

**Strong Minds, Creative Lives: A Study of the Biographies of Eastern Han Women  
as Found in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan***

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October, 2009

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree



## **Acknowledgments**

Writing this thesis has been a genuinely collective endeavor, whose completion has rested on the magnanimity of colleagues, friends and family.

Since my first day at the Department of East Asian Studies at McGill University, Suan Ong has helped me navigate the subtleties of graduate school, keeping me on task and grounded. I am also grateful for the camaraderie of my colleagues Eavan Cully, Rongdao Lai, Margaret Ng, and Afra Tucker. I feel inestimable gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Griet Vankeerberghen, for her patient guidance and generous assistance with the very many drafts.

I consider myself privileged to be surrounded by friends who cheerfully and selflessly dedicated their time and energies towards this project: Samia Aisha remains a constant source of encouragement; Dr. María Arrieta, Imane Essrifi, Haoua Mamoudou, Dr. Louai Razzouk, and Flore Saget simultaneously gifted me French translations of the abstract; Ugurgul Tunc tirelessly remained at my side during the decisive moments of the anchor leg. I am exceptionally indebted to M. Essam Hallak, who never fails to remind me every time I forget.

Most importantly, I thank my mother, Rita González, whose limitless support makes possible all my endeavors and my brother Francisco Sellés for putting things in their due perspective.

Although this thesis has benefited for the participation of many, I alone am responsible for its errors and shortcomings.



## **Strong Minds, Creative Lives: A Study of the Biographies of Eastern Han Women as Found in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan***

This thesis addresses a chapter titled *Lienü zhuan*, or *Arrayed Traditions of Women* from Fan Ye's (398-446) *Hou Han shu*, or *Book of Later Han* as starting point to challenge the prevailing image of early Chinese women as helpless victims of an oppressive Confucian society. The women represented therein behave as purposeful, active participants in the creation of Eastern Han social mores. Most remarkably, they can be interpreted as agents defining their social roles as wives and daughters. Chapter One focuses on the historiography of the *Hou Han shu*, generally, and the *Lienü zhuan*, in particular, and formulates some hypotheses about the extent of Fan Ye's own creative input in the process of compiling his *Lienü zhuan*. Chapter Two investigates previous scholarship on the genre of biographies of women and proposes a theoretical model for reading the biographies of women found in *Hou Han shu* based on notions of ritual discussed by Catherine Bell and by the collaboration between Seligman, Weller, Puett, and Simon. In order to gain further insight into the women represented in the text, Chapter Three analyzes the social, economic, and literary background of the seventeen women included in the text. These findings on the commonalities and differences in marital status, economic situation, political influence, literacy, and education are put to use in Chapter Four, which applies the ideas on ritualization to the social roles the women in Fan Ye's text perform as wives and daughters. The thesis ends with a partial translation of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* chapter into English.

Cette thèse traite d'un chapitre intitulé *Lienü zhuan*, ou *Traditions arranges des femmes*, du livre de Fan Ye (398-446) *Hou Han shu*, ou le *Livre de Han postérieur*, comme point de départ utile pour défier l'image dominante des femmes de la Chine antique où elles sont perçues comme des victimes impuissantes d'une société confucéenne oppressive. Les femmes dépeintes dans ce texte adoptent une attitude déterminée, participant pleinement à la création des codes sociaux de la dynastie Han orientale. Fait remarquable, ces femmes définissent elles-mêmes leur rôle social en tant qu'épouses et filles. Le premier chapitre met l'emphasis sur l'historiographie des *Hou Han shu*, en général, et le *Lienü zhuan*, en particulier. Il s'agit aussi d'émettre des hypothèses sur la démarche créative de Fan Ye dans sa compilation de biographies des femmes. Le deuxième chapitre s'attarde sur les études existantes concernant les biographies de femmes et suggère une approche théorique dans la lecture de ce genre littéraire dans *Hou Han shu* basée sur les notions de la ritualisation tel que discutées par Catherine Bell et par la collaboration de Seligman, Weller, Puett, et Simon. Le troisième chapitre analyse en profondeur le fond social, économique et littéraire des 17 femmes décrites dans le texte. Le quatrième chapitre met en évidence les différences et les similitudes entre le statut marital, la situation économique, l'influence politique, l'instruction aussi bien que l'éducation. Dans ce chapitre, on retrouve aussi les notions de rituel du rôle social des femmes en tant qu'épouses et filles. La thèse se termine par une traduction partielle en anglais du chapitre *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*.



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## Introduction

This thesis addresses a chapter titled *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳, or *Arrayed Traditions of Women* from Fan Ye's 范曄 (398-446) *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, a history of the Later Han Dynasty (23-220 CE).<sup>1</sup> Comprised of 17 representations of women who reportedly lived during the second part of the Han 漢 dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), this chapter has received little attention in contemporary English-language scholarship. Nevertheless, the text merits careful study as an invaluable source on women's lives in the Later Han, heretofore referred to as the Eastern Han (*Dong Han* 東漢), and on perceptions of Eastern Han women in the subsequent period of division.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the text provides a useful starting point to challenge the prevailing image of Early Chinese women as the helpless victims of an oppressive Confucian society.

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1. Starting in the Han dynasty and maintained throughout imperial Chinese history, officially commissioned court scribes and independent scholars endeavored at historical records. Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145- ca. 86 BCE) *Shiji* 史記, or *Records of the Historian*, although itself not officially commissioned, served as the prototype for this genre. Nevertheless, there is no standard with regard to the composition, compilation, or official recognition for each history. A given dynasty could have several histories, written by different authors. Eventually, in the 18th century, the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 established one "standard history" (*zhengshi* 正史) per dynastic period. As far as the number of Standard Histories, they can be numbered at 24, 25, or 26, relative to the era of the writer. At the time of the compilation of the *Siku quanshu*, the count was at 24; hence the term 二十四史 *Ershisi Shi* or *24 Histories*. Fan Ye's 范曄 *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 is the third of these histories, immediately preceded by the *Han shu* 漢書, or *Book of Han*. Endymion Porter Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 505.

2. The Han dynasty is divided by Wang Mang's 王莽 (b. ca. 45 BCE; r. 6-23 CE) interregnum. The period from 206 BCE to 8 CE is known as the Western Han (*Xi Han* 西漢), or Former Han (*Qian Han* 前漢); the capital was located at Chang'an 長安 (modern day Xi'an 西安). From 25-220 CE, the period is known as the Eastern Han (*Dong Han* 東漢) or Later Han (*Hou Han* 後漢); the capital was located in Luoyang 洛陽, a position east of Chang'an. Because there exists another *Hou Han*, in the 10th century, this thesis will adopt the Western-Eastern Han convention.

## Focus on Eastern Han Society

Han dynasty China has long been favoured by historians as a seat of China's political and intellectual traditions. Indeed, in very broad terms, by the end of its 400 years, the Han legated several key scholarly and administrative elements that became intrinsic to China's long imperial history. From the political perspective, for example, the Han court established much of the governmental infrastructure of imperial China, including land administration and the institutionalization of a complex civil service bureaucracy.

Among the principal intellectual legacies is the "canonization" of the texts of Classic scholarship, generally known as the "Confucian" Classics: the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), the texts on Rites (*Li* 禮), the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋).

Throughout China's imperial history, the ability to memorize, cite, and give exegesis of these texts were key markers of a person's erudition. Whereas the texts came to be treated as a collection or canon (*jing* 經), the individual tomes were created independently from each other throughout several centuries.<sup>3</sup> The general content,

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3. The *Odes* is a collection of songs about day-to-day life in the Western Zhou 西周 (10th to 8th century BCE), as well as more solemn hymns for state rituals. The songs were written between 1000 and 600 BCE.

The *Documents* compiles speeches and documents addressing issues of responsible rulership, some dating as back as the early Western Zhou.

There are three texts on rites: the *Ceremonial* (*Yili* 儀禮) and the *Zhou Rites* (*Zhouli* 周禮) dating from a time near the beginning of the Han dynasty; and the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) which was presumably compiled and edited in Western Han. These texts convey the importance of decorous behavior to the perfection of an individual's human potential and to a ruler's capacity to establish harmony in the state.

The *Changes* originated as a divination manual, and was gradually expanded to include line and hexagram explanations, as well as a philosophical treatise that explained the nature of cosmological change.

composition, and target audience of these texts reflect issues affecting imperial governing elite from a distant past – ritual propriety, literary ability, and cultivating knowledge all figure prominently. Nevertheless, during the Han times, the Classics were key players in defining the values of the non-imperial Eastern Han elite.

### **Focus on Eastern Han Gentry Women**

Our interest in the Han dynasty is somewhat off-center from studies that focus on Han political and intellectual history. Specifically, we are concerned with gentry women’s participation in one of the key social legacies stemming from the Eastern Han – the formation of a social class of *shi*士, or “educated gentlemen.”<sup>4</sup>

For the first half of the Han, the term *shi* was mostly used to denote those men whose scholarly and moral training qualified them to be government officers. In contrast, during the Eastern Han, the term *shi* dilated to become more inclusive of local elite. As a result, there emerged a certain national *shi* class consciousness, whose ranks equally encompassed officers and scholars at the highest of government echelons and local functionaries of the lowest-rank. This opening of the *shi* class had wide-ranging effects on the literary and cultural traditions that have come to be associated with the Han dynasty.

One of the trends among these nouveau *shi* was to use the Classics as a means by which to define *shi* class values and morality. The *liezhuan*列傳, or “exemplary lives”

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The *Spring and Autumn Annals*, as the name suggests, recorded the affairs of the Lü 呂 court during the Spring and Autumn 春秋 period, i.e., between 722 and 481 BCE. Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 77-87, 123-36, 173-78, 208-28, 256-62, respectively.

4. I use Ebrey’s translation of the term *shi*, and will draw upon her discussion of the later Han scholarly elite. Patricia Ebrey, “The Economic and Social History of Later Han,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1 ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1987).

literary tradition, of which the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* forms part, became a means through which these changing values were disseminated. Most of the women Fan Ye chose to represent indicate membership in this emerging *shi* class. In addition, many of them demonstrate familiarity with the Classics and similar scholarship. By examining their actions and words, in particular their ritualization of the texts and traditions of classical scholarship, we may gain insight into the participation of women in the formation of Eastern Han *shi* social mores and values. In our reading of the text, we find these women to be purposeful, vibrant and active participants in the creation of this new *shi* class.

### **Overview of this Thesis**

One of the first concerns in approaching the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* is to ask who the women that Fan Ye chose to represent are. Are these “real” Eastern Han women, or are these representations mere products of Fan Ye’s fifth century perspective? Although it is not possible to provide an answer, this does not hamper the ability to use the text as a reflection of women’s lives in the Eastern Han. In Chapter One, I will use various texts – including Tang 唐(618-907) and Song 宋(960-1279) encyclopaedia and other texts of the women’s *liezhuan* tradition – to try to establish the extent to which the women represented in Fan Ye’s chapter are “real” Eastern Han women or the compiler’s original work.

In setting the stage for reading the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, Chapter Two presents some of the trends in studying women’s biographies over the last century. One of the problems in previous scholarship is a tendency to subsume all women’s

experiences in one category – irrespective of period in imperial history, social class, education, family background, etc. For example, late imperial studies of biographies of women often focus on issues of chastity. The passage of hundreds of years notwithstanding, there is a strong tendency to read Fan Ye's text under the same late imperial paradigms of chastity.

As an alternative, I will argue that the primary values of the women represented in Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan* are best appreciated by a study of their roles as exceptional wives and daughters. It is in the creation of these roles that they make a contribution to the formation of Eastern Han *shi* society. Chapter Two also contains the theoretical framework of ritualization, which enables us to read this text in a way that highlights these women's agency. Chapter Three presents the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* as members of the Eastern Han *shi* class, through a study of the social, economic, and literary background of the seventeen women.

Chapter Four presents my analysis and shows how these Eastern Han gentry women were indeed active participants in the creation of their own society. They, rather than take their direction from outside sources, internalized and interacted with classical literature and their own conceptions of morality in order to produce their actions that the historians later found so noteworthy. Chapter Five gives my partial translation of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*.



## Chapter One

### The *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* and its Sources

The *Lienü zhuan* appears as the 84<sup>th</sup> chapter (*juan* 卷) of the *Hou Han shu*, and is the 74<sup>th</sup> of the 80 *juan* that comprise the section *Arrayed Traditions* (*liezhuan* 列傳).<sup>1</sup> The first 73 *liezhuan* are devoted to the biographies of specific (mostly male) personalities of the Eastern Han. The *Lienü zhuan* is immediately preceded by the narrations of the traditions of different categories of officials, scholars, recluses, and magicians, and is followed by six *liezhuan* on the ethnic groups at the periphery of the empire's territory. The chapter itself starts with an introduction (*xu* 序) stating Fan Ye's purpose in creating the chapter and ends with a short appraisal (*zan* 贊). It contains, between the *xu* and the *zan*, 17 biographies of varying length. The seventeen women are listed below in table 1.1 by order of appearance, along with their location within the 1965 *Zhonghua shuju* 中华书局 edition of the text.<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Liezhuan* 列傳 was a term first used by Sima Qian in the *Shiji* (henceforth abbreviated in citations as *SJ*). *Lie* may be translated as “arrayed” or “assorted,” *zhuan* as “tradition,” and *nü* 女 means “woman.” *Liezhuan* is often translated as “biographies.” Stephen Durrant raises two objections to the term “biographies” as a translation for *liezhuan* in the *Shiji*.

One, although many *liezhuan* are dedicated to specific people, others are dedicated to groups of people, or to an ethnic group. For example, *Shiji* 110 is a *liezhuan* on the Xiongnu 匈奴 people and *Shiji* 121 is on the *Rulin* 儒林, or scholars. See Sima Qian, *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 2921, and 3115, respectively.

Two, even in the *liezhuan* dedicated to individuals, the information provided sometimes is very terse and intended to be a supplement to other sources. Durrant translates *liezhuan* as “arrayed traditions.” See Stephen Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), xix-xx.

Thus, *Arrayed Traditions of Women* is a more literal translation of the title *Lienü zhuan* than *Biographies of Women*.

2. When a woman's name is followed by a number in parentheses, such as Ban Zhao 班昭 (5), the number indicates the biography number in Fan Ye, *Hou Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965).

**Table 1.1** Women represented in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*

Name (Dates, if known)	HHS 84/74 Page Numbers
1. Huan Shaojun 桓少君 (d. late 20's CE)	2781-82
2. The wife of Wang Ba 王霸妻	2782-83
3. The wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩妻	2783
4. Zhao A 趙阿	2784
5. Ban Zhao 班昭 (approx. 48-120)	2785-92
6. The wife of Yue Yangzi 樂羊子之妻	2792-93
7. Li Mujiang 李穆姜	2792-93
8. Cao E 曹娥 (d. 143)	2794-95
9. Lü Rong 呂榮	2795
10. Ma Lun 馬倫 (122-184)	2796
11. Zhao E 趙娥	2796-97
12. The wife of Liu Changqing 劉長卿妻	2797
13. The wife of Huangfu Gui 皇甫規妻	2798
14. Xun Cai 荀采	2798-99
15. Zhao Yuanjiang 趙媛姜 ( d. 201)	2799
16. Shuxian Xiong 叔先雄 (103-127)	2799-2800
17. Cai Yan 蔡琰	2800-03

### Fan Ye, Compiler of the *Hou Han Shu*

Fan Ye, style Wei Zong 蔚宗, was born in 398 in Shunyang 順陽, to a family of scholars.<sup>3</sup> According to his biography in the *Song shu* 宋書, or *Book of the Song*, from a young age Fan Ye demonstrated an affinity for scholarship and a talent for writing. His family background and natural abilities augured well for a steady ascent through the

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Henceforth, the *Hou Han shu* will be abbreviated in citations as *HHS*, followed by the *juan* 卷 and page numbers. For example, Ban Zhao's biography would be cited as *HHS* 84/74: 2785-92. References for all other Chinese texts will be provided in the same manner by presenting the abbreviated title, *juan* reference, and page number; for example, *Shiji* 110 cited above would be cited as *SJ* 110:2921.

3. Shunyang 順陽 was a commandery (*jun* 郡) unit in occupied in the present-day Hubei 湖北 Province. See Hans Bielenstein, *The Restoration of the Han Dynasty, with Prolegomena on the Historiography of the Hou Han Shu* (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1953), 14. Bielenstein's text was reprinted as an article in the *Journal of the British Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 26 (1954).



ranks of the central imperial bureaucracy. Nevertheless, indecorous inebriation during a state funeral cut short his career prospects. Subsequently, he was demoted to serve as Grand Administrator (*taishou* 太守) of Xuancheng Commandery 宣城.<sup>4</sup> It was during his time at Xuancheng that Fan Ye began compiling the *Hou Han shu*. However, he was not able to complete the work.<sup>5</sup> Fan Ye became embroiled in an attempted coup on Emperor Wen 文 (424-453) of the Liu Song 劉宋 dynasty (420-479) and, along with his co-conspirators, was sentenced to public execution. He died in 446.<sup>6</sup>

### Sources for the *Hou Han Shu*

At the time Fan Ye prepared the *Hou Han shu* in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Eastern Han Dynasty was long over. As Bielenstein has shown in his authoritative article on the historiography of the *Hou Han shu*, it is unlikely that Fan Ye had direct access to documents from the Eastern Han imperial archives to inform his compilation.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, many of these were destroyed during the many turns of civil unrest that started at the end of the Eastern Han, and lasted well into Fan Ye's own time.<sup>8</sup>

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4. His biography is listed in chapter 69 of Shen Yue's 沈約, *Song shu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 1819. (Henceforth, the *Song shu* will be abbreviated in citations as *SS*). For a synopsis in English, see Bielenstein, *Restoration of the Han*, 14-15. For a longer treatment, see Qu Lindong 瞿林東, *Fan Ye pingzhuan* 范曄評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing da xue chu ban she, 2006), 50-67.

5. Xuancheng 宣城 was a commandery unit, located in the present-day Anhui 安徽 province, governed by a Grand Administrator (*taishou* 太守) appointed by the central government.

6. Some sources list 445 as Fan Ye's date of death; Bielenstein demonstrates the correct date is 24 January, 446 CE. See Bielenstein, *Restoration of the Han*, 15.

7. Ibid.

8. When Dong Zhuo 董卓 (d. 192) forced Emperor Xian 獻 (b. 181, r. 189-234) to move the capital from Luoyang 洛陽 to Chang'an 長安 (present-day Xi'an 西安) in 221, much of Luoyang was looted and burned. Consequently, many of the libraries were sacked and many of the books were destroyed or repurposed. The *Hou Han Shu* accounts show the bamboo slips were dismantled and turned into splinters; the silk scrolls (*juan*) refashioned as curtains or sacks – less than half the tomes made it to Chang'an. A little less than a century later, the Jin 晉 (265-420) dynasty met a similar fate: in 311 Luoyang and Chang'an were looted; in 314 Chang'an was looted. Again, many of the imperial archives were destroyed. When the Jin moved the capital to Jiankang 建康 (in present-day Nanjing 南京) in 317, few of

It is, therefore, more likely that Fan Ye composed the *Hou Han shu* using the numerous other histories of the Eastern Han in circulation during the early fifth century, even though few of these texts have been preserved to the current age.<sup>9</sup> In addition to

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the books survived the transfer. This led Bielenstein to conclude it was impossible for Fan Ye to have relied primarily on the archives of the Eastern Han. See Bielenstein, *Restoration of the Han*, 15.

9. Except for Yuan Hong's 袁宏 (328-376) *Hou Han ji* 後漢記, none of these history texts have been preserved in their entirety. Some of the most important are:

(a) The *Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記 or *The Han Record of the Dongguan [Library]* –

The first 28 *pian* 篇 were begun by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) on commission from Emperor Ming 明 (28-75; r. 57-75). Per successive imperial edicts, the rest of the text was continued by different authors of the Eastern Han period. This history included the tables and biographies of emperors; biographies on the relatives of the emperors, scholars, meritorious subjects; and treatises on scientific subjects such as geography. Interestingly, its section *DGHJ* 22/17 is titled *Lienü, waiyi* 列女, 外裔. Of the 143 original *juan* only 24 have been reconstituted. See Li Jing 李靜, *Dongguan Hanji jiaozhu* 東觀漢記校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2008); henceforth the *Dongguan Hanji* as it appears in the *Dongguan Hanji jiaozhu* will be cited as *DGHJ*.

(b) Wang Wentai's 汪文臺 (1796-1844) *Qi jia Hou Han shu* 七家後漢書 (Taipei: Wenhai, 1974) contains reconstitutions of several Eastern Han and Sanguo 三國 period (220-280) histories of the Eastern Han (henceforth abbreviated in citations as *QJHHS*):

- (1) Xie Cheng's 謝承 (222-227) *Hou Han shu* has a *lienü*; *QJHHS*, 5-260.
- (2) Xue Ying's 薛瑩 (+282) *Hou Han shu*; *QJHHS*, 259-68.
- (3) Sima Biao's 司馬彪 (240-306) *Xu Han shu* 續漢書; *QJHHS*, 269-486.
- (4) Hua Qiao's 華嶠 (+293) *Hou Han shu*; *QJHHS*, 487-564.
- (5) Xie Shen's 謝沈 *Hou Han shu*; *QJHHS*, 565-72.
- (6) Yuan Shansong's 袁山松 (ca. 401) *Hou Han shu*; *QJHHS*, 621-61.
- (7) Zhang Fan's 張璠 *Han ji* 漢紀; *QJHHS*, 621-6.
- (8) In addition, there is a *Hou Han shu* of anonymous authorship 失名氏後漢書 which includes six individual biographies; *QJHHS*, 661-66.

(c) Some of the Sanguo period Eastern Han history texts not included in the *QJHHS* are the following, based on Bielenstein, *Restoration of the Han*, 13:

- (1) Qiao Zhou's 譙周 (199-270) *Gushi kao* 古史考, of whose 25 *juan*, one is extant,
- (2) Qiao Zhou's *Hou Han ji*, and
- (3) Yuan Ye's 袁曄 *Xiandi chungiu* 獻帝春秋.

(d) We know two of the Jin period historical texts dealing with the Eastern Han that are not included in the *Qi jia Hou Han shu*. Each of these was comprised of 6 *juan*, of which none are left. See Bielenstein, *Restoration of the Han*, 13.

- (1) Kong Yan's 孔衍 (268-320's) *Hou Han chungiu* 後漢春秋, and
- (2) Kong Yan's *Hou Han shang shu* 後漢尚書.

(e) We also know of the existence of two scholars close to Fan Ye's time, each of whose *Hou Han shu* was entirely lost: (1) Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444) and (2) Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489-537). See Ronald Eagan, "The Prose Style of Fan Yeh," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39, no. 2 (1979): 342.

these histories of the Eastern Han, Fan Ye drew from a wide variety of other texts written during the Eastern Han dynasty, or containing material on that period. For our purposes, works written within the tradition of Liu Xiang's 劉向 (79-8 BCE) *Lienü zhuan* will be particularly important.

Fan Ye's usage of sources is best understood in light of how he articulates his own vision for his history. In a famous letter from prison to one of his nephews, dated to 446, Fan Ye puts forth an assessment of his life work. With regard to the *Hou Han shu*, he states that his intent was to write a history that surpassed Ban Gu's 班固 (32-92) *Han shu* 漢書, or *Book of Han*.<sup>10</sup> Whereas the letter states that his ambitions for the annals (*ji* 紀) and biographies (*lie* 列) proper were modest, he still considers that the resulting work supersedes all other historical work in the way it combines scope and subtlety.

In the Annals and Biographies proper, my plan was simply to give a general sketch of events. Still, they fully evidence my painstaking effort. Never since antiquity has there been such a grand plan matched with such subtle thoughts as in this work of mine. 紀、傳例為舉其大略耳，諸細意甚多。自古體大而思精，未有此也。<sup>11</sup>

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(f) Other works from the late Han and early Sanguo period, some of which are preserved in part, some lost entirely, are:

- (1) *Han xiandi qiju zhu* 漢獻帝起居注,
- (2) Hou Jin's 侯瑾 (ca. 190) *Huanghou de ji* 漢皇德紀, one of thirty *juan* have been reconstituted,
- (3) Ge Hong's 葛洪 後漢書鈔,
- (4) Wang Can's 王粲 (177-217) *Han mo yinxiong ji* 漢末英雄記, of which one of ten *juan* have been reconstituted. See *Zhongguo yeshi jicheng* 中國野史集成 vol. 1, (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue, 1993), 225-247.
- (5) *Xiandi zhuan* 獻帝傳.
- (6) Yuan Hong's *Hou Han ji*, of whose all *juan* have been preserved.
- (7) Zhang Ying's 張瑩 *Hou Han nanji* 後漢南記. See Bielenstein, *Restoration of the Han*, 13.

10. Ban Gu (32-92, style Mengjian 孟堅) was a court scholar who, like his father, worked in various offices of the Excellencies. He is credited with writing the bulk of the *Han shu* (henceforth abbreviated in citations as *HS*) begun by his father. See *HHS* 40/30A-B: 1330-86; Rafe de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 7. References to the *Han shu* are to the 1962 Beijing Zhonghua Shuju edition.

11. *SS* 69:1830; translations adapted from Egan, "Prose Style of Fan Yeh," 342.

His tone becomes more strident when addressing three types of writing contained in the biographies. When describing the introductions (*xu* 序) and disquisitions (*lun* 論) from the chapter *Scrupulous Scholars* (*xunli* 循吏) to the chapters on the six nomadic tribes (*yi* 夷),<sup>12</sup> Fan Ye is unabashedly boastful of his creativity:

But as for the Introductions and Disquisitions in my chapters from the ones on scrupulous officials down to those on the six barbarian tribes, in those my brush gallops away unbridled. They are the most original writings in this world. Here and there they do not pale before the piece “The Faults of the Ch’in,” and when I set them alongside those that Pan Ku wrote they are far from being a source of shame. 至於循吏以下及六夷諸序論，筆勢縱放，實天下之奇作。其中合者，往往不減過秦篇。嘗共比方班氏所作，非但不愧之而已。<sup>13</sup>

Of his appraisals, he writes with equal pride:

The Appraisals contain my supreme thinking: not a single word is wasted and they are full of unexpected turns, all aiming at the same goal though in different styles. 贊自是吾文之傑思，殆無一字空設，奇變不窮，同合異體，乃自不知所以稱之。<sup>14</sup>

It seems, then, that Fan Ye draws a sharp distinction between, on the one hand, those parts that make up the body of the various chapters, wherein he draws upon the work of others to sketch an outline of historical events, or of a person’s life and career, and, on the other hand, the *xu*, *lun*, and *zan*, in which he gives free rein to his own creative expression, and for which he lays a greater claim to originality.

### **The Introduction and the Appraisal of *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan***

The *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* precedes the chapters on the six tribes, which places it within the range of chapters in the introductions and disquisitions of which Fan Ye takes

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12. HHS 76/66 to HHS 90/80.

13. SS 69:1830-31; Egan, “Prose Style of Fan Yeh,” 341.

14. SS 69:1831; Egan. “Prose Style of Fan Yeh,” 342.

special pride. *Lienü zhuan* contains a *xu* (introduction), but no *lun* (disquisition).

Moreover, the *zan* (appraisal) that ends the chapter must also be among the portions of his history Fan Ye himself considered as embodying his “supreme thinking.” It is therefore imperative to analyze the introduction and disquisition in some detail before launching into an analysis of the seventeen biographies that make up the body of the chapter.

The *xu* sheds light on the author’s purpose and on the reason of his selection of particular biographical subjects. The introductory passage of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, in accord with the grandiloquent self-appraisal contained in his letter from prison, signals to the reader Fan Ye’s perceptions of what makes his work innovative and historically significant. The *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*’s *xu* reads:

The discussions in the *Book of Odes* and in the *Book of Documents* of female virtue are from a far away era. Just as worthy imperial consorts assisted their lords in ruling their states, wise women ennobled the ways of their families; just as accomplished scholars promoted purity, women who exercised proper conduct illuminated the deportment of purity. However, their excellence has not been differentiated. Indeed, the texts transmitted forth from generation to generation are all deficient in this regard. Thus, starting with the Restoration, I have arranged their accomplishments and transmitted them as *Arrayed Chapter on Women*. Women such as the Empresses Ma, Deng, and Liang have received their own accounts, which can be found in the preceding chapters; the likes of Liang Yi and Concubine Li have been appended to the chapters dedicated to their respective households. Women like them will not be included in this chapter. As for the rest, I merely sought out and put in order those whose conduct was exceptional. They did not necessarily engage in only one type of behavior. 詩書之言女德尚矣。若夫賢妃助國君之政，哲婦隆家人之道，高士弘清淳之風，貞女亮明白之節，則其徽美未殊也，而世典咸漏焉。故自中興以後，綜其成事，述為列女篇。如馬、鄧、梁后別見前紀，梁嬖、李姬各附家傳，若斯之類，並不兼書。餘但搜次才行尤高秀者，不必專在一操而已。<sup>15</sup>

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15. *HHS* 84/74: 2781.

Fan Ye delimits his subject, women of excellent conduct, in two ways: by social status and chronologically. The chronological parameter is the most easy with which to deal. Fan Ye's chapter, will only present women who lived from the Restoration of the Han onward; that is, women of the Eastern Han dynasty. Here Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan* certainly distinguishes itself from Liu Xiang's, which lacks a clear chronological scope, and contains biographies of women from high antiquity all the way through to his own times. In social terms, Fan Ye excludes imperial consorts, who have received treatment earlier in his opus, as well as some women of highly prominent families, whose stories are already told elsewhere in *Hou Han shu*. It seems, therefore, that Fan Ye's chapter will focus on women one step below the highest social-political classes.

The delimitation by social group is introduced through two analogies: just as righteous imperial consorts contribute to excellence in rulership, righteous wives bring excellence to their families; just as high-minded scholars aim for purity, some women, too, exemplify the ideals of purity in their behavior. The first part of each analogy presents an established subject of biography, whose merits and virtues are uncontested. That is, virtuous imperial consorts and outstanding male scholars have received much attention in other history texts, including the *Shiji* 史記, the *Han shu*, and the *Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記. The second part of each analogy introduces new subjects: wives who serve their husbands; and women of outstanding conduct. These women, by Fan Ye's own admission, have never been treated properly in the existing historiography.

In Sherry Mou's assessment, the importance of this *xu* lies in way it stresses the representation of non-imperial women, so that Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan* came to set a

precedent for later dynastic histories.<sup>16</sup> Mou, however, has an entirely different reading of the sentences in the *xu* that I have treated as analogies, and argues that, in them, Fan Ye presents four distinct categories of exemplary women – royal consorts, able women, worthy literati, and chaste women.<sup>17</sup> Of these, according to Mou, only the latter three receive actual treatment in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*.<sup>18</sup>

Mou's reading of the paired sentences assumes that Fan Ye was modeling his work on earlier works containing biographies of women. Notably, Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*, places each biographical subject in one of seven categories.<sup>19</sup> She then proceeds

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16. Sherry J. Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions for Women's Lives* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 77.

17. Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions*, 77-78. Although Fan Ye's text contains no such divisions, Mou divides the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* into the three paradigms: able, worthy literati, and chaste. Her findings are summarized in table form in Appendix D; *ibid.*, 240-241. The difference in interpretations is due to a different reading of the phrase 若夫賢妃助國君之政，哲婦隆家人之道，高士弘清淳之風，貞女亮明白之節, which she treats as an enumeration rather than an analogy. In effect, this alternate translation identifies four categories of women and makes uncommon usage of *gaoshi* 高士 as a gender-neutral term which may denote women scholars. Mou's translation reads :

Both the *Classic of Poetry* and the *Classic of History* have spoken of womanly virtues for a long time. There are capable royal consorts who helped the rulers of the states in governing, able women who exalted the way of the families, worthy literati who spread wide their cleansing and pure influence, and chaste women who illustrated the virtue of purity. Their finess [sic.] is not different, but the books have often omitted them. Thus, I gathered those incidents since the years of Restoration and described them in this chapter of women.

People such as Empresses Ma, Deng, and Liang can be found separately in the previous "Basic Annals" sections. Liang Yu [sic.] and Li Ji are attached to their family biographies. People like these will not be written about here. As for the rest, those whose talents and behavior are particularly superior and distinguished are collected whether in one way (or in many). *Ibid.*, 222.

I am deeply indebted to Prof. Yang Haizheng 杨海峥 from Beijing University's Department of Chinese Language and Literature for guiding the reading of the introduction and for the suggestion to translate this phrase as an analogy.

18. Two translations into modern Chinese of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* yielded similar renderings of the *xu* as Mou's translation: Lei Guozhen 雷国珍 et al. *Hou Han shu quanyi* 後汉书全译, (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1995), 3552 and Wu Liming 吴礼明 *Hou Han shu jinghua* 後汉书精华, (Changchun: Changchun shubanshe, 2008), 319-20.

19. Liu Xiang created seven categories of women in his *Lienü zhuan* and clearly divided his text into seven subsections, each of which contained the women whose behavior or character exemplified the category. These categories are: (1) *Matronly Models* (*mu yi* 母儀), (2) *The Worthy and Enlightened* (*xianming* 賢明), (3) *The Benevolent and Wise* (*renzhi* 仁智), (4) *The Chaste and Obedient* (*zhenshun* 貞



to classify each of the seventeen women in Fan Ye's text into one or more of the three categories that she assumes Fan Ye to have provided: able women, worthy literati, and chaste women.<sup>20</sup> In doing so, she glosses over the fact that in Fan Ye's work no labels are actually used to group the women in categories. Moreover, the final lines of the *xu* indicate that Fan Ye consciously refrained from further categorizing the seventeen biographies:

I merely sought out and put in order those whose conduct was exceptional. They did not necessarily engage in only one type of behavior  
餘但搜次才行尤高秀者，不必專在一操而已。<sup>21</sup>

Fan Ye might have found such efforts at categorization futile, and might have wanted to stress that each of the women he represented was notable for different reasons.

The lack of a specific typology of women is further reflected in the *zan*. There, the women are collectively described in the following words:

With their upright manners, they left a footprint;  
With their quiet reserve, they made themselves stand out.  
In detail, I differentiated and illustrated their exemplary ardor.  
Brilliant indeed, the red brush they passed on to me.  
贊曰：端操有蹤，幽閑有容。區明風烈，昭我管彤。<sup>22</sup>

This *zan* consists of a short, four-line, rhymed poem in which he praises all the women.

Using literary allusions to the red brush associated with women scholars, he highlights

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順), (5) *The Principled and Righteous* (jieyi 節義), (6) *The Accomplished Speakers* (biantong 辯通), and (7) *Depraved Favorites* (niebi 孽嬖). See Anne Behnke Kinney, "Traditions of Exemplary Women (Lienü zhuan): An Introduction" in Liu Xiang, *Xin kan gu Lienü zhuan* 新刊古列女傳, <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/lienu/browse/LienüIntro.html> (accessed July 20, 2009); henceforth, Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan* will appear in citations as *LX LNZ*, followed (if applicable) by the scroll number, biography, and location on this ebook. For alternate translations see Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 20.

20. For a similar reading, see Qu Lindong, *Fan Ye pingzhuan*, 210-11.

21. *HHS* 84/74: 2781.

22. The Appraisal (*zan* 贊) appears in *HHS* 84/74:2803. It also refers to a passage of the chapter on imperial consorts in *HHS* 10A: 397 that reads:

Female scribes [with their] red brushes record achievements and take note of missteps.  
女史彤管，記功書過。



their exceptional quality but also emphasizes their impact on later generations, in which Fan Ye includes himself as an admirer and beneficiary of their legacy. In contrast to our translation, Mou's interpretation is strongly moralizing:

The upright value can be traced, and poised composure agrees with the demeanor of *li*. I underscore the moral influence and fortitude they left behind to illuminate what is recorded with the red brushes [of the women historians].<sup>23</sup>

In this version, the translator uses “demeanor of propriety” for *youxian* 幽閑, “upright virtue” for *duan cao* 端操, and “moral influence and fortitude” for *fenglie* 風烈. In emphasizing morality, the admiration Fan Ye feels for the women, and the pleasure he derives from their stories are lost on the reader.

The problem of translation and the balance between admiration and morality hinges on the term *tongguan* 彤管. When translated as “red brushes,” *tongguan* is a metonymic device to refer to female writers, who were thought to have used red brushes. The term is certainly used in this way in introduction to the *Hou Han shu* chapter on imperial consorts.<sup>24</sup> However, imposing the traditional metonymic meaning here is somewhat awkward, since no one claims that these biographies were authored by women, and since only two of the seventeen women who receive biographies – Ban Zhao 班昭 (5) and Cai Yan 蔡琰 (17) – were actually writers. Mou solves this conundrum with the unlikely suggestion that Fan Ye intended irony with this allusion.<sup>25</sup>

Whereas it is clear that Fan Ye was familiar with the metonymic reading, in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, he might have intended a more direct allusion to the *Jingnü*

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23. Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions*, 93; brackets appear in the original.

24. *HHS* 10A: 397.

25. Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions*, 231, note 4.

靜女 from the *Odes*.<sup>26</sup> In this ode, the *tongguan* is a red reed, given to the protagonist by a beautiful girl, and cherished by him for that reason. We may entertain the possibility that Fan Ye creates an analogy in his *zan* in which he is the subject who receives and transmits stories of women in whose biographies he found delight.

### Sources for *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*

Fan Ye's words about his historical work in his letter from prison also have repercussions for how we should read the 17 biographies proper contained within the chapter. As we shall see in this section, much of the biographies proper is adapted from other, earlier sources; this substantiates his lesser claim to originality for the narrative passages themselves.

A non-exhaustive search of the still extant literature reveals that many of the women who received a biography in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* were written about in other, earlier sources. Indeed, for fourteen out of the seventeen women parallel biographies in other texts could be located, and for several of these there was more than one parallel passage; this information is summarized in table 1.2.

However, Fan Ye never explicitly refers to the sources upon which he drew for individual biographies. Also, the texts that we now have stand in often complex

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26. A verse from the *Odes*' *Jingnü* 靜女 reads:

Oh! The maiden, so handsome and coy,  
For a pledge gave a slim rosy reed.  
Than the reed is she brighter, my joy;  
On her loveliness how my thoughts feed!

靜女其變、貽我彤管。彤管有煒、說懌女美。 Translation by James Legge, *The She King; or The Book of Ancient Poetry* (London: Trübner, 1876), 90-91.

That which Legge has translated as "slim rosy reed" is, in fact, the *tongguan* 彤管.

relationships with the texts that once were.<sup>27</sup> Thus, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions regarding the affiliation of the various versions of one woman's biography with one another. Given that this is the case, we can also only phrase some general observations regarding Fan Ye's editorial interventions.

From this table, it appears that Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan* shares passages with several other types of texts in circulation in his time. These texts can be roughly characterized as follows: (a) general histories of the Later Han dynasty; (b) texts written within the tradition of Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*; (c) local histories such as *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 or *Kuaiji dianlu* 會稽典錄; (d) texts usually regarded as more literary than historical, for example *Soushen ji* 搜神記. I will survey these different types, and try to derive some conclusions from them regarding Fan Ye's authorship, and regarding areas where he did or did not innovate.

#### (a) *General histories of the Later Han dynasty*

The ancestral text to all of the histories written about the Eastern Han is the *Dongguan Hanji*, which was compiled under a series of imperial orders during the Eastern Han period itself. The *Dongguan Hanji* has not been preserved in its entirety; the partial editions we now use are reconstitutions by Qing 清 (1644-1911) or modern scholars.

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27. For example, some of the texts are texts that were once lost and subsequently reconstituted by Qing scholars on the basis of fragments; some of the attributed fragments in Tang 唐 (618-907) and Song 宋 (960-1279) collections such as *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 and *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 contain what are clearly summaries of or excerpts from a longer original. The *Yiwen leiju* was compiled by Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641) and others; henceforth, the *Yiwen leiju* will be abbreviated in citations as *YWLJ*, and page numbers will refer to *Yiwen liju*, 2 vol. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965; rpt. Shanghai guju, 4 vol. 1982). The *Taiping yulan*, was compiled by Li Fang 李昉 (925-96) and others, and contains quotations from over 1,690 sources, 70 of which are lost. Henceforth, the *Taiping yulan* will be abbreviated in citations as *TPYL*, and references are to the digital *Siku quanshu* available as *Wen yuan ge Si ku quan shu dian zi ban* 文淵閣四庫全書電子版 (Hong Kong: Dizhi wenhua chuban youxian gongsi, 2007; accessed July 20, 2009).

However, even the extant portions of *Dongguan Hanji* still contain several biographies of women who would fit the parameters of Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan*.<sup>28</sup> That this is the case shows that Fan Ye's impulse to include biographies of non-imperial women was not a new one, but one that goes back to historical works of the Eastern Han period itself. Moreover, the fact that several of the women who received a biography in *Dongguan Hanji* were not included in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* indicates selectiveness on Fan Ye's part: he did not choose to include all biographies to which he had access.<sup>29</sup> Only two of the biographies in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* have parallels in the extant *Dongguan Hanji*, namely the biographies of Huan Shaojun 桓少君 (1) and of the wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩 (3).

The earliest of the histories of the Eastern Han that we know contained a section entitled *Lienü* is Xie Cheng's 謝承 *Hou Han shu*.<sup>30</sup> The reconstituted section currently contains only two biographies: that of Yuan Wei's 袁隗妻 wife and one belonging to Ban Zhao. Whereas the biography of Yuan Wei's wife is found in the *Hou Han shu*

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28. *Shiji* 9, *Basic Annals of Empress Lü* (Lü taihou benji 呂太后本記); *Shiji* 49, *Hereditary Houses of Families Related to the Emperor by Marriage* (Waiqi shijia 外戚世家); and *Han shu* 97, *Traditions of the Relatives of the Emperor by Marriage* (Waiqi zhuan 外戚傳) all contain biographies of imperial women. See *SJ* 9: 395-412; *SJ* 49: 1967-86; and *HS* 97: 3973-4011. For translations into English of the *Shiji* and *Han shu* chapters on imperial women, see Burton Watson's *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty I* (Hong Kong: Columbia University Press, 1993) and *Courtier and Commoner in Ancient China: Selections from the History of Former Han by Pan Ku* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), respectively. For a discussion on the development of chapters on biographies and empresses in imperial histories, see Robert Joe Cutter and William Gordon Crowell's prolegomenon in *Empresses and Consorts: Selections from Chen Shou's Records of the Three States with Pei Songzhi's Commentary* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 3-45.

29. For example, the story of Lü Mu 呂母 in the *Dongguan Hanji* was not included among Fan Ye's biographies of women. Nevertheless, it addresses revenge killing, a topic covered in biographies 9 and 11 in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*; DGHJ 23/7, 902-3.

30. *QJHHS*, 5-260.

*lienü zhuan*;<sup>31</sup> the parallel to the lines on Ban Zhao occur not in her biography in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, but in one of the two chapters of Fan Ye's work that deals with the Ban family.<sup>32</sup> What is important for our purposes is that Fan Ye's decision to group non-imperial women into a chapter of their own is not without precedent.

**Table 1.2** Biographies of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* with parallel biographies in other texts

Biography Number and Name of Subject	References
1. Huan Shaojun 桓少君	<i>Dongguan Hanji</i> 東觀漢記, <i>Taiping yulan</i> 太平御覽 <sup>33</sup>
3. The Wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩妻	<i>Dongguan Hanji</i> , <i>Huayang guozhi</i> 華陽國志, <i>Taiping yulan</i> <sup>34</sup>
5. Ban Zhao 班昭	<i>Taiping yulan</i> <sup>35</sup>
6. The Wife of Yue Yangzi 樂羊子之妻	<i>Soushen ji</i> 搜神記, <i>Yiwen leiju</i> 藝文類聚, <i>Taiping yulan</i> <sup>36</sup>
7. Li Mujiang 李穆姜	<i>Huayang guozhi</i> <sup>37</sup>
8. Cao E 曹娥	<i>Kuaiji dianlu</i> 會稽典錄, <i>Taiping yulan</i> <sup>38</sup>
9. Lü Rong 呂榮	<i>Yiwen leiju</i> , <i>Taiping yulan</i> <sup>39</sup>
10. Ma Lun 馬倫	Xie Cheng's 謝承 <i>Hou Han shu</i> , <i>Taiping yulan</i> <sup>40</sup>
11. Zhao E 趙娥	<i>Taiping yulan</i> <sup>41</sup>
12. The Wife of Liu Changqing 劉長卿妻	<i>Yiwen leiju</i> <sup>42</sup>
13. The Wife of Huangfu Gui 皇甫規妻	<i>Taiping yulan</i> <sup>43</sup>
15. Zhao Yuanjiang 趙媛姜	<i>Huayang guozhi</i> <sup>44</sup>
16. Shuxian Xiong 叔先雄	<i>Soushen ji</i> <sup>45</sup>

31. Ma Lun (10) is the wife of Yuan Wei 袁隗妻, *QJHHS*, 179-80.

32. *HHS* 47: 1583-6.

33. *DGHJ* 22/17, 867-9; *TPYL* 775 5a.

34. *DGHJ* 17/22, 388-89; *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 10B in *Zhongguo yeshi jicheng*, vol. 1, 818; *TPYL* 862 3a, 60 6b. Henceforth the *Huayang guozhi* as cited in the *Zhongguo yeshi jicheng* will appear in citations as *HYGZ*.

35. *TPYL* 520 7b.

36. *Soushen ji* 搜神記 11/292, translated in Kenneth DeWoskin and J. I. Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 136-7; *YWLJ* 18, 336-7; *TPYL* 825 4a, 811 7b, 520 7a, 491 6b, 440 5a, 426 5a, and 422 7b. Henceforth, the *Soushen ji* will appear in citations as *SSJ*.

37. *HYGZ* 10B, 829.

38. *Kuaiji dianlu* is cited in Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403-444) *Shishuo Xinyü* 世說新語, found in Yang Yong 楊勇, *Shishuo xinyü jiaojian* 世說新語校箋 vol. 1 (Taipei: Zheng wen shu ju yin xing, 2000), 524-25; translated by Richard B. Mather in *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies University, 2002), 314, footnote 1; *TPYL* 415.5a. Henceforth, the *Kuaiji dianlu* as cited in the *Shishuo xinyü* will appear in citations as *KJDL*.

39. *YWLJ* 18, 336-7; *TPYL* 440 5a.

40. Xie Cheng's *Hou Han shu* in *QJHHS*, 179-8; *TPYL* 517.2b-3a (attributed to Xie Cheng's *Hou Han shu*).

41. *DGHJ* 18/13 869-872 from *TPYL* 481.

42. *YWLJ* 18, 336.

43. *TPYL* 616 9b.

44. *HYGZ* 10B, 823.

45. *SSJ* 11/291, 136-7.

(b) *Lienü zhuan*

The bulk of parallel passages with *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* are found in texts associated with the tradition of Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*. Many such passages are included in Tang and Song compilations such as *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 or *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽. Sometimes *Taiping yulan* is specific in attributing a passage to a particular text authored within the *lienü zhuan* genre: this is the case, for example, when it attributes passages to Huangfu Mi's 皇甫謐 (215-282) *Lienü zhuan*.<sup>46</sup> However, in most cases the attribution is just to a *Lienü zhuan*; that is, to one of the many works we know were authored after Liu Xiang's death to imitate or supplement his famous work. The *Sui shu* 隋書 provides a list of such texts (including Huangfu Mi's text).<sup>47</sup>

Liu Xiang's original text was an independent tome that did not form part of a larger historical work. Rather than focus on a specific group of women, or on a specific period, his text includes stories about women from different social strata, and from the full span of human history. An accomplished writer and master of classical texts, Liu Xiang had a

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46. TPYL 422.7b, based on comment in YWLJ 18, 336-7.

47. Wei Zheng's 魏徵(580-643), *Sui Shu* 隋書 33:978 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) lists the following books of the *lienü* tradition:

- (1) *Lienü zhuan*, 15 *juan*, composed by Liu Xiang, edited by Cao Dajia – 列女傳十五卷劉向撰，曹大家注 (n.b., Cao Dajia, or Ban Zhao, is featured as the protagonist HHS LNZ, biography 5. HHS 84/74: 2785-92).
- (2) *Lienü zhuan*, 7 *juan*, edited by Zhao Mu – 列女傳七卷趙母注
- (3) *Lienü zhuan*, 8 *juan*, composed by Gao Shi – 列女傳八卷高氏撰
- (4) *Lienü zhuan*, 1 *juan*, composed by Liu Xin (46 BCE-23 CE) – 列女傳頌一卷劉歆撰
- (5) *Lienü zhuan*, 1 *juan*, composed by Cao Zhi – 列女傳頌一卷曹植撰
- (6) *Lienü zhuan*, 1 *juan*, composed by Miao Xi – 列女傳讚一卷繆襲撰
- (7) *Lienü zhuan*, 10 *juan*, composed by Xian Yuan – 列女後傳十卷項原撰
- (8) *Lienü zhuan*, 6 *juan*, composed by Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐(215-282) – 列女傳六卷皇甫謐撰
- (9) *Lienü zhuan*, 7 *juan*, composed by Qi Sui – 列女傳七卷綦毋邃撰
- (10) *Lienü zhuan*, 3 *juan*, 列女傳要錄三卷
- (11) *Lie ji*, 10 *juan*, composed by Du Yu – 女記十卷杜預撰
- (12) *Mei furen*, 6 *juan* – 美婦人傳六卷.

keen eye for propriety and frequently remonstrated to Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 33-7 BCE) regarding what he deemed excessive influence on his court of the families of imperial consorts. Of particular concern was the unprecedented dominance of sisters Empress Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕 (c. 32 BCE -1 BC) and Consort Zhao Hede 趙合德 (d. 7 BC) and their family. It is in this context that Liu Xiang wrote a text on biographies of exemplary women titled *Lienü zhuan*.<sup>48</sup> The text as we know it, is comprised of 104 biographies of women, divided into 7 chapters (*juan*), each of which is dedicated to a particular example of behavior – the first six for laudable behavior; the seventh for deplorable conduct.

Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan* has to be placed within this tradition of moralistic historiography on women. Indeed, it is the fact that so many authors admired Liu Xiang's work and sought to continue it by drafting biographies of women living after Liu Xiang's date of death that created the wealth of source material Fan Ye could draw on for his *Lienü zhuan*. However, it is important to also remain attuned to the differences between Liu Xiang's and Fan Ye's respective enterprises. First, Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan* is embedded as one chapter into a much lengthier historical work. Second, unlike Liu Xiang, who summarizes each biography with a *song* 頌 conveying a moral lesson with every woman's biography, Fan Ye seems more willing to allow the reader to make her own assessment on the various choices facing the women. He contents himself with the collective *xu* (introduction) and *zan* (appraisal). In these, as we saw, he expresses his admiration for the women, but refuses to tie them collectively to specific virtues.

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48. *HS* 36: 1928-67. For more on the context in which Liu Xiang wrote his *Lienü zhuan*, see Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions*, 26-74 and Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 19-20.

(c) *Local Histories*

As far as we have been able to reconstruct it, four of the biographies in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* have parallels with local histories, three of these with *Huayang guozhi*<sup>49</sup> and one with *Kuaiji dianlu*. Whereas both of these texts predate Fan Ye's *Hou Han shu*, it is by no means certain that the biographies they contain directly served as source material for Fan Ye. Other scenarios of textual affiliation are indeed possible. There are some interesting variations between the biographies in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* and those in *Huayang guozhi* and *Kuaiji dianlu*, some of which will be briefly discussed below. The most obvious difference is the way in which the women or their relatives are tied to a locality. Whereas Fan Ye's interest lies with the Chinese realm as a whole, he does not often refer to administrative divisions below the level of the commandery (*jun* 郡). The local histories, as is to be expected, provide a higher level of detail as to the location of their protagonists, as illustrated in tables 1.3 and 1.4.

(d) *Other texts*

Two biographies have parallels in the *Soushen ji*, attributed to Gan Bao 干宝 (fl. 317-320).<sup>50</sup> Here, again, we cannot be sure what the exact textual affiliation was between *Soushen ji* and *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*. In other words, whereas Fan Ye might have used the work, it is also possible that both authors drew upon a common fount of authors. Kenneth DeWoskin and J.I. Crump, who translated the *Soushen ji* in its entirety, state how Gan Bao, rather than compile accounts of traditional biographical subjects, such as

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49. The *Huayang guozhi* is attributed to Chang Qu 常璩 (fl. 265-316), is a gazetteer-like history of the area now known as Sichuan 四川; Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 812.

50. All 464 passages are translated in DeWoskin and Crump's *In Search of the Supernatural*.



the emperors and notable courtiers found in the histories, “collected experiences in and reports of a new world.”<sup>51</sup> This “new world” was in a state of flux after the collapse of the Han dynasty: “Chroniclers of the era were products of Han literatus culture; they were also products of a cataclysmic collapse of stable society which produced it and pressures from the rise of a new and more diverse political, social, cultural world, the likes of which had never been described before.”<sup>52</sup> This decline of political centrality and geographic relocation away from Luoyang 洛阳 allowed the scholars to focus on alternative subjects of study, as well as to investigate local accounts in circulation during the Han and Six Dynasties 六朝 (220-589) period, many of which were tales of what would strike (the 21<sup>st</sup> century) reader as supernatural.

The fact that *Soushen ji* is now often viewed as the first in a long tradition of works that deals with the strange and supernatural (i.e., the *zhiguai* 志怪 genre), and the fact that the text shares, almost verbatim, some of its stories with a historical text such as Fan Ye’s *Hou Han shu*, sheds interesting light on the historiography of the time. Indeed, four of the biographies in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* contain elements that we would now regard as superhuman, illustrated in table 1.5. For example, Biography 3 contains an account of a spontaneous spring forming at the side of the filial couple’s house, out of which emerge a pair of fish that happen to be the favorite of their dear mother. Equally strange is the violent windstorm that struck when Lü Rong 呂榮 (9) was assassinated by a bandit. The strangeness of these events, however, may be more a perception on our

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51. DeWoskin and Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural*, xxiv.

52. DeWoskin and Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural*, xxiv.

part than something that was conceptualized in this way at the time; we need to use the word “supernatural” with caution.<sup>53</sup>

**Table 1.3** *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* biographies with parallels in *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志

Biography	<i>Hou Han shu lienü zhuan</i> Introductory Formula	<i>Huayang guozhi</i> 10B Introductory Formula
3. The Wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩	The wife of Jiang Shi from Guanghan was the daughter of Pang Sheng from the same commandery. 廣漢姜詩妻者，同郡龐盛之女也。	Pang Xing was the wife of Jiang Shi. 龐行姜詩妻也。 <sup>54</sup>
7. Li Mujiang 李穆姜	The wife of Cheng Wenju from Hanzhong was the eldest sister of Li Fa from the same commandery, and her style was Mujiang. 漢中程文矩妻者，同郡李法之姊也，字穆姜。	Mujiang, wife of Cheng Wenju, magistrate of Anzhong and eldest sister of Li Fa, Director of Retainers. 穆姜安眾令程祇妻。司隸校尉李法姊也。 <sup>55</sup>
15. Zhao Yuanjiang 趙媛姜	The wife of Sheng Dao from Jianwei was a daughter of the Zhao family, also of the same commandery; her style was Yuanjiang. 犍為盛道妻者，同郡趙氏之女也，字媛姜。	趙媛姜。資中人盛道妻也。 Zhao Yuanjiang, was the wife of Sheng Dao from Zizhong. <sup>56</sup>

**Table 1.4** Parallel texts to *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* in *Kuaiji dianlu* 會稽典錄

Biography	<i>Hou Han shu lienü zhuan</i> Introductory Formula	<i>Kuaiji dianlu</i> <sup>57</sup> Introductory Formula
8. Cao E 曹娥	Filial woman Cao E was from Kuaiji in Shangyu. 孝女曹娥者，會稽上虞人也。	孝女曹娥者，上虞人。Filial daughter, Cao E was a native of Shangyu.

53. DeWoskin notes that in terms of the relationship between historical and fictional literature, “fiction is not perfectly opposed to fact, its occurrence does not preclude the presence of true records, and the apparent historicity or even plausibility of the substance of a work cannot be the sole determinant of whether it is fictional.” DeWoskin, “The Six Dynasties *Chih-kuai* and the Birth of Fiction,” in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, ed. Andrew Plaks (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 24.

54. HYGZ, 818. This passage is the exception, in that it provides no further details on the location. The reader would know the wife of Jiang Shi comes from Guanghan, as she is featured in a section of men and women from Guanghan (*Guanghan shinü* 廣漢士女). The section features 46 men and 11 women. Unlike the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, the *Huayang guozhi* provides her first name.

55. HYGZ, 829. Li Mujiang 李穆姜 is one of the nine women featured in the section on men and women from Hanzhong (*Hanzhong shinü* 漢中士女). Besides the nine women, the section features twenty-five men.

56. HYGZ, 823. Like Li Mujiang, she is featured in the section on Hanzhong.

57. Yang Yong, *Shishuo xinyü jiaojian*, 524-25.

**Table 1.5** “Supernatural” Events appearing in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*

Biography	Supernatural Event
3. The wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩妻	Unexpectedly, a spring rushed up next to the home, whose water tasted like that of the Jiang. Every morning from it emerged a pair of carp. 舍側忽有涌泉，味如江水，每旦輒出雙鯉魚，常以供二母之膳。
8. Cao E 曹娥	[H]e went to the county riverside, he moved against the waves, spinning and whirling to contact the spirits, but he drowned...於縣江泝濤(迎)婆婆[迎]神，溺死...
9. Lü Rong 呂榮	That day, a sudden windstorm, violent rains, thunder, and lightning shook the darkness. The bandit, terrified, bowed to her to ask forgiveness. Later on, she was buried. 是日疾風暴雨，雷電晦冥，賊惶懼叩頭謝罪...
16. Shuxian Xiong 叔先雄	After 100 days had passed, the family had grown a bit lax in their surveillance. Xiong took a small boat and at the place where her father’s boat had sunk, wept with profound sadness. Subsequently, she threw herself in the water and drowned. That same night, her younger brother Xian, dreamt that Xiong told him, “In six days, I, along with our father, will come out.” When, at the appointed time, he surveyed the area, she was floating on the river, holding onto her father. 經百許日後稍懈，雄因乘小船，於父墮處慟哭，遂自投水死。弟賢，其夕夢雄告之：「卻後六日，當共父同出。」至期伺之，果與父相持，浮於江上。

### Fan Ye’s *Hou Han shu* in Relation to Surveyed Parallel Texts

One way to explore the extent of Fan Ye’s original contribution to the composition of the seventeen biographies is to compare the biographies with parallel passages. In doing so, we will pay attention to places where Fan Ye’s narrative contains less material than the parallel text, and conversely, examine instances where Fan Ye’s text offers the more extensive narrative. Whereas our search will not yield much in the way of definitive conclusions, several findings are worth mentioning. In relating those findings, we will focus on some significant examples.

#### *Elements in other texts missing in the Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*

As mentioned above, the biography of Shuxian Xiong叔先雄(16) has a parallel text in the *Soushen ji*. In both versions, Shuxian Xiong is presented at the time after her father’s

accidental death by drowning. His body wasn't recovered and his family was especially distraught that they weren't able to give him a proper burial. Eventually, Xiong drowns herself in the same river where her father passed away. She appears to her younger brother in a dream, telling him to look for her in the river. At the appointed time, her body surfaced with her father's body. However, the *Soushen ji* account provides more detail than Fan Ye's text. Our findings are summarized in table 1.6.

The *Soushen ji* narration of events is more colorful than that of Fan Ye because its narrative contains many more non-essential details. We are informed of Shuxian Xiong's age, as well as the names and ages of her children. That Fan Ye is frugal in providing details of this kind, is clear from many other instances as well. In addition, we are also informed of the county magistrate who dispatched her father on the fated mission. Most notably, the *Soushen ji* account provides the details of the dates in which the events take place. From Fan Ye's account, we learn that it was at the beginning of the Yongjian 永建 (126-132) era that father Nihe 泥和 entered office as officer of merit. The *Soushen ji* further provides the specific month of his drowning, as well as the date of Xiong's suicide and of her supernatural reappearance. Whereas the *Soushen ji* narrative and the *Hou Han shu* version do not conflict there is one point of contradiction regarding Xiong's children – Fan Ye presents her as mother of a son and a daughter, while the *Soushen ji* presents her as the mother of two sons.

**Table 1.6** Differences between two parallel texts in the biography of Shuxian Xiong 叔先雄 (16)

Difference	<i>Hou Han shu</i> lienü biography 16	<i>Soushen ji</i> 搜神記 11/291 <sup>58</sup>
Identification Formula	Filial woman Shuxian Xiong was a resident of Jianwei. 孝女叔先雄者，犍為人也。	Shuxian Nihe from Jianwei had a daughter named Xiong. 犍為叔先泥和，其女名雄...
Dates	Nihe serves as Officer of Merit 功曹 at the beginning of Yongjian era.	Nihe serves as Officer of Merit in the third year of Yongjian era.
	No equivalent.	Nihe drowns in the tenth month.
	No equivalent.	Xiong commits suicide on the fifteenth of the twelfth month.
	In her brother's dream she informs her brother that she will emerge in six days.	In her brother's dream she informs her brother she will emerge on the twenty-first day of the same month.
Details of Characters	The county magistrate is mentioned, but no name is provided for him	County magistrate's 縣長 name is Zhao Zhi 趙祉.
	Xiong has a son and a daughter 所生男女二人	Xiong has two sons: Gong 貢 and Shi 貰. 有子男貢, 年五歲, 貰, 年三歲.
Ages	No equivalent.	Xiong is 27 years old.
	Her son and daughter were very young.	Gong is 5 years old, Shi is 3.
Narrative	Xiong frequently made plans to drown herself.	Xiong instructs younger brother, Xian 賢 and wife to find Ni He's corpse. If they did not succeed, she would search by drowning herself in the river.
	The family was initially on suicide watch for her, but, with time, relaxed their vigilance.	The whole family was grief-stricken and thus did not find her behavior odd.

*Case Study: Fan Ye's text as the most synthetic*

The biography of the wife of Jiang Shi (3) serves as a good example of a case where Fan Ye's text is the most synthetic, particularly since parallel biographies in many different texts are available. Despite numerous personal difficulties, such as expulsion from the home and the death of her own son, the wife of Jiang Shi exerts herself in taking care of her mother-in-law – at times a solo effort, at others in collaboration with her husband. Table 1.7 summarizes the comparison of key events in the biography of the wife of Jiang Shi between the *Hou Han shu* lienü zhuan, the *Dongguan Hanji*, the *Huayang guozhi*, and two accounts available in the *Taiping yulan*.

58. *SSJ* 11/291, 136-7.

Of the surveyed parallel passages, Fan Ye's text contains the most complete entry on the biography of the wife of Jiang Shi. Almost all elements of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* appear in one of the parallel texts – however, there are two exceptions. First, Jiang Shi's commendation for filiality appears exclusively in Fan Ye's account. Second, Fan Ye's version is the only to identify the bandits specifically as the Red Eyebrows (*chimei* 赤眉). This mention of the Red Eyebrows is somewhat unusual since, as we've seen previously, in general, Fan Ye is more reticent than the other sources when it comes to detailing personal names.<sup>59</sup> Conversely, there are only a few instances where the *Hou Han shu* version is missing elements narrated in another version. Absent from Fan Ye's narration are two incidents: (1) the couple throws their late son's clothes into the river and, (2) Jiang's censure for presumably consuming the food given to him by the bandits.

We may also glean several points of disagreement between Fan Ye's text and other versions of the biography of the wife of Jiang Shi. The first such disagreement relates to the reason for the wife's banishment from the home. In the *Hou Han shu* account, she was expelled for her inability to return on time from fetching water when caught in a storm; the *Huayang guoshi* attributes her exile to her disobeying the orders to pound grain.

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59. Bielenstein takes another mention of the Red Eyebrows in the *Hou Han shu* as an example of an unequivocally invented speech. Whether Fan Ye took this from another biography or whether he invented it himself is unknown. Irrespective of the original author of these words, the Red Eyebrows were illiterate and unsophisticated and thus, according to Bielenstein, it is inconceivable they would have had the habit or educational background to document their speeches. See Bielenstein, *Restoration of the Han*, 58.

**Table 1.7** Key Elements of the biography of the wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩 (3) in four different texts.<sup>60</sup>

Fan Ye's HHS	DGHJ	HYGZ	TPYL 862 3a	TPYL 60 6b
The wife of Jiang Shi from Guanghan was the daughter of Pang Sheng from the same commandery. 廣漢姜詩者，同郡龐盛之女也。	Jiang Shi, style Shi You, from Luo in Guanghan. 姜詩、字士遊，廣漢雒人也。 <sup>61</sup>	龐行姜詩妻也。Pang Xing was the wife of Jiang Shi. <sup>62</sup>	—	—
Shi is a filial son	Jiang Shi, a filial son, helped by his wife, cares for his mother	The wife of Jiang Shi weaves for her mother-in-law	The wife of Jiang Shi serves her mother-in-law.	The wife of Jiang Shi from Guanghan cares for her mother-in-law with utmost filiality.
The wife fetches river water for mother-in-law.	—	The wife is ordered to pound grain for mother-in-law.	—	The wife fetches river water for mother-in-law.
The wife returns late due to a storm; mother-in-law thirsts.	—	The wife does not respond promptly her husband's command.	—	The wife returns late due to a storm; mother-in-law thirsts.
Jiang Shi expels her from the household; she cares for mother-in-law in absentia.	—	The wife is expelled from the household; cares for mother-in-law in absentia.	—	Her husband expels her from the household; in absentia she cares for mother-in-law.
Due to intervention of neighbor, the wife gets to return to her husband's household	—	Due to intervention of neighbor, the wife gets to return to her husband's household	—	Due to intervention of neighbor, the wife gets to return to her husband's household
Son fetches river water and drowns	Son fetches river water and drowns	Son fetches river water and drowns	—	—
The wife tells mother-son is away studying	Couple tells mother-in-law that their son is away studying	Couple tells mother-in-law that their son is away studying	—	—
—	They throw clothes for their son in the river water	They throw clothes and notes for their son in the river water	—	—
Couple cooks fish dish for mother-in-law; invite neighbor to share meals.	—	—	Couple cooks fish dish for mother-in-law; invite neighbor to share her meals.	—
Spring wells up; water tastes like river, gives 2 carp each day.	Spring wells up; water tastes like river, gives 2 carp each day.	—	Spring wells up, gives 2 carp each day.	Spring wells up; its water tastes like river.
Red Eyebrows spare village, afraid his filiality will stir the gods, give Jiang food; he buries it.	Thieves spare village, give Jiang food because of his reputation for filial; he buries it.	—	—	—
—	Denounced for taking the food; reveals burial.	—	—	—
Jiang received an official post on the basis of his filiality.	—	—	—	—

60. HHS 84/74: 2783; DGHJ 17/22, 388-89; HYGZ 10B, 818; TPYL 862 3a and 60 6b.

61. This *Dongguan Hanji biography* is that of husband, Jiang Shi.

62. The wife of Jiang Shi's name is Pang Xing 龐行 in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 689.

The second dissimilarity, with both the *Dongguan Hanji* and *Huayang guozhi*, relates to whether it was solely the wife of Jiang Shi or both husband and wife who were afraid of grieving the mother-in-law with news of their son's death.

The third dissimilarity is that in the *Dongguan Han ji*, it is not the wife of Jiang Shi but rather her son who dutifully fetches water for the mother-in-law.

The last, and perhaps most significant dissimilarity with the *Dongguan Hanji* relates to the choice of protagonist. The primary subject of the *Dongguan Han ji* biography is Jiang Shi, who with the help of his wife takes excellent care of his mother. In contrast, Jiang Shi appears in the *Hou Han shu* as the husband of the protagonist of the third biography of its *Lienü zhuan*. Although Jiang Shi does not have a biography of his own in the *Hou Han shu*, the last third of his wife's biography is strictly about him and does not mention her.<sup>63</sup>

### *Literary References*

In some of the biographies, Fan Ye's subjects make use of literary references to the Classics, the *Analects*, other biographies of women, etc. in defense of a particular

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63. The last third of the biography describes of Jiang Shi,

When some scattered bandits of the Red Eyebrows passed Shi's village, they lay down their arms. One of the bandits spoke, "To alarm a person of such great filiality surely arouse the ghosts and spirits." It happened that the year of the Red Bandits was also a year of bad harvest. The bandits provisioned the Shi household with grains and meats, which they received and buried. A neighboring village was grateful to Shi, crediting him for their safety. In the third year of Yongping, there was an imperial search for those who were "filial and incorrupt." Xianzong gave the following imperial order: "Those of great filiality will enter the service of the court. All the others who have been recommended will be placed on the same level as they await their appointment." All were honored with the position of "Gentleman of the Palace." Shi subsequently was appointed as magistrate<sup>63</sup> in Jiangyang. He died while in office. All of the places where he lived were well-governed. The villagers erected shrines for him. 赤眉散賊經詩里，鋒兵而過，曰：「驚大孝必觸鬼神。」時歲荒，賊乃遺詩米肉，受而埋之，比落蒙其安全。永平三年，察孝廉，顯宗詔曰：「大孝入朝，凡諸舉者一聽平之。」由是皆拜郎中。詩尋除江陽令，卒于官。所居治，鄉人為立祀。HHS 84/74 2783-84.



virtuous behavior. In this section, I will investigate whether these references are also found in parallel passages from other texts.

The wife of Yue Yangzi 樂羊子之妻 (6) admonishes her husband making reference to words used by Mencius's mother, as well as quotes the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語).<sup>64</sup> The *Taiping yulan*, quoting a *Lienü zhuan*, presents the wife scolding her husband in almost identical terms. This indicates that Fan Ye did not make up the content of the wife's admonition, but took her words from a presumably earlier source.

In the biography of the wife of Liu Changqing 劉長卿妻 (12), the *Hou Han shu* contains a reference to the *Odes* that does not appear in the parallel text in *Yiwen leiju*. Lacking further evidence, one may not discard the possibility this could have been an addition by Fan Ye. Finally, Fan Ye's biography of Zhao A 趙阿 (4) has her referring to morally upright imperial consorts Fan 樊 and Ren 衛; a reference we might attribute to Zhao A's familiarity with the biographies of these two consorts in Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*.<sup>65</sup> However, since there is no parallel text, we have no means of assessing whether Fan Ye added the reference, or took it from elsewhere.

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64. Compare with the chapter on Meng Mu 孟母 in Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*; LX LNZ 1.11, <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/lienu/browse/scroll11.html> (accessed July 20, 2009); Albert Richard O'Hara, *The Position of Woman in Early China* (Taipei: Mei Ya, 1971), 39-42. The editorial note in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* biography indicates this is a reference to the *Analects* 論語. HHS 84/74:2793. *Analects* 19.5 reads:

Zixia said, He who, day after day, remembers what he still needs to learn and, month after month, does not forget what he has already learned, is truly fond of learning. 子夏曰、日知其所亡、月無忘其所能、可謂好學也已矣。 *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 in the Academic Sinica *Shisanjing zhu* 十三經注, <http://db0.sinica.edu.tw/~tdbproj/handy1/> (accessed July 25, 2009). All future references to the *Analects* are from this Academia Sinica electronic edition of the *Shisanjing shu*. Translation by Simon Leys, in *The Analects of Confucius*, (New York: Norton, 1997), 95.

65. The editorial note on Zhao A's biography cites Liu Xiang's *Lienü Zhuan* in explaining:

## Conclusion

We have been able to establish that at least some of the biographies in Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan* have parallels in other texts, some of which predate Fan Ye's *Hou Han shu*.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to ascertain whether Fan Ye knew these texts existed and actively used them – a situation compounded by the fact so many of the texts are incomplete and that there are texts about which we do not know. Ronald Egan goes as far as to suggest “Fan Ye’s writings must have been a largely a mechanical task, one that consisted of compiling documents and anecdotes from his array of sources, deciding between conflicting versions of events, and arranging the material into coherent chapters”<sup>66</sup> Our findings corroborate, to a certain extent, Egan’s assessment. Equally true, is that, at least in some instances, he contributed some stylistic elements that might have included literary allusions and variations on the line of narration.

Part of our inability to draw definitive conclusions about Fan Ye’s contributions relates to the use of sources such as the Tang and Song *leishu* 類書. These are very useful in finding references, yet many of these are summaries of longer biographies, some of which may no longer exist. For example, the *Taiping yulan* excerpt on Ban Zhao (5) is attributed to the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* itself. The *Taiping yulan* entry for Ban Zhao contains less than 50 characters; the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* version (excepting the quotations from her works) contains about 600 characters.<sup>67</sup> In this

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King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王 was fond of hunting. Imperial Consort Fan 樊姬 would not eat of the freshly hunted fowl and by these means conveyed her admonition to the king. Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 was fond of listening to music. His Imperial Consort Ren 衛姬 would not listen to the five tones and by these means conveyed her admonition to the duke. *HHS* 84/74: 2784.

66. Egan, “Prose Style of Fan Yeh,” 369-70.

67. *TPYL* 520 7b.

example, our conclusion is that we cannot conclude whether Fan Ye supplied information not contained in the *Taiping yulan* passage.

In reading the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, it is important to bear in mind these uncertainties related concerning the extent of Fan Ye's original contribution to the narrative. Nevertheless, given the similarities of Fan Ye's passages with those in parallel texts, it is still possible to take the seventeen women as representations of Eastern Han women, albeit in a limited sense, allowing room for the uncertainties we have discussed.



## Chapter Two

### Approaches to Biographies of Women

Sons shall be his, — on couches lulled to rest.  
The little ones, enrobed, with scepters play;  
Their infant cries are loud as stern behest;  
Their knees the vermeil covers shall display.  
As king hereafter one shall be addressed;  
The rest, our princes, all the States shall sway.  
乃生男子、載寢之床、載衣之裳、載弄之璋。  
其泣嚶嚶、朱芾斯皇、室家君王。

And daughters also to him shall be born.  
They shall be placed upon the ground to sleep;  
Their playthings tiles, their dress the simplest worn;  
Their part alike from good and ill to keep,  
And ne'er their parents' hearts to cause to mourn;  
To cook the food, and spirit-malt to steep.  
乃生女子、載寢之地、載衣之褐、載弄之瓦。  
無非無儀、唯酒食是議、無父母詒罹。

*Book of Odes*<sup>1</sup>

It does not belong to the woman to determine anything herself but she has the three obediences. Therefore, when young, she has to obey her parents; when married, she has to obey her husband; when her husband is dead, she obeys her son. This is proper etiquette. 以言婦人無擅制之義，而有三從之道也。故年少則從乎父母，出嫁則從乎夫，夫死則從乎子，禮也。

Spoken by the Mother of Mencius in Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*<sup>2</sup>

English-language scholarship on gender in imperial Chinese history has long favored a focus on the continuities of social structures and practices for thousands of years. Whereas continuity certainly exists, excessive emphasis on sameness leads to anachronisms and distortions. Within the study of women's biographies in the Han dynasty, the most notable of these misapprehensions takes form in the usage of terms

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1. Ode titled *Si Gan* 斯干, translated by Legge, *She King*, 223.

2. From the chapter titled *Mu yi* in *LX LNZ* 1.11, <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/lienu/browse/scroll11.html> (accessed July 20, 2009); translation from O'Hara, *Position of Woman*, 39-42.

such as “Confucian society” and “traditional China.” These terms lead to a deceptive, generic image of a universal and immutable experience for all women who lived at any time between prehistory and the end of the Qing. These two terms flatten the differences in experience afforded by circumstances such as time period, location, economic situation, occupation, marital status, social “class,” ethnicity, etc. These differences, however, are precisely what would inform a clearer understanding of women’s lives in early imperial China.

The chapter containing biographies of women, titled *Lienü zhuan* in Fan Ye’s *Hou Han shu*, may serve as a window into the lives of specific groups of women – gentry women; within a specific dynastic period – the Eastern Han. The goal of my study is to discuss this text, and the female experiences that lie at the heart of it, in a historically informed way. As such, I will emphasize how the women featured in Fan Ye’s chapter helped create “Confucian” norms and standards rather than being the passive recipients of them.

## **Women in China’s Traditional Confucian Society**

### *Confucian Society*

In the popular mind, Chinese society is described as a Confucian society, whose mores date back to the Han dynasty. The 400 years of Han rule are seen as precedent for 2,000 years of a Confucian bureaucracy comprised of male scholars who, in turn, studied Confucian texts and institutionalized social applications of the teachings of Confucius 孔子 (551-479 BCE) and his followers. However, the attribution of an essential

Confucian nature to the workings of Chinese society throughout history is a key source of misunderstanding, and especially detrimental to a discussion on gender.

The characterization of imperial Chinese society as “Confucian” became prominent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chinese political movements used the term “Confucian” to embrace a very wide spectrum of spiritual and ethical beliefs and practices that it considered as essentially Chinese. The May Fourth-New Culture movement (1915-27) blamed Confucianism for the diplomatic ills that had befallen the country, the oppression of women, and the general civil unrest.<sup>3</sup> Late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Western missionaries, in search for a Chinese equivalent to the social, political, and religious ubiquity of Christianity in Europe and North America, also resorted to the term “Confucianism.”<sup>4</sup>

Recent scholarship has challenged the extent to which Han society can be deemed “Confucian.” Michael Nylan has stressed the importance of distinguishing between “Classical learning” and the ethical teachings of Confucius. Even though the Classics assumed growing importance in the Han dynasty, not all scholars or politicians who used the Classics can be deemed “Confucians.”<sup>5</sup> Paul Rakita Goldin’s close reading of some passages from the Classics lead him to conclude that there is no express hostility towards women in the texts of the “Confucian” tradition. The commonly-held assumption of a Confucian misogyny is contradicted by indications that these texts

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3. For details on the relationship between the May Fourth movement and gender studies of imperial China, please see the introduction to Dorothy Ko’s *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1-26.

4. Nylan, *Five Classics*, 3-4.

5. Nylan, *Five Classics*, 39.

reflect gender equality in terms of self-cultivation. That is, both men and women had the same potential for achieving elevated states of moral rectitude.<sup>6</sup>

With the passage of time during the Han dynasty, the Classics were increasingly internalized as a source of prescriptions for moral action. As we will see in Chapter Four, the women whose biographies were told in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* certainly knew the Classics and applied them to their lives in interesting new ways.

### *The Ambiguity of Traditional China*

Another popular and equally ambiguous assumption is the existence of a unified and continuous entity called “traditional China.” Problems arise from the generic nature of this term – to whom do these traditions belong; in what period; to what ethnic group; to what sorts of economic backgrounds? This traditional China exists in a temporal vacuum – an ill-defined timeframe that can encompass any or all given periods from prehistory up until the end of the Qing dynasty. The prevailing opinion in gender studies of imperial China has been that in traditional China Confucianism oppressed women. Jinhua Emma Teng’s informative 1999 state-of-the field article, “The Construction of the ‘Traditional Chinese Woman’ in the Western Academy,” explains how the first Western interest in gender in early China was guided by missionary and imperialist agendas set on “civilizing” and colonizing the Chinese.<sup>7</sup> Around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, intellectual trends, influenced by ideas of the evolution of societies as set forth by the likes of Bachofen and Engels, correlated women’s “position” in society with the degree

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6. See the second chapter, titled “Women and Sex Roles” of Paul Rakita Goldin, *The Culture of Sex in Ancient China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 48-74.

10. Jinhua Emma Teng, “The Construction of the ‘Traditional’ Chinese Woman’ in the Western Academy,” *Signs*, no. 1 (1996): 115-151.



of a society's evolutionary progress. Therefore, the portrayal of the long tradition of women's oppression since the empire's early days justified a need for educating the Chinese and bringing them forth to modern progress. That is, bringing them from Confucian social "backwardness" to Christianity. The product, then, is the icon of the traditional Chinese woman, perpetually suffering under the yoke of Confucianism.

Two essays in *Women in Early China*, published in 1981, illustrate how modern Western scholarship conflates the relationship between the Classics and the construct of a Confucianist order in traditional China. In "The Chinese Lieh-nü Tradition," Marina Sung identifies Chinese society as one dominated by Confucianism and does not shy away from the generalization that throughout "traditional Chinese society, women were not treated as equals to men."<sup>8</sup> Proof of the inferiority resides in the Five Classics, in which "very little is said about the nature and innate qualities of women, although they are described as inferior to men."<sup>9</sup> There is no questioning of the frame of reference used to define inferiority, Confucianism, inequality, etc. Richard Guisso in "The Five Classics and the Perceptions of Women," critiques the rulers of traditional China for regarding the Classics in "too literal a fashion...as the collective repository of human wisdom."<sup>10</sup> The issues of treating gender as a universal experience, historical specificity, and literalist interpretations of the Classics are all relevant to our reading of the representations of the biographies of women in the *Hou Han shu*, to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

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8. Sung, "The Chinese Lieh-nü Tradition," 66.

9. Sung, "The Chinese Lieh-nü Tradition," 66.

10. Richard Guisso, "The Five Classics and the Perception of Women in Early China," in *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*, ed. Richard Guisso and Stanley Johannesen (New York, Philo, 1981), 48.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Studies of the Biographies of Women

To study the 17 biographies of women that comprise Chapter 84 of the *Hou Han shu* offers several advantages to a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience interested in understanding gender relations in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century society, while wishing to go beyond the commonly posited assumption of a perennially oppressed “traditional” Chinese woman. First, that that all women lived during the Eastern Han helps one reach conclusions that are confined to one particular historical period. Second, the women represented therein are mostly gentry women, not palace women or commoners, and our conclusions about this particular group will not be extended to other social groups, thus we veer away from creating a monolithic image of a traditional Han dynasty woman. Third, the chapter is replete with allusions to classical scholarship; this creates an arena for interpretation that might challenge ideas about a Confucian oppression of women.

There is little scholarship on the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*. Fortunately, there are studies about other texts with biographical information on women. It is these studies we will review in this section as it is important to examine the methodology with which Western scholarship has approached these biographies of women, especially early Chinese women. Liu Xiang’s *Lienü zhuan* is certainly the one treated most extensively by scholars.<sup>11</sup>

Liu Xiang was one of the most influential court scholars of the Western Han 西漢 (206 BCE-8 CE). His work in ordering the imperial library was central to the

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11. This is the same title *Lienü zhuan* of the *Hou Han shu* chapter on biographies of women. The style and format of Fan Ye’s text is different from Liu Xiang’s text. Liu Xiang’s *Lienü zhuan* had been in circulation for a couple of hundred years by the time Fan Ye compiled the *Hou Han shu*. Nevertheless, Fan Ye does not mention or reference this text in his “*Lienü zhuan*,” except, perhaps, in having given it the same title.

establishment of the different genres of Chinese literature, as well as in finding, compiling and preserving obscure or seemingly lost works.<sup>12</sup>

According to the Eastern Han scholar and historian Ban Gu, in writing the *Lienü zhuan*, Liu wanted to create a didactic text that would instruct the Son of Heaven as to the importance of having virtuous women at court and warn against the destructive effects of depraved women.<sup>13</sup>

One of the first English-language studies of Liu Xiang's text was conducted in 1945 by Jesuit priest Albert O'Hara, who translated the entirety of Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan* in *The Position of Women in Early China*.<sup>14</sup> As the title suggests, the study tried to describe women's social standing in the first centuries of imperial China. O'Hara dedicates two chapters to his analysis – the first uses “other” sources to describe the position of women, whereas the second one uses Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*. In essence, the two chapters seek to contrast the image of women derived from the Classics with the representations of women in Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*. O'Hara aims at correcting the Western tendency to generalize that “women in China are little better than playthings for the wealthy and drudges for the poor.”<sup>15</sup>

O'Hara certainly does not present women in China as universal victims. Instead,

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12. See Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Han and Xin Periods, 221 BC - AD 24* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 372-75 and *HS* 36: 1928-67.

13. *HS* 36: 1957-58 reads:

[Liu Xiang] gathered and obtained what was recorded about virtuous consorts and chaste wives in *Shijing* and *Shangshu* to be a standard for reviving the state and making families prominent, as well as of evil favorites and the destructive, and put them in order as *Lienüzhuan* in eight chapters (*pian*) to warn the son of heaven. 故採取詩書所載賢妃貞婦，興國顯家可法則，及孽嬖亂亡者，序次為列女傳，凡八篇，以戒天子。 Translation by Raphals in *Sharing the Light*, 3-4.

14. To date, O'Hara's is the only translation in English, although a new translation by Anne Behnke Kinney is forthcoming.

15. O'Hara, *Position of Women*, 1.

he tries to present women in China as having much more of an influence in affairs of the state and home than generally thought. However, despite his stated goal, the actual analysis falls short. There is little to no differentiation between the women represented in the Classics, in the histories, and in the *Lienü zhuan*, or, for that matter, between these women and the women of the China in which O'Hara himself lived – the whole work is atemporal. In addition, the *Lienü zhuan* and the other sources he addresses also contain women from different backgrounds, another area in which he fails to make the appropriate distinctions.

Another text that has similar issues with regard to contextualization, although somewhat less severe, is Ch'ü T'ung-tsu's *Han Social Structure*.<sup>16</sup> This hefty tome contains 550 pages dedicated to a description of society during the Han dynasty. The first half of the study consists of a Weberian analysis of a proposed set of social groups; the second half contains translations of his sources – over 200 excerpts from the *Shiji*, the *Han shu*, and the *Hou Han shu* (including parts of the *Lienü zhuan*) and other histories. A. P. F. Hulsewé critiques Ch'ü's work for the lack of attention to the differences across the four centuries that comprised the Han dynasty, and for not contextualizing his work in light of contemporary translations and research available at the time of publication, such as epigraphic and archeological data.<sup>17</sup>

Lisa Raphals's 1998 *Sharing the Light* is a more recent work that addresses, in part, Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*. Her analysis is not as concerned with the accuracy of

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16. Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Han Social Structure*, ed. Jack L. Dull (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972).

17. A. P. F. Hulsewé, review of *Han Social Structure*, by Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, ed. Jack L. Dull, *T'oung Pao*, 2nd ser., 62, livr. 4/5 (1976): 330-337.

*Lienü zhuan* in reflecting “real life” in any particular period,<sup>18</sup> as it is with the representation itself. Her text does not necessarily challenge women’s situation in early imperial China, but rather the universality of elite males’ contempt for women. Raphals highlights the importance of situating the text within the particular court environment in which Liu Xiang was writing, and taking into account his goal of presenting an admonition to the emperor.<sup>19</sup>

Raphals focuses on the categories of women presented by Liu Xiang. In particular, she looks at “types” of women to demonstrate that women were not excluded from court life, but rather were expected to participate. The chapters titled *Worthy and Enlightened* (*xianming* 贤明), *Benevolent and Wise* (*renzhi* 仁智), and *Accomplished Speakers* (*biantong* 辩通) each present a particular model of women’s behavior. The one commonality Raphals finds is that the women, in one way or another, are all represented as advisors to the men in their families, and share their concern with the preservation of their families and states.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the women are extolled for caring for and handling matters outside of typically female issues.<sup>21</sup> These women are presented as equivalent to “ministers and filial princes,” which attempt to admonish the rulers they serve and adopt a variety of strategies when they cannot achieve their objective.<sup>22</sup>

Rather than admonish the emperor directly on the particulars of his bedroom affairs, Liu Xiang provided mostly examples of types of women whose company is beneficial and whose influence is positive. These “good” women served as a contrast to

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18. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 3-4.

19. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 3-4.

20. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 59.

21. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 59.

22. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 59. Conversely, Paul Rouzer argues that it is courtiers who are represented with the attributes of women. See Paul Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 26-38.

the women in the last chapter, whose actions resembled those of Emperor Cheng's paramours. The last chapter contains a type of women presented as "detrimental," they were mostly interested in "cavorting" with the emperor and distracted him from ruling. In particular, Emperor Cheng did not have an heir and, in Liu Xiang's esteem, should have been focusing his sexual energies on procreation rather than recreation.<sup>23</sup> In the case Cheng were to die without an heir, Liu Xiang predicted a chaotic court battle between the different families and interests seeking to establish an emperor partisan to their agenda.

Mou's 2004 *Gentlemen's Prescriptions for Women's Lives* also looks at the types of women in the *Lienü zhuan*, but comes up with a different reading than Raphals. Mou's study requires special attention because her study addresses the whole genre of biographies of women from the Han to the end of the Five Dynasties 五代 (907-960). Aside from the Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*, it studies the *lienü* chapters on biographies of women in the standard histories, starting with their appearance in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*.

Mou, like Raphals, finds Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan* representations of women to be those of intelligent and active participants in their social environment. However, Mou qualifies the agency of the women as exerted only in favor of supporting a pre-existing Confucian gender hierarchy. Mou cites Mencius's 孟子 (approx. 372-289 BCE) "five human relationships" to indicate that the Confucian social model only accounts for women's participation in society in their role as wives.<sup>24</sup> As applied to Liu Xiang's

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23. The details of the precarious state of the throne during Emperor Cheng's rule are detailed in Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 78-86.

24. *Mencius* 5B: 97 states there are five human relationships:

*Lienü zhuan*, “this subordinated wifely role is the starting point for the inclusion of women in the 104 biographies.”<sup>25</sup>

From this perspective, Liu Xiang is presented as a Confucian with a stake in propagating the Confucian gender hierarchy. As such, he co-opts women and represents idealized women whose actions serve the gender hierarchy. Mou says of Liu Xiang that,

on the one hand he tried to appropriate women in the Confucian tradition through his assembling of prominent women throughout history, on the other hand his reassessment is preconfined and predefined by established Confucian ideology, which is allotted special discursive fields for women as subordinate to men.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the representations of women in Liu Xiang’s *Lienü zhuan* and the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* for dynastic histories were created by men of privileged social standing, with access to the inner circles of court life – men who also could boast wide familiarity with the Classics. However, Mou’s judgment is too sweeping, as, in her view, these men almost conspired to keep women in their subordinate position.

From the perspective granted by 21<sup>st</sup> century hindsight, it is convenient to subsume all scholarship under the Confucian rubric. Nevertheless, as shown previously, this generalization does very little for a discussion on gender. If one accepts, *a priori*, that the Confucian ideology treats women as subordinate to men, then all readings of the texts will seem to point that way. It is more fruitful, in examining at the pervasiveness of

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[L]ove between father and son, duty between ruler and subject, distinction between husband and wife, precedence of old over the young, and faith between friends. 父子有親，君臣有義，夫婦有別，長幼有序，朋友有信. Translation by D.C. Lau, *Mencius* (London: Penguin, 1970), 102; original text of the found in *Mengzi zhushu* 孟子注疏 in the Academic Sinica *Shisanjing zhu* 十三經注, <http://dbo.sinica.edu.tw/~tdbproj/handy1/> (accessed July 25, 2009). All future references to the *Mencius* are from this Academia Sinica electronic edition of the *Shisanjing shu*.

25. Mou, *Gentlemen’s Prescriptions*, 31.

26. Mou, *Gentlemen’s Prescriptions*, 66.

the “wifely” roles women play, to focus more on the women themselves, on the various roles they play, and, in many cases, on their own scholarly backgrounds and motivations.

Bret Hinsch suggests this approach in *Women in Early Imperial China*.<sup>27</sup> He suggests we study women in early imperial China by observing and reconstructing the range of social roles they occupy. Whereas Raphals and Mou looked at the categories provided within the text, Hinsch’s model looks at the roles by these source texts. Informed by Erving Goffman’s theory of social dramaturgy, Hinsch suggests that in early imperial China, roles themselves were more important than they are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Western society. The correct playing of a role carried much more weight for the actor – male or female – and for his or her society. That is, according to Hinsch, an elite woman was no more and no less forced into the role of “wife” than a man was pressured to play the role of the scholar who excels in an official career, of the dutiful head of the household, or of the selfless son who provides for his parents in old age.

Thus, for men and women the measure of a person’s success was not necessarily the same as for modern Western society. Hinsch suggests that “success in life did not come from seeking new opportunities but rather from fitting into social roles.”<sup>28</sup> Observing familiar and other social roles as represented in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* is useful, but requires special caution. However, his study of roles can easily fall into the ahistorical traps that have obstructed previous scholarship.

In summary, there are several key lessons to be learned from this discussion, which will, in turn, have bearing on how we frame an analysis of the text:

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27. Bret Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 3-9.

28. Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China*, 8.



- Biographies of women were written by male scholars who presented a vision on noteworthy women. The scholars' perspective will reflect a particular point of view, if not an ideology.
- One approach to exploring these texts is to look at the similarities and differences of the women in light of the social roles represented therein.
- In terms of biographies of women as presented in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, the role of wife features prominently and is a useful place to approach the text.
- Our study will mainly focus on how each woman of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* constructs these based upon her individual circumstances.

## **Histories and Fiction**

Although we have argued that one of the major shortcomings of prior scholarship has been using texts such as the Classics as descriptive of Han dynasty society, it is necessary to pause to ask ourselves if we, too, are committing the same error in treating the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* biographies as factual history. How are we able to read as “historical” a text whose narration contains presumably fictional elements such as the magical fish which appear in the biography of the wife of Jiang Shi (3) as a reward for filial piety, and such as Shuxian Xiong's (16) miraculous posthumous retrieval of her father's drowned body?<sup>29</sup>

These polemics of fictional and historical narratives are not unique to our text and extend far beyond the scope and capacity of our study. For our purposes, we will have to take Fan Ye as the compiler of a text based on prior texts. Our preliminary

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29. Some aspects of this issue of the supernatural are also addressed in Chapter One.

research, explained in the previous chapter, on the possible sources for some of Fan Ye's biographies in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* led to no definitive conclusion as to Fan Ye's creative input in the authorship of the biographies. However, it seems certain that he availed himself of earlier texts for at least most of the biographies. Both of the examples of supernatural events mentioned above appear in some form in texts that pre-date the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*: the magical fish appear in the *Dongguan Hanji* as well as in other *Lienü zhuan* sources whereas Shuxian Xiong's heroic drowning appears in the *Soushen ji*.<sup>30</sup>

We will adopt the position that Fan Ye was not as concerned with the veracity of the stories but rather with their transmission from prior sources that, according to his criteria, belonged in a history compilation.<sup>31</sup> David Johnson suggests that people who compiled this sort of historical text perhaps did not dwell extensively on the believability of supernatural events because the larger “book” (*shu* 書) volume in which it was narrated was considered to be, in itself, a credible text.<sup>32</sup> Anthony Yu further suggests that part of credibility rested in that at least some of the narrated events' occurrence at a particular historical moment could be corroborated.<sup>33</sup> For example, in the case of the biography of the wife of Jiang Shi there are dates in Fan Ye's narration that correlate with known events, such as the years of famine, social unrest, and the presence of the Red Eyebrows; in the biography of Shuxian Xiong, we have information on the dates of the events, as well as on the father's occupation. We, too, can temporarily set aside the

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30. *DGHJ* 17/22, 388-89; *SSJ* 11/291, 136-7.

31. Such “supernatural” elements also occur in the *Shiji*.

32. David Johnson, “Epic and History in Early China: The Matter of Wu Tzu-hsu,” *Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 40.2 (1981): 265.

33. Anthony C. Yu, “History, Fiction, and the Reading of a Chinese Narrative,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles and Reviews*, 10 (1999): 2-3.

seemingly fictional elements and use similar criteria to accept Fan Ye's work, and the biographies of women contained therein as a historical text, within a particular historiographical tradition.

### **Ritual and the Subjunctive**

The preceding sections of this chapter have outlined that some of the problems in previous scholarship of biographies of women in Early China are caused by anachronistic approaches to gender roles, in general, and to the handling of the Classics, in particular. We have also remarked that there are conditions, related to the distinction between history and fiction, under which we must approach the text. The theoretical model with which we read this chapter of the *Hou Han shu*, should be flexible enough to address these problems and conditions without necessitating we provide a universal definition of gender roles, or to establish the Classics as a source of universal authority. A sincere effort to avoid using the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* as generically representative of women's experiences in Early China is important – to do so would go against Fan Ye's stated purpose in his *xu* and *zan*, which is to write about exceptional women of the Eastern Han. There are, nevertheless, certain trends in Eastern Han society, and certain qualities of the represented women which further drive our choice of model.

The first factor we need to consider is that Eastern Han society underwent significant socio-economic changes that distinguished it from Western Han. Of particular concern to the reading of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* are the changes in the upper-level class of *shi* 士. Until the Eastern Han, the *shi*, or “educated gentlemen” were those whose scholarly and moral training qualified them to be government officers. This

*shi* “class” was further subdivided into ranks and levels that could range from ministers and scribes in the civil service to unemployed teachers.<sup>34</sup> During the Eastern Han, the term *shi* was more inclusive of local elite. These began to self-identify as *shi* knowledgeable and participating in issues of national concern, irrespective of their level of scholarly or bureaucratic attainment, thus giving local elite a certain national class membership. That is, the *shi* now included officers and scholars near and far from the seat of central government, whether local functionaries of the lowest-rank, imperial advisors, or men who had chosen to stay aloof of politics altogether.<sup>35</sup>

The second factor to consider in choosing a theoretical model also relates to the changes in the *shi* class. Along with the expansion of *shi* class self-consciousness, there came a dissemination of and interest in the notion of *shi* values. These nouveau *shi* began conducting themselves and promoting what they saw as fitting behavior for members of their class.<sup>36</sup> For example there was an increase in the circulation of “exemplary lives,” whether in biographical works such as *liezhuan* which praised local *shi* for possessing values previously recorded for imperial nobility and court elite such as filial piety, moral uprightness, loyalty, and personal cultivation, or in memorial stele. The new *shi*, often supported their values with the Classics.

The third factor to consider is that the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* form part of one such “exemplary lives” Eastern Han text. As will be demonstrated in the fourth chapter, the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* belonged to families

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34. Ebrey, “The Economic and Social History of Later Han,” 643. For a view into the classes and levels, see the biographical dictionaries by Loewe, de Crespigny. The appendices contain translations for dozens of the civil servant ranks and titles.

35. Ebrey notes that the impact of this change is such that “in the succeeding centuries, the strength and coherence of the upper class of “cultured gentlemen” proved to be more durable than political or economical centralization as a basis for the unity of Chinese civilization. Ebrey, “The Economic and Social History of Later Han,” 643.

36. Ebrey, “The Economic and Social History of Later Han,” 643.

firmly planted in this emerging *shi* class. Many of the women were either well-versed in the Classics, or belonged to families wherein ritual deportment was practiced or taught. They gained representation in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* because of their exemplary behavior that challenged some social norm or convention to the degree they stood out to historians. Although all the women's behavior is equally praiseworthy, they excel for different reasons, and because of different actions.

As mentioned previously, one of the distinguishing factors between this *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* and Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan* is that the women are not grouped by category in Fan Ye's text. In fact, Fan Ye takes special pride in not placing the women in explicit categories. As such, in our text we have women who, when faced with the possibility of remarriage, carry out contrasting actions and give different justifications. In the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* there is Ban Zhao (5), a woman scholar who writes against remarriage, as well as Cai Yan (17), a woman scholar who marries twice, in addition to women who commit suicide or mutilate themselves in order to avoid their fathers' orders to remarry. It is more useful to focus on the individual women and analyze their particular contributions, rather than to attempt to pin down normative social practices of remarriage in the Eastern Han,

We need a theory that is mostly concerned with action and interaction. Catherine Bell's work on ritualization and the presentation on ritual's relation to subjunctive put forth in the co-authored *Ritual and its Consequences* by Adam B. Seligman, Robert P.

Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon will guide our reading of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*.<sup>37</sup>

Most of the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* are educated, as demonstrating some sort of expertise, oftentimes with regard to the Classics and other scholarly and ritual texts. For example, the wife of Yue Yangzi (6) is versed in the *Analects*, Huan Shaojun (1) is familiar with the *Changes*, and the wife of Liu Changqing (12) cites from the *Odes*. If the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* are enmeshed in a social context of classical scholarship, what is it that makes a woman choose one aspect of ritual text over another? In the example of remarriage, why, under the same paternal pressure to remarry does one woman favor filial piety by obeying her father's orders to remarry while another appeals to notions of loyalty to her late husband by committing suicide? This suggests that there is a process of creation and adaptation of the classical texts that extends well beyond a simple cause-effect relationship of literal interpretation of a text's prescriptions. Catherine Bell's ideas of ritualization are useful in conceptualizing the representation of the women in their usage of the Classics and ritual texts.

Bell presents ritualization as “a matter of various culturally-specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the sacred and the profane, and of ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors.”<sup>38</sup> This is best explained though an illustration with the example of a case of the wife of Liu Changqing (12) in

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37. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

38. Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 74.

which a woman avoids remarriage by mutilating herself, and, in doing so, goes against her father's wishes. Our interest is in observing – within the culturally specific situation of these Eastern Han gentry women – the strategy used by the wife of Liu Changqing. Is she creative in her act or is it “principled” to cut off one's ear to avoid remarriage? In a sense, our interest is not in commenting on the shock value of the mutilation, nor in debating whether a woman cuts herself in frustration at her oppression by a patriarchal structure. Rather, we want to see how it is mutilation becomes a “sacred” act, rather than the mere amputation of a sensory organ; how it is she negotiates and reconciles the conflicting interests of loyalty to her late husband and filial obedience to her father's instructions.

Adopting Bourdieu's theory of practice, Bell posits that ritualization, like all social practice, is “situational, strategic, embedded in a misrecognition of what it is doing, and able to reproduce or configure a vision of the order in the world.”<sup>39</sup> Bell understands also ritualization to take place within the *habitus* – the context of dispositions through which individuals create and mold social norms – of which the subject is not aware.<sup>40</sup> If we continue with the same example of the wife of Liu Changqing, in observing the process of negotiation and reconciliation within her particular context, it is not accurate to say that she is a victim of the ritual texts or of her social environment. In this model, there is no free-standing source of authority with absolute determining power over the individual. In interacting with the texts and other aspects of her *habitus*; the *habitus* does not impose, but rather she is a participant in the

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39. Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 78.

40. Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 79-80.

creation of her environment. She is influenced by it, but she also exerts influence in it (to her father, social peers, prospective fiancé, etc.) via her actions.

However, in this formulation of acting and creating, although the wife of Liu Changqing's actions are viewed as genuine, it is not accurate to say she is fully aware of her ability to reproduce or reconfigure her world. In Bell's framework, despite the number of alternatives we readers see before her, the wife of Liu Changqing, embedded in her *habitus*, feels her course of action is externally defined. That is, although her environment is not imposing upon her a certain mode of action, the wife of Liu Changqing acts in a particular manner because she considers it to be the only course of action. That is, the women can use the *Odes* to justify her behavior and to choose one mode of action over another, but in order for ritualization to hold, she must envision herself in such a way that this certain mode of action transcends individual choice, that there are "higher" (moral, ethical, religious, etc.) conditions that dictates such action.

Therefore, the person engaged in ritualization might be seen as, or might see herself as helpless and/or oppressed. In *Ritual and its Consequences*, Seligman, Weller, Puett, and Simon claim to go a step beyond Bell. In response to Bell, they write:

Catherine Bell, for instance, sees one of the fundamental characteristics of ritualization as the simple imperative to *do* something in such a way that the doing itself gives the acts a special or privileged status. Such "doing" appears naturalized and externally defined, she argues, because of the performative and traditionalizing features of ritual.<sup>41</sup>

The authors of *Ritual and its Consequences* change the focus from that about which the woman is not aware to that which she imagines herself to be:

The model we propose understands ritual as a subjunctive – the creation of an order as if it were truly the case... the subjunctive creates an order that is self consciously distinct from other possible social worlds.... We

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41. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*, 4-5.



emphasize the incongruity between the world of enacted ritual and the participants' experience of lived reality, and we thus focus on the work that ritual accomplishes.<sup>42</sup>

Whereas Catherine Bell's model is useful for exploring the women's negotiations with specific texts or social practices, the model offered by *Ritual and its Consequences* will allow us, in our analysis of the biographies of the women in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, to get away from the idea of oppression and make room for creativity and agency.

Indeed, our claim will be that women envision themselves – much like the male nouveau *shi* of the Eastern Han – as members of a larger collective of wives and daughters, a collective through which they forge links with righteous women of the past whose behaviors they know through texts. They seek to emulate these exemplary women, even if in doing so they go against the demands of her contemporaries. For example, in the wife of Liu Changqing's situation, she uses the *Odes* to argue that only by being upright she can uphold her ancestral tradition. Thus, although to her contemporaries, remarriage is a socially-accepted practice, the wife of Liu Changqing imagines herself to belong to a subjunctive world populated by righteous women of her native lineage, and thus she acts in the manner seemly of such women.

It is in these subjunctive worlds, that our inquiry into the roles of wife and daughter will be carried out. Roles are, in fact, social patterns. However, following Seligman, Weller, Puett, and Simon's lead, the interest is not in how well the women carry out the role of wife or daughter. Indeed, such a line of investigation presupposes there is an externally imposed and objective definition of what it means to be a wife or a daughter. In reading the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, we will examine each woman's

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42. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*, 20.

choices within and without the subjunctive worlds they are creating, and in which they are carrying out their vision of what it is to be a wife or daughter.

Before exploring these notions of the creation of the subjunctive in the representations of women in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, it is important we give a brief overview of some of the social and economic conditions in which these women lived.

## Chapter Three

### The Women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*

Ritualization as social practice does not take place in a vacuum. As I indicated in the previous chapter, one of the major shortcomings of previous scholarship on early Chinese women is its general lack of contextualization of social phenomena with regard to the experiences afforded by economic situation, social “class,” occupation, age, spiritual practices, family environment, etc. The inevitable result of such scholarship is the flattening of society into only two experiences – the male and the female.<sup>1</sup> However, gender does not suffice. A woman’s experience of these other differentiating elements is fundamentally what shapes her ritualization actions, and therefore must be considered.

The permutations of all the possible factors that constitute a person’s social experience are infinite and impossible to reconstruct. At best, the observer can define and study a limited set of experiences that contribute to the ritualization process. For the purposes of the present study, we need to have a clear definition of the cultural and social context in which the women carried out their noteworthy actions.

This chapter will begin with some remarks about the structure of formulas that introduce each of the women in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* as they reveal, to some extent, the women’s experiences with regard to family situation and roles. Using this information, I will further define some additional factors such as the women’s educational background and economic situation.

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1. For example, with regard to the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, Mou remarks that “the biographies of women are bound by gender” and that, by extension, are “limited to only this chapter, no matter what distinguished them. Mou, *Gentlemen’s Prescriptions*, 76-77.

## The Identification Formula

The beginning sentence of each of the biographies follows a formula that provides the woman's name, the name of her husband and of her father, as well as the natal commandery (*jun*) of the husband and father.<sup>2</sup> A generic formula is adapted to the information available on each woman.

### Generic Formula

The most generic version of the identification formula is,

The wife of B from A, was the daughter of D from C, and her name was F. AB妻者，CD之女也。字F.

Thus, the woman's marital home is identified through her husband, her natal home through her father. For example, biography 10 starts,

The wife of Yuan Wei from Runan was the daughter of Ma Rong from Fufeng; and her style was Lun. 汝南袁隗妻者，扶風馬融之女也。字倫。<sup>3</sup>

### Incomplete Information

If the woman's name is unknown or there is information missing about her background, this is usually noted. For example, in biography 2, neither the woman's name nor family background are known,

The wife of Wang Ba from Taiyuan is a daughter of an unidentified family. 太原王霸妻者，不知何氏之女也。<sup>4</sup>

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2. During the Eastern Han, a commandery (*jun*) was the largest administrative subdivision of a province 州 (*zhou*).

3. HHS 84/74: 2796.

4. HHS 84/74: 2782.

### Male Relatives other than the Father

In two cases relatives other than the father identify the woman. Biography 7 begins:

The wife of Cheng Wenju from Hanzhong was the eldest sister of Li Fa from the same commandery, and her style was Mujiang. 漢中程文矩妻者，同郡李法之姊也，字穆姜。<sup>5</sup>

In this case, a famous brother serves to identify the woman's natal home, supplanting the father. Biography 11 uses the son's name rather than the husband's name as identifier for the marital household:

The mother of Pang Yu from Jiuquan was a daughter of the Zhao family and her style was E. 酒泉龐涓母者，趙氏之女也，字娥。<sup>6</sup>

### Filial Daughters (xiaonü 孝女)

In the two cases where the protagonist is introduced as "filial daughter," the generic formula is not applied. None of the women's male relatives are used for identification. The pattern for filial daughters is,

Filial Daughter A was a resident of B. 孝女A者，B人也。

Biography 8 starts,

Filial daughter Cao E was from Shangju in Kuaiji. 孝女曹娥者，會稽上虞人也。<sup>7</sup>

The woman Cao E is identified by her reputation as filial, as well as her natal location within the commandery. Table 3.1 summarizes the information gathered from all the formulas in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*.

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5. HHS 84/74: 2792.

6. HHS 84/74: 2796.

7. HHS 84/74: 2794.

**Table 3.1** Information Provided in Identification Formulas

Bio #	Style 字 /Name 名 (Location)	Husband (Location)	Natal Family (Location)
1	Shaojun 少君, style	Bao Xuan 鮑宣 (Bohai 勃海)	Family氏: Huan 桓
2	—	Wang Ba 王霸 (Taiyuan 太原)	Unidentified Family
3	—	Jiang Shi 姜詩 (Guanghan 廣漢)	Father: Pang Sheng 龐盛 (same as husband)
4	A 阿, style	Zhou Yu 周郁 (Pei 沛郡)	Father: Zhao Xiao 趙孝 (same)
5	Zhao 昭, name Hui Ban 惠班, style Ji 姬, alt. name	Cao Shishu 曹世叔 (Fufeng 扶風)	Father: Ban Biao 班彪 (same)
6	—	Yue Yangzi 樂羊子 (Henan 河南)	Unidentified Family
7	Mujiang 穆姜, style	Cheng Wenju 程文矩 (Hanzhong 漢中)	Brother: Li Fa 李法 (same)
8	Cao E 曹娥 (Kuaiji 會稽)	—	—
9	Rong 榮, style	Wu Xusheng 吳許升	Family: Lü 呂
10	Lun 倫, style	Yuan Wei 汝南 (Runan 袁隗)	Father: Ma Rong 馬融 (Fufeng)
11	E娥, style	—	Son: Pang Yu 龐涓 (Jiuquan 酒泉); Family: Zhao 趙
12	—	Liu Changqing 劉長卿 (Pei)	Huan Luan 桓鸞 (same)
13	—	Huangfu Gui 皇甫規 (Anding 安定)	Unidentified Family
14	Cai 采, name Nu Xun 女荀, style	Yin Yu 陰瑜 (Nanyang 南陽)	Xun Shuang 荀爽 (Yingchuan 潁川)
15	Yuanjiang 媛姜, style	Sheng Dao 盛道 (Jianwei 犍為)	Family: Zhao 趙
16	Shuxian Xiong 叔先雄 (Jianwei)	—	—
17	Yan 琰, name Wenji 文姬, style	Dong Si 董祀 (Chenliu 陳留)	Cai Yong 蔡邕 (same)
Total	11 identified by name or style.	14 identified by husband.	12 identified by family: (7 by father; 4 family; 2 other.)

### Names

In *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, women are often identified by their style (*zi* 字); nine of the seventeen women are presented by style in their identification formula. In general, a style was given to a person when she reached adulthood. Of these nine women, three are also listed by personal name (*ming* 名).

Michael Loewe observes that the usage of styles to identify a person is much more frequent in the *Hou Han shu* than in the *Shiji* or *Han shu*.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, in the *Lienü zhuan*, the styles seem largely reserved to the protagonists of the various biographies; a woman's relatives are usually recorded by their surname (*xing* 姓) and their personal name, not their style. For example, Ban Zhao's (5) father, Ban Biao 班彪 appears in his daughters identification formula by *mingxing* 名姓 although his style is Shupi 叔皮.<sup>9</sup>

With the exception of Zhao E 趙娥 (11), whose son appears in the identification formula, when a woman's natal relatives were not recorded, 氏 *shi* is used to denote her family;<sup>10</sup> four women appear by their family names and three are listed as belonging to an unidentified family. Two of the examples mentioned previously illustrate its usage: The wife of Wang Ba 王霸妻 (2) "is a daughter of an unknown family" (*bu zhi he shi zhi nü* 不知何氏之女也)<sup>11</sup> and the mother of Pang Yu 龐涓, "is a daughter of the Zhao family" (*Zhao shi zhi nü ye* 趙氏之女也).<sup>12</sup>

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8. Michael Loewe, *The Men who Governed Han China* (Leiden; Brill, 2004), 22-25.

9. *HHS* 84/74: 2784.

10. Loewe, *Men who Governed*, 18.

11. *HHS* 84/74: 2782.

12. *HHS* 84/74: 2796.

### Marriage

Whereas within the *Hou Han shu*, identification in *liezhuan* dedicated to men's biographies do not contain marital information, in the *Lienü zhuan*, fourteen of the seventeen women appear in the identification formulas as someone's wife. The remaining three women in the collection were not necessarily single. In fact, one may assume that an additional two women married at some moment in life. There are two biographies that do not indicate any marital information but they appear as mothers. Assuming each woman married the father of her children, only one remains unmarried. Cao E (8) committed suicide at the age of 14. Although one may not conclude she married, her age at death coincided with the age of marriageability. For example, Ban Zhao (5) states in her *Nüjie* 女诫 she married at age 14.<sup>13</sup> It is possible and probable that Cao E's life was cut short before the opportunity for nuptials.

### Father and other Male Relatives

The names of the women's relatives appear in nine of the seventeen identification formulas; nine are listed by father, one by son, and one by brother.

### Location

Excepting the two filial women, none of the introductory formulas ascribe a specific natal or marital location to the women. In order to speculate where these women could have lived at two separate life stages, we can assume that a woman lived in her father's location at childhood, and in her husband's location at marriage. There is information on the location of thirteen of the women's husbands, and of twelve locations where the

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13. *HHS* 84/74: 2796.



women were born, or where their natal relatives lived. Maps 1 and 2 in appendices B and C, respectively, provide a visual representation of these locations. As the maps show, there seems to be no pattern to the women's locations, as they are spread throughout the empire's territory.

### *Intellectual Background*

Only Ban Zhao's biography (5) contains explicit information on her natal family's intellectual background; it refers to her brother Ban Gu as author of the *Han shu*.<sup>14</sup> Other biographies, however, are not so revealing. One way of finding out more on the household members' intellectual background is to cross-reference their appearances in other chapters of the *Hou Han shu* or to consult modern biographical dictionaries that summarize this information.<sup>15</sup>

To construct an estimate of the family intellectual background, I gathered the information available for all of the male relatives listed in each of the biographies. The search included all those who would fit into the rubric of *shi* 士, or “educated gentlemen.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, we may supplement the information on the male relatives included in the biographies. For example, the father of Zhao A (4) is mentioned to be a “worthy” (*xian* 賢) man. However, seeking other sources, one learns that he also held several posts in the central government including the upper-level position of Palace Attendant

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14. *HHS* 84/74: 2784.

15. Namely, de Crespigny's *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*.

16. I use Ebrey's translation of the term *shi*, and draw upon her discussion of the later Han scholarly elite. See Ebrey “The Economic and Social History of Later Han,” 631-32.

(*shizhong* 侍中).<sup>17</sup> Table 3.2 summarizes the results of this search pertaining to the relatives mentioned in the identification formula.

**Table 3.2** Intellectual Background of Marital and Natal Relatives from the Identification Formula

Bio #	Husband	Natal Family Relative
1	Scholar	Father: Scholar
2	Scholar, Court Official	—
3	Local Government Official	—
4	—	Father: Court Official
5	—	Father: Preeminent Scholar, Court Official
6	Scholar	—
7	—	Brother: Court Official
8	—	—
9	Scholar	—
10	Court Official	Father: Preeminent, Court Official
11	—	Son: Court Official
12	Court Official	Father: Renowned Scholars
13	Renowned Scholar, Court Official	—
14	—	Father: Renowned scholar, Court Official
15	—	Father: Local Official
16	—	—
17	—	Father: Preeminent Scholar, Court Official
Total	8 husbands with scholarly training.	10 natal relatives with scholarly training.

Of the seventeen women, thirteen come from a family with at least one of either male relative or husband with scholarly training. For example, in the biography of Huan Shaojun (1), we learn that her father was a wealthy scholar under whom her husband

17. *HHS* 39/29:1298-99; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1109.

studied; of the wife of Liu Changqing (12) the biography tells that she stems from a family in which men, for many generations, have excelled in scholarship and virtue.<sup>18</sup>

The respective fathers of Ban Zhao (5), Ma Lun 馬倫(10), and Cai Yan (17) were among the most renowned scholars of the Eastern Han, and were in close contact with the upper echelons of power; Xun Cai's 荀采 father (14) was a prolific writer whose works included an essay titled *Nüjie* 女誡, or *Lessons for Women*.<sup>19</sup> In sum, the vast majority of the women who receive biographies in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* stem from or marry into scholarly elite families; in the biographies we witness how this moral and scholarly excellence expresses itself in the lives of these families' daughters, wives, and mothers.

### **Economic Status**

The economic situation of the women of the *Lienü zhuan* is another important family-related factor to consider. As with the intellectual background, to construct the economic background, I consulted other chapters of the *Hou Han shu*, as well as biographical dictionaries to compile a list of the highest known government post held by each woman's husband and male relatives, and the salary scale of each of these posts; table 3.3 summarizes these findings.

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18. Huan Shaojun 桓少君 explains that one of her ancestors of five generations "studied until he became a leading classicist, and received the honor of an appointment as imperial tutor. 昔我先君五更，學為儒宗，尊為帝師。” Huan Shaojun appears in *HHS* 84/74: 2781-82; the wife of Liu Changqing in 84/74: 2797.

19. Information on Ban Biao 班彪 appears in *HHS* 100A-B, 40/30A:1313-30 and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 3-4, 1231; on Ma Rong in *HHS* 60/50A and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 648-49; on Cai Yong 蔡邕 in *HHS* 60/50B and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 32; and on Xun Shuang 荀爽 in *HHS* 62/52:2050-57 and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 925, 927.

This information on the salaries of male relatives was then compared to Bielenstein's calculations of each rank's relative wealth based on surplus grain after consumption to yield a final estimate of each family's economic situation. Before discussing the findings, I will review the rank and salary practices of the Eastern Han.

**Table 3.3** Salary ranges for family members at highest post<sup>20</sup>

Bio #	2,000 <i>shi</i> and above	1,000 <i>shi</i>	600 <i>shi</i> or less
1	Husband: Director of Retainers 司隸校尉		
2			Husband: Court Official
3		Husband: Magistrate 令/長 (depending on pop. size)	
4	Father: Palace Attendant 侍中		
5		Father: Magistrate	
7	Brother: Household Counselor 光祿大夫	Husband: Magistrate	
10	Husband: Grand Tutor 太傅		
	Father: Grand Administrator 太守		
11	Son: Grand Administrator		
12		Father: Magistrate	
13	Husband: Grand Administrator		
14	Father: Excellency of Works 司空		
16			Father: Local Merit Ofc. 功曹
17	Father: Palace Attendant		

### Relative Wealth of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* Women's Household

Salaries were paid according to the current post held; seniority in the imperial bureaucracy was not a consideration. Using a salary list from an edict dated 50 CE,

20. The sources for information on the family members are documented in the translation of the *Lienü zhuan* included in this thesis. All of the women's relatives mentioned in the text have received a biographical footnote. Of the remaining four women whose salary information is unknown:

- Biography 6, the husband was a student,
- Biography 8, the father was a shaman,
- Biography 9, the husband held an unspecified local post.,
- Biography 15, the husband was a private militia leader, and
- Biography 16, the husband was an officer of merit for a county office.

Bielenstein identifies eighteen ranks, the first sixteen of which were paid in measures of unhusked grain known as *shi* 石, translated as “bushel.”<sup>21</sup> The remaining two ranks were at the bottom of the pay scale. There was an additional rank, held by the Grand Tutor, (*taifu* 太傅) whose pay exceeded 10,000 *shi*. An official’s salary was paid half in cash, and half in unhusked grain.

Bielenstein estimates that an average family consisted of three adults and two children, and that their average monthly consumption was 10.5 *hu* of unhusked grain, and that one *hu* is worth 100 cash. This information, applied to the Salary List of 50 CE yields a family’s surplus cash after consumption; table 3.4 summarizes the results.<sup>22</sup>

**Table 3.4** Salaries in *hu* and surplus in cash for official ranks in the Eastern Han<sup>23</sup>

Rank	Salary ( <i>hu</i> )	Cash after Grain Consumption
10,000 <i>shi</i>	350 <i>hu</i>	33950
Fully 2000 <i>shi</i>	180	16950
2000 <i>shi</i>	120	10950
Equivalent to 2000 <i>shi</i>	100	8950
1000 <i>shi</i>	90	7950
Equivalent to 1000 <i>shi</i>	80	6950
600 <i>shi</i>	70	5950
Equivalent to 600 <i>shi</i>	60	4950
400 <i>shi</i>	50	3950
Equivalent to 400 <i>shi</i>	45	3450
300 <i>shi</i>	40	2950
Equivalent to 300 <i>shi</i>	37	2650
200 <i>shi</i>	30	1950
Equivalent to 200 <i>shi</i>	27	1650
100 <i>shi</i>	16	550
Equivalent to 100 <i>shi</i>	n/a	n/a
Officials Whose Salaries Are Measured in <i>Dou</i> 斗	11	50
Accessory Clerks 書佐史	8	-250

21. Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 4-5.

22. Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 125-31.

23. This table is a summary of Tables 2 and 3 from Bielenstein’s *Bureaucracy*, 126, 128.

From the information in table 3.4 above, it appears all but the lowest rank, the Accessory Clerks 書佐史, had a surplus of cash after deducting the amount of unhusked grain consumption expected from an average family. Having a surplus of cash does not necessarily indicate wealth, given that a family needs more than grain to subsist and run a household. We may conclude that those officials paid in *dou* 头, as well as the Accessory Clerks needed other sources of income beside their official posts. It must also be noted that imperial bestowals of cash, silk, winter garments, wine, and foodstuffs often supplemented officials' salaries. These were granted based on merit, auspicious days, personal favor, and other momentous occasions. Bielenstein notes that on one such bestowal, salaries were supplemented by 50%.<sup>24</sup>

Applying these salary-to-cash equivalencies to the seventeen biographical entries in the *Lienü zhuan*, twelve women have a male relative who was part of the imperial bureaucracy and had, at the peak of their careers, a salary level with significant surplus cash after consumption. Of these:

- One exceeded the highest salary – Ma Lun's (10) husband served as Grand Tutor, thus placing his income at over 10, 000 *shi*.
- One was ranked at 10,000 *shi* – Xun Cai's (14) father served as Excellency of Works (*sikong* 司空).
- Six were ranked in the 2,000 *shi* range – Huan Shaojun's (1) Husband; Zhao A's (4) father; Li Mujiang's 李穆姜 (7) brother; Ma Lun's father; Zhao E's (11) son; Huangfu Gui 皇甫規(13); and Cai Yan's (17) father.

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24. Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 23.

- Two had variable salaries between 1,000 and 300 *shi* – Ban Zhao’s (5) father and Li Mujiang’s husband.
- Two were paid 600 *shi* or less – Wang Ba 王霸 (2); Jiang Shi (3); and the wife of Liu Changqing’s father (12).<sup>25</sup>

If we were to include family members mentioned in the biography but not used in the identifying formula, an additional two family members served in the bureaucracy:

- Huan Shaojun’s grandson served as Excellency over the Masses (*situ* 司徒), earning 10,000 *shi*.<sup>26</sup>
- Ban Zhao’s son was chancellor (*xiang* 相) of a kingdom and was enfeoffed as a secondary marquis (*guannei hou* 關內侯), granting him additional revenue from his territory.<sup>27</sup>

### **General Comments about the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* based on the Identification Formula**

As discussed in Chapter One, although it is not possible to know which sources Fan Ye used for compiling the biographies of women for his *Hou Han shu* chapter, it is possible to suggest that Fan Ye might have intended to emphasize certain aspects of a woman’s

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25. The following information on relatives does not appear in the women’s biographies. For information on Ma Lun’s husband see *HHS* 45/35:1523 and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1013-14, 1221; on Xun Shuang, *HHS* 62/52:2050-57 and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 925, 927; on Zhao Xiao 趙孝 *HHS* 39/29:1298-99; and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1109; on Li Fa 李法, *HHS* 48/38:1601 and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 410; on Zhao E’s son, *SGZ* 18: 547-48 and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 690-90, 1223; on Huangfu Gui 皇甫規, *HHS* 65/55: 2129-37 and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54; on Cai Yong *HHS* 60/50B and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 32; on Ban Biao *HHS* 100A-B, 40/30A:1313-30 and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 3-4, 1231; and on Huan Luan 桓鸞 *HHS* 37/27:1257 and deC, 336.

26. Information on Huan Shaojun’s grandson, Bao Yu 鮑昱 is found *HHS* 29/19: 1021-23; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 14.

27. *HHS* 84/74: 2785.

life in composing the identification formulas. For example the usage of an identification formula is not unique to the *lienü* of the *Hou Han shu*; its formulations and information contained therein sometimes vary among the different narrations of a given biography. For example, the *Huayang Guozhi* narration of the biography of the wife of Jiang Shi (3) identifies her under the heading:

Pang Xing nurtures her mother-in-law. 龐行養姑婦.

and provides the identification formula,

Pang Xing was the wife of Jiang Shi. 龐行姜詩妻也.

One of the *Taiping yulan* starts:

The wife of Jiang Shi from Guanghan cares for her mother-in-law with utmost filiality. 廣漢姜詩妻事姑至孝.

In contrast Fan Ye's identification formula states:

The wife of Jiang Shi from Guanghan was the daughter of Pang Sheng from the same commandery. 廣漢姜詩者，同郡龐盛之女也。<sup>28</sup>

Another example relates to the use of the term “filial daughter” to identify a Shuxian Xiong (16). Fan Ye's identification formula introduces the protagonist by her title “filial daughter” and her commandery of origin as written in her memorial, while the *Soushen ji* account identifies her by her father's name and his natal place. Fan Ye's identification sentence reads:

Filial woman Shuxian Xiong was a resident of Jianwei. 孝女叔先雄者，犍為人。

However, in the *Soushen ji* 11/291, the identification formula reads

Shuxian Nihe from Jianwei had a daughter named Xiong. 犍為叔先泥和，其女名雄...<sup>29</sup>

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28. HYZ 10B, 818.; TPYL 60 6b; HHS 84/74: 2783.

29. HHS 84/74: 2799; SSJ 11/291, 136-7.



Thus, in general, it can be argued that from the identification formulas, the women serve a social role of wife and/or daughter.

Another crucial piece of information provided by Fan Ye's identification formulas relates to the economic status and educational background of the women. The information collected from the male relatives with which these women purportedly lived suggest that as a whole, these women belonged to the *shi*, gentry class taking part in the social changes which later became identified as part of the Eastern Han. At the lowest of office within the *shi*, the male relative formed part of the lower local bureaucracy, such as Shuxian Xiong's (16) father, who was a local Officer of Merit (*gongcao* 功曹); at the highest, there are men such as Ma Lun's (10) husband who served as Grand Tutor, the highest office. Moreover, the women came from relatively educated backgrounds – with few exceptions such as Cao E's (8) shaman father – with male relatives ranging from those who at the very least must have met the minimal criteria of literacy in classical scholarship for public service to renowned masters of the Classics. Thus, although it is not necessarily possible to know if the quotations of the Classics and other texts spoken by the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* were added by Fan Ye, or present in other sources, at the very least it is conceivable that these women had access to and were familiar with some degree of a classical education.



## Chapter Four

### Wives and Daughters

Cloistered in their houses, *nei ren* ('humans for the inside'), they are, according to Confucianism, destined only for housework and reproduction. Consequently, there is no need for them to learn to read and write.  
From Julia Kristeva's *About Chinese Women*<sup>1</sup>

I am fortunate both to have received not a little favor from my scholarly father, and to have had a (cultured) mother and instructresses upon whom to rely for a literary education as well as for training in good manners. 蒙先君之餘寵，賴母師之典訓。  
From the Introduction to Ban Zhao's *Lessons for Women*<sup>2</sup>

This chapter intends to provide a reading of the lives of Eastern Han women as represented in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, presented through a framework of ritualization. I will start with some theoretical remarks on how the concepts of ritualization introduced in Chapter Two will be applied to this concrete reading

The analysis in this chapter will focus on the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* in their representation as either wives or daughters, even though this is not a strict dichotomy, the roles oftentimes overlap. Daughters appear in two main representations: the filial daughter upon the death of her father and the daughter-in-law. My discussion will revolve around these issues: first the concept of wife; second, the wife as a household educator; and third, widow remarriage. The chapter concludes with a section on the two women authors. Ban Zhao's (5) and Cai Yan's (17) writings allow us to get a sense of these ritualization processes in their "own" words.

Wanting to read Fan Ye's *Lienü zhuan* as a way to gain insight into the represented lives of selected gentry Eastern Han women, we are faced with a dilemma.

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1. Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows (New York: Marion Boyars, 1974), 74.

2. *HHS* 84/74:2786. Translation by Nancy Lee Swann in *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China*. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, 2001), 82.

On the one hand, the identification formulas, the actions described in the biographies, and the chapter's *xu* and *zan*, provide little evidence Fan Ye intended to present women in well-defined categories of virtue. On the other hand, we need to define some sort of parameters with which to analyze and compare the women. Here I will propose a minimal – but by no means perfect – categorization of the women by roles of wife and daughter. This choice is mostly based on Fan Ye's introductory formulas, which describe the women as wives and daughters.

The seventeen women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* are not timeless women, but rather are circumscribed to the conditions of their historical period. As Eastern Han *shi* society was defining itself, values such as filial piety were increasingly emphasized and members of elite groups more insistently sought to live their lives after values derived from the Classics.<sup>3</sup> The increasing emphasis on local society is reflected in the historiography of the period, as many of the *liezhuan* dealing with this period contain biographical information on men of little or no particular political influence.

Although some of the women in the *Lienü* chapter of the *Hou Han shu* wielded a certain degree of political power – albeit indirectly – many of them did not. It seems, indeed, that Fan Ye's main criterion for inclusion was whether or not the women displayed outstanding behavior. In this way the *Lienü zhuan* contains within itself trends that are also noticeable within the *liezhuan* genre as a whole.

Ebrey indicates that one of the highly promoted new moral values in currency among the new *shi* was the theme of filiality in the gentlemen scholars' *liezhuan*.<sup>4</sup> Fan

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3. On scholars and filial piety, see Miranda Brown, "Sons and Mothers in Warring States and Han China," *Nan/Nü* 3.2 (2003): 137-169; and Michael Nylan, "Confucian Piety and Individualism in Han China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (Jan.-March, 1996): 1-27.

4. Ebrey, "Economic and Social History of Later Han," 643.

Ye's *xu* hints at a parallel between these *gaoshi* of lofty moral accomplishment and the women presented in his compilation:

Just as accomplished scholars promoted purity, women who exercised proper conduct illuminated the department of purity. 高士弘清淳之風，貞女亮明白之節<sup>5</sup>

This enactment of a gendered division of virtue is echoed by the wife of Liu Changqing (12) when she describes the men and women of her family:

[O]ur men have shone because of their loyalty and filiality, and the women have received a reputation because of their uprightness and obedience. 男以忠孝顯，女以貞順稱。<sup>6</sup>

This chapter will study what the particular virtues the wives and daughters featured in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* sought to realize.

### Theoretical Remarks

Before continuing, it is prudent to pause for some clarifications with regard to my choice of theoretical model and the definition of some key terms, as used in this chapter. With regard to the terms along which roles have been divided, both the terms “wife” (*qi* 妻) and “daughter” (*nü* 女) as social roles were used by Fan Ye himself, who, as we saw, introduced each woman as X's wife or W's daughter.

The theoretical framework used in this reading was intentionally chosen in such a way that would best allow us to see the women as “agents,” in such a contrast to the common and tired tropes of women as victims of a Confucian patriarchy. We seek this perspective because, as Grace Fong articulates, “the notion of agency...suggests the ability and will to take action purposefully and self-consciously and is imbricated with

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5. *HHS* 84/74: 2781.

6. *HHS* 84/74: 2797.

concepts like ‘selfhood,’ ‘individuality,’ and ‘subjecthood.’”<sup>7</sup> Thus, in my description, I will present the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* as actively engaged in the construction of their own social roles. As indicated in Chapter 2, this reading uses ideas on ritualization presented by Bell in *Ritual Theory/ Ritual Practice*, as well as those of Seligman, Weller, Puett, and Simon in the co-authored *Ritual and its Consequences*.

The authors of *Ritual and its Consequences* seek to define ritual by first divesting it of its conventional ascriptions to religious practice. They cast ritual’s net wide, describing it as a “particular form or orientation to action” which is “relevant in understanding human activity beyond what may be done in temples, churches, and mosques – or in the houses of Parliament for that matter.”<sup>8</sup> Their definition hinges on orientation to action in contrast to its “meaning.” In other words, we are more concerned with ritual as practice or performance rather than with what a ritual may or may not mean.

Ritual viewed as action, is about the “the creation of an order *as if* it were truly the case,” creating “an order that is self-consciously distinct from other possible social worlds...”<sup>9</sup> Thus, in the process of ritualization, the individual selectively frames her surroundings to construct a “personal universe” or understanding of reality.<sup>10</sup>

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7. Grace S. Fong, *Herself an Author: Gender, Agency, and Writing in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 5.

8. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*, 5.

9. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*, 20; italics in the original.

10. An extension of the authors’ example of social niceties such as “please” and “thank you” among parent and child may illustrate the mechanics of this process. When a parent asks a child to “please” do something, she is creating an order in the world as if the child has the option to not do what she is asked to do. Nevertheless, from the child’s perspective “please” relates less to option, and instead serves as a word to buffer the imperative. Both parent and child participate in the illusion of generational equality and thus make it their lived reality. That is, the “as if” world presented here, albeit illusory to the observer, is at the center and this particular parent-child relationship. As such, it is real to the parent and child. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*, 8.

If one views society as a network of innumerable such interactions, society may be defined as a “shared ‘could be,’ a mutual illusion of the sort that all rituals create” which serves as the “the nodal point where members of a society come together as symbol users.”<sup>11</sup>

The opposite of ritual, in terms of modes of action, is sincerity. From the perspective of ritual, who we are, our *sense* of reality, is formed by our actions – by our construction of and participation in the “as if” subjunctive. In contrast, the mode of sincerity projects an “as *is*” perspective, whereby the individual deems herself as capable of perceiving the world “as it ‘really’ is.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, from the perspective of sincerity, the individual is not formed by her actions. Rather, the ability to perceive the true, “real” reality allows the individual to act according to this privileged gnosis. The authors explain that “[r]ather than becoming what we do in action through ritual, we do according to what we have become through self-examination.”<sup>13</sup>

The focus on women’s inferior “position” in studies of women in Early China reflects some of the essentializing tendencies of sincerity. From this perspective, women’s actions stem from the women’s own cognitions of their inferiority. Rather than form part of their social interactions, women may only react to the situation. Thus, suicides are portrayed as actions stemming out of desperation and hopelessness, obedience to father and husband as an act befitting someone with inferior gender status, care for parents stems from a self-identification as *de facto* household servant.

The mode of ritual requires us to view the women’s represented actions as snapshots of each woman’s individual subjunctive, itself part of a larger collective “what

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11. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*, 23.

12. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*, 8.

13. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*, 103.

if.” This collective “what if” requires participation from all its members in a process of continual feedback – influencing individual members as much as it is influenced by individuals. Thus, the women’s behavior is not stemming from a clearly-defined inferior social position; rather, it is the women’s behavior within the individual and larger social context that allows the women to position themselves morally and socially. In other words, ritual creates agency.

The last item of clarification relates to the previous discussion on Fan Ye’s sources for the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, in which we presented some of the problems related to establishing the authorship of these stories and Fan Ye’s hand in the editing. An offshoot of this problem is the inability for us to know the precise details of how the women committed the actions, especially in the cases where we’ve seen there are different narrations of the same woman’s biography. More importantly, there is no way to corroborate whether these women genuinely performed these actions or whether the represented justifications actually reflect the women’s thoughts or are later attributions.

## **Daughters**

### *Filial Daughters upon the Death of a Father*

We will start with a few comments on the role of daughter, which features prominently in the biographies. In two biographies, Fan Ye introduces the women as “filial,” Cao E (8) and Shuxian Xiong (16). In these two biographies, the focus is on the women in their role as daughters – they are neither mentioned as wives nor in light of remarriage, nor is there any reference to a husband. This does not necessarily mean these two filial women were unmarried. In the case of Shuxian Xiong, it is possible to surmise she must have been married or was a widow since the biography mentions two children.



Cao E's father was a shaman who drowned after a big wave overtook him in the midst of summoning a spirit.<sup>14</sup> His daughter, 14 years old at the time, threw herself in the same river 17 days after her father's death. She was reinterred by village authorities and memorialized in a stele. Shu Xianxiong also committed a piety drowning.<sup>15</sup> Her father died when his boat was overtaken by a big wave. His corpse was lost and could not be found. After making financial arrangements for the security of her children, she threw herself in the water. Later, she appeared in a dream to a younger brother, announcing she would appear at the place of drowning with her father's body. She, too, received a stele in her memory.

The details of the events narrated in the biographies of Cao E and Shuxian Xiong are curiously similar: each father drowned, and in turn, each daughter committed suicide by drowning. How should these deaths be assessed? Mou describes Cao E as a "typical case of a filial daughter" and Shuxian Xiong's feats as an example of "how a daughter's filiality to her parents can cut short her role as a mother."<sup>16</sup> Can these two cases indeed be dismissed as "typical"? Should we, as Mou does, posit a cause-effect relationship between the death of a father and a daughter's suicide?

To attribute this sort of cause-effect relationship seems to reflect the mode of sincerity mentioned by the authors of *Ritual and its Consequences*, as it is content that gives meaning. Instead, the supernatural events in both of these cases suggests that the filial piety commemorated in the stele and retold by Fan Ye implies a ritualization of

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14. David Johnson identifies Wu Zixu 伍子胥 as the god invoked, renowned for filial piety in "The 'Wu tzu-hsu pien-wen' and its sources," Part II, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40, no. 2: (1980): 465-505. For the traditions ascribed to Wu Zixu and to the influence of Cao E's story in popular lore, see Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 310-11.

15. Perhaps it is coincidental, but it is there seems to be a link between filial piety and drowning. The Wife of Jiang Shi's (3) son also drowned while fetching water for his grandmother. It is possible that the sources for these stories are stele by the riverbanks at the site of drowning.

16. Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions*, 91.

death, an attempt to include matters that transcend this-worldly concerns to include otherworldly concerns. For example, Cao E, daughter of a shaman, probably shared a conception of the spiritual realm with her father. Whereas it seems that Cao E committed suicide out of grief, there are other possibilities to entertain, including that she, too, offered herself to the deity summoned by her father. Shuxian Xiong's death seems to have a much more pragmatic purpose – she sought to give her father a proper burial so that he may have a good experience in the hereafter. These are just two speculations of the many that may arise in relation to the suicides of these two filial daughters.

In general, not committing suicide upon the death of a parent is normative practice in the Eastern Han. (Otherwise, filiality suicides would not be noteworthy.) Using Bell's perspective of ritualization, each of these two women "improvised" her suicide as a response to her own specific quagmire. Although the means and result of attempting suicide are the same among the women, the two acts are not that similar.

If we avail ourselves of the parallel text in the *Soushen ji* it is known that Shuxian Xiong's brother and his family were involved in the search for her late father. Thus, the inability to give the father a proper burial was, to a certain extent, communal.<sup>17</sup> There was no expectation that anyone in the family should commit suicide upon the death of her father. (In fact, her excessive grief caused her family to keep her under surveillance precisely to prevent her suicide.) Given this scenario, Shuxian Xiong's suicide is her improvised solution to the very concrete problem of her father's burial (albeit along "supernatural" principles). Her actions are perhaps more akin to those of Zhao E (11) than those of fellow filial daughter Cao E.

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17. *SSJ* 11/291, 136-7.

Upon her father's assassination, Zhao E sets out to avenge her father's death. It is implied that by social convention, this revenge killing was to be carried out by another male relative. Since all three of her brothers died, E assumes responsibility for the task. She chooses filial piety over adhering to gender expectations related to retaliation. Thus for 10 years stalks the murderer until successfully exacting revenge. Rather than meet social censure, her actions were memorialized on a village gate inscription and she received a bolt of silk cloth.

Zhao E and Shuxian Xiong commit great acts of filial piety, it seems, because "someone" had to remedy a communal problem. Since neither of them – for different reasons – could rely on her brothers to take care of filial duties, each of these two women took matters into her own hands. In contrast, the actions of filial daughter Cao E seem to be of a different nature. Although each of the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* is presented in light of different expressions of virtue, Cao E's biography is itself different from the rest. She is the daughter of a shaman, and as such is presumably in a different social grouping than the others, who are linked to a scholarly or *shi* lifestyle.

#### *Daughters-in-Law*

In addition to the two women identified as filial daughters, some of the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* exhibit filial behavior in ways that extend beyond their own parents to include caretaking of parents-in-law. Although I have categorized these women with the filial daughters, their displays of filiality to their parents-in-law are in fact an extension of their devotion to their husbands. The wife of Jiang Shi (3), and the wife of Yue Yangzi (6) are each presented as taking good care of their mothers-in-law, and Zhao A is concerned with the father-in-law's opinion of her. Although appearing as

a wife, the wife of Jiang Shi (3), too, is praised for her dutiful care for her mother-in-law.

The wife of Jiang Shi's (3) primary attribute is her diligent care for her mother-in-law. After the introductory formula, we are told that her husband,

Shi served his mother with utmost filiality; and in turn, his wife served and obeyed him wholeheartedly.” 詩事母至孝，妻奉順尤篤。<sup>18</sup>

The remainder of the narrative, however, is dedicated to how the wife of Jiang Shi demonstrated affection towards her mother-in-law. In this sense, filial piety is an extension of her wifely virtues.

The wife of Jiang Shi's mother-in-law was fond of the water from a particular river. Every day, the wife of Jiang Shi walked the 3 four 4 kilometers to fetch fresh water from this source. On one occasion, inclement weather prevented her from returning in time to quench the mother-in-law's thirst. Shi banished his wife from the home after giving her a scolding. Fetching water from the river was physically demanding and an endeavor with some risk attached, since on one occasion, the couple's son drowned while procuring water.<sup>19</sup> The wife of Jiang Shi, to avoid grieving her mother-in-law, does not tell her their son has died, but rather explains his absence by saying he is away studying.

In the next instance, while the wife is still exiled at a neighbor's home, she takes to spinning thread and weaving cloth in order to acquire the means by which to procure delicacies for the mother-in-law, which she sent with the neighbor. When the mother-in-law takes her back, she increases in affection and dutifulness towards her.

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18. *HHS* 84/74: 2783.

19. The wife of Jiang Shi mercifully lied to her mother-in-law so as not to burden her with the news that her grandson died while seeking to indulge her palate.

We should note the sharp contrast between the role of daughter and daughter in law. There is a marked affection between the daughter and her natural parents. It seems that these women are willing to pay any cost to do what they believe is justice to their fathers. Dutifulness towards a demanding mother-in-law requires very little affection towards her but does illustrate a great deal of affection toward the husband.

## **Wives**

The role of wife is perhaps the most represented role in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*. As mentioned in Chapter Three, there is reason to believe that all but one of the women, filial daughter Cao E (8), were married. There are observable differences in how each woman creates her subjunctive “wifely” world.

### *The Way of the Wife*

*Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* contains evidence of an explicit discourse on what it means to be a good wife. Two of the biographies, in exalting the women’s virtue, use the term *fudao* 婦道, or “way of the wife.” Huan Shaojun (1) is said to have “cultivated the way of the wife” (*xiu xing fudao* 脩行婦道); whereas Zhao A (4) was “accomplished in the way of the wife” (*xian yu fudao* 閑於婦道).<sup>20</sup> Passages such as these convey that being a wife is not just a civil status, but that there is a way of excellence in being a wife, that there is a virtue which we might call “wifeliness.” Wifeliness as a virtue is not necessarily contingent on a woman being married. Zhao A’s cultivation of the *fudao*

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20. *HHS* 84/74: 2782, 2784.

predated her marriage. From childhood, she received an education in the skills necessary to be a virtuous wife. After her introductory formula, the text informs that,

From a young age, she practiced etiquette, and had become accomplished in the Way of the wife; in contrast, her husband Yu was arrogant, licentious, and short-tempered. He habitually behaved in contravention of ritual propriety. 少習儀訓，閑於婦道，而郁驕淫輕躁，多行無禮。<sup>21</sup>

In fact, her father-in-law explains she was chosen to be the wife of Yu 郁 precisely because of her family background. The underlying assumption is that a father's virtue will be passed on to his daughter:

You, the new wife, are the daughter of a worthy man. You should use the Way to correct your husband. 新婦賢者女，當以道匡夫。<sup>22</sup>

Faced with the incapacity to act in a manner becoming to a good wife and a good daughter-in-law, Zhao A takes her life. Her parting words give an intimation of her education and how she was thought to have viewed her own role as wife. In addressing her attendants she justifies her actions by saying,

In behavior, I am no match for Imperial Consorts Fan and Ren...我無樊衛二姬之行...<sup>23</sup>

With these words, she models her own wifely behavior upon other exemplary women, two lofty and renowned imperial consorts. This short statement suggests two points. Firstly, her education familiarized her with the biographies of exemplary women, perhaps through Liu Xiang's text. Indeed, the biographies of Fan 樊 and Ren 衛 are available in the latter's *Lienü zhuan*. Secondly, she envisions herself as a wife, member of a community of virtuous wives that stem as far back as the Zhou dynasty. Thus, in her subjunctive world, she is not merely responding to the moral quandary of how to

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21. HHS 84/74: 2784.

22. HHS 84/74: 2784.

23. HHS 84/74: 2784.

tactfully admonish her depraved husband, she is also claiming membership in a wider community of exemplary women.

Mou has a different perspective on the causes for Zhao A's suicide:

Zhao A took her husband's "proud, licentious, flighty" behavior as evidence of her own inability to influence him, and she committed suicide after her father-in-law blamed her for her husband's recalcitrant errancy.<sup>24</sup>

This view on the suicide presents Zhao A as operating in the "as is" mode of sincerity. Her suicide is a reflection of her self-assessment of mediocrity in changing her husband's obstinate ways and self-assessment of failure to meet the father-in-law's expectations. Attributing these causes to Zhao A's suicide misses the creativity that seems to have been an integral part of her suicidal act.

### **Wives as Household Educators**

Some women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* are portrayed in what may be called an educator role. The most salient example is Fan Ye's choice to include Ban Zhao's (5) instructional text for women, the *Nujie*, or *Admonitions for Women*, within her biography. Likewise, we've discussed Zhao A's role in reforming her debaucher husband. The argument may even be extended to include the widows who commit suicide or mutilate themselves to prevent remarriage: these women all commit the action in order to demonstrate their virtue; that is, they are educating their relatives as to the proper way to read into the Classics.

The wife of Yue Yangzi (6) is primarily presented as an educator of both her husband and mother-in-law. When Yue Yangzi brings home a piece of gold someone

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24. Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions*, 89.

had dropped on the road, his wife gives him a lecture about proper behavior befitting of a gentleman. Her husband took the lesson to heart and thereupon moved away from home to search for a teacher. His wife lectured him again when he returned without having finished his course of studies. In a separate incident, her mother-in-law stole a chicken that had wandered from their neighbor's yard. The wife of Yue Yangzi provides a very terse and indirect admonition to her mother-in-law. When offered a bowl of the poached chicken, the wife makes a show of distress while stating her sadness that their indigence has made the family resort to stealing food.<sup>25</sup>

As Yue Yangzi's wife scolds her husband, she uses the same analogy of weaving that Mencius's mother used to reprimand her son; she draws upon literary allusions to the *Analects* to illustrate how futile it is to leave one's education incomplete. In a sense, her own education surpasses that of her husband. She must have had some exposure to classical scholarship, and to biographical works such as Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*.<sup>26</sup>

Lisa Raphals's article on women's rhetoric in early Chinese texts examines the biography of the mother of Mencius, Meng Mu 孟母, found in Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*.<sup>27</sup> She classifies Meng Mu's arguments within the "rhetorical persuasion category."<sup>28</sup> Raphals uses an extended analogy of the weaving loom, which in itself resembles the instructive argument set forth by Confucius to his disciples in the *Analects*. Yue Yangzi's wife skillfully adapts the weaving analogy to her own situation, and constructs a detailed instructive argument citing and adapting other texts – including the

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25. HHS 84/74:2792-93.

26. That we know of Mencius' mother through Liu Xiang, does not exclude that the story may have been very generally known in Han times.

27. From the chapter titled *Mu yi* in *LX LNZ* 1.11, <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/lienu/browse/scroll11.html> (accessed July 20, 2009); translated in O'Hara, *Position of Women*, 39-42.

28. Lisa Raphals, "Arguments by Women in Early Chinese Texts," *Nan/Nü* 3.2 (2002): 159-61, 176-78.



*Analects* – to demonstrate to her husband the inappropriateness of abandoning studies in the middle of the road.

In her relationship with her mother-in-law, the wife of Yue Yangzi's behavior as educator contrasts with the behavior of Zhao A and the wife of Jiang Shi to their in-laws. The wife of Yue Yangzi's diligence in care to her mother-in-law did not preclude her from politely remonstrating with her mother-in-law. When the older woman stole a chicken that had wandered from their neighbor's yard, Yue Yangzi's wife, in this case, provides a diplomatic admonition to her mother-in-law.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, Zhao A, who was chosen as a bride to correct and educate her gambling husband, refuses to educate him or to take any action that may bring direct confrontation with her father-in-law. The wife of Jiang Shi seeks to fulfill all her mother-in-law's desires however whimsical or preposterous.

### **Various Approaches to Widow Remarriage**

Seven of the seventeen women of the women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* are widows; of these, only one remarries after the death of her husband; this information is summarized in table 4.1. Although women's virtue practically became synonymous with chastity in later dynastic eras, especially in the Ming 明(1368-1644) and Qing eras,<sup>30</sup>

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29. *Analects* 4.18 on remonstrating with parents reads,  
When you serve your parents, you may gently remonstrate with them. If you see that they do not take your advice, be all the more respectful and do not contradict them. Let not your efforts become bitterness. 事父母幾諫, 見志不從, 又敬不違, 勞而不怨.  
Translation by Leys in *Analects of Confucius*, 17.

30. Paul S. Ropp's introduction to the *Nan/Nü* issue dedicated to chastity in late imperial China presents a survey on English language scholarship on the topic, "Passionate Women: Suicide in Late Imperial China," *Nan/Nü* 3.1 (2001): 3-21. For the history of state promotion an intervention in chastity practices throughout imperial China see Mark Elvin, "Female Virtue and the State in China," *Past and Present* 104 (1984): 111-52. Weijing Lu's book *True to Her Word: The Faithful Maiden Cult in Late*

Fan Ye's choice to present some examples of women whose virtue is primarily related to avoiding remarriage upon widowhood does not necessarily indicate that it was widely practiced or encouraged in the Eastern Han. Indeed, the women who abide by these practices seem exceptional for their time in their insistence to abide by their understanding of ritual propriety.

**Table 4.1** Biographies of the *Hou Han shu* *lienü zhuan* widows in which remarriage is relevant

Biography	Pressure to Remarry	Circumstances
5. Ban Zhao 班昭	None mentioned	Practices and advocates widow chastity
7. Li Mujiang 李穆姜	Implicit: from stepsons, Suggested: by daughter	After husband's death, suffers mistreatment from his sons, rejects changing household.
9. Lü Rong 呂榮	Father	While husband was alive: rejects father's orders to marry better man. After her husband's death: dies resisting rape.
12. The wife of Liu Changqing 劉長卿妻	Father	Mutilates herself in defiance of pressure to remarry.
13. The wife of Huangfu Gui 皇甫規妻	Powerful suitor	Prefers to be killed by the suitor.
14. Xun Cai 荀采	Father	She commits suicide in new household.
17. Cai Yan 蔡琰	Father's friend successfully ransoms and finds her a husband.	After first husband's death, she is kidnapped as consort to Xiongnu king, has children with him. Ransomed and remarries.

### *Ban Zhao* 班昭 (5)

Ban Zhao is a key figure when discussing widow remarriage practices in the Eastern Han, as well as in later eras. Along with her biography, Fan Ye included her

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*Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) presents a multi-faceted view of women's subjectivity and motivation in chastity suicides.

instructional text for women, *Nüjie*, amongst whose teachings are an argument against widow remarriage. The fifth section of her text starts by claiming,

Now in the “Rites” is written the principle that a husband may marry again, but there is no Canon that authorizes a woman to be married the second time. Therefore it is said of husbands as of Heaven, that as certainly as people cannot run away from Heaven, so surely a wife cannot leave. 禮，夫有再娶之義，婦無二適之文，故曰夫者天也。天固不可逃，夫固不可離也。<sup>31</sup>

Remarkably, the text of her biography itself does not focus on her status as an unmarried widow. The reader is merely informed that:

After [her husband] Shishu died at an early age, she was moderate in behavior and upheld moral standards. 世叔早卒，有節行法度。<sup>32</sup>

Ban Zhao’s biography seems to focus mostly on her achievements as a scholar and wise advisor. The greater part of the narration is dedicated to giving details of her experience and influence at court as tutor to women of the imperial household and as advisor and confidante of Empress Deng 鄧 (81-121).<sup>33</sup> In comparison, the issue of marriage and remarriage is one of the foci in the biography of Cai Yan (17), the other woman scholar whose works are included in her *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* biography. Ban Zhao’s text will be explored in a subsequent section as part of a larger discussion about the two women authors presented by Fan Ye. Nevertheless, Ban Zhao’s own widowhood, in terms of the narration of her biography proper, is not presented as especially noteworthy.

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31. HHS 84/74:2790, translation by Swann, *Pan Chao*, 87.

32. Swann commented that this phrase later entered common use as the description of a widow; thus, she translates it as “observed the canons of widowhood.” Swann, *Pan Chao*, 40 note 52.

33. Miranda Brown comments that this essay is the earliest indication of a political elite appropriation and redefinition of Warring States and Western Han conceptions of filial piety. Ban Zhao manipulates classic texts to challenge the notion held in earlier periods that acquiring fame – particularly in the service of the state – was the highest expression of filial piety. Miranda Brown, *The Politics of Mourning in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 55-56. For a discussion of the sort of interpretations of filial piety and the state addressed by Brown, see Nylan, *Five Classics*, 8-11.

*Li Mujiang* 李穆姜 (7)

Li Mujiang remains in her late husband's household after his death, caring for his four sons from a previous marriage and her own two biological children with him. She is not pressured to leave her marital household directly. In fact, her natal family is not present in the narrative, save for her deathbed mention of her brother Li Fa 李法, a scholar and high government official of the times, renowned for moral excellence. Nevertheless, her stepsons' spiteful and abusive treatment towards her provided enough motive for one of her own children to suggest they leave to establish a new household:

One of her own birth-children asked her, "The four sons are extremely unfilial towards you, why don't we establish a separate residence to keep them at a distance?" 四子不孝甚矣，何不別居以遠之<sup>34</sup>

The ill treatment received from her husband's sons suggests that, at least in their eyes, their step-mother entered the household as their father's wife, and that any filial respect extended to her was an extension of respect to their father. Upon his death, the four sons became very unfilial (*buxiao* 不孝), as described by her own birth child, and no longer felt a need to keep her inside the household. The reason given for this mistreatment is that they did not see her as a mother and resented her presence once their father passed away:

Because she was not their birth mother, the four sons loathed and slandered the stepmother, with ever-increasing hatred. 四子以母非所生，憎毀日積符...<sup>35</sup>

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34. HHS 84/74: 2794. I am using "One of her own birth-children asked her..." for *huo wei mu yue* 或謂母曰— More literally, "Another addressed mother saying..." The reasoning is that only one of Mujiang's children (biological or stepchildren) would be addressing her as "mother." This is consistent with the usage of *mu* in this biography; in all other instances of *mu* are used either when the interlocutor is speaking of *his* mother or when the narration is referring to *their* mother. Lei Guozhen 雷国珍 et al. *Houhan shu quanyi* 後汉书全译, 3562-63.

35. HHS 84/74: 2793.

The harsh treatment by her stepchildren and her own child's encouragement to move households suggests that it would have been socially acceptable for Li Mujiang to leave the household upon his death. It also suggests that there was no expectation for the relationship between stepchild and stepmother to be a lifetime bond, but rather is was valid for the duration of the marriage and thus ceased upon her husband's death.

Despite these conditions, Mujiang insists on remaining in the household as the caretaker of all her late husband's children – including those to whom she had no blood relations and she extended no favoritism to her own brood.

...Mujiang was compassionately loving and warmly benevolent towards them, caring for them, with ever-increasing dedication. When it came to distributing the family's clothing and food provisions, she gave them many times more than she gave her own children ...而穆姜慈愛溫仁，撫字益隆，衣食資供皆兼倍所生。<sup>36</sup>

In other words, her husband's death did not terminate the conditions under which she cared for his children – she behaves in the same manner as when her husband was alive. Although Fan Ye's narration certainly highlights Mujiang as an excellent mother, it is the attention paid to the stepchildren that makes her most remarkable. More specifically, what seems to be most laudable is that the manner in which she deals with the stepsons is the same manner as when she cared for them as part of her role as their father's wife. Although he has passed away, she still adheres to this aspect of being a wife.

Mujiang's response to her child's suggestion to move indicates her self-image of household educator. She expresses her desire to remain in the household to correct their ways:

I am determined to guide them by dutifulness, so that they would themselves be moved to become good. 吾方以義相導，使其自遷善也。<sup>37</sup>

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36. HHS 84/74: 2793.

37. HHS 84/74: 2793.

Fan Ye presents her as a success story in education – all four stepsons repented for their ill-behavior, turned themselves into the authorities self-denouncing their unfilial behavior. Ultimately pardoned, the stepsons were awarded an official post.

A further perspective on Mujiang's subjunctive world is provided by the degree to which she identifies with the community of erudite men and women from her family, as is indicated to a degree in her parting words:

My younger brother, Bo Du was a man accomplished in wisdom. His essay on frugal funerals had such deep meaning. To issue a will before one dies is to follow the model of the worthy and sage. I order you all to abide by the legacy you have received: do not behave like vulgar people, so as not to embarrass me. 吾弟伯度，智達士也。所論薄葬，其義至矣。又臨亡遺令，賢聖法也。令汝曹遵承，勿與俗同，增吾之累。  
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Thus, at her deathbed, she places herself in the same ranks of wisdom and uprightness as her brother and others who follow the model of the virtuous. She also presents a contrast between the upright and the vulgar. Her dying wish is for her children and stepchildren to follow her example. This dichotomy might be applied to her decision to stay within her deceased husband's household; doing so might be seen as her way of aligning herself with the virtuous and dissociating herself from the vulgar. We, of course, do not know whether this was the real Li Mujiang's perception or whether it was an attribution by whomever was responsible for this particular layer of the text. The parallel passage in *Huayang guoshi*, interestingly, does not contain this deathbed scene.<sup>39</sup>

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38. HHS 84/74: 2794. Bodu is Li Fa's style.

39. HYGZ 10B, 829.

*The Wife of Liu Changqing* 劉長卿 (12)

The wife of Liu Changqing remains within her late husband's household until their son passes away. Thereupon, she responds to the pressure from her natal family to return and remarry by cutting off her own ear, making herself unsightly to potential suitors.<sup>40</sup> Her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law are perplexed by her actions. In justifying her motives to the women of her marital family she explains,

My forefather of five generations studied until he became a leading classicist, and received the honor of an appointment as imperial tutor. For these five generations, our men have shone because of their loyalty and filiality, and the women have received a reputation because of their uprightness and obedience. The Ode reads, "Do not shame your ancestors but rather cultivate their virtue." Thus, as a preventive measure, I mutilate myself. This is how I express my determination." 昔我先君五更，學為儒宗，尊為帝師。五更已來，歷代不替，男以忠孝顯，女以貞順稱。詩云：『無忝爾祖，聿脩厥德。』是以豫自刑翦，以明我情。」

The wife of Liu Changqing's justification illustrates she upholds her family's tradition, even if doing so contradicts the demands placed upon her by her older and younger brothers.<sup>41</sup> She takes the *Odes* passage that advises "do not shame your ancestor" (*wu nian er zu* 無念爾祖) as direct confirmation of the appropriateness of her chosen course of action. Within her construction, remaining a widow within the marital household is the means by which to avoid shaming her ancestors, uphold this righteousness, and maintain her family's reputation. She seems adamant on creating a community of the righteous within her own lineage, even if her own relations ostentatiously flaunt their demands.

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40. Amputation of body parts and corporal mutilations were also means of criminal punishment. See A.P.F. Hulsewé's *Remnants of Han Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 124-28.

41. *YWLJ* 18, 336.

The biography of the wife of Liu Changqing presents a similar situation to that of Li Mujiang in several ways. First, each of the two women positions herself at the high level of a famous relative – Li Mujiang with her younger brother Li Fa, and the wife of Liu Changqing with Huan Rong. Second, each of the two women remains in her respective late husband's household to raise his children. The third similarity synthesizes the first two: each woman, by staying in her husband's household, not remarrying, and raising her husband's son(s) is regarded as providing a gender-appropriate affirmation of partaking in her native family's moral excellence.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Lü Rong* 呂榮 (9)

Lü Rong's biography presents her in two life stages – before and after the death of her husband. Unlike the two cases we have seen so far, Lü Rong's encounter with the possibility of remarriage occurs while her husband was still alive. Upon finding out his daughter's husband turned out to be a debaucher, Rong's father asks her to leave him in favor of remarriage into a better situation. In justifying remaining in her husband's household, Lü Rong says:

This is the fate I have encountered, and the right thing to do is to not leave him and remarry 命之所遭，義無離貳！<sup>43</sup>

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42. Chapter 44 of the *Liji*, titled *Hun Yi* 昏義, or *The Meaning of Marriage* describes an idealized marriage ceremony, and explains the cosmological significance of each of the described events.<sup>42</sup> Marriage, as expressed in the *Liji*, is a union between two surnames. At the end of the described marriage procedures, in separate events, the bride offers foodstuffs to her parents-in-law and at the shrines of her husband's ancestors. Through these acts, the bride treats her husband's family with the same reverence she treated her own parents and ancestry. Although the *Liji* is not representative of all the possible ritual texts and traditions circulating in the Eastern Han, in this particular model for marriage, the bride, in effect, vows allegiance to her husband's household. If the Wife of Liu Changqing was availing herself of the *Liji* or other ritual traditions that presented this marriage model, it is possible that avoiding remarriage reflects a desire not to shame her husband's ancestors, to whom she has vowed allegiance. Séraphim Couvreur, trans., *Mémoires sur les bienséances et les ceremonies*, tome II, deuxième partie (Paris: Cathasia, 1950), 641-51.

43. *HHS* 84/74: 2795.



Rong's justification to stay in her husband's household contrasts with those given by Li Mujiang and the wife of Liu Changqing. Each of the latter two women presents arguments that reflect a subjunctive world in which they identify with a community of righteous ancestors. Lü Rong's justification, rather than identify with people, expresses a subjunctive world ordered by some sort of supernal power(s), or fate. She understands her allotment of husband to have been decided by these non-human forces and according to her ethos, the determination of husband is final and binding – it occurs once, and to remarry is tantamount to challenging fate.

In contrast, her father's request shows that such beliefs in the workings of fate or on the ethical reprehensibility of remarriage were not universally shared. His concerns are concrete and pragmatic – finding his daughter a good husband to secure her well-being. Interestingly, Lü Rong's choice to remain in the household obtains similar results to those of Li Mujiang – she manages to educate and reform her husband into a righteous man.

Sometime after her husband's death, Lü Rong faces another choice – a bandit threatens to kill her if she does not yield to his advances. Choosing death, her final words were:

The right thing to do is to refuse to suffer shame at the hands of a vile bandit 義不以身受辱寇虜也！<sup>44</sup>

In a sense, Lü Rong's death was a suicide by proxy. She did not kill herself but faced with the choice of either rape or death at the hands of the bandit, chooses death. However, unlike Zhao A, whose suicide is partly explained by her self-identification with a tradition of righteous wives, Rong's suicide by proxy is explained by her self-

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44. HHS 84/74: 2795.

identification as an agent capable of participating in the ordering of the universe and interacting with fate.

Although Lǚ Rong accepts her husband as fate's provision, it might seem inconsistent that she does not accept rape as another one of fate's blows. If we look at the way in which Lǚ Rong justifies herself, in both instances she mentions her decision is "right" or "righteous" (*yi* 義). The concern with *yi* frames both her acceptance of an irresolute husband and her death to avoid rape. Thus we are also led by the historians to regard them as active choices. Fate destines but also allots free-will. Lǚ Rong's excellence, thus, may partly reside in her capacity to avoid doing what the common person may do, remarry as suggested by her father, or suffer an indignity in favor of remaining alive. Thus she too might be said to have actively created a subjunctive world, populated by righteous people like herself.

Another of the women represented in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* faces a seemingly similar death. The wife of Yue Yangzi (6), when faced with the choice of her own rape or her mother-in-law's murder at the hands of a bandit, improvises a third option, and commits suicide with a knife:

The wife [of Yue Yangzi] looked up to Heaven and cried out. Then she took the knife, slit her own throat, and died. 妻仰天而歎。<sup>45</sup>

In both situations, the women do not seem to entertain the option of rape. The difference is that Lǚ Rong's concerns are with *yi*, whereas the wife of Yue Yangzi's is with preserving the life of her mother-in-law. This, of course, can be construed as an act of dutifulness, too.

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45. *HHS* 84/74: 2795.

*Xun Cai* 荀采 (14)

Xun Cai, in a situation similar to the wife of Liu Changqing, finds herself pressured by her father Xun Shuang 爽 (128-190) to return to her natal home to remarry upon widowhood. Initially, Xun Cai married a man named Yin Yu 陰瑜, with whom she had a daughter. Upon Yin's death, Cai fiercely resisted her father's orders to return. She finally relented after Shuang feigned illness. Nevertheless, the father's victory was Pyrrhic – upon entering the new household she hung herself with a belt. Her suicide note asked that her corpse be returned to the Yin family.

The represented contrast between father and daughter in this biography is especially poignant. Xun Shuang is Cai's father, a well-known scholar. His written works were extensive commentaries on the Classics, as well a treatise titled *Nujie*.<sup>46</sup> Gao Zhen 高臻 and Han Shufeng 韩树峰, in their 2002 article on chastity during the Han and the Five Dynasties 五代 (907-960), indicate that a scholar of Shuang's stature certainly must have been familiar with the ritual texts' discourse on widow remarriage.<sup>47</sup> Specifically, Gao and Han state that Shuang must have studied the Rites Classics extensively, including the *Liji*'s prescription that a woman must not remarry after the death of a husband. Thus, according to Gao and Han, Shuang was either unconvinced of the moral positions presented in the ritual canon, or he was persuaded by practical considerations that his daughters should remarry after all.<sup>48</sup> Gao and Han use this

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46. Shuang's collected works appeared under the title *Xin shu* 新書, and totaled over 100 *pian*, most of which were lost soon after his death; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 927.

47. Gao Zhen 高臻 and Han Shufeng 韩树峰, "Han-Jin shiqi funü de shoujie yu zai jia 汉晋时期妇女的守节与再嫁," *Zhonghua nüxue xueyuanbao* 中华女子学院学报 14 vol. 4 (2002): 52-56.

48. Gao and Han, "Han-Jin shiqi funü de shoujie yu zai jia," 52-56.

episode as evidence that widow remarriage was probably the norm in Eastern Han society, irrespective of what was stated in ritual prescriptions.

Gao and Han's speculation seems plausible. Regretfully, since Xun Shuang's *Nijie* is no longer available, we have no way of corroborating to what extent the historical Xun Shuang specifically wrote against widow remarriage. Rafe de Crespigny notes that Xun Shuang's 166 memorial attributes the basis of morality to the relationship between husband and wife.<sup>49</sup> This memorial caused a commentator in the *Hou Han shu jijie*, compiled by Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842-1928), to conclude Xun Shuang must have been wrongly identified as Xun Cai's father in her biography.<sup>50</sup> This 19<sup>th</sup> century commentator found it unconscionable that a scholar of Shuang's accomplishment would have forced his daughter into remarriage.<sup>51</sup> Certainly, this episode shows the need to historicize both biographies and commentary.

Cai's biography is different from those of Lü Rong and the wife of Liu Changqing in that she does not provide the same type of clear justification for her actions. Lü Rong remains at her husband's home appealing to notions of righteousness and fate; the wife of Liu Changqing self-identifies with a family tradition of virtuous women. One may speculate that Cai's justification is tacitly implied from the association with her father. In a sense, in asking her body be returned to the Yin family, she is choosing to accept prescriptions from the ritual texts such as the passages cited by Gao

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49. de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 925.

50. de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 925.

51. Whereas we've aside debates of historical accuracy and authorship in the *Hou Han shu Lienü zhuan*, the polemics on the identification of Shuang's character are important as an example of retroactive conclusions about early Chinese women based on late imperial historians' hindsight. The commentator of the *Hou Han shu ji jie*'s assumption is that high-ranking *ru* could not have taken such a lax position on remarriage, although the earlier text indeed suggests flexibility on the father's part.

and Han in a manner different than her father, perhaps even criticizing his concern with practicality.

Although speculative, it may be that Cai's virtue lies in the idealistic choice and the identification with the lofty women addressed in the ritual texts, in contrast to her scholarly father's pragmatism. Having grown up in a scholarly father's household may certainly have afforded Cai familiarity with ritual texts, and with texts on the education of women. If either of these two conditions took place in the Xun household, Cai's suicide may reflect a different interpretation of the Classics than her father. Although she still maintains and respects ties of kinship with her natal family, Cai's suicide note of "belonging" to the Yin family reflects, in part, a sense of identity with her marital family, as part of her duties as wife.

*The Wife of Huangfu Gui* 皇甫規 (13)

The biography of the wife of Huangfu Gui represents her amidst a heated rejection of a potential suitor. Unlike some of the cases we've seen previously, the pressure on her to remarry was not from the father but rather from one of the most powerful political figures in the late Eastern Han, Dong Zhuo (d. 192), and the warlord whose machinations at court contributed to the fall of the Han dynasty.<sup>52</sup>

The wife of Huangfu Gui is presented as a beautiful, erudite woman, capable of writing prose, and skilled at composition. Upon Huangfu Gui's death, Dong Zhuo 董卓

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52. Dong Zhuo (d. 192) was a military man and would-be usurper of power at court. He precipitated civil war in a series of court machinations that involved quashing the eunuch's sway at court after the death of Emperor Ling (r. 146). In 189 he forced child emperor Liu Bian 劉辯 to abdicate in favor of his half-brother, Xie 協 (r. 189-234), then had Liu Bian and Dowager He 何 assassinated. Ultimately he, too, was assassinated. *HHS* 72/62: 2319-32; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 157-58.

presented exorbitant gifts seeking her hand in marriage. Unable to dissuade him through diplomatic means, Huangfu Gui's wife is affronted by his persistence and changes tactic. With a series of insults, she presents her argument for the avoiding remarriage to this particular man,

You, sir, are the product of the Qiang and the Hu; have you not brought enough injury to all under heaven? My previous husband had a purity of virtue among the greatest on earth. The Huangfu family had superior scholarship and military talent, and served as loyal ministers to the emperor. Were you not yourself their underling and runner? And you still have the audacity to subject your lord's wife to abandon ritual? 君羌胡之種，毒害天下猶未足邪！妾之先人，清德奕。皇甫氏文武上才，為漢忠臣。君親非其趣使走吏乎？敢欲行非禮於爾君夫人邪！<sup>53</sup>

The wife of Huangfu Gui's words of rejection to Dong Zhuo suggest a moral hierarchy among the Huangfus, Dong Zhuo, and herself. First, she establishes Dong Zhuo's inferiority by suggesting the time he spent at the periphery of the empire fighting the outlying Qiang 羌 and Hu 胡 tribes influenced him with uncouth customs. Second, she reminds her would-be suitor that he once served as the military subordinate of her late husband's nephew, Huangfu Song 皇甫嵩.<sup>54</sup> These two factors lead to the final accusation that marriage to Dong Zhuo would require her to abandon ritual (非禮 *feili*).

This mention of ritual, although not an explicit reference to a ritual text, does reflect the fact that the wife of Huangfu Gui sees herself as part of a world reigned by propriety.

The wife of Huangfu Gui reminds Dong Zhuo that, unlike him, Huangfu family is renowned for superior scholarship, leadership, and military talent. Fan Ye, in

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53. HHS 84/74: 2798.

54. In 188, Dong Zhuo was appointed General of the Van (*qian jiangjun* 前將軍) under General on The Left (*zuo jiangjun* 左將軍) Huangfu Song 嵩, a nephew of Huangfu Gui. After Dong Zhuo's coup, Song was demoted and the subject of assassination plots. He was promoted in office in the new regime after the death of Dong Zhuo; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 355-56, 1233, 1241.

introducing the protagonist of this biography, lists that she, too, was of superior literary achievement:

His wife was skilled at composing prose and had mastered the grass script. Sometimes she answered letters on Gui's behalf. Many admired her skill. 妻善屬文，能草書，時為規荅書記，眾人怪其工。<sup>55</sup>

Thus, it is not unlikely that the wife of Huangfu Gui, too, derived her insistence on ritual from her familiarity with ritual and educational texts.

*Cai Yan* 蔡琰 (17),

Cai Yan, a scholar and poet, is featured as the last biography of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*. Of all the biographies, she is the only woman said to have remarried after her first husband's death. Additionally, between marriages to her first and second husband, she was the captive of a Xiongnu 匈奴 king, with whom she had two children.

Her father, Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132-192), another famous scholar of the late Eastern Han like Xun Shuang wrote educational texts for women. Yong was also a personal friend of the powerful military warlord and ruler at the time, Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220). Worried that his friend died without having left descendants, Cao Cao ransomed Cai Yong's daughter from the Xiongnu so that she may remarry.<sup>56</sup>

Cai takes a different route than the other renowned female scholar presented in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, Ban Zhao. Yan seems to have readily accepted Cao Cao's ransom and choice of husband. In her biography, Cai Yan serves her new husband loyally, even after he committed a crime for which he was sentenced to death. Cai Yan

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55. *HHS* 84/74: 2796.

56. Interestingly, the two children with the Xiongnu are not, in Cao Cao's esteem, considered Cai Yong's descendants.

seeks an audience with Cao Cao, and successfully persuades him to allow her husband to live.

Later scholars were scandalized by Cai Yan's behavior. Notably, Fan Ye received faced posthumous criticism from Tang scholar Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721), who in his *Shitong* 史通 argues that Cai Yan should not have been included in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*. With the following remarks, Liu Zhiji assesses the unsuitability of Cai Yan's inclusion in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*,

Dong's wife, *née* Cai, gave birth to barbarian children and was shamed in an alien court. Of literary merit she had more than enough, but her moral behavior was defective. This is an instance of words and actions contradicting each other. 董祀妻蔡氏，載誕胡子，受辱虜廷，文詞有余，詞概不足，此則言行相乖者也。<sup>57</sup>

In other words, Cai Yan, according to the Tang historian, was morally defective having been captured by the Xiongnu, having had children (i.e., “shamed” by these sexual relations) with the Xiongnu king, and having remarried upon returning to the Han court. Liu Zhiji's criticism shows how attitudes toward remarriage and chastity had evolved by Tang times.

Liu Xiang and Fan Ye each titled his compilation of biographies of women *Lienü zhuan*. In each of these cases, the *lie* 列 refers to the assorted nature of the traditions *zhuan* of women lives collected in the text. During the Han times, the homophone *lienü* 烈女 (with the fire radical) was used in reference to heroic women. In *Shiji* 86, for example, Nie Ying 聶榮 is recognized as a *lienü* 烈女 for risking her life to claim her

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57. *Shitong* 史通 8.13 in Zhang Shunhui 張舜徽, ed., *Shixue sanshu pingyi mulu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 89-91, translation by Hans H. Frankel, “Cai Yan and the Poems Attributed to Her,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 5 no. ½ (Jul., 1983): 155.



brother's body.<sup>58</sup> This *lienü* 烈女 was used as the analogous term *lieshi* 烈士 used for male heroes. By the Tang dynasty, both *lienü*'s became associated with women who committed acts of heroism – namely suicide – for the sake of chastity. The terms *lienü* 列女 and *lienü* 烈女 converged to refer to women whose primary exemplary quality was chastity. By the time of the Ming dynasty, there is one edition of Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan* whose title is written *Lienü zhuan* 烈女傳.<sup>59</sup>

From the biographies we've examined thus far in this section, it seems widow remarriage was not an unusual practice among the Eastern Han elite. The state, nonetheless, tried to encourage female chastity. For example, in 119 CE, the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the Yuanchu 元初 era of Emperor An 安 (b. 94, r. 106-125), an imperial edict established state alimentary support of 3 *hu* for three categories of indigents, as well as awards of 10 *hu* and public recognitions for chaste women.<sup>60</sup>

### **First-Person Experiences of Virtue in the Writings of Ban Zhao and Cai Yan**

In the biographies of Ban Zhao (5) and Cai Yan (17), Fan Ye included some of the writings attributed to each of these two women. What purpose did these writings serve their inclusion into the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*? Mou assesses these are examples of the historian's "attempt to appropriate women into the Confucian tradition."<sup>61</sup>

Specifically, she finds that,

...through the lives of the two most learned women, Ban Zhao and Cai

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58. Her brother, Nie Zheng 聂政 was a famous assassin. See *SJ* 86: 2526. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 13-14.

59. Katherine Carlitz, "The Social Uses of Female Virtue in Late Ming Editions of *Lienü Zhuan*," *Late Imperial China* 12, no. 2 (1991): 126.

60. Gao and Han, "Han-Jin shiqi funü de shoujie yu zai jia," 54.

61. Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions*, 190.

Yan, some pivotal issues on Chinese womanhood were introduced. Ban Zhao's "Admonitions for Women" clearly states that women are inferior to men just as *ying* is inferior to *yang*. And perhaps even more damaging is her advocacy of a wife's single-minded behavior to her husband, narrowing the focus of a wife from the husband's clan to him. Cai Yan's literary talent is all too quickly overshadowed by her three involuntary marriages, raising remarriage as a chastity issue for heated discussion among later historians.<sup>62</sup>

I would like to conclude this chapter with alternative views into the inclusion of these writings in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*. Rather than attempt to ascertain Fan Ye's objective in presenting the purported writings of these women, I would like to propose we use them most advantageously as a means to further explore the mechanics of ritualization and the creation of these women's subjunctive worlds of virtue.

The seventeen biographies that comprise the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* present third-person descriptions of the external actions and verbalized justifications for the women's remarkable actions and behavior. The writings of Ban Zhao and Cai Yan allow for privileged access to the internal rational or emotive processes that lead the women to take the virtuous path. Ban Zhao's *Nüjie*, although seemingly advocates for women's inferior status, may also be construed as a crafty defense of women's education; rather than relate Cai Yan's poetry to the problematic of chastity, it may serve as a window into the painful decision to return to Han society. In both of these cases, it becomes evident that ritualization and the formation of subjunctive worlds are – far from following a ready-made "Confucian" script – purposeful, creative processes, products of strong, well-educated minds.

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62. Mou, *Gentlemen's Prescriptions*, 190-91.

*Ban Zhao's Nüjie*

Ban Zhao's exposition on women's education and widow chastity have been the source of much derision among some modern scholars who claim her *Nüjie* effectively canonized women's inferior status in traditional China. With language advocating meekness as a virtue, a literal reading into the *Nüjie* seems to give categorical evidence of women's disadvantaged position relative to men. However, Ban Zhao's life and writings are far from normative and probably do not reflect a "typical" woman's experience. Ban Zhao's life and *Nüjie* are useful to our study because she brings together two important issues relevant to many of the other biographies of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* – being a wife and education. She not only is educated and practices widow chastity; in her writings she promulgates both.

Ban Zhao was the most prominent of women intellectuals of the Han dynasty. Born into a family of renowned court scholars, her father, Ban Biao, created a private academy as well as begun the historical work on the *Han Shu* completed by her older brother, Ban Gu. Ban Zhao continued the work started by her father and brother. Her role at court was not limited to writing, she was also appointed tutor to women of the imperial household, and served as advisor and confidante of Empress Deng.<sup>63</sup>

As its title suggests, *Nüjie* is a text specifically addressed to women, in particular those of her social strata. The author states she intended to provide for her daughters a didactic text in the behavior appropriate for married women. This concern with outlining the correct behavior of married women of her own political, economic, and educational

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63. Miranda Brown comments that this essay is the earliest indication of a political elite appropriation and redefinition of Warring States and Western Han conceptions of filial piety. Ban Zhao manipulates classic texts to challenge the notion held in earlier periods that acquiring fame – particularly in the service of the state – was the highest expression of filial piety. Miranda Brown, *Politics of Mourning*, 55-56. For a discussion of the sort of interpretations of filial piety and the state addressed by Brown, see Nylan, *The Five Classics*, 8-11.

background allows us to read the *Nüjie* as a self-referential literary production of Eastern Han times, focused on defining and promulgating the values of the evolving *shi* class to which her family of gentleman scholars belonged. The text's strategic and frequent usage of passages from the Classics to address issues concerning Eastern Han gentry women allows us to frame our reading with ritualization models.<sup>64</sup>

The *Nüjie* opens with a reference to the *Odes* concerning how the birth of a daughter was announced in antiquity:

On the third day after the birth of a girl the ancients observed three customs: (first) to place the baby below the bed; (second) to give her a potshard with which to play; and (third) to announce her birth to ancestors by an offering. 古者生女三日，臥之禱下，弄之瓦墼，而齋告焉。<sup>65</sup>

Ban Zhao's interpretation of the *Odes* implies that (first) women were born into a subordinate status and thus must adopt a humble demeanor; (second) she was to be hard-working; and (third) that she must have reverence for her ancestors. In remaining passages, she also cites the *Changes* and the *Liji*, as well as *yin/yang* theory as applied to the nature of men and women.<sup>66</sup> In interpreting passages such as this one, it is initially difficult to understand under what auspices Ban Zhao – taking into account her level of education, privileged position at court, family background of scholars – would write a text extolling women's lowly position. One approach to reading this passage treats Ban Zhao's position as a severe case of cognitive dissonance. Sung considers the *Nüjie* as a means by which to propagate the notion that marriage was a woman's "place" in

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64. For the full text see Swann, *Pan Chao*, 82-99.

65. HHS 84/74:2787, translation is found in Swann, *Pan Chao*, 83.

66. For a treatment of the complexities related to the usage of *yin/yang* theory in the construction of gender, see Chapter Six, "Yin and Yang" in Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 139-68.

society.<sup>67</sup> Using the *san cong*, or thrice following as a model, marriage is the second stage in a woman's life. In marrying, she passes from her father's control to that of her husband. In this perspective, marriage causes the perceived lack of agency created by the lack of autonomy from a male relative. Following a similar argument, Mou analyzes Ban Zhao's notion of "womanhood" as one in which "everything revolves around the husband."<sup>68</sup> Sung and Mou's views may be colored by the hindsight afforded by the passage of twenty centuries since the Eastern Han. This kind of appraisal is consistent with the gender dynamics and values of a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Western academic paradigm.

During the Eastern Han, marriage and the role of wife was as much a woman's "place" in society as the role of husband was for a great number of its male constituents. If one considers first, that marriage was as normative a social practice for men as it was for women; second, that Fan Ye presented Ban Zhao's writings as evidence of the author's outstanding virtues; and third, that the author was specifically targeting women of her own background, one should suspect perhaps there is more to the *Nüjie* than a call for women's subservience.

Beneath the surface there lies, in my view, a creative reformulation of the main issues affecting other Eastern Han gentry women. Ban Zhao's words seem to indicate submission; however, the rhetorical intent seems to be focused on improving women's education. Raphals presents the possibility that the *Nüjie* is a text written to advocate for women's education, written within the paradigm that would make it palatable to

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67. Sung, "The Chinese Lieh-nü Tradition," 69.

68. Sung, "The Chinese Lieh-nü Tradition," 86.

conservative male scholars.<sup>69</sup> For example, in the second section of the *Nüjie* the reader finds that

If a husband does not control his wife, then the rules of conduct manifesting his authority are abandoned and broken. If a wife does not serve her husband, then the proper relationship (between men and women) and the natural order of things are neglected and destroyed. 夫不御婦，則威儀廢缺；婦不事夫，則義理墮闕。<sup>70</sup>

In another example, the text claims that whereas boys are educated in controlling wives, women are not taught to submit to men's authority, in contravention of the proper rites. Thus, Ban Zhao concludes that women, too, need to be educated, if only to become better wives:

According to the "Rites," it is the rule to begin to teach children to read at the age of eight years, and by the age of fifteen years they ought then to be ready got cultural training. Only why should it not be (that girls' education as well as boys' be) according to this principle? 但教男而不教女，不亦蔽於彼此之數乎！禮，八歲始教之書，十五而至於學矣。獨不可依此以為則哉！<sup>71</sup>

If one agrees with Raphals, that the *Nüjie* is part of a larger argument for the education for women, one may see Ban Zhao's writings as part of a ritualization process appropriate for the culturally-specific environment of Eastern Han scholarly society. She not only advocates female education, but by her own life and writing makes herself a member of a community of scholars that stretches far back into China's past.

In a previous section of the *Nüjie*, Ban Zhao uses an *Odes* passage on the birth of a girl to suggest women are of subordinate status to men. In this second section, she begins by establishing that the Classics prescribe that the relationship between men and women should be such that the husband leads and the woman follows. To violate these

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69. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 245.

70. HHS 84/74: 2788, translation by Swann, *Pan Chao*, 84.

71. HHS 84/74: 2788, translation by Swann, *Pan Chao*, 84-85.

gender dynamics would violate the natural order of human relationships. Her argument moves on to establish that the practice of educating men with the skills of leading, in accordance with the *Rites*, is correct since it allows men to excel in their gender-appropriate roles, including that of husband. The *Rites* do not call for equal attention to the education of girls. Nevertheless, Ban Zhao argues that in order to avoid violating the natural order of human relations as mentioned in the Classics, the same moral imperative to teach boys to be men applies in teaching girls to be women. Ban Zhao's ritualization of the Classic text does not take place with the literal interpretation of women's inferiority, it takes place in taking the passage related to the education of boys and extending it to include girls. That is, she introduces women into a passage unambiguously addressing men. On the one hand, she follows the gender hierarchy by reinforcing the role of wife and her perceived subservience. On the other hand, she subverts the gender hierarchy by placing boys and girls as equally deserving of education.<sup>72</sup>

#### *The Emotions of Virtue in Cai Yan's Poetry*

Whereas Ban Zhao's writings may be interpreted as an expression of agency, wherein the rhetoric of wifely submission is co-opted to serve the seemingly contradictory cause of advancing women's education, Cai Yan's writings address an entirely different topic. The poetry attributed to Cai Yan presents the emotional dimensions related to the difficulties incurred in choosing the path considered virtuous by her biographers.<sup>73</sup>

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72. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 242-46

73. We should note that the authenticity of the poems attributed to Cai Yan is refuted by Frankel, who notes that these do not reflect Eastern Han representations of Xiongnu life. See Frankel, "Cai Yan and the Poems Attributed to Her," 133-156.

A stanza in the first poem attributed to Cai Yan relates her experience in leaving her children:

A bond of nature ties them to my heart,  
Once separated there could be no reunion.  
In life or death: forced forever apart.  
I could not bear to bid them farewell!  
My sons flung their arms around my neck,  
Asking: "Mother, where are you going?  
The people are saying that our mother has to leave,  
And that you will never come back to us.  
O mother, you were always so kind and caring,  
How come you are now so cold and cruel?  
We still are children, not grown up men,  
Can it really be you do not care?"  
When I say this, my heart broke into pieces,  
And I felt as if I'd lost my mind, gone mad!  
I wept and cried and stroked them with my hands,  
And as I was about to depart, was filled with doubt.  
天屬綴人心，念別無會期。  
存亡永乖隔，不忍與之辭。  
兒前抱我頸，問母欲何之。  
「人言母當去，豈復有還時。  
阿母常仁惻，今何更不慈？  
我尚未成人，柰何不顧思！」  
見此崩五內，恍惚生狂癡。  
號泣手撫摩，當發復回疑。<sup>74</sup>

Cai Yan's words reflect that her individual process of choosing to return home in order to fulfill her filial duties was not a case of following clear-cut social prescriptions. Faced with similar stimuli as Cai Yan, other women in the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* improvise different responses: given a choice between death and an unworthy suitor, the wife of Huangfu Gui (11) opted to let herself be killed; faced with pressure to remarry, the wife of Liu Changqing (12) mutilates herself, and Xun Cai (14) commits suicide. Cai Yan did not opt for death when forced to become the spouse of presumably unworthy

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74. HHS 84/74:2802, translated in Wilt L. Idema and Beata Grant, *Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge : Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 116.



sutor; neither did she mutilate herself or commit suicide when faced with the pressure to return home and remarry. Nevertheless, the choices before Cai Yan are not necessarily less difficult than those of the other women with whom she shares a chapter in the *Hou Han shu*.

Granted the much-awaited opportunity to be reunited with her natal family, the return home alone, without her children was indeed difficult. Although Cai Yan ultimately takes the “correct” course of action of filial piety, leaving behind her children with the foreign king was psychologically crippling. She expresses feeling like an unfit mother, cold-hearted, and to the last moment had second-thoughts on whether to return home with her natal family or stay abroad with her own children. Cai Yan’s predicament, in expressing such heartbreak, makes a strong argument for her agency.

We may speculate Cai Yan’s heaviness of heart at weighing her options may also have been the case of many of the other women of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*. Unfortunately, we do not have such privileged access into the emotions of the women in the rest of the biographies, as we do from the writings attributed to Ban Zhao and Cai Yan. Nevertheless, we may surmise that taking the virtuous path – despite the glory accorded to them by historians and the conviction with which they created their subjunctive worlds – was part of a complex matrix of thoughts and emotions. It is this complexity of life experiences and choices that gives dimension to these seventeen women, presenting them to us as active participants in their lives and in the construction of the Eastern Han society and *shi* culture in which they lived.



## Chapter Five

### A Partial Translation of Fan Ye's 范曄 *Arrayed Traditions of Women* (*Lienü zhuan* 列女傳) from the *Book of Later Han* (*Hou Han shu* 後漢書)<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction<sup>2</sup>

詩書之言女德尚矣。若夫賢妃助國君之政，哲婦隆家人之道，高士弘清淳之風，貞女亮明白之節，則其徽美未殊也，而世典咸漏焉。故自中興以後，綜其成事，述為列女篇。如馬、鄧、梁后別見前紀，梁嫵、李姬各附家傳，若斯之類，並不兼書。餘但搜次才行尤高秀者，不必專在一操而已。

The discussions in the *Book of Odes* and in the *Book of Documents*<sup>3</sup> of female virtue are from a far away era. Just as worthy imperial consorts<sup>4</sup> assisted their lords in ruling their states, wise women<sup>5</sup> ennobled the ways of their families; just as accomplished scholars<sup>6</sup>

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1. This translation of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan* excludes the writings of Ban Zhao (5) and Cai Yan (17) presented along with each of these two women's respective biographies. A translation of Ban Zhao's 蔡琰 texts can be found in Swann, *Pan Chao*, 61-130. Cai Yan's poetry is found in Frankel, "Cai Yan and the Poems Attributed to Her," 135-45; Idema and Grant, *Writing Women of Imperial China*, 114-18, 121-27; and Dore Levy, "Cai Yan" in *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy, eds., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 22-30. In addition, modern Chinese *baihua* 白話 translations of the entire chapter can be found in Lei Guozhen et al. *Hou Han shu quanyi*, 3552-86; and Wu Liming *Hou Han shu jinghua*, 319-352. In addition, the footnotes in this chapter intentionally repeat some of the information provided in the footnotes of previous chapters in order to facilitate reading the translation.

2. *HHS* 84/74 2781-2806. The section titles and enumeration that appear in this translation do not appear in the original text. The section titles provide clarity in demarcating the different biographies; the enumeration is consistent with that used in the main text of this thesis. Absent from this translation are the texts authored by Ban Zhao and Cai Yan, appended to the respective biography of each woman. The subsections are titled by the name of the woman protagonist. In the event her name is unknown, she is identified by her husband.

3. The *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) and the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經) were two of the Five "Confucian" Classics, along with the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), the texts on Rites (*Li* 禮), and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) form part of the core texts for a Classical education in Imperial China. The ability to memorize, cite, and give exegesis of these texts were key markers of a person's erudition.

4. Worthy imperial consorts (*xianfei* 賢妃) – *xian*, "worthy"; *fei*, "imperial consort."

5. Knowledgeable women (*zhèfu* 哲婦) – *zhe* "wise," *fu* "woman." *Fu* can also mean "wife." In this particular context in the introduction, I opted to use "woman" to differentiate it from the specific term used in the text to denote "wife" namely *qi* 妻.

6. Accomplished scholars (*gaoshi* 高士) – *gao* "lofty"; *shi* "scholar."

promoted purity, women who exercised proper conduct<sup>7</sup> illuminated the deportment of purity.<sup>8</sup> However, their excellence has not been differentiated. Indeed, the texts transmitted forth from generation to generation are all deficient in this regard. Thus, starting with the Restoration,<sup>9</sup> I have arranged their accomplishments and transmitted them as *Arrayed Chapter on Women*.<sup>10</sup> Women such as the Empresses Ma<sup>11</sup>, Deng<sup>12</sup>,

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7. Women who exercised proper conduct (*zhennü* 貞女) – although in the Ming 明 (1368-1644) -Qing (1644-1911) chastity rhetoric *zhen* is mostly used as “chastity,” in the time period relevant to the subjects, authors, and compilers of this text, *zhen* has a broader meaning which encompasses many aspects of proper behavior and moral rectitude but is not strictly delimited to sexuality.

8. I am deeply indebted to Prof. Yang Haizheng 楊海嶢 from Beijing University’s Department of Chinese Language and Literature for guiding the reading of the introduction, and suggesting this way of translating the phrase

若夫賢妃助國君之政，哲婦隆家人之道，高士弘清淳之風，貞女亮明白之節...

Another way of translating the text yields:

Worthy imperial consorts assisted in their lords’ ruling of their states; wise women ennobled the way of the family; accomplished [women] scholars promoted purity, and women who exercised proper conduct illuminated the deportment of purity...

In effect, this alternate translation identifies four categories of women and makes uncommon usage of *gaoshi* 高士 as a term to denote women scholars. This reading assumes that the biographies followed the pattern established by Liu Xiang in his text, also titled *Lienü zhuan*, to separate women into sections, each of which contains the women that exemplify one virtue or vice. I would adopt this reading if there were other instances of these categories in the text to differentiate the women by attribute.

9. The Restoration (*zhongyu* 中興) refers to the restoration of the Han dynasty by Emperor Guangwu 光武 (b. 5, r. 25-57) after the interregnum Xin 新 dynasty of Wang Mang (r. 6-23 CE).

10. The title of the entire text translated here is *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳; the introduction refers to the text as *Lienü pian* 列女篇. Whereas *zhuan* denotes “tradition,” *pian* indicates a subsection of a larger written work. *Lie* may be translated as “arrayed” or “assorted,” and *nü* means “women.” Most commonly, *liezhuan* is translated into English as “biographies,” although Durrant makes a case that this translation is inadequate, suggesting *Arrayed Traditions* is more accurate. *Lienü zhuan* translates neatly as *Arrayed Traditions of Women*. Thus, *Lienü pian* somewhat awkwardly becomes *Arrayed Chapter on Women* or *Arrayed Section on Women*. See Stephen Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror*, xix- xx.

11. Empress Ma 馬 (40-79) was consort of Emperor Ming 明 (28-75, r. 57 – 75) and dowager of Emperor Zhang 章 (b. 57, r. 75-88). She was the youngest daughter of Ma Yuan 援 (d. 49) with concubine Lin 蔭 (d. 49). Ma was renowned for the superior treatment she extended to Emperor Ming’s mother, for her frugality, and for possessing superior protocol skills. Unable to have children, she exerted herself in preparing a suitable and attractive harem for the emperor to produce offspring. She was instructress to Emperor Zhang in the ways of government and correct deportment. Her biography is found in *HHS* 10A: 407-14. An English summary of her biography is provided in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 634-36.

12. Deng Sui 鄧綏 (81-121), empress of Emperor He 和 (b. 79, r. 88-106) and later Dowager, was the daughter of Deng Xun 訓 (36-92, style Pingshu 平叔) and wife Yin 陰 (d. 110). Empress Sui was renowned for filial behavior, mastery of the Classics, modesty in dress and for observing proper ritual etiquette. In addition, she was lauded for bringing forth junior concubines to the emperor in order to produce offspring since many of the emperor’s sons had died in infancy. After the death of her husband,

and Liang<sup>13</sup> have received their own accounts, which can be found in the preceding chapters; the likes of Liang Yi<sup>14</sup> and Concubine Li<sup>15</sup> have been appended to the chapters dedicated to their respective households. Women like them will not be included in this chapter. As for the rest, I merely sought out and put in order those whose conduct was exceptional. They did not necessarily engage in only one type of behavior.

### 1. Huan Shaojun 桓少君<sup>16</sup>

勃海鮑宣妻者，桓氏之女也，字少君。宣嘗就少君父學，父奇其清苦，故以女妻之，裝送資賄甚盛。宣不悅，謂妻曰：「少君生富驕，習美飾，而吾實貧賤，不敢當禮。」妻曰：「大人以先生脩德守約，故使賤妾侍執巾櫛。既奉承君子，唯命是從。」宣笑曰：「能如是，是吾志也。」妻乃悉歸侍御服飾，更著短布裳，與宣共挽鹿車歸鄉里。拜姑禮畢，提甕出汲。脩行婦道，鄉邦稱之。

宣、哀帝時官至司隸校尉。子永，中興初為魯郡太守。永子昱從容問少君曰：「太夫人寧復識挽鹿車時不？」對曰：「先姑有言：『存不忘亡，安不忘危。吾焉敢忘乎！』」永、昱已見前傳。

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she became *de facto* ruler of the Eastern Han until her death. One of her chief advisors, Ban Zhao, appears below as the topic of biography 5. See *HHS* 10A:418-30; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 121-28.

13. Liang Na 梁嬪 (116-150) was empress of Emperor Shun 順 (b. 115, r. 125-144). She was daughter of Liang Shang 商 and sister of the notorious debaucher Liang Ji 冀 (d. 159). Upon the emperor's death, she ruled as dowager until her death. She was praised for her knowledge of womanly virtue, including knowledge of Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*, wisdom in appointing government officials, maintaining order in the empire, and for frugality. See *HHS* 10B:438-40; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 454-56.

14. Liang Yi 梁嬪 (b. 62) was an Honored Lady (*guiren* 貴人) – the first rank of imperial concubine after the empress) in Emperor Zhang's harem, and mother of the future emperor He 何 (b. 79, r. 88-106). She was the eldest daughter of Fan Shu 樊儵 (6. 67) and Liang Song 竦 (d. 83). Interestingly, Liang Yi shares a surname with the mother, in contravention of the more common practice of giving a child the father's surname. See *HHS* 34/24:1172-73; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 463.

15. Imperial Consort Li 李姬 was a concubine of Emperor An 安 (b. 94, r. 106-25). In 115, she gave birth to future emperor Shun. After the son's birth she was poisoned by a very jealous Empress Yan 閭姬 (d. 126). See *HHS* 10B 437-38; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 406.

16. Huan Shaojun 桓少君 (d. late 20's CE, personal name Yanlin 彦林) appears as the first biography in *HHS* 84/74: 2781-82 and is summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 337.

The wife of Bao Xuan<sup>17</sup> from Bohai<sup>18</sup> was a daughter of the Huan family, and her style<sup>19</sup> was Shaojun. Once upon a time, Bao studied under Shaojun's father. The Huan patriarch found his student remarkable in that he maintained his integrity in spite of poverty. Subsequently, Huan gave his daughter to Xuan in marriage, generously bestowing sumptuous goods upon the couple. Huan reacted with displeasure and addressed his wife, "You, Shaojun, were born into a wealthy, arrogant family and have grown used to the fine things in life. In contrast I am indeed poor and therefore cannot accept these gifts as ritual prescribes."<sup>20</sup> His wife spoke, "You have cultivated virtue under the tutelage of my father and have practiced moderation. Because of this merit, he instructed me<sup>21</sup> to attend to you by holding the towel and comb."<sup>22</sup> Given this, I will look after you, following only your orders." Xuan chuckled in delight at his wife's response and said, "If we can live together under these conditions, then this is also what I want." Thereupon, the wife dispatched the attendants, returned the finery, and took to wearing a short cotton garment.<sup>23</sup> Together with Xuan, she led the deer cart<sup>24</sup> to return to his village. Having

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17. Bao Xuan 鮑宣 (d. ca. 5 CE) appears in the *Hou Han shu* solely in his faculty as Huan Shaojun's husband. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 12.

18. Bohai 勃海郡 is a commandery unit in Ji Province 冀州.

19. The style, or *zi* 字, is a name given to a person for use among close friends and families, and as a name for publications and other publicly acknowledged works. A person could be known by the compound formed by his/her family name and personal name (姓名 *xingming*) or by the compound formed by his/her family name and his/her style. For example, the *xingming* of the protagonist of this biography is Huan Yanlin 桓彦林 but is recognized publicly by her style, Huan Shaojun 桓少君.

20. Bao Xuan is expressing his financial inability (and perhaps moral opposition) to perform the ritual exchange of gifts that ideally takes place in marriages, according to the prescriptions in the ritual traditions, perhaps those from the Classics.

21. "I" is a translation from a more specific first person singular feminine pronoun *qie* 妾. Although *qie* often means "concubine," it is used as a woman's humble, polite form when she is addressing her husband, strangers, or superiors.

22. *Zhi jinshi* 執巾櫛, to hold (*zhi*) the towel (*jin*) and comb (*zhi*), is a metonymic device for a spouse or concubine. A woman uses these instruments in caring for her husband.

23. The short cotton garment (*duan buchang* 短布裳) seems to be a short (*duan*) unisex skirt (*chang*) made from coarse cloth (*bu*) worn by ordinary people. Shaojun traded the opulent garments worn at the father's home for plain garb in acceptance of her husband's socioeconomic and moral positions.

completed the ritual of paying respect to her mother in law, she then took an urn and drew water from the well.<sup>25</sup> She cultivated the wifely Way,<sup>26</sup> and was praised by the people of the village.

Under the reign of Emperor Ai,<sup>27</sup> Xuan served as an official. His office ascended in rank until reaching the position of Director of Retainers.<sup>28</sup> At the beginning of the Restoration, Xuan's son Yong,<sup>29</sup> served as the Grand Administrator of Lu Commandery.<sup>30</sup> Yong's son Yu<sup>31</sup> asked Shaojun, "Grandmother, do you still remember the times of the deer cart?" To which she would reply, "My late mother-in-law used to say, 'When one exists, one does not forget death; when one is safe, one does not forget

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24. The deer cart (*lüche* 鹿車) is either a cart or carriage (*che*) pulled by deer (*lù*), or a type of ordinary small cart. Since Shaojun is pulling (*wan* 挽) along with her husband, it is improbable that in this context, the *lüche* refers to the cart pulled by deer.

25. The marriage rituals, as described in the *Liji* and *Yili*, conclude with the installation of the wife in her husband's household. Upon entering, she endeavors to serve her parents-in-law, in a display of the attention with which she will care for them for the rest of their lives. For a translation into French of the *Liji* description, see *Hun yi* 昏義, "Signification des cérémonies du mariage," translated by Couvreur in *Mémoires sur les bienséances et les ceremonies*, 641-51 and *Hunli* 昏禮, *Mariage d'un future officier* translated by Couvreur in *Cérémonial* (Paris :Cathasia, 1951), 25-57.

26. Unlike in the introduction, in translating *fudao* 婦道 as "wifely way," I translated *fu* as "wife," rather than "woman." In this context she is being praised not for being a woman, but for her excellence in being a wife and caring for her household members.

27. Emperor Ai 哀 of the Western Han (202 BCE- 23 CE) reigned from 7-1 BCE.

28. Director of Retainers (*sili xiaowei* 司隸校尉) is de Crespigny's translation. The Director of Retainers was the administrator of the capital province, Sili 司隸. His rank was "Equivalent to 2,000 *shi* 石 (bushels)" and had under his purview all the officials in the province. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1226.

29. Bao Yong 鮑永 (d. ca. 43, style Junchang 君長) was a Han loyalist, appointed to government under the Ping 平 (r. 7 BCE – 1 CE), Gengshi 更始 (r. 23-25) and Guangwu emperors. He was noted for excellent rulership and filial behavior. See *HHS* 29/19:1017-21; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 12-14.

30. De Crespigny translates *taishou* 太守 as "Administrator." Bielenstein uses "Grand Administrator." In this case, I used Bielenstein's translation in order to make a clearer distinction from the Western Han title for the same position, Commandery Administrator (*junshou* 郡守). The Grand Administrator was the official in charge of a commandery unit, and his rank was "2,000 *shi*." See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1228; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy of Han*, 93. Lu Commandery 魯郡 is in Yu Province 豫州.

31. Bao Yu 鮑昱 (style Wenyan 文淵, d. 81) was a scholar who inherited his father's position of Director of Retainers, as well as held numerous other posts in the respective courts of Emperors Ming and Zhang. See *HHS* 29/19: 1021-23; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 14.



danger.<sup>32</sup> How would I dare forget?” The biographies of Yong and Yu may be found in preceding chapters.<sup>33</sup>

## 2. The Wife of Wang Ba 王霸妻<sup>34</sup>

太原王霸妻者，不知何氏之女也。霸少立高節，光武時，連徵不仕。霸已見逸人傳。妻亦美志行。初，霸與同郡令狐子伯為友，後子伯為楚相，而其子為郡功曹。子伯乃令子奉書於霸，車馬服從，雍容如也。霸子時方耕於野，聞賓至，投耒而歸，見令狐子，沮忤不能仰視。霸目之，有愧容，客去而久臥不起。妻怪問其故，始不肯告，妻請罪，而後言曰：「吾與子伯素不相若，向見其子容服甚光，舉措有適，而我兒曹蓬髮歷齒，未知禮則，見客而有慙色。父子恩深，不覺自失耳。」妻曰：「君少修清節，不顧榮祿。今子伯之貴孰與君之高？奈何忘宿志而慙兒女子乎！」霸屈起而笑曰：「有是哉！」遂共終身隱遯。

The wife of Wang Ba<sup>35</sup> from Taiyuan<sup>36</sup> is a daughter of an unidentified family. At a young age, Ba had established a reputation for lofty behavior. During Guangwu's reign, Ba was summoned repeatedly to the court but never accepted to office. An account of Ba has already been given in the *Traditions of Recluses*.<sup>37</sup> His wife, too, delighted in high-minded conduct. Initially, Ba was friends with Linghu Zibo, native of the same commandery.<sup>38</sup> Later, Zibo became chancellor<sup>39</sup> at Chu<sup>40</sup> and his son became an Officer

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32. The editorial note identifies this phrase as a quotation from the *Commentary of the Appended Phrases* (Xici 繫辭) section of the *Book of Changes*.

33. The biographies of Yong and Yu are found in HHS 29/19: 1017-23.

34. The wife of Wang Ba 王霸妻 appears as the second biography in HHS 84/74: 2782-83 and is summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 799.

35. Wang Ba 王霸 (style Ruzhong 儒仲 or 孺仲) was a former court official. When Wang Mang took the throne, Wang Ba retired from public office and, along with his family, became a hermit. His biography is found in HHS 83/73: 2762-63; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 799.

36. Taiyuan Commandery 太原郡 was in Bing Province 并州.

37. The *Yiren zhuan* 逸人傳, or *Traditions of Recluses* is found in HHS 83/73: 2755-2780, under the title *Yimin liezhuan* 逸民列傳. The title given in this biography is different than the actual title in the *Hou Han shu*, although they are synonymous: For Wang Ba's biography, see HHS 83/2762-63.

38. Linghu Zibo 令狐子伯 appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in the context of the biography of Wang Ba's wife. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 468.

39. Because Chu 楚 was a kingdom, rather than a commandery, its head administrator held the title of Chancellor (*xiang* 相) rather than *taishou*. The king did not hold any administrative role, but would receive income from the taxes of his territory. Kingdoms were customarily awarded to members of the imperial family. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1229.



of Merit in the commandery.<sup>41</sup> Zibo sent his son to present a letter to Ba, with carriages and horses in attendance – such was his distinction. At this moment, Ba’s son happened to be plowing in the fields. When he heard a guest had arrived, he dropped his plough and returned. Seeing Linghu’s son, he was so baffled that he was unable to raise his eyes to look at him. When Ba saw this, he was chagrined. After the guest left, he took to bed and would not get up. His wife found his behavior strange and asked his reason. At first, he did not want to tell her. Only when she asked what she had done wrong, he explained, “From the beginning, Zibo and I were very different – but now I see his son’s brilliant countenance and his commanding manners. In contrast, our son’s hair is disheveled, gap-toothed, and unfamiliar with the rules of propriety. Thus, when he saw our guest, he looked ashamed. The affection between us as father and son runs deep. Nevertheless, without realizing it, I have become a failure.” The wife then replied, “Since a young age, you have cultivated purity of behavior, seeking neither rank nor riches. Now, how can Zibo’s noble position compare to your own loftiness? How is it that now you have forgotten your old intentions, feeling shame on your children’s behalf?” Ba, having been set right, rose and said, laughingly, “You are right.” Forthwith, they all remained in seclusion for the rest of their lives.

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40. Chu Kingdom was located in Xu Province 徐州.

41. Officer of Merit (*gongcao* 功曹) is de Crespigny’s translation of this administrative title; see de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*. 1237. The Bureau of Merit was under the purview of the Colonel Director of Retainers, and its officials had the charge of identifying meritorious service; see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy of Han Times*, 85-86.

### 3. The Wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩妻<sup>42</sup>

廣漢姜詩妻者，同郡龐盛之女也。詩事母至孝，妻奉順尤篤。母好飲江水，水去舍六七里，妻常泝流而汲。後值風，不時得還，母渴，詩責而遣之。妻乃寄止鄰舍，晝夜紡績，市珍羞，使鄰母以意自遺其姑。如是者久之，姑怪問鄰母，鄰母具對。姑感慙呼還，恩養愈謹。其子後因遠汲溺死，妻恐姑哀傷，不敢言，而託以行學不在。姑嗜魚鱸，又不能獨食，夫婦常力作供鱸，呼鄰母共之。舍側忽有涌泉，味如江水，每旦輒出雙鯉魚，常以供二母之膳。赤眉散賊經詩里，鋒兵而過，曰：「驚大孝必觸鬼神。」時歲荒，賊乃遺詩米肉，受而埋之，比落蒙其安全。

永平三年，察孝廉，顯宗詔曰：「大孝入朝，凡諸舉者一聽平之。」由是皆拜郎中。詩尋除江陽令，卒于官。所居治，鄉人為立祀。

The wife of Jiang Shi<sup>43</sup> from Guanghan<sup>44</sup> was the daughter of Pang Sheng<sup>45</sup> from the same commandery. Shi served his mother with utmost filiality, and in turn, his wife served and obeyed him wholeheartedly. His mother was fond of water from a river that was approximately six or seven *li*<sup>46</sup> from their home. The wife regularly would go upstream to fetch the water.<sup>47</sup> One day, when a windstorm made it impossible for the wife to return promptly, the mother went thirsty. Shi reproached his wife and dismissed her from the household.<sup>48</sup> Thereupon, the wife took up residence at a neighbor's house. Day and night, she spun thread and wove cloth that she traded for delicacies. The wife sent these delicacies with the matriarch of her host family, instructing her to offer these

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42. The wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩妻 appears as the third biography in *HHS* 84/74:2783; and is summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 690. She appears in the *Huayang guozhi* under the *mingxing* Pang Xing 龐行, see *HYZ* 10B, 818.

43. Jiang Shi 姜詩 (style Shiyu 士游) was magistrate (*ling* 令 or *zhang* 長) of Jianwei Commandery 犍為郡 in Yi Province 益州, renown for his filial behavior and good rulership. He appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in his wife's biography. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 377.

44. Guanghan Commandery 廣漢郡 is in Yi Province.

45. Pang Sheng 龐盛 does not appear elsewhere in the *Hou Han shu*.

46. The *li* 里/厘 is a unit of distance, equivalent to 150 *zhang* 丈, or roughly half a kilometer.

47. In the *Huayang guozhi* parallel text, the wife is ordered to pound grain for her mother-in-law. See *HYZ* 10B, 818.

48. In the *Huayang guozhi* parallel text, the wife is exiled because she did not respond promptly enough to the order to pound grain; *HYZ* 10B, 818.

in person to her mother-in-law, under the ruse they came from the neighbor. This went on for some time until the mother-in-law, puzzled by the situation, questioned her friend [about the origins of the special foods]. The neighboring matriarch divulged the whole scheme. The mother-in-law, feeling ashamed, asked the wife to return to the household. In her attentions towards her mother-in-law, the wife continued to nurture her with ever-increasing diligence and affection.

Some time after the wife's return to the household, her son drowned while fetching water from the river. Fearing her mother-in-law would be afflicted with grief, the wife did not dare inform her about the death. Instead, the wife gave the pretext that her son was not living at home because he was traveling for study.<sup>49</sup>

The old lady was fond of a special dish made out of slices of fish<sup>50</sup> but could not bear to eat alone. [To remedy this situation,] husband and wife often, and with much effort, prepared the dish for the mother and invited the neighbor to share the meal with her. Unexpectedly, a spring rushed up next to the home, whose water tasted like that of the river. Every morning from it emerged a pair of carp.<sup>51</sup> Husband and wife frequently used these magical fish to offer the two matriarchs their meal.

When some scattered bandits of the Red Eyebrows<sup>52</sup> passed Shi's village, they lay down their arms. One of the bandits spoke, "To alarm a person of such great filiality surely arouse the ghosts and spirits." It happened that the year of the Red Bandits was

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49. In the *Dongguan Hanji* and *Huayang guozhi* accounts, it is the couple rather than the wife of Jiang Shi alone, who tells her mother-in-law their son is away studying. In these two parallel texts, the couple throws their son's clothing into the river so the matriarch would think they were sending their son parcels of clothes. See *DGHJ* 17/22, 388-89; *HYGZ* 10B, 818.

50. *Yukuai* 魚膾 is dish prepared out of raw fish slices. 膾 is an alternate writing of 鱠.

51. Carp (鯉 魚 *liyü*).

52. The Red Eyebrows (*chimei* 赤眉), were a peasant band that formed in response to unrest and civil war following the Yellow River Floods of 2-11 CE. The band received its name from their practice of painting their faces red. They fought and defeated Wang Mang's army. The *Dongguan Hanji* parallel text does not identify the bandits as the Red Eyebrows; *DGHJ* 17/22, 388-89.

also a year of bad harvest. The bandits provisioned the Shi household with grains and meats, which they received and buried.<sup>53</sup> A neighboring village was grateful to Shi, crediting him for their safety.<sup>54</sup>

In the third year of Yongping,<sup>55</sup> there was an imperial search for those who were “filial and incorrupt.”<sup>56</sup> Xianzong gave the following imperial order: “Those of great filiality will enter the service of the court. All the others who have been recommended will be placed on the same level as they await their appointment.” All were honored with the position of “Gentleman of the Palace.”<sup>57</sup> Shi subsequently was appointed as magistrate<sup>58</sup> in Jiangyang.<sup>59</sup> He died while in office. All of the places where he lived were well-governed. The villagers erected shrines for him.

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53. In the *Dongguan Hanji* parallel text, Jiang Shi is reprimanded for taking the bandits’ food, later reveals its burial place. See *DGHJ* 17/22, 388-89.

54. “A neighboring village was grateful to Shi, crediting him for their safety.” 比落蒙其安全 *biluo meng qi anquan* – *Biluo*, “neighboring village;” 蒙 “to be indebted, grateful, etc”; *qi anquan* “their safety.” It seems that the Shi household reputation was such that it commanded the respect of the Red Bandits; instead of plundering their region, the bandits bestowed them with food to prevent starvation. Lei Guozhen et al. *Hou Han shu quanyi*, 3554.

55. Yongping 永平 was the era name, *nianhao* 年號, for the entirety of Emperor Ming’s rule. In Each emperor has at least one era name associated with his period of rulership. These can comprise any number of years; some change every few months, others keep one reign name for the entire duration of their rule. Emperor Ming ascended the throne in 57; his third year was 60 CE. It is unclear why Shi was presented with the awards several decades after the Red Eyebrows incident.

56. “Filial and Incorrupt” (*xiaolian* 孝廉) is a term used in nominations to enter civilian corps comprised of Gentlemen (*lang* 郎). These were under the purview of the Central Government’s Minister of the Household (*guangluxun* 光祿勳). A *lang*, went through a probation period, after which he would be assigned a government post. Depending on his promotions, he could reach high levels in government. Provinces were required to submit a certain number of nominees, a search for which was carried out by the Officer of Merit. Salaries at this probationary period ranged from 300-600 *shi*. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1222, 1230-31.

57. Gentlemen of the Palace (*bai langzhong* 拜郎中) – Michael Loewe translates *langzhong* as Gentleman of the Palace, see his *Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, former Han and Xin periods*, 760. This is a class of the *lang* discussed above.

58. Magistrate (*xunchu* 尋除) – The editorial note in *Hou Han shu jinghua* defines *xun* as “before long”; and *chu* as “to confer and award.” The modern Chinese translation reads:

Jiang Shi before long was appointed to a county in Jiangyang to serve as magistrate. 姜诗不久被任命为江阳县县令. See Wu Liming, *Hou Han shu jinghua*, 324.

59. At the end of the Eastern Han, the Jianwei Commandery was divided to form the Jiangyang 江陽 Commandery in Yi Province .

#### 4. Zhao A 趙阿<sup>60</sup>

沛郡周郁妻者，同郡趙孝之女也，字阿。少習儀訓，閑於婦道，而郁驕淫輕躁，多行無禮。郁父偉謂阿曰：「新婦賢者女，當以道匡夫。郁之不改，新婦過也。」阿拜而受命，退謂左右曰：「我無樊鄒二姬之行，故君以責我。我言而不用，君必謂我不奉教令，則罪在我矣。若言而見用，是為子違父而從婦，則罪在彼矣。生如此，亦何聊哉！」乃自殺。莫不傷之。

The wife of Zhou Yu<sup>61</sup> from Pei Commandery<sup>62</sup> was the daughter of Zhao Xiao<sup>63</sup> from the same commandery, and her style was A. From a young age, she practiced etiquette, and had become accomplished in the Way of the wife; in contrast, her husband Yu was arrogant, licentious, and short-tempered. He habitually behaved in contravention of ritual propriety. Yu's father, Wei, summoned A and addressed her with these words, "You, the new wife,<sup>64</sup> are the daughter of a worthy man. You should use the Way to correct your husband. If Yu's ways do not change, it will be your fault." A bowed respectfully and accepted the task. She withdrew and told her attendants, "In behavior, I am no match for Imperial Consorts Fan and Ren<sup>65</sup> and this is why my father-in-law has charged me with this duty. If I admonish my husband and he does not change, then my

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60. Zhao A 趙阿 appears as the fourth biography in *HHS* 84/74: 2784; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1094.

61. Zhou Yu 周郁 is listed in the *Hou Han shu* solely in his capacity as Zhao A's husband.

62. Pei Commandery 沛郡 is in Yu Province.

63. Zhao Xiao 趙孝 (style Changping 長平) served several posts in government in the middle of the first century CE, in the period encompassing Wang Mang through Emperor Ming. He was renown for his modest demeanor, deep sense of filial duty. See *HHS* 39/29:1298-99; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1109.

64. Father-in-law Wei 偉 addresses A in the third person, by her position of new (*xin* 新) wife (*fu* 婦) within the family. Wei appears in the *Hou Han shu* only within Zhao A's biography.

65. Fan and Ren 樊鄒 – The editorial note on Zhao A's biography cites Liu Xiang's *Lienü Zhuan*:

King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王 was fond of hunting. Imperial Consort Fan 樊姬 would not eat of the freshly hunted fowl and by these means conveyed her admonition to the king. Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 was fond of listening to music. His Imperial Consort Ren 鄒姬 would not listen to the five tones and by these means conveyed her admonition to the duke.

See *HHS* 84/74:2784; *LX LNZ* 2.5 and 2.2, <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/lienu/browse/scroll12.html> (accessed July 20, 2009); O'Hara, *Position of Woman*, 50-52, 57-58.

father-in-law will believe I did not honor his instructions. The blame will be on me. If I admonish my husband and he does listen, then, as a son, he will have favored obeying his wife but disobeyed his father. The blame will be on him. In this situation, what can I rely on?" Thereupon she killed herself. There was no one who was not saddened by her death.

## 5. Ban Zhao 班昭<sup>66</sup>

扶風曹世叔妻者，同郡班彪之女也，名昭，字惠班，一名姬。博學高才。世叔早卒，有節行法度。兄固著漢書，其八表及天文志未及竟而卒，和帝詔昭就東觀臧書閣踵而成之。帝數召入宮，令皇后諸貴人師事焉，號曰大家。每有貢獻異物，輒詔大家作賦頌。及鄧太后臨朝，與聞政事。以出入之勤，特封子成關內侯，官至齊相。時漢書始出，多未能通者，同郡馬融伏於閣下，從昭受讀，後又詔融兄續繼昭成之。

永初中，太后兄大將軍鄧騭以母憂，上書乞身，太后不欲許，以問昭。昭因上疏曰：「伏惟皇太后陛下，躬盛德之美，隆唐虞之政，闢四門而開四聰，采狂夫之瞽言，納芻蕘之謀慮。妾昭得以愚朽，身當盛明，敢不披露肝膽，以刊萬一。妾聞謙讓之風，德莫大焉，故典墳述美，神祇降福。昔夷齊去國，天下服其廉高；太伯違邠，孔子稱為三讓。所以光昭令德，揚名于後者也。論語曰：『能以禮讓為國，於從政乎何有。』由是言之，推讓之誠，其致遠矣。今四舅深執忠孝，引身自退，而以方垂未靜，拒而不許；如後有毫毛加於今日，誠恐推讓之名不可再得。緣見逮及，故敢昧死竭其愚情。自知言不足采，以示蟲螳之赤心。」太后從而許之。於是騭等各還里第焉。

作女誡七篇，有助內訓。

...

馬融善之，令妻女習焉。

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66. Ban Zhao 班昭 (approx. 48-120, style Huiban 惠班) appears as the fifth biography in *HHS* 84/74:2785-2792; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 8-10. The alternate name listed in the biography, Ban Ji 姬, is a corruption of the text according to de Crespigny. For a translation of her biography and works, see Swann, *Pan Chao*, 40-58 (biography), 61-130 (works).

昭女妹曹豐生，亦有才惠，為書以難之，辭有可觀。昭年七十餘卒，皇太后素服舉哀，使者監護喪事。所著賦、頌、銘、誄、問、注、哀辭、書、論、上疏、遺令，凡十六篇。子婦丁氏為撰集之，又作大家讚焉。

The wife of Cao Shishu<sup>67</sup> from Fu Feng<sup>68</sup> was the daughter of Ban Biao<sup>69</sup> of the same commandery; her name was Zhao and was styled Hui Ban, and alternate name was Ji. She was vastly learned and exceptionally talented. After Shishu died at an early age, she was moderate in behavior and upheld moral standards.<sup>70</sup> Her older brother Gu<sup>71</sup> wrote the *Book of Han*, his *Eight Tables*, as well as the *Treatise on Astronomy*, was incomplete when he died. Emperor He summoned Zhao in person to the Eastern Pavilion library<sup>72</sup> to finish his work. The Emperor repeatedly summoned her to the palace and ordered the Empress and the assembled noble women<sup>73</sup> to treat her as a teacher. He called her “Venerable Madam.”<sup>74</sup> On every occasion for a tribute or extraordinary events, they summoned the Venerable Madam to compose rhapsodies or hymns. When Dowager Deng arrived to power, she conferred with her to hear her counsel regarding government

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67. Cao Shou 曹壽 (d. 80's, style Shishou 曹世) appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in his wife's biography.

68. Fufeng 扶風, also (Youfufeng 右扶風) is a commandery unit in the capital province of Sili 司隸.

69. Ban Biao 班彪 (3-53; style Shupi 叔皮) was a scholar who had a private academy. Most importantly, began work on the *Han shu* 漢書, or *Book of Han*. He received the title of Abundant Talent (*maocai* 茂才) and worked in various offices of the Excellencies and was posted as magistrate at Zhongshan Commandery 中山郡, Jizhou 冀州 Province and at Linhuai Commandery 臨淮, Xuzhou Province 徐州. See *HHS* 100A-B, 40/30A:1313-30; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 3-4, 1231.

70. Swann commented that this phrase later entered common use as the description of a widow; thus, she translates it as “observed the canons of widowhood.” Swann, *Pan Chao*, 40 n. 52.

71. Ban Gu 班固 (32-92, style Mengjian 孟監) was a court scholar who, like his father, worked in various offices of the Excellencies. He is credited with writing the bulk of the *Han shu* begun by his father, as well as began work on the *Dongguan Hanji*. See *HHS* 40/30A-B:1330-86; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 7.

72. Emperor He ruled from 88-106. The Eastern Pavilion was the imperial library where the officially commissioned compilation and writing took place. This is namesake of the *Dongguan Hanji*.

73. *Huanghou* 皇后 and *taihou* 太后 are both used as the title of “empress,” although *tai hou* is used for a dowager.

74. *Dagu* 大家 is an honorific title for women, which denotes a master or a teacher, see Swann, *Pan Chao*, 40.



affairs. Due to her diligence both in and out of court, her son Cheng<sup>75</sup> was enfeoffed as a secondary marquis<sup>76</sup> and reached the office of Chancellor of Qi. At the time the *Book of Han* came out, many were unable to make sense of it. Ma Rong,<sup>77</sup> of the same commandery, was admitted to the [Eastern] Pavilion to receive instruction from Zhao. Later on, Rong's older brother Xu<sup>78</sup> was ordered by imperial decree to see Zhao's work to completion.

In the middle of the Yongchu era,<sup>79</sup> the Empress's older brother, General-in-Chief Deng Zhi,<sup>80</sup> grieving his mother's death petitioned the court to be excused from office. The Empress did not want to allow this and thus asked Zhao for her opinion. Zhao presented a memorial that read,<sup>81</sup>

Prostrated below the steps to the Empress's throne, I bow before the beauty of the Empress's virtue, exalted as the governments of Yao and Shun.<sup>82</sup> Even

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75. Cao Cheng 曹成 (style Zigu 子穀) worked in various offices of the Excellencies and was Filial and Incorrupt. He served as Chancellor of Qi Kingdom 齊王國, Qing Province 青州 and as magistrate (*zhang* 長 or *ling* 令) in Chenliu Commandery 陳留郡, Yan Province 兗州. See *HHS* 15/5:591-93; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 39-40.

76. Secondary Marquis (*guannei hou* 關內侯) – Were fiefs granted for exceptional service or for relatives of the imperial family. The marquis did not have administrative power but collected income from the subjects. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1219.

77. Ban Zhao's student Ma Rong 馬融 was the father of Ma Lun 馬倫, whose biography is also in this chapter. Please refer to biography ten below.

78. Ma Xu 馬續 (d. 143, style Jize 季則), served various administrative posts including Emissary to the Xiongnu (*Shi Xiongnu zhonglang jiang* 使匈奴中郎將), and Protector of the Qiang (*Hu-Qiang xiaowei* 諄羌校尉), both ranked at Equivalent to 2,000 *shi*. See *HHS* 24/14:862, 87/77:2894, 89/79:2960-62; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 654-55.

79. The Yongchu 永初 was the era name for the first six years of Emperor An's 安 (b. 94, r. 106-125) rule. Swann established the year to be 108 based on evidence from the *Hou Han shu*. See Swann, *Pan Chao*, 53.

80. Deng Zhi 鄧騭 (d. 121, style Zhaobo 昭伯) had a long, distinguished military career, and served as a chief advisor to his sister when she was Dowager. See *HHS* 16/6:612-18, 87/77:2886; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 135-37. The title General-in-Chief (*dajiangjun* 大將軍) was a title usually given to the senior male relatives of an empress. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1233.

81. For another translation, see Swann, *Pan Chao*, 76-77.

82. Yao and Shun 唐虞 were righteous mythical kings of antiquity, praised by Confucius for ideal rulership. For a sample of the lofty position of these two rulers, see the passage from the *Documents*



though [the Empress] opened up the four gates [of communication] and sought to hear the four [directions of] knowledge,<sup>83</sup> she opts for the blind words of a mad person [whose advice has the worth] of hay and straw. Your servant Zhao is stupid and old, but lives in an era of flourishing brilliance. How would I dare not expose my guts, even if worth one ten-thousandth. I have heard that in terms of virtue, there is none greater than yielding place to others. The classic texts mention its superiority and the spirits grant it blessings. In the past, Yi and Qi left the state<sup>84</sup> and the land bowed before their lofty incorruptibility; Tai Bo went against the Bi and thus Confucius praised his triple refusal.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, their illustrious virtue came to be renowned for future generations. The *Analects* read, “If one can govern the country by observing ritual and showing deference, there is no more to be said.”<sup>86</sup> Consequently, yielding rank to others is the utmost expression of sincerity. At present the Four Uncles<sup>87</sup> in their deep piety would like to enter retirement, but because the frontiers are not yet pacified [the Empress] disagrees and will not allow it. If later on, there are [other] trivial

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translated in WM Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 29-30.

83. “Opened up the four gates [of communication] and sought to hear the four [directions of] knowledge...” 闢四門而開四聽 — Swann comments this is an allusion to a passage from the *Documents*. See Swann, *Pan Chao*, 79, n. 27.

84. Yi 夷 and Qi 齊 were recluse brothers from antiquity who serve as example of principled withdrawal from corrupt government. See *SJ* 61: 2121-29.

85. Tai Bo 太伯 was from the kingdom of Wu 吳. When Taibo was asked to rule, he desisted in favor of his younger brother so his nephew, could eventually become the king. The nephew, Wen 文 founded the Zhou dynasty.

86. *Analects* 4.13 reads,

If one can govern the country by observing ritual and showing deference, there is no more to be said. If one cannot govern the country by observing ritual and showing deference, what’s the use of ritual? 能以禮讓為國乎，何有？不能以禮讓為國，如禮何。 Translation by Leys, *Analects of Confucius*, 16.

87. The Four Uncles (*sijiu* 四舅) – Deng Zhi is seeking retirement for himself and other close male relatives.

matters added to the current situation, then I sincerely fear that the name of one who yields to others will no longer be obtainable. For these reasons I have come to my conclusion. Therefore, I risk deserving death for speaking to the Empress this way, having reached the capacity of my intellect and emotions. I know my words are insufficient, but they demonstrate what is in the heart of this lowly worm.

The dowager subsequently allowed him to retire. Accordingly, Zhi and the other [members of his family] each returned to his own home.

[Zhao] wrote *Lessons for Women* in seven *pian*, the contents of which were useful for instructing within the household.

Ma Rong found this [text] excellent and ordered the wives and daughters of his family to follow her precepts.

Zhao's younger sister-in-law Cao Fengsheng,<sup>88</sup> was also talented and kind, and wrote letters critiquing [Zhao's] work, her words can [readily] be found.

Zhao died at over 70 years, the Empress Dowager wore half mourning and sent envoys to oversee the funeral affairs. Her *oeuvre* consisted of: rhapsodies, hymns, inscriptions, eulogies, topical treatises, commentaries, elegies, letters, essays, memorials, wills – all in all over 60 scrolls. Her daughter-in-law, from the Ding Family,<sup>89</sup> collected her works and published them with a eulogy of the Venerable Madam.

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88. Cao Fengsheng 曹豐生's information is found in the *Hou Han shu* only in the context of Ban Zhao.

89. This is all the information in the *Hou Han shu* about the daughter-in-law.

## 6. The Wife of Yue Yangzi 樂羊子之妻<sup>90</sup>

河南樂羊子之妻者，不知何氏之女也。羊子嘗行路，得遺金一餅，還以與妻。妻曰：「妾聞志士不飲盜泉之水，廉者不受嗟來之食，況拾遺求利，以污其行乎！」羊子大慙，乃捐金於野，而遠尋師學。一年來歸，妻跪問其故。羊子曰：「久行懷思，無它異也。」妻乃引刀趨機而言曰：「此織生自蠶繭，成於機杼，一(絲) ... 而累，以至於寸，累寸不已，遂成丈匹。今若斷斯織也，則捐失成功，稽廢時月。夫子積學，當日知其所亡，以就懿德。若中道而歸，何異斷斯織乎？」羊子感其言，復還終業，遂七年不反。妻常躬勤養姑，又遠饋羊子。

嘗有它舍雞謬入園中，姑盜殺而食之，妻對雞不餐而泣。姑怪問其故。妻曰：「自傷居貧，使食有它肉。」姑竟棄之。

後盜欲有犯妻者，乃先劫其姑。妻聞，操刀而出。盜人曰：「釋汝刀從我者可全，不從我者，則殺汝姑。」，妻仰天而歎，舉刀刎頸而死。盜亦不殺其姑。太守聞之，即捕殺賊盜，而賜妻緘帛，以禮葬之，號曰「貞義」。

The wife of Yue Yangzi<sup>91</sup> from Henan<sup>92</sup> was the daughter of an unknown family. One day, when Yangzi was walking along the road, he picked up a piece of gold someone had left behind. He returned home to give it to his wife. His wife berated him, “I have heard that gentlemen of purpose do not drink water from the source called ‘Fount of Thieves.’<sup>93</sup> Incorrupt people do not eat from charity given begrudgingly. How much less would such a person pick up lost items, seeking profit from them? These behaviors sully his deportment!” Yangzi remorsefully disposed of the piece of gold in a field. Thereupon, he left home, seeking a master with whom to study. A year later, he returned. His wife knelt before him and asked the reason for his return. Yangzi replied, “I’ve been

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90. The wife of Yue Yangzi’s 樂羊子之妻(*qi* 妻) appears as the sixth biography in *HHS* 84/74:2792-93; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1019-20.

91. Yue Yangzi 樂羊子 listed in the *Hou Han shu* under his wife’s biography.

92. Henan Commandery 河南郡 is in the Capital Province Sili, and contains the Imperial Capital city Luoyang 洛陽.

93. With regard to the Fount of Thieves 盜泉, a note in *Hou Han shu jinghua* 後漢書精華 cites the *Lunyan zhuan kao chen* 論言撰考識:

If the water [source] was called “Fount of Thieves Confucius would not even gargle with it. 水名盜泉，仲尼不漱。 See Wu Liming 吳禮明 *Hou Han shu jinghua* 後漢書精華, 336.

traveling for a long time and was homesick. That's all." Hearing this, his wife took a knife and hastened towards her weaving loom saying, "This weave originally is born from the cocoon of silkworms.<sup>94</sup> It develops inside the wheel and the loom, thread by thread until it reaches the length of a thumb.<sup>95</sup> By accumulating *cun* after *cun*, it finally becomes a bolt of cloth of one *zhang*<sup>96</sup> in length. Now if I break this weave, then I will lose all that had been accomplished thus far, wasting my time all these months. You have become like "he who day-to-day remembers that which he still needs to learn."<sup>97</sup> You, as you study and study, ought to remember, day after day what you still need to learn, so that you can acquire the perfection of virtue.<sup>98</sup> To be in the middle of the Way and turn back, how is this different from tearing this weave?" Yangzi, moved by her words, went back and continued until he reached the end of his studies. He did not come home for a total of 7 years. In his absence, the wife diligently took to the daily care of her mother-in-law and often sent parcels of food to Yangzi.

On one occasion, a chicken from a neighboring home mistakenly wandered into the family courtyard. The mother-in-law seized the chicken, killed, and ate it. When the

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94. The chapter on Meng Mu 孟母 in Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*, the mother of philosopher (Mengzi 孟子), (4th c. BCE), relates how she was able to inculcate the value of education in her child. One day, when Mencius returned early from school, she asked for the cause of his truancy. He replied that there was no cause other than his wish to leave. Mencius's mother then used a knife to cut the weaving on her loom and admonished him by drawing a parallel. Leaving school, just as destroying one's weaving, ends one's means of attaining livelihood. Furthermore, it renders one unable to support oneself with dignity. See *LX LNZ* 1.11, <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/lienu/browse/scroll1.html> (accessed July 20, 2009); O'Hara, *Position of Woman*, 39-42. On Meng Mu's argumentation skill and technique, please see Lisa Raphals, "Arguments by Women in Early Chinese Texts," 159-61,

95. Thumb (*cun* 寸) is a unit of length, approximately equivalent to 3 1/3 centimeters.

96. A *zhang* 丈 is a unit of length, approximately equivalent to 3 1/3 meters.

97. The editorial note states this is a reference to the *Analects*. See *HHS* 84/74:2793. *Analects* 19.5 reads:

Zixia said, He who, day after day, remembers what he still needs to learn and, month after month, does not forget what he has already learned, is truly fond of learning. 子夏曰、日知其所亡、月無忘其所能、可謂好學也已矣。 Translation by Leys, *Analects of Confucius*, 95.

98. Perfection of virtue (*yide* 懿德) – is a verb-object compound; *yi* "to perfect"; *de* "virtue."

wife received her portion of chicken, she did not eat from it but rather sobbed. The mother-in-law, surprised at her behavior asked her to explain. The wife spoke, “I am distressed that our home is so poor that we’ve resorted to eating meat which belongs to others.” The mother-in-law immediately discarded the chicken.

Later in time, into the home came a thief who wanted to violate Yangzi’s wife, but first took her mother-in-law hostage. Upon hearing the scuffle, the wife grabbed a knife and confronted the bandit. The thief said, “If you drop the knife and do as I say, your mother-in-law will be safe. However, if you don’t, then I will kill her.” The wife looked up to Heaven and cried out. Then she took the knife, slit her own throat, and died. Seeing this, the thief did not kill the mother-in-law. When the Grand Administrator heard about this incident, he had the bandit captured and killed. He also donated a bolt of silk for the funeral rites, and buried her in accordance with proper ceremony. He conferred upon her the posthumous title “Pure and Righteous.”<sup>99</sup>

## 7. Li Mujiang 李穆姜<sup>100</sup>

漢中程文矩妻者，同郡李法之姊也，字穆姜。有二男，而前妻四子。文矩為安眾令，喪於官。四子以母非所生，憎毀日積，而穆姜慈愛溫仁，撫字益隆，衣食資供皆兼倍所生。或謂母曰：「四子不孝甚矣，何不別居以遠之？」對曰：「吾方以義相導，使其自遷善也。」及前妻長子興遇疾困篤，母惻隱自然，親調藥膳，恩情篤密。興疾久乃瘳，於是呼三弟謂曰：「繼母慈仁，出自天受。吾兄弟不識恩養，禽獸其心。雖母道益隆，我曹過惡亦已深矣！」遂將三弟詣南鄭獄，陳母之德，狀己之過，乞就刑辟。縣言之於郡，郡守表異其母，蠲除家徭，遣散四子，許以脩革，自後訓導愈明，並為良士。

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99. “Pure and Righteous” (*zhenyi* 貞義) is also translated as “Pure & Honorable.” See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1020.

100. Li Mujiang 李穆姜 appears as the seventh biography in *HHS* 84/74:2792-93; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 420-21.

穆姜年八十餘卒。臨終臥諸子曰：「吾弟伯度，智達士也。所論薄葬，其義至矣。又臨亡遺令，賢聖法也。令汝曹遵承，勿與俗同，增吾之累。」諸子奉行焉。

The wife of Cheng Wenju<sup>101</sup> from Hanzhong<sup>102</sup> was the eldest sister of Li Fa<sup>103</sup> from the same commandery, and her style was Mujiang. She and her husband had two children together, and her husband had four sons from his former wife. Wenju was sent to serve as magistrate in Anzhong<sup>104</sup> and died in office. Because she was not their birth mother, the four sons loathed and slandered the stepmother, with ever-increasing hatred. Despite their behavior, Mujiang was compassionately loving and warmly benevolent towards them, caring for them, with ever-increasing dedication. When it came to distributing the family's clothing and food provisions, she gave them many times more than she gave her own children. One of her own birth-children asked her,<sup>105</sup> "The four sons are extremely unfilial towards you, why don't we establish a separate residence to keep them at a distance?" To this she replied, "I<sup>106</sup> am determined to guide them by dutifulness, so that they would themselves be moved to become good."

When Yu,<sup>107</sup> the oldest son by the first wife, fell seriously ill, Mujiang felt a

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101. Wenju 文矩 is the style of Cheng Zhi 程祗. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 93.

102. Hanzhong Commandery 漢中郡 was in Yi Province.

103. Lifa 李法 (style Bodu 伯度) was renowned for erudition and moral excellence. He served in several high government posts. See *HHS* 48/38:1601; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 410.

104. Anzhong County 安眾縣 is part of the Nanyang Commandery 南陽郡 in Jing Province 荊州.

105. I am using "One of her own birth-children asked her..." for *huo wei mu yue* 或謂母曰. More literally, "Another addressed mother saying..." The reasoning is that only one of Mujiang's children (biological or stepchildren) would be addressing her as "mother." This is consistent with the usage of *mu* in this biography; in all other instances of *mu* are used either when the interlocutor is speaking of *his* mother or when the narration is referring to *their* mother. See Lei Guozhen 雷國珍 et al. *Hou Han shu quanyi* 後漢書全譯, 3562-63.

106. "I" 吾 *wu* – is a first person personal pronoun, used by men and women in less formal settings.

107. Cheng Yu 程興 appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in his stepmother's biography.

natural sympathy for him. She attended to him by sending medicines prepared with her own hands. In her treatment, she was generous and affectionate. After a long illness, he recovered. He called his three full brothers and addressed them saying, “Our stepmother is compassionate and caring. She emitted a love that came naturally. We brothers have not recognized the extent of her affection and nurturing. Even though she held fast to the Way of motherhood, we attributed to her the heart of a beast. We have erred greatly.” Thereupon he led his three brothers to the Nanzheng prison,<sup>108</sup> where they spoke of their mother’s great virtue and filed a self-denouncement based on what had transpired. They requested punishment in accordance with the law. This case was transmitted from the county level to the commandery level.<sup>109</sup> The Commandery Administrator<sup>110</sup> praised as extraordinary their mother. He granted the household exemption from taxes and compulsory labor,<sup>111</sup> and then dispatched the four sons, allowing them to mend their ways. From this moment onward, every day they became more insightful in their studies. They all served as palace gentlemen.

Mujiang died when she was in her eighties. On the eve of her death, as all her children gathered together she told them, “My younger brother, Bo Du<sup>112</sup> was a man accomplished in wisdom. When he discoursed on frugal funerals, he made absolute

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108. Nanzheng County 南鄭縣 is part of the Hanzhong Commandery in which the family lived.

109. Legal cases in Han dynasty China were tried at the local level. Special cases and appeals were brought forth to the next unit of government. The case of the Cheng brothers started locally at the village level in Nanzheng and was transmitted along to be adjudicated at the commandery level in Hanzhong. Hypothetically, if the case had not been resolved in a satisfactory manner in Hanzhong, could have move up through the Provincial level until eventually reaching the Imperial Court in Henan 河南, the capital. See A.P.F. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, 71-101

110. Commandery Administrator (*junshou* 郡守) is a Western Han term for Grand Administrator. See Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy of Han*, 93.

111. Han dynasty families were taxed as a unit, based on the number and ages of the household members. In addition to these taxes in grain and/or cash, the state also levied taxes payable in human labor. The adult, able-bodied males of a household were subject to a military or corvée labor duties. See Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, 17.

112. Bodu is Li Fa’s style.

sense. To issue a will before one dies is to follow the model of the worthy and sage.<sup>113</sup> I order you all to abide by the legacy you have received: do not behave like vulgar men, so as not to embarrass me.” All the children followed her wishes.

## 8. Cao E 曹娥<sup>114</sup>

孝女曹娥者，會稽上虞人也。父盱，能絃歌，為巫祝。漢安二年五月五日，於縣江泝濤(迎)婆娑[迎]神，溺死，不得屍骸。娥年十四，乃沿江號哭，晝夜不絕聲，旬有七日，遂投江而死。至元嘉元年，縣長度尚改葬娥於江南道傍，為立碑焉。

Filial woman Cao E was from Kuaiji in Shangyu.<sup>115</sup> Her father, Xu,<sup>116</sup> was skilled at playing the *xian* in accompaniment to chanting<sup>117</sup> and a medium for spirits.<sup>118</sup> In the fifth month and fifth day of the second year of Han'an<sup>119</sup> he went to the county riverside, he moved against the waves, spinning and whirling to contact the spirits, but he drowned; his body never was found.<sup>120</sup> E, fourteen years old at the time, cried and cried for him along the banks of the river. For seventeen days,<sup>121</sup> she remained by the banks of the

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113. For an analysis of women's wills in the Han Dynasty, see Hinsch, "Women, Kinship, and Property as Seen in a Han Dynasty Will," 1-20.

114. Cao E 曹娥 (d. 143) appears as the eighth biography in HHS 84/74:2794-95; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 41. She later becomes a popular deity and the river is named after her. See Johnson, "The Wu Tzu-Hsu Pien-Wen and its Sources: Part II," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40, no. 2 (1980): 473-77.

115. Shangyu 上虞 is located in the Kuaiji Commandery 會稽郡 of Yang Province 揚州.

116. Cao Xu 曹盱 (d.143) appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in his daughter's *Lienü zhuan* biography.

117. A *xian* 絃 is a zither-like instrument, played in accompaniment to singing or chanting. *Ge* 歌 means "to chant," to sing, etc.

118. Invoking the spirits (*wuzhu* 巫祝) is "to invoke" "to pray" or "to recite" incantations. Her father was a shaman.

119. Han'an 漢安 is the era name, *nianhao*, for the period of Emperor Shun's rule between 142 and 144.

120. *yu xian jiang su tao (ying) posuo [ying] shen* 於縣江泝濤(迎)婆娑[迎]神 – *jiangyi* refers to a riverside, *tao* to a large wave; *posuo* conveys the ideas of being entranced, performing a religious dance, to seem intoxicated or in an altered state, etc.; a *yingshen* is a ceremony to call upon the spirits. Johnson identifies Wu Zixu 伍子胥 as the god invoked, renowned for filial piety. The deity's biography is found in *SJ*: 2171-83.

121. 17 days (*xun you qi ri* 旬有七日) – A *xun* is a period of 10 days. The four characters translate into "xun endowed [with] seven days," i.e. 17 days.



river until she eventually threw herself into the river and drowned. In the first year of Yuanjia,<sup>122</sup> the county magistrate<sup>123</sup> Du Shang<sup>124</sup> re-interred her body next to the road of the southern bank of the river, and erected a stele in her honor.

## 9. Lü Rong 呂榮<sup>125</sup>

吳許升妻者，呂氏之女也，字榮。升少為博徒，不理操行，榮嘗躬勤家業，以奉養其姑。數勸升修學，每有不善，輒流涕進規。榮父積忿疾升，乃呼榮欲改嫁之。榮歎曰：「命之所遭，義無離貳！」終不肯歸。升感激自厲，乃尋師遠學，遂以成名。尋被本州辟命，行至壽春，道為盜所害。刺史尹耀捕盜得之。榮迎喪於路，聞而詣州，請甘心讎人。耀聽之。榮乃手斷其頭，以祭升靈。後郡遭寇賊，賊欲犯之，榮踰垣走，賊拔刀追之。賊曰：「從我則生，不從我則死。」榮曰：「義不以身受辱寇虜也！」遂殺之。是日疾風暴雨，靄電晦冥，賊惶懼叩頭謝罪，乃殯葬之。

The wife of Wu Xusheng<sup>126</sup> was the daughter of the Lü clan, and her style was Rong.

From a young age, Sheng was a gambler whose behavior was not proper. Rong diligently dedicated herself to household duties, in order to care for her mother-in-law. She repeatedly exhorted Sheng to apply himself to studies. Every time he misbehaved she would, weeping, come forward to admonish him. Rong's father, having accumulated anger, came to loathe Sheng. He called Rong back to her natal home, wishing to marry her into a different household. Rong sighed saying, "This is the fate I have encountered, and the right thing to do is to not leave him and remarry." Ultimately, she refused to return to her native home. Sheng was moved by this and became self-disciplined. Then,

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122. Yuanjia 元嘉 is the era name for the period ruled by Emperor Xuan (b. 132, r. 146-168) in the years 151-152.

123. County magistrate (*xianzhang* 縣長); de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1241.

124. Du Shang 度尚 does not have an independent entry in the *Hou Han shu*.

125. Lü Rong 呂榮 appears as the ninth biography in *HHS* 84/74:2795; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 630.

126. Wu Xusheng 吳許升符 (b. approx. 140 CE) appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in his wife's biography. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 630.

in search of a teacher, he went to study in faraway places, and, as a result, managed to establish a reputation for himself. At one point, he was called to serve in his natal province. Upon reaching Shouchun,<sup>127</sup> he was killed by a bandit. Inspector Yin Yao<sup>128</sup> apprehended and detained the criminal. When Rong traveled to recover the body, she heard about the details of the bandit's arrest and went to the provincial capital, seeking permission to exact revenge upon her enemy. Yao accepted her request. Then, Rong with her own hands severed the murderer's head, in order to sacrifice it to Sheng's departed soul.

Later in time, a band of thieves descended upon the county and wanted to assault her. Rong tried to escape by climbing up on a wall, but the thief pursued her with a knife. He spoke, "Obey me and you will live. Disobey me and you will die." Rong responded, "The right thing to do is to refuse to suffer shame at the hands of a vile bandit." Thereupon he killed her. That day, a sudden windstorm, violent rains, thunder, and lightning shook the darkness. The bandit, terrified, bowed to her to ask forgiveness. Later on, she was buried.

#### 10. Ma Lun 馬倫<sup>129</sup>

汝南袁隗妻者，扶風馬融之女也。字倫。隗已見前傳。倫少有才辯。融家世豐豪，裝遣甚盛。及初成禮，隗問之曰：「婦奉箕疇而已，何乃過珍麗乎？」對曰：「慈親垂愛，不敢逆命。君若欲慕鮑宣、梁鴻之高者，妾亦請從少君、孟光之事矣。隗又曰：「弟先兄舉，世以為笑。今處姊未適，先行可乎？」對曰：「妾姊高行殊邈，未遭良匹，不似鄙薄，苟然而已。」又問曰：「南郡君學窮道

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127. *Shouchun* 壽春 was located in the Jiujiang 九江 commandery in Yang 陽 Province.

128. Inspector (*cishi* 刺史) is de Crespigny's translation in the *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1236. Yin Yao 尹耀 (d. 144) was the inspector in Yang Province 揚州 who summoned Wu Xusheng into office. More information about him is located in the *HHS* 6:275, 38/28:1279, and de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 984.

129. Ma Lun 馬倫 (122-184) appears as the tenth biography in *HHS* 84/74:2796 and is summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 646.

奧，文為辭宗，而所在之職，輒以貨財為損，何邪？」對曰：「孔子大聖，不免武叔之毀；子路至賢，猶有伯寮之愬。家君獲此，固其宜耳。」隗默然不能屈，帳外聽者為慙。隗既寵貴當時，倫亦有名於世。年六十餘卒。

倫妹芝，亦有才義。少喪親長而追感，乃作申情賦云。

The wife of Yuan Wei<sup>130</sup> from Runan<sup>131</sup> was the daughter of Ma Rong<sup>132</sup> from Fufeng;<sup>133</sup> her style was Lun. Wei's biography appears in a preceding chapter.<sup>134</sup> At a young age, Lun possessed ability with rhetoric. At the time, Rong's family was wealthy and eminent, so they gave her a large dowry. Then, at the start of the marriage ceremony, Wei inquired about the presents and commented, "A woman is only supposed to hold the winnow basket<sup>135</sup> and no more. What need is there to send these excessive valuables and beautiful things?" Lun responded, "My dear parents sent these as an expression of their affection, I do not dare to go against their wishes [that I use them]. If you, sir, wish to emulate the greatness of Bao Xuan and Liang Hong, then I humbly request to follow the feats of Shaojun and Meng Guang."<sup>136</sup>

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130. Yuan Wei 袁隗's (d. 190, style Ciyang 次陽) kinship to a powerful eunuch granted him special favor in court. In 189 he held the highest administrative post in the empire Grand Tutor *dafu* 太傅 (ranked at over 10,000 *shi*) with control of the Imperial Secretariat (*lushangshu shi* 錄尚書事) for Emperor Shao 少 (b. 176, r. 189-190). He also served twice as Excellency of Works (司空 *sikong*; 10,000 *shi*) twice and once as Minister of Ceremonies (太常 *taichang*; Fully 2,000 *shi*). Court intrigues led to his assassination in 190. See *HHS* 45/35:1523; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han C*, 1013-14, 1221.

131. Runan 汝南 is a commandery in Yu Province 豫州.

132. Ma Rong 馬融 (79-166, style Jinzhang) was renowned for his intelligence, instruction in classical scholarship, political commentary, and literary production. Throughout his life he oscillated between reclusion hermetic eccentricity and serving in public office. Ma was among the scholars chosen as part of Ban Zhao's collaborators for the completion of the *Han shu*. He spent the last 20 years of his life in semi-retirement, operating an academy in his home. See *HHS* 60/50A; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han* 648-49.

133. Fufeng is a commandery unit in the capital province of Sili.

134. Wei's biography appears in *HHS* 45/35:1523.

135. "Holding the winnow basket" (*feng jidao* 奉箕疇) is a metonymic device for the work carried out by a wife.

136. Bao Xuan is the husband of (Huan) Shaojun; Liang Hong 梁鴻 (style Boluan 伯鸞 or Bochun 伯淳) is the husband of Meng Guang 孟光 (style Deyao 德曜). Both couples are models of withdrawal from society whereby the husbands refuse to hold office and their sagacious wives play a pivotal role in encouraging them to remain true to their ideals. Bao Xuan and Huan Shaojun are treated in

Then Wei replied, “If the younger brother is promoted in office before his older brother, the world ridicules him. Now you marry before your elder sister, is this permissible?” In response, she said, “My older sister is of lofty behavior and exceptional, and has not yet found a good husband. She is unlike ordinary people, who don’t care much about who they marry.”

He then asked her, “The Lord of the Nan Commandery<sup>137</sup> was accomplished in his studies and had a mastery of the Way. Where it came to composition, he was recognized as a master. Each time he held office, he mismanaged the available resources. How was this so?” She answered, “Confucius was a great sage, and yet this did not preclude Wu Shu from slandering him. Zi Lu was of the highest worth, and yet Bo Liao defamed him.<sup>138</sup> That my father encounters this only demonstrates how appropriate his actions were.”

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the first biography of this chapter. Liang Hong and Meng Xuan are found in *HHS* 83/73: 2765-68; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 448-49.

137. Lord Nanjun 南郡君 is a title for Lun’s father, Ma Rong, who served as Grand Administrator of Nan Commandery 南郡 in Jing Province.

138. The commentary to this edition of the *Hou Han shu* gives two partial quotes from the *Analects*. The material in brackets completes the parts of the quotations that were not cited in the commentary. Translation by Leys, *Analects of Confucius*, 97, 71.

19.24: Shusun Wushu slandered Confucius. Zigong said, “It does not matter. It cannot touch him. The merits of other people are like a hill across you can walk; but Confucius is like the sun or the moon, over which you cannot jump. [If someone wished to cut himself off from their light, how could this affect the sun and the moon? He would merely display his own folly. ] 叔孫武叔毀仲尼。子貢曰、無以為也、仲尼不可也、他人之賢者、丘陵也、猶可踰也、仲尼、日月也、無得而踰焉、[人雖欲絕、其何傷於日月乎、多見其不知量也。 ]

14.36: Gongbo Liao slandered Zilu to Ji Sun. Zifu Jingbo reported this to Confucius, saying: “My master’s mind is being swayed by Gongbo Liao; but I still have the power to get his carcass exposed in the marketplace...” The Master said, “If it is Heaven’s will, the truth will prevail; if it is Heaven’s will, the truth will perish. What does Gongbo Liao matter set against Heaven’s will?” 公伯寮愬子路於李孫、子服景伯以告、曰、夫子固有感志於公伯寮、吾力猶能肆諸市朝。子曰、道之將行也與、命也、道之將廢也與、命也、公伯寮其如命何。

Wei fell silent unable to utter a response. Those listeners outside the curtain were ashamed on his behalf. Subsequently, Wei became an eminent person in accordance with the times. Lun also became renown in all the land. She was over 60 years old when she passed away.

Lun's younger sister Zhi also was able and righteous. At an early age she lost her grandparents and remembered them with deep sentiment. In their honor wrote the rhapsody, *Expressing my Feelings*.<sup>139</sup>

### 11. Zhao E 趙娥<sup>140</sup>

酒泉龐涪母者，趙氏之女也，字娥。父為同縣人所殺，而娥兄弟三人，時俱病物故，讎乃喜而自賀，以為莫己報也。娥陰懷感憤，乃潛備刀兵，常帷車以候讎家。十餘年不能得。後遇於都亭，刺殺之。因詣縣自首。曰：「父仇已報，請就刑戮。」(福)祿[福]長尹嘉義之，解印綬欲與俱亡。娥不肯去。曰：「怨塞身死，妾之明分；結罪理獄，君之常理。何敢苟生，以枉公法！」後遇赦得免。州郡表其閭。太常張奐嘉歎，以束帛禮之。

The mother of Pang Yu<sup>141</sup> from Jiuquan<sup>142</sup> was a daughter of the Zhao family<sup>143</sup> and her style was E. Her father was murdered by someone of the same county. Since E's three

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139. Ma Zhi 倫芝 appears in the *Hou Han shu* within the context of her sister's biography. Her rhapsody (*fu* 賦) was titled, *Zhenqing* 申情.

140. Zhao E 趙娥 (or Zhao Eqin 親) appears as the eleventh biography in *HHS* 84/74:2796-97; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1097.

141. Pang Yu 龐涪 (style Ziyi 子異) also became renowned for his loyalty and filiality. He served many posts in local and central government, including Grand Administrator of his native commandery of Jiuquan 酒泉, Liang Province 涼州 and Commandant of Attendant Cavalry (*fuqi douwei* 鮒騎都尉; ranked Equivalent to 2,000 *shi*). In addition, he was enfeoffed as Secondary Marquis. His biography is not in the *Hou Han shu*, however an entry for him can be found in Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, scroll 18 (Beijing, Zhongshua shuju, 1973), 547-48; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 690-90, 1223. Henceforth the *Sanguo zhi* will be abbreviated in citations as SGZ.

142. Jiuquan Commandery 酒泉郡 was in Liang Province 涼州.

143. The father's *mingxing* is Zhao An 趙安 (d. 179). His biography is not in the *Hou Han shu*, however his biography, however, an entry for him can be found in SGZ 18: 48; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1094.

brothers had all died of illness,<sup>144</sup> there was no one left to avenge his crime. Thinking his crime would not be avenged, the assassin was pleased and congratulating himself. E, however, nurtured great resentment within herself. She secretly prepared a dagger and often waited outside his home in a curtained carriage. She continued stalking him in this fashion for ten years until finally she met with him in the village,<sup>145</sup> where she seized the opportunity to stab and kill him.

She proceeded to turn herself in to the county authorities. She explained her actions saying, “I have already taken revenge from my father’s enemy. Please subject me to capital punishment.” Assistant Magistrate Yinjia<sup>146</sup> found her actions righteous. He removed himself from office intending to abscond with her.<sup>147</sup> E did not let him leave, “That in order to stop my resentment I had to do this, this is only my fate. To shackle criminals and administer the prisons is your day-to-day duty. How would you dare to temporarily extend my life if by doing so you entail the corruption of public law?” Later, she received an amnesty and was released. The provincial and commandery authorities inscribed a memorial of her actions on the village gate. Minister of Ceremonies Zhang Huan<sup>148</sup> made public her excellence and completed the ceremony by

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144. In a *Taiping yulan* parallel text, attributed to a *Lienü zhuan*, the text specifies Zhao E’s three brothers died of a pestilence. See *TPYL* 345 10a.

145. Village (*duting* 太傅). – This was a territory around the capital of a county *xian* 鄉. In effect, the *duting* was the village where the capital was located. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1220.

146. Assistant Magistrate (*fuzhang* 福長) – A *fu* is an adjective that means “assistant” or “vice,” a *zhang* is a magistrate. This seems to be some sort of local-level auxiliary magistrate. Yin Jia’s 尹嘉 appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in Zhao E’s biography.

147. “To remove himself from office” 解印綬欲與俱亡 – *jie yinshou* 解印綬 is “to untie the cords of an official seal, i.e. to remove oneself from office; *ju* 俱亡, “entirely”; *wang* 亡 “to run away” or “to die.” Alternatively, the Assistant Magistrate could have wanted to die along with her. See Lei Guozhen 雷国珍 et al. *Hou Han shu quanyi* 後汉书全译, 3565.

148. Zhang Huan 張奐 (104-181, styled Ranming 然明) was a renowned scholar and imperial administrator. He is credited with authorship of a commentary to the *Documents*. See *HHS* 65/55:2138-44; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1054.

bestowing upon her silk cloth.

## 12. The Wife of Liu Changqing 劉長卿妻<sup>149</sup>

沛劉長卿妻者，同郡桓鸞之女也。鸞已見前傳。生一男五歲而長卿卒，妻防遠嫌疑，不肯歸寧。兒年十五，晚又夭歿。妻慮不免，乃豫刑其耳以自誓。宗婦相與愍之，共謂曰：「若家殊無它意；假令有之，猶可因姑姊妹以表其誠，何貴義輕身之甚哉！」對曰：「昔我先君五更，學為儒宗，尊為帝師。五更已來，歷代不替，男以忠孝顯，女以貞順稱。詩云：『無忝爾祖，聿脩厥德。』是以豫自刑翦，以明我情。」沛相王吉上奏高行，顯其門閭，號曰「行義桓釐」，縣邑有祀必膳焉。

The wife of Liu Changqing<sup>150</sup> from Pei<sup>151</sup> was the daughter of Huan Luan,<sup>152</sup> of the same commandery. For Luan, see above. She gave birth to one son. When he turned 5 years old, Changqing passed away.<sup>153</sup> The wife, in order to guard against ill repute refused to return to her natal home [and face remarriage]. When her son was 15 years old, one evening, he, too, passed away.

For the wife of Liu Changqing, remarriage was now unavoidable.<sup>154</sup> Considering this, as a preventive measure, she wielded a blade and vowed to herself to cut off her ear.<sup>155</sup> The women of the clan pitied her. Together they said, “Your family surely has no

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The Minister of Ceremonies (*taichang* 太常) was one of the highest posts in the empires. It was ranked at “Fully 2,000 *shi*.” See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1221.

149. The wife of Liu Changqing 劉長卿妻 appears as twelfth biography in HHS 84/74:2797; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 333.

150. Liu Changqing 劉長卿 (d. 160s) appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in the context of his wife’s biography.

151. Pei was a commandery unit located in Yu Province.

152. Huan Luan 桓鸞 (108-184, style Shichun 始春) was renowned for excellent conduct and incorrupt tenure in office. Served as magistrate in Beihai 北海 (in Qing Province 青州), Chenliu 陳留 (in Yan Province 兗州), and Henei 河內 (in Sili); was consultant at the court of Emperor Huan 桓 (r. 146-168). See HHS 37/27:1257; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 336.

153. In the *Yiwen leiju* parallel text, a name, Yu 玉, is given for their son. See YWLJ 18, 336.

154. In the *Yiwen leiju* parallel text, the older and younger brothers come for a vigil, and presumably to fetch the wife of Liu Changqing. See YWLJ 18, 336.

155. The mutilation and amputation of body parts were means of punishment for criminals. In mutilating herself, she would not only make herself too unsightly for remarriage, but symbolically debases herself to the level of a criminal. See Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, 124-28. In the *Yiwen leiju* parallel



ulterior motive, but, even if it did, you could rely on us, your mother-in-law, older and younger sisters to testify your sincerity. Why would you be so extreme in valuing righteousness, but belittling your body?”

She replied, “My forefather of five generations studied until he became a leading classicist, and received the honor of an appointment as imperial tutor. For these five generations,<sup>156</sup> our men<sup>157</sup> have shone because of their loyalty and filiality, and the women have received a reputation because of their uprightness and obedience. The Ode reads, “Do not shame your ancestors but rather cultivate their virtue.”<sup>158</sup> Thus, as a preventive measure, I mutilate myself. This is how I express my determination.”

Wang Ji, chancellor of Pei,<sup>159</sup> communicated her lofty conduct to the throne, and she received an inscription in the gates to her home saying, “Righteous Conduct Widow Huan.” The county,<sup>160</sup> at every sacrifice, offered some of the sacrificial meat in her honor.

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text, the wife of Liu Changqing explicitly states that she cannot remarry because she cannot be the wife of two men (*ming yi bu er* 明已不二). See YWLJ 18, 336.

156. The “forefather of five generations” is Huan Rong 桓榮 (style Chunqing 春卿 or Zichun 子春), master of the *Documents* and a tutor to heir apparent, the future Emperor Ming (b. 28, r. 57-75). Huan Rong’s biography appears in *HHS* 37/27:1249-53; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 336-37.

157. i.e. of her natal home.

158. Huan is citing *King Wen* (*Wen Wang* 文王) from the *Odes*:

May you never shame your ancestors,  
But rather tend their inward power,  
That forever you may be linked to Heaven’s charge  
And bring yourself many blessings.

無念爾祖，聿脩厥德，永言配命，自求多福。 Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs* (New York: Grove, 1960), 251.

159. Wang Ji 王吉 (d. 179) is treated in *HHS* 77/67:2501; de Crespigny, 818.

160. County (*yi* 邑) – de Crespigny translates *yi* as county, however, also notes that it can refer to estates belonging to princesses, and to some duchies. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 1193.



### 13. The Wife of Huangfu Gui 皇甫規妻<sup>161</sup>

安定皇甫規妻者，不知何氏女也。規初喪室家，後更娶之。妻善屬文，能草書，時為規荅書記，眾人怪其工。及規卒時，妻年猶盛，而容色美。後董卓為相國，承其名，娉以駟輜百乘，馬二十匹，奴婢錢帛充路。妻乃輕服詣卓門，跪自陳請，辭甚酸愴。卓使傳奴侍者悉拔刀圍之，而謂曰：「孤之威教，欲令四海風靡，何有不行於一婦人乎！」妻知不免，乃立罵卓曰：「君羌胡之種，毒害天下猶未足邪！妾之先人，清德奕世。皇甫氏文武上才，為漢忠臣。君親非其趣使走吏乎？敢欲行非禮於爾君夫人邪！」卓乃引車庭中，以其頭縣轆，鞭撲交下。妻謂持杖者曰：「何不重乎？速盡為惠。」遂死車下。後人圖畫，號曰「禮宗」云。

The wife of Huangfu Gui<sup>162</sup> from An Ding<sup>163</sup> was a daughter of an unidentified family.

Gui, after having mourned his first wife, married her afterwards. His wife was skilled at composing prose and had mastered the grass script. Sometimes she answered letters on Gui's behalf. Many admired her skill. At the time of Gui's death, his wife was still in her prime, and was of beautiful appearance. Sometime later, Dong Zhuo<sup>164</sup> was serving as Chancellor of the State<sup>165</sup> and learned of her reputation. To fetch her as a bride, he sent one hundred carriages, 20 horses, servants, money, and silks – all of which filled the

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161. The wife of Huangfu Gui 皇甫規妻 appears as the thirteenth biography in *HHS* 84/74: 2798; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 354.

162. Huangfu Gui 皇甫規 (104-174, style Weiming 威明) was known as an incorrupt court official, valiant military man, and brilliant scholar. He retired from office was blacklisted for advising the court to ensure that those who served in court should be men of principle; kept the Qiang people of the northern frontier at bay; and founded an academy where he taught hundreds in his areas of specialty, the *Odes* and the *Changes*. His biography is in the chapter dedicated to officers who maintained the Chinese weakened position in the north before its eventual collapse. See *HHS* 65/55: 2129-37; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54.

163. Anding 安定 is a commandery in Liang Province.

164. Dong Zhuo 董卓 (d. 192, style Zhongying 仲穎) was a military man and would-be usurper of power at court. He precipitated civil war in a series of court machinations that involved quashing the eunuch's sway at court after the death of Emperor Ling (r. 146). In 189, he forced child emperor Liu Bian 劉辯 to abdicate in favor of his half-brother, Xie 協 (r. 189-234), then had Liu Bian 劉辯 and Dowager He 何 assassinated. Ultimately, he, too, was assassinated. See *HHS* 72/62: 2319-32; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han* 157-58. The first of Cai Yan's 蔡琰 (17) poems, as cited in her biography starts with a vivid narration of his hand in the collapse of the Han., found in *HHS* 84/74: 2801.

165. De Crespigny identifies 189 as the date of his marriage proposal, corresponding to the time he was carrying out the machinations with the child emperors. The title Chancellor of the State (*Xiangguo* 相國) was not awarded to him but rather was one of several self-aggrandizing titles he gave himself as part of his assertion of power. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 189.

road. The wife, dressed in unassuming clothing,<sup>166</sup> went to Zhuo's gate seeking an audience. Kneeling down, she sought to excuse herself with words that showed her affliction. Zhuo sent his slaves and attendants to pull their knives and surround her. He said, "With the authority that I possess, I can, at will, command all within the four seas, and wherever the wind reaches. How can it possibly be that, in so far as a woman is concerned, the same does not work?" Gui's widow realized she could not escape and standing up, scolded him as follows: "You, sir, are the product of the Qiang and the Hu;<sup>167</sup> have you not brought enough injury to all under heaven? My previous husband had a purity of virtue among the greatest on earth. The Huangfu family had superior scholarship and military talent, and their men were loyal ministers to the emperor. Were you not yourself their underling and runner?<sup>168</sup> And you still have the audacity to desire to subject your lord's wife to impropriety?" Thereupon, Zhuo pulled a chariot to the middle of the courtyard, and harnessed her head to the yoke,<sup>169</sup> and had her whipped and beaten simultaneously. Gui's wife said to the man holding the rod, "Harder! Be kind and finish this quickly." Subsequently she died under the chariot. Later on, people commemorated her in drawings. Posthumously she was called "Guardian of Propriety."

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166. In other words, she did not accept his finery and thus went to meet him dressed in ordinary clothes.

167. The Qianghu 羌胡 are the same northern peoples which her husband fought in his military campaigns.

168. In 188, Dong Zhuo was appointed General of the Van (*qian jiangjun* 前將軍) under General on The Left (*zuo jiangjun* 左將軍) Huangfu Song 嵩, a nephew of Huangfu Gui. After Dong Zhuo's coup, Song was demoted and the subject of assassination plots. He was promoted in office in the new regime after the death of Dong Zhuo. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 355-56, 1233, 1241.

169. The *e* 軓 is the part of a carriage harness that rests on the neck of the horse. See *Sun Ji* 孙机, *Handai wuzhi wenhua ziliao tushuo* 汉代物质文化资料图说 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), diagram 29.

#### 14. Xun Cai 荀采<sup>170</sup>

南陽陰瑜妻者，潁川荀爽之女也，名采，字女荀。聰敏有才藝。年十七，適陰氏。十九產一女，而瑜卒。采時尚豐少，常慮為家所逼，自防禦甚固。後同郡郭奕喪妻，爽以采許之，因詐稱病篤，召采。既不得已而歸，懷刃自誓。爽令傅婢執奪其刃，扶抱載之，猶憂致憤激，勅衛甚嚴。女既到郭氏，乃偽為歡悅之色，謂左右曰：「我本立志與陰氏同穴，而不免逼迫，遂至於此，素情不遂，奈何？」乃命使建四燈，盛裝飾，請奕入相見，共談，言辭不輟。(亦)[奕]敬憚之，遂不敢逼，至曙而出。采因勅令左右辨浴。既入室而掩戶，權令侍人避之，以粉書扉上曰：「尸還陰。」「陰」字未及成，懼有來者，遂以衣帶自縊。左右翫之不為意，比視，已絕，時人傷焉。

The wife of Yin Yu<sup>171</sup> of Nanyang<sup>172</sup> was the daughter of Xun Shuang<sup>173</sup> of

Yingchuan.<sup>174</sup> Her name was Cai and her style was Nuxun, or, Daughter of Xun. She was quick-witted and talented. At age 17, she married into the Yin family. At age 19, having given birth to a daughter, her husband passed away. At the time, Cai was still very young, and often considering that she might be forced [into marriage] by her family, she resisted [the idea] even more fiercely. Some time later, Guo Yi,<sup>175</sup> native of the same place [as her father], lost his wife. Shuang promised Cai in marriage to him. Feigning serious illness, he summoned Cai. Thus, having no choice but to return, she put a blade close to her chest, and vowed to herself. Shuang ordered the maids in attendance to seize her knife and to hold her closely while she was being transported. As she was still

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170. Xun Cai 荀采 appears as the fourteenth biography in *HHS* 84/74: 2798-99; summarized by de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54, 925.

171. Yin Yu 陰瑜 appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in the context of his wife's chapter.

172. Nanyang 南陽 is a commandery in Jing Province.

173. Xun Shuang 荀爽 (128-190, alternate name Xun Xu 譚, style Ciming 慈明) was renowned for excellence in understanding of the Classics. Repeatedly declined summons to serve at court and only served when forced. He took a strong stance against corruption. His works were collected under the title *Xin Shu* 新書, among the works contained therein is an essay titled *Nujie*, which bears the same title as Ban Zhao's essay, cited in her biography 5. See *HHS* 62/52:2050-57; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54, 925, 927.

174. Yingchuan 潁川 is a commandery in Yu Province.

175. The editorial note on Guo Yi 郭奕 (style Boyi 伯益) indicates that the *Wei shu* 魏書 identifies Guo Yi as the son of Guo Jia (170-207, style Fengxiao 孝奉). The fathers' dates of birth make it unlikely for the Guo Yi of the biography and the son of Guo Jia to be the same person. See *HHS* 84/74: 2799; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54, 292.

afflicted and extremely indignant, he ordered her under very strict guard. When his daughter arrived at the Guo family, she feigned an appearance of merriment and thus told all those around her: “I was, from the outset, determined to be jointly buried with my husband of the Yin family, but could not avoid being forced. After having come here, my true feelings have not been followed, what is to be done about that?”

Then she called upon her attendants to set up four lanterns, and, making herself as beautiful as possible, invited Yi to enter for a rendezvous.

They spoke together and the words did not cease flowing. Yi, out of respect and awe, did not dare compel her to bed. When dawn arrived, he left. Cai ordered her attendants to draw her a bath. Then she entered the room and shut the door. Taking advantage of the situation, she ordered her servants to leave her alone. Using her dusting powder, she wrote the following at the door: “Return this corpse to Y...”

She had not finished writing “Yin” when, fearing someone was about to enter, she hung herself with a belt. The attendants had rejoiced that she did not have any further intentions, but by the time they saw her, her life was already extinguished. At the time, people were deeply saddened by this turn of events.

### 15. Zhao Yuanjiang 趙媛姜<sup>176</sup>

媛為盛道妻者，同郡趙氏之女也，字媛姜。建安五年，益部亂，道聚眾起兵，事敗，夫妻執繫，當死。媛姜夜中告道曰：「法有常刑，必無生望，君可速潛逃，建立門戶，妾自留獄，代君塞咎。」道依違未從。媛姜便解道桎梏，為齋糧貨。子翔時年五歲，使道攜持而走。媛姜代道持夜，應對不失。度道已遠，乃以實告吏，應時見殺。道父子會赦得歸。道感其義，終身不娶焉。

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176. Zhao Yuanjiang 趙媛姜(d. 201) appears as the fifteenth biography in *HHS* 84/74:2799; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54; 1114.

The wife of Sheng Dao<sup>177</sup> from Jianwei<sup>178</sup> was a daughter of the Zhao family, also of the same commandery; her style was Yuanjiang. In the fifth year of Jian'an,<sup>179</sup> the Yi Region<sup>180</sup> was in chaos. Dao raised a militia; their cause was defeated.<sup>181</sup> Husband and wife were arrested and imprisoned, soon to be executed. Yuanjiang, in the middle of the night, spoke to Dao, "The punishments prescribed by law are immutable; surely, there is no hope to live. You can make a quick escape and establish a new household. I will remain in prison and will, in your stead, serve as a ransom for your punishment." Dao was hesitant and not yet willing to go along with her plan. Yuanjiang then released Dao from his fetters, and provided him with grain and some cash. Their son, Xiang, was five years old at the time. She instructed Dao to grab him and flee. Yuanjiang substituted for her husband before the night watchman. She reported no one was missing. When she estimated Dao was already far, she told the official the truth. She was killed immediately. Dao and son were later amnestied and able to return.<sup>182</sup> Dao, out of respect for her righteousness, never remarried.

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177. Sheng Dao 盛道 rallied private troops to fight Zhao Wei's 趙韋 rebellion against Grand Administrator Liu Zhang 劉璋 in the year 200. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54, 731.

178. Jianwei Commandery was in Yi Province.

179. The fifth year 五年 of Jian'an 建安 refers to the fifth year of the Jian'an era of Emperor Xian 獻 (b. 181; r. 189-234). The Jian'an era comprised the period from 196-220; its fifth year corresponds to 201.

180. Yi Region is the same place as Yi Province. Region (*bu* 部) is synonymous with Province (*zhou* 州). The previous term is used more often in the Eastern Han; the latter appears in the *Hou Han shu* treatise on Administrative Geography 郡國志 in *HHS* 109/23-113/23; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54, 1193.

181. Patricia Ebrey notes that "common form of local organization [in the Eastern Han] was a group composed of a local strong man and his followers... When full scale civil war broke out after 184, men all over the country began recruiting followers, forming alliances, and establishing private armies." See Ebrey "The Economic and Social History of Later Han", 228.

182. i.e., The husband and the son, after receiving the amnesty, were no longer in need to be on the run and thus able to return home.

## 16. Shu Xianxiong 叔先雄<sup>183</sup>

孝女叔先雄者，犍為人也。父泥和，永建初為縣功曹。縣長遣泥和拜檄謁巴郡太守，乘船墮湍水物故，尸喪不歸。雄感念怨痛，號泣晝夜，心不圖存，常有自之計。所生男女二人，並數歲，雄乃各作囊，盛珠環以繫兒，數為訣別之辭。家人每防閑之，經百許日後稍懈，雄因乘小船，於父墮處慟哭，遂自投水死。弟賢，其夕夢雄告之：「卻後六日，當共父同出。」至期伺之，果與父相持，浮於江上。郡縣表言，為雄立碑，圖象其形焉。

Filial woman Shu Xianxiong was a resident of Jianwei.<sup>184</sup> In the beginning of the

Yongjian era,<sup>185</sup> her father, Nihe,<sup>186</sup> served in the county as Official of Merit.

The county magistrate dispatched Nihe to pay a formal visit to the Grand Administrator of the Ba Commandery and deliver official correspondence. He died when a surge of water caused his boat to capsize. His corpse was lost and could not be returned home for proper burial. Xiong was grief-stricken and aching with sorrow. Day and night, she wailed and sobbed; her heart did not want to go on living. She frequently made plans to drown herself. Her son and daughter were both of a delicate age.<sup>187</sup> She made a purse for each child and filled it with jade and pearls to pass onto her children. She spoke words of farewell many times. The family members each time held her back. After 100 days had passed, the family had grown a bit lax in their surveillance. Xiong took a small boat and at the place where her father's boat had sunk, wept with profound sadness.

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183. Shuxian Xiong 叔先雄 (103-127) appears as the sixteenth biography in *HHS* 84/74:2799-2800; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54, 885-86. Based on evidence from the *Hou Han shu jijie* 集解 commentary, de Crespigny concludes Fan Ye made a mistake in identifying the woman; her name is Xian Luo 先絡.

184. Jianwei Commandery was in Yi Province.

185. Yongjian 永建 refers to the first era of emperor Shun's (b. 115; r. 125-144) rule, from 126-132.

186. Xian Nihe 先泥和 (alternate *xing* Jianghe 江和 and Shenhe 沈和) was an Officer of Merit for the county magistrate. He only appears in the *Hou Han shu* in his daughter's entry; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54, 886.

187. The *Soushen ji* parallel text presents Xiong at 27 years of age, and has following information about her children:

[Xiong] had two sons, Gong, who was five years old, and Shi, who was three. 有子男貢，年五歲，貴，年三歲。Xiong has two sons: Gong 貢 and Shi 貴. See *SSJ* 11/291, 136-7.

Subsequently, she threw herself in the water and drowned. That same night, her younger brother Xian, dreamt that Xiong told him, “In six days, I, along with our father, will come out.” When, at the appointed time, he surveyed the area, she was floating on the river, holding onto her father. The authorities publicized her case and erected a stele in her honor, with her portrait drawn on it.

### 17. Cai Yan 蔡琰<sup>188</sup>

陳留董祀妻者，同郡蔡邕之女也，名琰，字文姬。博學有才辯，又妙於音律。適河東衛仲道。夫亡無子，歸寧于家。興平中，天下喪亂，文姬為胡騎所獲，沒於南匈奴左賢王，在胡中十二年，生二子。曹操素與邕善，痛其無嗣，乃遣使者以金璧贖之，而重嫁於祀。

祀為屯田都尉，犯法當死，文姬詣曹操請之。時公卿名士及遠方使驛坐者滿堂，操謂賓客曰：「蔡伯喈女在外，今為諸君見之。」及文姬進，蓬首徒行，叩頭請罪，音辭清辯，旨甚酸哀，眾皆為改容。操曰：「誠實相矜，然文狀已去，柰何？」文姬曰：「明公蹙馬萬匹，虎士成林，何惜疾足一騎，而不濟垂死之命乎！」操感其言，乃追原祀罪。時且寒，賜以頭巾履襪。操因問曰：「聞夫人家先多墳籍，猶能憶識之不？」文姬曰：「昔亡父賜書四千許卷，流離塗炭，罔有存者。今所誦憶，裁四百餘篇耳。」操曰：「今當使十吏就夫人寫之。」文姬曰：「妾聞男女之別，禮不親授。乞給紙筆，真草唯命。」於是繕書送之，文無遺誤。

The wife of Dong Si<sup>189</sup> from Chenliu<sup>190</sup> was the daughter of Cai Yong<sup>191</sup> from the same commandery; her name was Yan, “Jade,” and her style was Wenji, “Erudite.” She had

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188. Cai Yan 蔡琰 (style Wenji 文姬) appears as the seventeenth biography in *HHS* 84/74:2800-03; summarized in de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 352-54, 28-29, and translated in full (including the poems) in Idema and Grant, *Red Brush*, 112-26. For another translation of her poems, see Frankel, “Cai Yan and the Poems Attributed to Her,” 135-45, and Levy, “Cai Yan,” 22-30.

189. Dong Si 董祀 appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in his wife’s biography; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 152.

190. Chenliu 陳留 was a commandery unit in Yan Province 兗州.

191. Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132-192, alternative *mingxing* CaiYong 雍, style Bojie 伯喈) was one of the leading scholars of the Han dynasty. His works span a wide range of topics including, mathematics, calligraphy, astrology, and includes a text on women’s morality. Originally reluctant to serve in court, he became a vocal critic of political impropriety. Eventually was sentenced to death in a political imbroglio. The actions recorded in her biography take place after Yong’s death. *HHS* 60/50B; de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 32.



studied broadly and had ability with words, as well as a deep understanding of music. She married Wei Zhongdao<sup>192</sup> from Hedong.<sup>193</sup> Her husband died and they had no children; she returned to live at her natal home. In the middle of the Yuping era,<sup>194</sup> the land was in upheaval. One day, Wenji was kidnapped by barbarian horsemen.<sup>195</sup> She was taken to the Righteous King of the Left of the Southern Xiongnu;<sup>196</sup> she spent 12 years amidst the Hu and bore two children. Cao Cao<sup>197</sup> had a long-standing friendship with Yong. He was heart-broken that Yong had no descendants. He sent an envoy with gold and jades to buy her freedom. Once more, she was married out, this time to Si.

Si was a commandant of agricultural colonies<sup>198</sup> and committed a crime for which he was sentenced to death. Wenji sought an audience with Cao Cao to petition on his behalf.<sup>199</sup> At this time, high ministers, famous scholars, as well as envoys and messengers from distant regions filled the audience hall.

Cao addressed his guests by saying, “The daughter of Cai Bojie<sup>200</sup> is outside.

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192. Wei Zhongdao 衛仲道 (d. ca. 190) appears in the *Hou Han shu* only in his wife’s biography.

193. Hedong 河東 was a commandery unit in the capital province of Sili.

194. The Yuping 興平 era is from 194-195. It falls under the reign of Emperor Xian (r. 189-234), the last emperor of the Eastern Han.

195. Hu 胡 refers to the Xiongnu tribes on the northern frontier, posing a military threat to the empire.

196. Righteous King of the Left of the Southern Xiongnu (南匈奴左賢王 *Nan Xiongnu zuo xian wang*).

197. Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220 alternate *mingxing* Jili 吉利, style Mengde 孟德) one of the most powerful and influential military leaders of his time. He served in many positions in the Later Han court, including magistrate, commandant, consultant, etc. Most notoriously, he was the power behind the emperor from 196-200. He created the Kingdom of Wei 魏 – one of the three kingdoms into which the empire eventually divided. See de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 35-38.

198. Commandant of agricultural colonies (*tuntiandou wei* 屯田都尉). de Crespigny, *Biographical Dictionary of Later Han*, 152.

199. There are interesting parallels with the story of Chunyu Tiying 淳于緹縈 (b. ca. 190 BCE.) when her father was sentenced to death, she sought audience with Emperor Wen to plead in his favor. Her story appears in *SJ* 10: 427-28; *SJ* 105:2785; *LX LNZ* 6.15, <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/lienu/browse/scroll6.html> (accessed July 20, 2009); and *HS* 23:1098; the latter is translated by Hulsewé, in *Remnants of Han Law*, 334-37.

200. Cai Bojie 蔡伯喈 is Cai Yong’s style.



Today you all will have an opportunity to receive her in audience.” When Wenji finally entered, she came with disheveled hair, on foot. Knocking her head to the floor, she asked for a pardon. Her words were concise and elegant, expressing her deep sorrow. Everyone in the audience was visibly affected by her words.

Cao spoke, “I genuinely feel for you, but, given that the order has already been issued, what can I do?”

Wenji spoke, “You, sir, have ten thousand horses in your stable, and as many brave men as trees in a forest. Why would you begrudge a single horse and not come to the rescue of a person about to die.” Cao was moved by her words and pardoned Si’s crime. The weather had already turned cold and Cao Cao bestowed upon her a headscarf, socks, and shoes to wear.

Thereupon Cao asked her, “I’ve heard your father had a large collection of manuscripts, are you still able to remember them?”<sup>201</sup>

Wenji responded, “Previously, my father passed down more than 4,000 scrolls of text. Because of the upheaval and destruction, none were preserved. There are about 400 *pian*<sup>202</sup> I can still recite from memory.”

Cao spoke, “Then it is appropriate to send you ten officials to write them out.”

Wenji spoke, “I heard that there is to be distinction between the genders. According to the rules of propriety, men and women are not allowed to touch.<sup>203</sup> I ask you give me paper and pens and I will use the grass script to obey your order.”

---

201. The portion of text from “Thereupon Cao Cao asked her...” to the final sentence is also translated by Frankel in “Cai Yan and the Poems Attributed to Her,” 148.

202. Scrolls (*juan* 卷) are subdivided into chapters, or sections (*pian* 篇).

203. An editorial note indicates that the *Book of Rites* 禮記 states “Men and women should not receive from each other. 男女不親授.” In addition, Mencius 4A: 17 reads:

Ultimately, she produced and handed in a clear copy, free of errors.

### Postscript

贊曰：端操有蹤，幽閑有容。區明風烈，昭我彤管。

The appraisal reads:

With their upright manners, they left a footprint;

With their quiet reserve, they made themselves stand out.

In detail, I differentiated illustrated their exemplary ardor.

Brilliant indeed, the red brush they passed on to me!<sup>204</sup>

---

Ch'un-yü K'un said, "Is it prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other?" "It is," said Mencius. "When one's sister-in-law is drowning, does one stretch out a hand to help her?" "Not to help a sister-in-law who is drowning is to be a brute. It is prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other, but in stretching out a helping hand to the drowning sister-in-law one uses one's discretion..." 淳于髡曰：「男女授受不親，禮與？」孟子曰：「禮也。」曰：「嫂溺則援之以手乎？」曰：「嫂溺不援，是豺狼也。男女授受不親，禮也；嫂溺援之以手者，權也。」 Translation by Lau, *Mencius*, 124-45.

204. The Appraisal (*zan* 贊) appears in *HHS* 84/74:2803. *Tongguan* 彤管, when translated as "red brushes" is often used as a metonymic device to refer to female writers, who used red brushes. Such is the case in the introduction to the *Hou Han shu* chapter on imperial consorts, which reads,

Female scribes [with their] red brushes record achievements and take note of missteps.  
女史彤管，記功書過. *HHS* 10A: 397.

Nevertheless, in the appraisal of the *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*, *tongguan* is used in a more direct allusion to the *Jingnü* ode, which reads,

Oh! The maiden, so handsome and coy,  
For a pledge gave a slim rosy reed.  
Than the reed is she brighter, my joy;  
On her loveliness how my thoughts feed!  
靜女其變、貽我彤管。彤管有煒、說懌女美. Translation by Legge, *The She King*, 90-91.

In this ode, the *tongguan*, translated by Legge as "slim, rosy reed" is given to the protagonist by the handsome and coy girl, which represents the beauty in which he delights. Fan Ye extends the analogy by positioning himself as one who received a bright red tube from the upright and quietly reserved women in whose beautiful stories he delighted and wanted to transmit.

## Appendix A

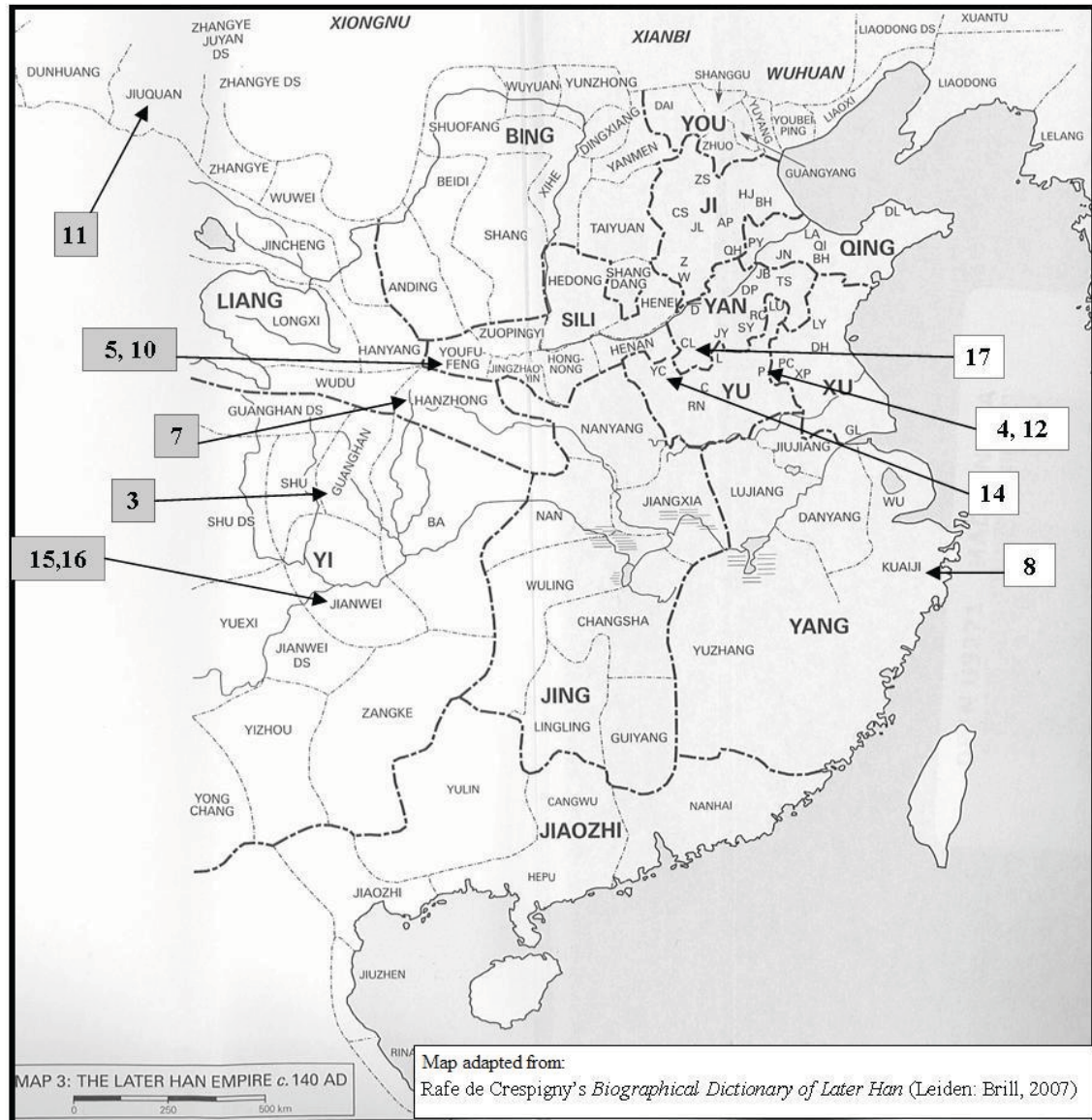
### Abbreviations Used in Citations

<i>DGHJ</i>	<i>Dongguan Hanji</i> 東觀漢記
<i>HS</i>	<i>Han shu</i> 漢書
<i>HHS</i>	Fan Ye's 范曄's (398-446) <i>Hou han shu</i> 後漢書
<i>KYDL</i>	<i>Kuaiji dianlu</i> 會稽典錄
<i>LX LNZ</i>	Liu Xiang's 劉向 (79 BCE-8 CE) <i>Lienü zhuan</i> 列女傳
<i>QJHHS</i>	Wang, Wentai's 汪文臺 (1796-1844) <i>Qi jia Hou Han shu</i> 七家後漢書
<i>SGZ</i>	<i>Sanguo zhi</i> 三國志
<i>SJ</i>	<i>Shiji</i> 史記
<i>SS</i>	<i>Song shu</i> 宋書
<i>SSJ</i>	<i>Soushen ji</i> 搜神記
<i>TPYL</i>	<i>Taiping yulan</i> 太平御覽
<i>YWLJ</i>	<i>Yiwen leiju</i> 藝文類聚



## Appendix B

### Natal Location of the *Hou Han shu* *lienü zhuan* Women Based on Primary Male Relative's Natal Province



#### Key:

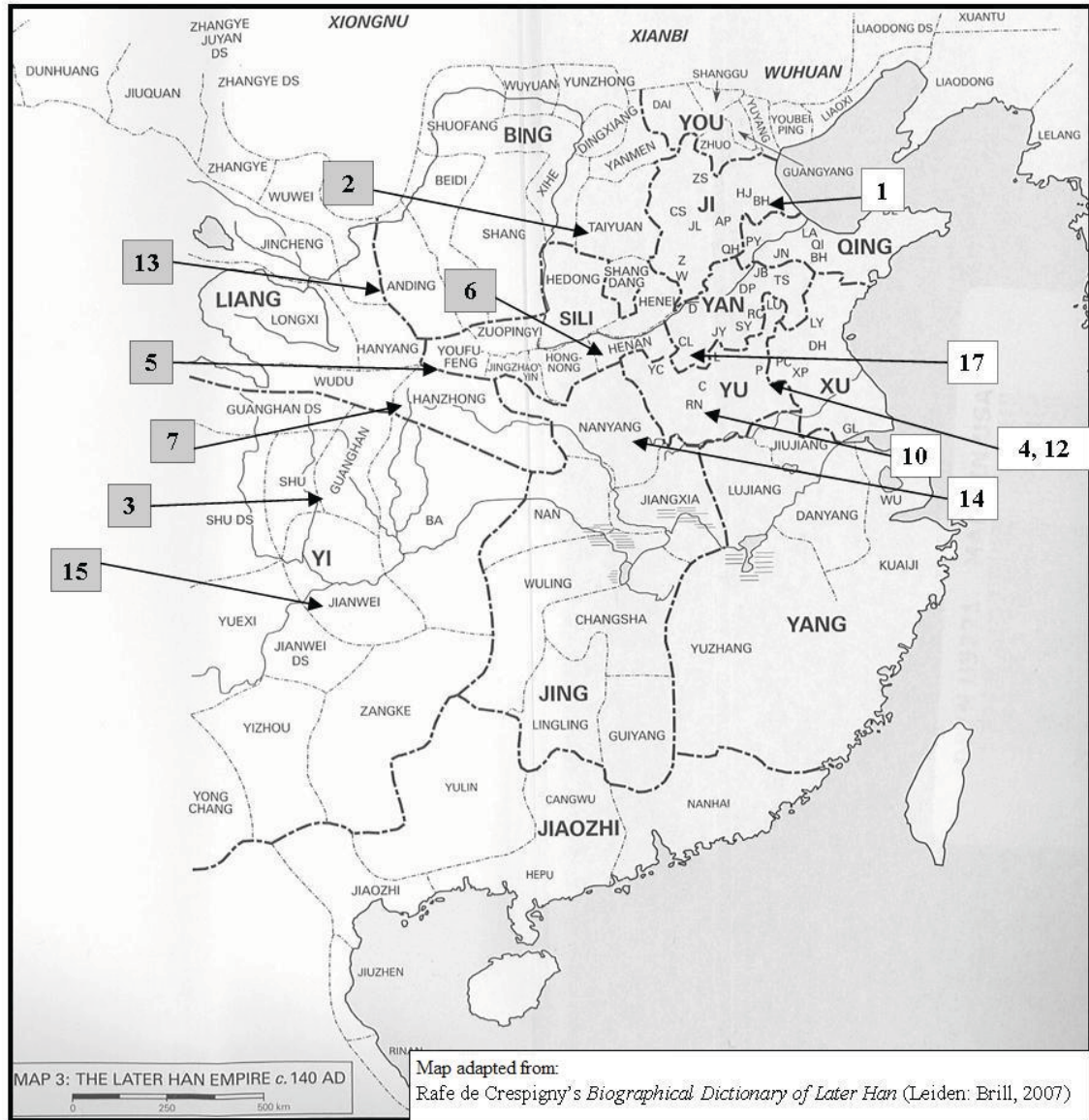
- 3. The wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩妻
- 4. Zhao A 趙阿
- 5. Ban Zhao 班昭
- 7. Li Mujiang 李穆姜
- 8. Cao E 曹娥
- 10. Ma Lun 馬倫

- 11. Zhao E 趙娥
- 12. The wife of Liu Changqing 劉長卿妻
- 14. Xun Cai 荀采
- 15. Zhao Yuanjiang 趙媛姜
- 16. Shuxian Xiong 叔先雄
- 17. Cai Yan 蔡琰



## Appendix C

### Marital Location of the *Hou Han shu* *lienü zhuan* Women Based on Husband's Natal Province



#### Key:

- |                                 |                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Huan Shaojun 桓少君             | 10. Ma Lun 馬倫                      |
| 2. The wife of Wang Ba 王霸妻      | 12. The wife of Liu Changqing 劉長卿妻 |
| 3. The wife of Jiang Shi 姜詩妻    | 13. The wife of Huangfu Gui 皇甫規妻   |
| 4. Zhao A 趙阿                    | 14. Xun Cai 荀采                     |
| 5. Ban Zhao 班昭                  | 15. Zhao Yuanjiang 趙媛姜             |
| 6. The wife of Yue Yangzi 樂羊子之妻 | 17. Cai Yan 蔡琰                     |
| 7. Li Mujiang 李穆姜               |                                    |





## Appendix D

### Index of Personal Names Appearing in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*

Name	Bio #	Notes in Bio #
Ban Biao 班	5	5
Ban Gu 班固 (alt. <i>xing</i> Ji 姬)	5	5
Ban Zhao 班昭	5	1(intro), 5
Bao Xuan 鮑宣	1, 10	1, 10
Bao Yong 鮑永	1	1
Bao Yu 鮑昱	1	1
Bo Liao 伯寮	10	10
Bodu 伯度, style		
(see Lifa 李法)	7	7
Bojie 伯喈, style		
(see Cai Yong 蔡邕)	17	17
Boluan 伯鸞/ Bochun 伯淳, style (see Liang Hong 梁鴻)	n/a	10
Boyi 伯益, style		
(see Guo Yi 郭奕)	n/a	14
Cai Yan 蔡琰	17	17
Cai Yong 蔡邕		
(alt. <i>xing</i> Yong 雍)	17	17
Cao Cao 曹操		
(alt. <i>mingxing</i> Jili 吉利)	17	17
Cao Cheng 曹成	5	5
Cao E 曹娥	8	8
Cao Fengsheng 曹豐生	5	5
Cao Shou 曹壽	1	5
Cao Xu 曹盱	8	8
Changping 長平, style		
(see Zhao Xiao 趙孝)	n/a	4
Cheng Wenju 程文矩, style	7	7
Cheng Yu 程興	7	7
Cheng Zhi 程祗	7	7
Chunqing 春卿, style		
(see Huan Rong 桓榮)	n/a	12
Ciming 慈明, style		
(see Xun Shuang 荀爽)	n/a	14
Ciyang 次陽, style		
(see Yuan Wei 袁隗)	n/a	10
Confucius 孔子	5, 10	5, 10
Deng Xun 鄧訓	n/a	1

Name	Bio #	Notes in Bio #
Deng Zhi 鄧騭	5	5
Deyao 德曜, style		
(see Meng Guang 孟光)	n/a	10
Ding 丁 Family Daughter	5	5
Dong Si 董祀	17	17
Dong Zhuo 董卓	13	13
Du Shang 度尚	8	8
Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓 公	n/a	4
Emperor Ai 哀	1	1
Emperor An 安	n/a	1
Emperor Gengshi 更始	n/a	1
Emperor Guangwu 光武	2	1, 1, 2
Emperor He 和	5	1, 3
Emperor Huan 桓	n/a	12
Emperor Ling 靈	n/a	13
Emperor Liu Bian 劉辯	n/a	13
Emperor Ming 明	n/a	1, 12
Emperor Ping 平	n/a	1
Emperor Shun 順	n/a	1
Emperor Wen 文	17	17
Emperor Xian 獻	n/a	15, 17
Emperor Zhang 章	n/a	1
Empress Deng Sui 鄧綏	1, 5	1
Empress He 何	13	13
Empress Liang Na 梁妠	1	1
Empress Ma 馬	1	1
Empress Yan 閭姬	n/a	1
Fan and Ren 樊衛	4	4
Fan Shu 樊噲	n/a	1
Four Uncles 四舅	5	5
Guo Jia 郭嘉	n/a	14
Guo Yi 郭奕	14	14
Huan Luan 桓鸞	12	12
Huan Rong 桓榮	n/a	12
Huan Shaojun 桓少君	1, 10	1, 10
Huan Yanlin 桓彥林		
(see Huan Shaojun 桓少)	n/a	1
Huan 桓 ( <i>xing</i> Li 釐)	12	12

## Appendix D (con't)

### Index of Personal Names Appearing in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*

Name	Bio #	Notes in Bio #
Huangfu Gui 皇甫規	13	13
Huangfu Gui's Wife 皇甫規妻	13	13
Huangfu Song 皇甫嵩	n/a	13
Huiban 惠班, style (see Ban Zhao 班昭)	5	1, 5
Ji Sun 李孫	n/a	10
Jiang Shi 姜詩	3	3
Jinzhang 季長, style (see Ma Rong 馬融)	n/a	10
Jize 季則, style (see Ma Xu 馬續)	n/a	5
Junchang 君長, style (see Bao Yong 鮑永)	n/a	1
King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王	n/a	4
Li Ji 李姬	1	1
Li Mujiang 李穆姜	7	7
Liang Hong 梁鴻	10	10
Liang Shang 梁商	n/a	1
Liang Song 梁竦	n/a	1
Liang Yi 梁冀	n/a	1
Liang Yi 梁嫺	1	1
Lifa 李法	7	7
Lin 蔭	n/a	1
Linghu Zibo 令狐子伯	2	2
Liu Changqing 劉長卿	12	12
Liu Xiang 劉向	n/a	1, 6
Liu Zhang 劉璋	n/a	15
Lord of Nan Commandery 南郡君 (see Ma Rong 馬融)	10	10
Lü Rong 呂榮	9	9
Ma Lun 馬倫	10	5, 10
Ma Rong 馬融	5, 10	5, 10
Ma Xu 馬續	5	5
Ma Yuan 馬援	n/a	1
Ma Zhi 馬芝	10	10
Mencius (Mengzi 孟子)	n/a	6, 17
Meng Guang 孟光 (style 德曜)	10	10

Name	Bio #	Notes in Bio #
Mengde 孟德, style (see Cao Cao 曹操)	n/a	17
Mengjian 孟監, style (see Ban Gu 班固)	n/a	5
Mother of Mencius (孟母)	n/a	6
Nu Xun 女荀, style (see Xun Cai 荀采)	14	14
Pang Sheng 龐盛	3	3
Pang Yu 龐淸	11	11
Pang 龐 ( <i>xing</i> Xing 行)	3	3
Pingshu 平叔, style (see Deng Xun 鄧訓)	n/a	1
Ranming 然明, style (see Zhang Huan 張奐)	n/a	11
Righteous King of the Left of the Southern Xiongnu 南匈奴左賢王	17	17
Ruzhong 儒仲/孺仲, style (see Wang Ba 王霸)	n/a	2
Sheng Dao 盛道	15	15
Shichun 始春, style (see Huan Luan 桓鸞)	n/a	12
Shishou 曹世, style (see Cao Shou 曹壽)	1	5
Shiyu 士游, style (see Jiang Shi 姜詩)	n/a	3
Shu Xianxiong 叔先雄	16	16
Shupi 叔皮, style (see Ban Biao 班彪)	n/a	5
Shusun Wushu 叔孫武叔	n/a	10
Tai Bo 太伯	5	5
Wang Ba 王霸	2	2
Wang Ba's Wife 王霸妻	2	2
Wang Ji 王吉	12	12
Wang Mang 王莽	n/a	1
Wei Zhongdao 衛仲道	17	17
Weiming 威明, style (see Huangfu Gui 皇甫規)	n/a	13
Wen Wang 文王	n/a	5

## Appendix D (con't)

### Index of Personal Names Appearing in *Hou Han shu lienü zhuan*

Name	Bio #	Notes in Bio #
Wenji 文姬, style (see Cai Yan 蔡琰)	17	17
Wenjuan 文淵, style (see Bao Yu 鮑昱)	n/a	1
Wu Shu 武叔	10	10
Wu Xusheng 吳許升	9	9
Wu Zixu 伍子胥	n/a	VIII
Xian Luo 先絡 see (Shu Xianxiong 叔先雄)	n/a	16
Xian Nihe 先泥和 (alt. <i>xing</i> Jianghe 江和/Shenhe 沈和)	16	16
Xun Cai 荀采	14	14
Xun Shuang 荀爽 (alt. <i>xing</i> Xu 譚)	14	14
Yao and Shun 唐虞	5	5
Yi and Qi 夷齊	5	5
Yin Jia 尹嘉	11	11
Yin Yao 尹耀	9	9
Yin Yu 陰瑜	14	14
Yin 陰	n/a	I
Yuan Wei 袁隗	10	10
Yue Yangzi 樂羊子	6	6

Name	Bio #	Notes in Bio #
Yue Yangzi's wife 樂羊子之妻	6	6
Zhang Huan 張奐	11	11
Zhao A 趙阿	4	4
Zhao An 趙安	11	11
Zhao E 趙娥 (alt. <i>xing</i> Eqin 親)	11	11
Zhao Wei 趙韙	15	15
Zhao Xiao 趙孝	4	4
Zhao Yuanjiang 趙媛姜	15	15
Zhaobo 昭伯, style (see Deng Zhi 鄧臧)	n/a	5
Zhongying 仲穎, style (see Dong Zhuo 董卓)	n/a	13
Zhou Wei 周偉	4	4
Zhou Yu 周郁	4	4
Zifu Jingbo 子服	n/a	10
Zigu 子穀, style (see Cao Cheng 曹成)	n/a	5
Zilu 子路	10	10
Zixia 子夏	n/a	6
Ziyi 子異, style (see Pang Yu 龐淸)	n/a	11



## Appendix E

### Commandery Units Mentioned in *Hou Han shu Lienü zhuan*

Commandery	Province	Biography #
Anding 安定	Liang 涼	13
Bohai 勃海	Ji 冀	1
Chenliu 陳留	Yan 兗	17
Chu 楚 (Kingdom)	Xu 徐	2
(You) Fufeng (右)扶風	Sili 司隸 (Capital)	5
Guanghan 廣漢	Yi 益	3
Hanzhong 漢中	Yi 益	7
Henan 河南	Sili 司隸 (Capital)	6
Jiangyang 江 陽	Yi 益	3
Jianwei 犍為	Yi 益	3, 15, 16
Jiujiang 九江	Yang 陽	9
Jiuquan 酒泉	Liang 涼	11
Kuaiji 會稽	Yang 揚	8
Lu 魯	Yu 豫	1
Nan 南	Jing 荆	10
Nanyang 南陽	Jing 荆	7, 14
Pei 沛	Yu 豫	4, 17
Runan 汝南	Yu 豫	10
Taiyuan 太原	Bing 并	2
Yingchuan 潁川	Yu 豫	14



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