cao Man zhuan 曹瞞傳
[A biography of Cao Man]

Chen Xulu 陳旭麓

Chen Yilin 陳翊林

Chen Yinke 陳寅恪

Chen Zilong 陳子龍

Chibi zhi zhan 赤壁之戰
[Battle of the Red Cliffs]

Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石

Chongqing 重慶

Chu 楚

chuan 傳
(transmit/convey)

Chunqiu 春秋
[Spring and autumn annals]

Chunqiu bifa 春秋筆法
(spring and autumn style)

D

Da-Ming diguo kaiguo shi 大明帝國開國史
(A history of the beginning of the great Ming dynasty)

Da Cien si Sanzang fashi zhuan 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳
[Biography of Master Xuan Zang of the Great Cien Temple]

dadan de jiashe, xiaoxin de qiuzheng 大膽的假設,
(Bold hypothesis [and] careful research) 小心的求証

Dazhong zhexue 大眾哲學
[The philosophy of the masses]

dazhuan 大傳
(major biography)

Dai Nippon hennen shi 大日本編年史
[Chronological history of Japan]

Deng Guangming 鄧廣銘

Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平

denki 伝記
(biography)

denki būmu 伝記ブーム
(biography boom)

Du Fu 杜甫

F

Fa Xian 法顯

fan'an 翻案
(verdict reversal)

feng 諷
(remonstrance)

Feng Bao 馮保

Feng Erkang 馮爾康

Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉

G

Gaixia	垓下
Gao Gong	高拱
Gaoseng zhuan [Lives of eminent monks]	高僧傳
Gaozong (Emperor)	高宗
Gaozu (Emperor)	高祖
"Gaozu benji" "The basic annals of Gaozu"	高祖本記
Ge Hong	葛洪
Gongyang zhuan [The Gongyang commentary]	公羊傳
Gu wei jin yong (make the past serve the present)	古為今用
Gu shi bian [Discussions on ancient history]	古史辨
Gu Yanwu	雇炎武
Guan Yu	關羽
Guomindang	國民黨
Guo Moruo	郭沫若
Guo Yu [Conversations from the states]	國語

H

Hai Rui baguan [Hai Rui dismissed from office]	海瑞罷官
Han (dynasty)	漢

Hanshu [History of the Han]	漢書
Han Xin	韓信
Han Yu	韓愈
Hanzi nianpu [A chronological biography of Han Yu]	韓子年譜
He Bingsong	何柄松
hezhuan (group biography)	合傳
Hong Xingzu	洪興租
Hong Xiuquan	洪秀全
houjin bogu (emphasize the present and de-emphasize the past)	厚今簿古
Hu Shi	胡適
Hu Yinglin	胡應麟
hujian fa (reciprocal method)	互見法
"Huaiyin hou liezhuan" "The biography of the Marquis of Huaiyin"	淮陰侯列傳
Huang Gan	黃幹
Hui Jiao	慧皎
Hui Li	慧立
huifu mingyu (restore a good name)	恢复名譽

J

ji (record)	紀

Ji Wenfu	嵇文甫
jisei (spirit of the times)	時勢
jishi benmo (record of events in great detail)	記事本末
jiwen (requiem)	祭文
jizhu (record exegesis)	記註
jizhuan (composite)	記傳
jiazhuan (family biography)	家傳
Jian Bozan	翦伯贊
Jian'an period (196-220)	建安
jianchen (traitorous official)	奸臣
jianyuan period (140-135 B.C.)	建元
Jiangsu	江蘇
Jiang Tingfu	蔣廷黻
jieji guandian (class viewpoint)	階級觀點
Jin (dynasty)	晉
Jin ping mei [The plum in the golden vase]	金瓶梅
jinzhong baoguo (utterly faithful in commitment to the country)	儘忠保國

K

Kang Youwei	康有為
Kangxi (emperor)	康熙
kaocheng fa (evaluating achievement regulation)	考成法
Kaogong si (Bureau of Evaluations)	考公司
kaoju xue (textual research)	考据學
kaozheng xue (evidential research)	考證學
"Kongbu zhengzhi" "Reign of terror"	恐佈政治
kōshō gaku (evidential research)	考証学
Kunming	昆明

L

Leshan	樂山
lei (elegy)	誄
Li Ao	李翱
Li Dazhao	李大釗
Li Hongzhang	李鴻章
Li Shaoyong	李少雍
Li Si	李斯
Li Xifan	李希凡
Li Zicheng	李自成

Li Zongwu	李宗吾
Liang Qichao	梁啟超
lishi tuihua (historical atrophy)	歷史退化
lishi zhuyi (historicism)	歷史主義
lie (ordered/exemplary)	列
Lienü zhuan [Biographies of exemplary women]	列女傳
Liexian zhuan [Biographies of immortals]	列仙傳
liezhuan (biographies)	列傳
Lin Yutang	林語堂
Lin Zexu	林則徐
Liu Jun	劉峻
Lin Tongji	林同濟
Liu Rushi biezhuan [A separate biography of Liu Rushi]	柳如是別傳
Liu Shi	柳是
Liu Xiang	劉向
Liu Xie	劉勰
Liu Yibing	劉亦冰
Liu Zhiji	劉知幾
Liu Zongyuan	柳宗元

liukou (roving bandits)	流寇
Lushan	廬山
Lu Xun	魯迅
Lu You	陸游
lunbian (essays and arguments)	論辯
Lunyu [The Analects]	論語
Luo Longji	羅隆基

M

Ma Honglin	馬洪林
Mao Zedong	毛澤東
Mei Yaochen	梅堯臣
Meiji	明治
Meng Zhaoxin	孟昭信
Mengzi [Mencius]	孟子
Miao Laoye	苗老爺
Min	閩
minzu yingxiong (national hero)	民族英雄
Ming (dynasty)	明
ming (brilliance or light)	明

ming (eulogy)	銘
Ming shi [History of the Ming]	明史
Ming shilu [The veritable records of the Ming dynasty]	明實錄
Ming Taizu	明太祖
Ming Taizu zhuan [A biography of Ming Taizu]	明太祖傳
Miyake Yonekichi	三宅米吉
Mozi	墨子
mubiao (grave notice)	墓表
muzhi (grave record)	墓志

N

Naka Michiyo	那珂通世
nianpu (chronological biography)	年譜
Nihon kaika shōshi [A short history of Japanese civilization]	日本開化小史
Nihon shigaku teiyō [A manual for the study of Japanese history]	日本史學提要
Nihon shikō [*An outline of Japanese history*]	日本史綱
nongmin qiyi jun (insurrectionary peasant army)	農民起義軍

O

Eastern Ou	東甌

P

"Palaopo de zhexue" "Philosophy of the hen-pecked"	怕老婆的哲學
Pan Gongzhan	潘公展
Pei Songzhi	裴忪之
Peng Dehuai	彭德懷
Peng Yingyu	彭瑩玉
pinti renwu (personality appraisal)	品題人物
pingzhuan (critical biography)	評傳
Poyang (lake)	鄱陽

Q

qijie (integrity)	氣節
qiyi jun (insurrectionary army)	起義軍
Qianxian [Frontline]	前線
Qin (dynasty)	秦
Qin Shihuangdi	秦始皇帝
Qing (dynasty)	清
"Qing Bu liezhuan" "The biography of Qing Bu"	黥布列傳
Qinghua	清華

R

renbiao (biographical tables)	人表
Renjianshi	人間世
Renwu [Figures]	人物
Rong Mengyuan	榮孟源

S

Saga Shosaku	嵯峨正作
Sanguo zhi [Record of the Three Kingdoms]	三國志
Sanguo zhi yanyi [The Romance of the Three Kingdoms]	三國志演義
Shang Yang	商鞅
shao er cong ying (a young genius)	少而聰穎
shendaobei (spirit-road tablet)	神道碑
Shenxian zhuan [Biographies of divine immortals]	神仙傳
Shengli (Publishing Company)	胜利
shi (men of service)	士
Shigaku genron [Principles of history]	史學原論
Shigaku kenkyu hō [Methods for the study of history]	史學研究法
Shiji [Historical records]	史記

shijia (hereditary houses)	世家
Shijiazhuang	石家莊
Shi Jing [Book of songs]	詩經
shishi qiu shi (seek truth from facts)	實事求是
Shishuo xinyu [A new account of tales of the world]	世説新語
Shixue yanjiu hui (Historical Research Association)	史學研究會
Shixue yuekan [Historiography monthly]	史學月刊
shu (treatises)	書
Sichuan	四川
Siku quanshu [The complete collection of the Four Treasuries]	四庫全書
Sima Guang	司馬光
Sima Qian	司馬遷
"Sima Wengong xingzhuang" "An obituary for Sima Guang"	司馬文公行狀
Song (dynasty)	宋
Song Bozhuang	宋伯莊
Song shi [History of the Song]	宋史
Su Shi	蘇軾
Su Wu	蘇武

Sun Li	孫犁
Sun Yatsen	孫中山
T	
tai (charm/manner)	態
taixue (study of manners)	態學
Taguchi Ukichi	田口卯吉
Tan Qixiang	譚其驤
Tang (dynasty)	唐
Tian Fen	田蚡
Tsuboi Kumazō	坪井九馬三
Tsurumi Yusuke	鶴見輔原
tufei (local badits)	土匪
tuntian (agricultural garrisons/state farms)	屯田
U	
Ukita Kazutami	浮田和民
W	
waizhuan (unofficial biography)	外傳
Wanli (Emperor)	萬歷
Wang Anshi	王安石
Wang Anshi pingzhuan [A critical biography of Wang Anshi]	王安石評傳

Wang Shizhen 王世貞

Wang Shouren 王守仁

Wang Shuo 王朔

Wang Zhongluo 王仲犖

Wei (dynasty) 魏

"Weiqi Wuan hou liezhuan" 魏其武安侯列傳
"The Biographies of the Marquisesof Weiqi and Wuan"

Wei Qing 衛青

Wen Tianxiang 文天祥

Wen Yiduo 聞一多

Wuan (Marquis of) 武安

Wuhan 武漢

Wu Han 吳晗

Wu Mi 吳宓

Wusong 吳松

"Wu xing zhuanji" 五行傳紀
"Biography of the five phases"

Wu Xun 武訓

X

"Xi ci zhuan" 繫辭傳
"Commentary on the attached verbalizations"

Xia Zengyou 夏曾右

Xiang Yu 項羽

"Xiang Yu benji" 項羽本紀
"The basic annals of Xiang Yu"

Xiao He	簫何
xiaopinwen (informal essay)	小品文
Xinmin congbao [Collected reports on a new citizenry]	新民叢報
Xinmin shuo [Theory of a new citizenry]	新民説
xin shixue (new history)	新史學
xin shi zhuan (new historical biography)	新史傳
xinwen zhuanji (biographical reportage)	新聞傳記
Xinyue yuekan [Crescent monthly]	新月月刊
xingzhuang (obituary/account of conduct)	行狀
Xiongnu	匈奴
xu (narrate)	敍
Xu Jie	徐階
Xuan Zang	玄奘

Y

Yan Cong	彥悰
Yan Song	嚴嵩
Yanzi chunqiu [The annals of Master Yan]	晏子春秋
Yan Ying	晏嬰

Yang Duo	揚鐸
Yang Guozhen	楊國楨
"Yang Hu Zhu Mei Yun zhuan" "The biographies of Yang, Hu, Zhu, Mei and Yun"	楊胡朱梅云傳
Yao Xueyin	姚雪垠
yi gu feng jin (using the past to criticise the present)	以古諷今
Yijing [Book of change]	易經
Yishi bao [*Prosperity Times*]	益世報
Yixing zhuan [Biographies of the extraordinary]	易行傳
yinyu (enigmatic expression)	隱語
yingshe (allusion)	影射
Yongzheng (emperor)	雍正
You sengbo dao huangquan [From begging bowl to imperial power]	由僧鉢到皇權
you you da zhi (of high ambition)	幼有大志
Yuzhou feng	宇宙風
yuan (unit)	元
Yuan (dynasty)	元
Yuan shi [History of the Yuan]	元史
Yuan Zhen	袁震

yuanguang period (134-129 B.C,)	元光
Yue (Eastern)	東越
Yue Fei	岳飛
Yue Fei zhuan [A biography of Yue Fei]	岳飛傳

Z

zan (assessment/comment)	贊
zeiren (rebels)	賊人
zeizhong (rebels)	賊眾
Zeng Guofan	曾國藩
Zhanguo ce [Annals of the Warring States]	戰國策
Zhanguo congshu [The Warring States collection]	戰國叢書
Zhang (Chancellor)	張丞相
Zhang Jian	張騫
Zhang Jun	張浚
Zhang Juzheng	張居正
Zhang Juzheng dazhuan [A major biography of Zhang Juzheng]	張居正大傳
Zhang Mosheng	張默生
"Zhang Weigong xingzhunag" "An obituary for Zhang Jun"	張魏公行狀
Zhang Xiaoruo	張孝若

Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠

Zhao Yi 趙翼

Zhejiang 浙江

Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功

zhengli guogu 整理國故
(reorganization of the national past)

zhengzhuan 正傳
(official biography)

zhiluan xunhuan 治亂循寰
(cyclical dynastic change)

zhi sang ma huai 指桑罵槐
(indicate the mulberry (yet) revile the ash - to write about one thing while referring to another)

zhong 忠
(loyalty)

Zhongguo gongxue 中國公學

Zhongguo lidai mingxian gushi ji 中國歷代明顯故事集
[A collection of stories of celebrated and outstanding people in Chinese history]

Zhongguo shehui jingji shi jikan 中國社會經濟史紀刊
[Chinese social and economic history review]

Zhou (dynasty) 周

Zhou Enlai 周恩來

Zhou Yang 周揚

Zhu Dongrun 朱東潤

Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮

Zhu Xi 朱熹

"Zhu Xi xingzhuang" "An obituary for Zhu Xi"	朱熹行狀
Zhu Yuanzhang	朱元璋
Zhu Yuanzhang zhuan [A biography of Zhu Yuanzhang]	朱元璋傳
zhuan (biography)	傳
zhuan (commentary)	傳
zhuanji (biography)	傳紀
zhuanji wenxue (biographical literature)	傳紀文學
zhuanpian (biographical monograph)	傳篇
zhuanshi (specialized history)	專史
zhuanshu (narrative)	撰述
zhuanxu (biography)	傳敍
zhuanzhuan (special biography)	專傳
zhuzi baijia (Various masters and the hundred schools)	諸子百家
zichanjieji gerenzhuyi (bourgeois individualism)	資產階級個人主義
Zuo Shula	左舒拉
Zuozhuan [Zuo commentary]	左傳