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Contributions to The Editor, *East Asian History*
Division of Pacific & Asian History, Research School of Pacific & Asian Studies
Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200, Australia
Phone +61 6 249 3140 Fax +61 6 249 5525

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Cover picture The walled city of Shanghai (*Shanghai xianzhi*, 1872)

MID-CH'ING NEW TEXT (*CHIN-WEN*) CLASSICAL LEARNING AND ITS HAN PROVENANCE: THE DYNAMICS OF A TRADITION OF IDEAS

 *On-cho Ng*

Historiographical and Methodological Prolegomenon

It is well known that there was a revival of interest in the New Text classics in the eighteenth century. In his recent work, Benjamin Elman examines the rise of New Text learning in Ch'ang-chou in the Yangtze delta. His study is a *tour de force* in many ways, deliberately encyclopedic in scope, explaining the resurgence of New Text classicism in terms of the broad social context of lineage resources and organization, and of the political context of factional disputes and reformist statecraft in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It argues for the integration of ideas into the enveloping socio-political world, and demonstrates the importance of extrinsic factors governing the rise and propagation of New Text Confucianism. Embodied within New Text learning, as represented by Chuang Ts'un-yü 莊存與 (1719–88) and Liu Feng-lu 劉逢祿 (1776–1829), was a political agendum, that is, Chuang's veiled attack on the body politic dominated and corrupted by the Ch'ien-lung emperor's Manchu favorite Ho-shen 和珅 (1750–99), and Liu's exposition of statecraft *Realpolitik*. Moreover, the creation of the Ch'ang-chou school of New Text Confucianism was possible because of the cultural resources amassed by the prominent Chuang and Liu lineages.¹ In the final analysis, Elman's admirable work is not so much concerned with the exact content of mid-Ch'ing New Text Learning and its ideational elements as with the social and political factors that underpinned its production. It is a well-argued, richly-textured piece of sociology of knowledge, a social history of thought. It adopts what Maurice Mandelbaum has termed "sociological monism," namely, "the contention that any element in a society is related to

¹ Benjamin A. Elman, *Classicism, politics, and kinship: the Ch'ang-chou school of New Text Confucianism in late imperial China* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990). For another discussion on the re-emergence of New Text learning in the mid-Ch'ing period see Tang Chih-chün, *Chin-tai ching-bsueh yü cheng-chib* [Classical scholarship and politics in recent history] (Peking: Chung-hua Shu-chü, 1984), pp.37–86.

² Maurice Mandelbaum, "The history of ideas, intellectual history, and the history of philosophy," *History and Theory*, Supplement 5 (1965): 47.

³ Yü Ying-shih, "Some preliminary observations on the rise of Ch'ing Confucian intellectualism," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, n.s., 11.1 and 2 (December 1975): 128.

⁴ Cf. René Wellek, *A history of modern criticism: 1750-1950*, 4 vols (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press), 1: 7.

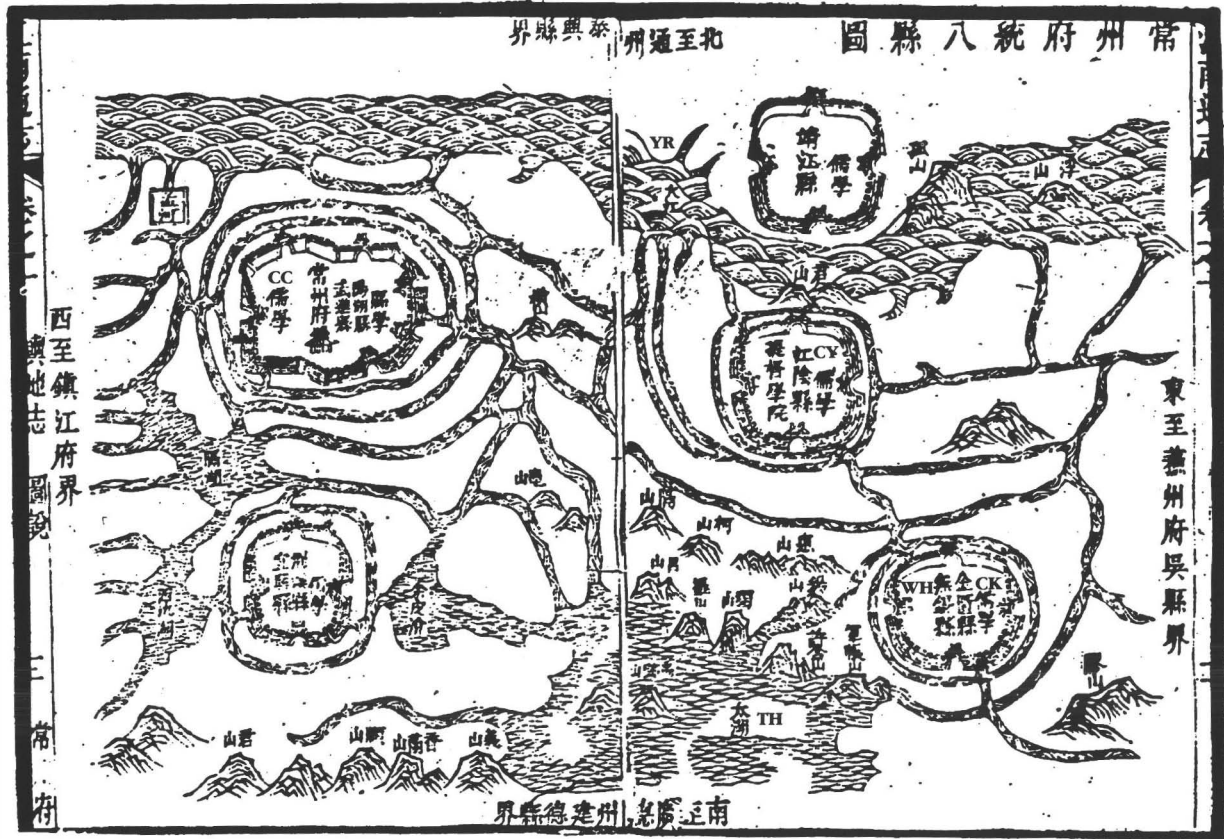
Figure 1

A gazetteer map (dated 1713) of Ch'ang-chou prefecture in Kiangsu, in which the Chuang and the Liu were prominent families. Initials superimposed on the map represent the following: CC - Ch'ang-chou fu; CK - Chin-k'uei; CY - Chiang-yin hsien; TH - Lake Tai; WH - Wu-hsi; YR - Yangtze River

the other elements within that society in such a way that it can only be understood through also understanding them, and through understanding the society as a whole."²

The present essay studies the New Text learning of the mid-Ch'ing from a different angle, that is, the internal one. The development of this exegetical tradition embodied what Yü Ying-shih would have called an "inner logic."³ New Text learning of the Han and Ch'ing constituted an "internal history," to borrow René Wellek's words, with a thematic and substantive unity.⁴ Insofar as Ch'ing New Text classicism harked back to the Western Han classical tradition, there was a *longitudinal* linkage between the Han progenitor and the Ch'ing offspring. At the same time, Ch'ing New Text learning could not have been solely mimetic. As a particular intellectual product of the Ch'ing, it diverged from its Han original. By showing how these two dimensions, intellectual inheritance and intellectual innovation, were interwoven with each other, I hope to reveal something of the subtleties of the texture of mid-Ch'ing thought.

Specifically, the central precepts that were the foundation of the Han New Text discourse will first be examined. How these precepts found new interpretative expressions in the mid-Ch'ing will constitute the core of this paper.



Owing to limitations of space, Ch'ing New Text learning will be represented by the scholarship of Chuang Ts'un-yü, who first systematically revived investigations of the Han-dynasty Kung-yang exegetical tradition, and of his maternal grandson, Liu Feng-lu, who consolidated New Text learning as an identifiable project in the Ch'ing intellectual universe.

Longitudinal Linkage with the Han Chin-wen Precepts

Intellectual rationalization, to use Stephen Pepper's term, begins with an "originating analogy" which creates the categories, orders the relevant evidence and defines the purposes of intellectual analysis.⁵ With respect to the Ch'ing New Text scholars, then, their "originating analogy" resided in the Western Han New Text exegetical tradition based on the principal text of the *Kung-yang Commentary*, a commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* written by Kung-yang Kao at the beginning of the Han dynasty. The *Commentary's* central notion of "[revealing] the profound principles [concealed in] subtle language" (*wei-yen ta-i* 微言大義) served as the "originating analogy" in their study of the classics—the illumination of the profound values in the abstruse words of the sages. This purposive notion further attained its substantive expression in the ideal of "fully understanding the classics for their practical application" (*t'ung-ching chih-yung* 通經致用).⁶ The purposive originating analogy of *wei-yen ta-i* gave rise to a set of discursive categories which formed the basic framework of much of the Ch'ing New Text discourse.

It should be noted that the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was viewed by both Old Text and New Text scholars as containing great principles (*ta-i* 大義) intimately concerned with proper political and social behaviour.⁷ However, the Old Text school identified itself with the *Tso Commentary*, which has been traditionally attributed to Tso Ch'iu-ming, a contemporary of Confucius. This commentary on the *Annals* furnished explanations largely in a historical vein, illuminating the *Annals'* principles by way of historical examples and precedents. The New Text school identified with the *Kung-yang Commentary*, on the other hand, went much further in plumbing and extracting the profound meanings of Confucius' words in the *Annals*, many of which were words of supra-historical and cosmological significance. Every word, or even the absence of words in many cases, was fraught with meaning. The imperative task of a commentary was precisely to reveal the paramount principles and meanings concealed and implied in the *Annals'* cryptic language. Such language was necessary because Confucius had to avoid offending the current ruler while propounding his radical ideas of institutional change.⁸ Thus a literal reading of the *Annals* would lose sight of these essential meanings. Out of the *Kung-yang Commentary* grew a tradition of exegesis seeking to make manifest the classics' great principles implied in subtle language. What were these principles that became the central discursive categories in the New Text discourse?

⁵ Stephen C. Pepper, *Concept and quality: a world hypothesis* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967), pp.1–34. Note that Pepper's idea of a root metaphor is the basis of what he calls a "world hypothesis," an integrated and comprehensive system of thought capable of explaining all elements in our experience. It is the point of origin of a comprehensive speculative philosophy. I am borrowing the idea for a narrower application.

⁶ On this ideal in the Han New Text tradition see Hsia Ch'ang-p'u, *Liang-Han ju-bsueh jen-chiu* [A Study of Confucian learning in the Han dynasty] (Taipei: Kuo-li Tai-wan Ta-hsueh Wen-hsueh-yuan, 1978), pp.81–6.

⁷ This is not the place to discuss the question of the splintering of the ancient classical tradition into the two schools of Old Text and New Text. See Elman, *Classicism*, pp. xxvi–xxx.

⁸ Chiang Po-ch'ien, *Sbsh-san-ching kai-lun* [A brief discussion on the Thirteen Classics] (Taipei: Chung-hsin Shu-chü, 1977), p.447–56.

⁹ For Ho Hsiu's New Text precepts, I refer to Hsü Yen's (c. Northern Ch'i dynasty, 550–77 and early T'ang) *Ch'un-ch'iu Kung-yang chu-shu* [An annotated commentary to the Kung-yang *Spring and Autumn Annals*] (hereafter *Ch'un-ch'iu*), collected in *Ssu-k'ü ch'uan-shu*. Hsü's work is an annotation of Ho Hsiu's sub-commentary to the *Kung-yang Commentary*.

¹⁰ The term *san-t'ung* has been variously translated as "three sequences" by Derk Bodde, "tripartite succession" by Homer Dubs, and "three systems" by F. W. Mote and Hok-lam Chan. For a discussion of these various translations see Chan, *Legitimation in imperial China: discussions under the Jurchen-Chin dynasty (1115–1254)* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1984), p.177, fn. 25.

¹¹ *Ch'un-ch'iu*, 1:3a, 13b–14a. Hsü Yen also recorded Sung Chung's 宋衷 (fl. c.AD 24–5) views. Sung defined the "Nine Points" differently and separated them from the "Three Categories." The nine independent "Points" were: season (*sbib* 時), month (*yueh* 月), day (*jib* 日), king (*wang* 王), sovereign (*t'ien-wang* 天王), emperor (*t'ien-tzu* 天子), derision (*chi* 譏), derogation (*pien* 黜) and severance (*chüeh* 絕). The first three constituted the principles governing the recording of events in terms of "comprehensiveness or sketchiness" (*bsiang-lieh* 詳略). The following three were principles governing the recording of events involving the "distance and proximity, closeness and remoteness" (*yuan-chin ch'in-shu* 遠近親疏) of relationships. Sung did not clearly explain what the last three principles were. But in all, they were guidelines for the proper recording of events in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. For a discussion on some of these precepts see Yang Hsiang-k'uei, *I-sbib-chai bsueb-shu wen-chi* [Collected scholarly writings from the Studio of Historical Interpretations] (Shanghai: Jen-min Ch'u-pan-she, 1983), pp.87–97.

According to Ho Hsiu 何休 (AD 129–182), the great Later Han New Text exegete, the *Kung-yang Commentary* embodied the great principles of the "Three Categories" (*san-k'o* 三科), subdivided into the "Nine Points" (*chiu-chib* 九旨).⁹ The first "Category" was "Preserving the Three Systems" (*ts'un san-t'ung* 存三統) or "Linking the Three Systems" (*t'ung san-t'ung* 通三統),¹⁰ consisting of the following three "Points":

1. "taking the Chou dynasty as the immediate predecessor" (*hsin Chou* 新周);
2. "recognizing the state of Sung as the descendant of the more remote predecessor [of the Shang]" (*ku Sung* 故宋);
3. "establishing the king envisioned in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as the new king" (*i Ch'un-ch'iu tang hsin-wang* 以春秋當新王).

The second "Category" was "Unfolding the Three Ages" (*chang san-sbib* 張三世), encapsulating the following three "Points":

1. "recording what was personally witnessed with different language" (*so-chien i-tz'u* 所見異辭);
2. "recording what was heard through contemporary accounts by the elders with different language" (*so-wen i-tz'u* 所聞異辭);
3. "recording what was heard and known through transmitted records with different language" (*so-ch'uan-wen i-tz'u* 所傳聞異辭).

The third "Category" was "Distinguishing the Inner from the Outer" (*i nei-wai* 異內外), embodying the following three "Principles":

1. "treating his [Confucius'] state [of Lu] as the inner and the rest of the Chinese hegemony as the outer" (*nei ch'i-kuo erh wai chu-Hsia* 內其國而外諸夏);
2. "treating the Chinese hegemony as the inner and the barbarian tribes as the outer" (*nei chu-Hsia erh wai i-ti* 內諸夏而外夷狄);
3. "the barbarian tribes becoming part of the feudal hierarchy" (*i-ti chin-chib yü chueh* 夷狄進至於爵).¹¹

Such were the "Nine Points" subsumed under the "Three Categories."

The idea of "Preserving the Three Systems" referred to the tripartite succession of systems of rule in ancient China. According to the New Text Kung-yang tradition, the state of Lu in the Spring and Autumn period had established itself as a legitimate dynasty, succeeding the Chou dynasty which in turn had followed the Shang, whose descendant was the Sung state. The following particular line of legitimate dynastic succession was in effect established: from Shang (or Sung), through Chou, to Lu. However, both Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒 (?179–?104 BC) and Ho Hsiu sometimes referred to the actual historical succession of Hsia, Shang and Chou as the Three Systems.

It was Tung Chung-shu who first explained the tripartite succession adumbrated in the *Kung-yang Commentary*. He eventually established Confucius as the new king, albeit uncrowned. Tung interpreted the last entry in the *Annals* concerning the capture of a *lin* (麟, a legendary creature whose appearance was taken to be a propitious omen) as evidence of Confucius' securing the Mandate of Heaven to rectify the flaws of the moribund Chou dynasty and to erect new institutions befitting a new king. With the initiation

of a new regime must come the proper act of its legitimation, that is, "Preserving the Three Systems" or, as Tung termed them, the "Three Beginnings" (*san-cheng* 三正). Accordingly, Chou and Shang descendants should share the title of king with the ruler of the state of Lu, thereby constituting the successive tripartition of the Three Systems of rule. The descendants of the Hsia dynasty before Shang would be relegated to the realm of the "five emperors" (*wu-ti* 五帝). Such were the sequential notions of "relegating Hsia" (*chuo Hsia* 紂夏), "taking Chou as the immediate predecessor" (*hsin Chou*), "taking Sung as the more remote predecessor" (*ku Sung*), and "establishing the king envisioned in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as the new king" (*i-Ch'ün-ch'iu tang-hsin-wang*).¹²

Complementing the cycle of the Systems, Tung postulated an alternating cycle of Simplicity (*chih* 質) and Refinement (*wen* 文). The beginning of a dynasty saw the institution of the cycle of Simplicity emphasizing the spirit and feeling behind rites and ceremonies, which would gradually give way to the cycle of Refinement concerned with external objects and artificiality, eventually leading to decadence. The rise of the new state of Lu signified the restoration of the cycle of Simplicity.¹³ In the hands of Tung Chung-shu, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* became a text which not only "describes the past so as to illuminate the future," but also embodies "the inscrutability of Heaven," enabling a sagacious person to gain "complete [understanding] of the world." The idea of "Preserving the Three Systems" with the attendant cyclical view of historical alternation between Simplicity and Refinement was thus shot through with cosmic imageries and charged with cosmological significance.¹⁴

In contrast, Ho Hsiu played down the speculative elements which in his day had pervaded and corrupted New Text learning in the form of apocrypha. Ho's explication of the idea of "Preserving the Three Systems" was conspicuously lacking in cosmological allusions and theorizing. Ho stated this idea of the Three Systems plainly and simply: "Confucius established the king envisioned in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as the new king, relegating the [state of] Ch'i [which was the descendant of the Hsia dynasty], taking the recent Chou [dynasty] as the immediate predecessor and recognizing the [state of] Sung as the more remote predecessor."¹⁵

Ho's elucidation of the idea of "*wang-Lu*" (王魯, taking the state of Lu as the ruling dynasty) in the *Annals* is quite straightforward. For instance, he suggested that in the very first entry of the *Annals*, Confucius had already presented Duke Yin of the state of Lu as a king, not a duke. The entry stated: "It was the first month of the king, the spring of the [duke's] first year (*yuan-nien* 元年). What is meant by the first year? The first year of the ruler." Ho Hsiu annotated, "Only the Son of Heaven could use the term *yuan-nien*. The various dukes could not. Why was he [Duke Yin] able to use the term *yuan-nien*? The *Spring and Autumn Annals* entrusted the rule of the new dynasty to the state of Lu, taking Duke Yin as the king who had received the Mandate. Therefore he could use the term *yuan-nien*."¹⁶

¹² On Tung's New Text ideas see P'i Hsi-jui, *Cbing-bsueh t'ung-lun* [A general discussion on classical studies] (Hong Kong: Chung-hua Shu-chü, 1961), vol.4, pp. 6-8. See also Fung Yu-lan, *A history of Chinese philosophy*, transl. Derk Bodde, 2 vols (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952-53), 2: 68, 72-3, and Ojima Sukema, "Kuyōka sankakyū-shizei ni tsuite" [On the Three Categories and Nine Points of the Kung-yang school], *Shinagaku* 1.1 (Sept. 1920):1-11.

¹³ Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese philosophy*, vol.2, pp.74-5. See also Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in imperial China*, pp.28-9.

¹⁴ On the Han apocrypha see Jack Dull, "A historical introduction to the apocryphal texts of the Han dynasty," PhD diss. (University of Washington, 1966).

¹⁵ *Ch'ün-ch'iu*, 16:10a. For a discussion on Ho Hsiu's Kung-yang thought see Yang Hsiang-k'uei, *Ta-i-t'ung Ju-chia ssu-bsiang* [The universal system of rule and Confucian thought] (Chi-lin: Chung-kuo Yu-i Ch'u-pan-she, 1989), pp.96-109.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 3b. Ho also integrated the idea of the cyclical alternation of Simplicity and Refinement. See Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese philosophy*, vol.2, p.75.

¹⁷ *Cb'un-ch'iu*, 1:5a.

¹⁸ For a discussion on the Kung-yang idea of the "Three Ages" see Tuan Hsi-chung, "Kung-yang Ch'un-ch'iu san-shih-shuo t'an-yuan" [On the origins of the Kung-yang notion of Three Ages], *Chung-hua wen-shih lun-t'ung* 4 (1963): 67, and Huang Chang-chien, "Chang-san-shih ku-i" [The ancient meanings of unfolding the Three Ages], *Hsueh-yuan* 1.8 (Dec. 1947): 15–19.

¹⁹ *Cb'un-ch'iu*, 1: 13b.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27: 4a.

In sum, the notion of "Preserving the Three Systems" legitimated a line of dynastic succession and dramatized the distinctiveness of the newly instituted dynasty as a new beginning. It implied the impermanence of political authority whose Mandate came from Heaven. As Ho Hsiu remarked, "The king who has received the Mandate must move his residence, change the beginning of the year, alter the colour of clothing, assume distinct new titles and employ different implements and weapons, in order to show clearly that [the Mandate] is received from Heaven, not from humanity."¹⁷

The other major New Text precept of "Unfolding the Three Ages" did not actually appear in the *Kung-yang Commentary*, but the idea of a chronological tripartition was implied in the commentary's prescriptive criteria regarding the proper style of recording historical events belonging to different historical periods.¹⁸ According to the commentary, the author of the *Annals* had tacitly separated the history of the twelve reigns (722–481 BC) of the house of Lu into three epochs or ages: the events of the first age he heard and knew of through transmitted records (*so-ch'uan-wen* 所傳聞); those of the second he heard through the contemporary accounts of elders still alive (*so-wen* 所聞); those of the third he personally witnessed (*so-chien* 所見). Accordingly, the phraseology and language (*tz'u* 辭) must be "different" (*i* 異) in the recording of these events of varying time-periods. This stylistic prescription was first pronounced in the commentary's explanation on the *Annals*' last entry under the first year of Duke Yin. This entry was very brief: "The Prince, I Shih, died." The commentary explained, "Why was it not dated? [It was] remote [in time]. What was personally witnessed was recorded in different language; what was heard through contemporary accounts by the elders still alive was recorded in different language; what was heard and known of through transmitted records was recorded in different language."¹⁹ In contrast, in an entry concerning a death which occurred in the third year of Duke Ai (492 BC), the *Annals* gave the full date: "Autumn, the seventh month, the day *ping-tzu*, Chi Sun-ssu died."²⁰ The stylistic principle was that for distant events, a dearth of detail was unavoidable and indeed proper. But for more recent events, especially those personally witnessed by Confucius, the complete date was given.

However, it does not follow that events closer in time to Confucius would invariably be described in greater detail; the temporal location of people and events was not the sole determinant of the narrative style. An entry under the second year of Duke Huan (710 BC) illustrates a variation on the general principle:

In the third month, Duke Huan met Marquis Ch'i, Marquis Ch'en and Earl Cheng at Ch'i for a conference, the purpose of which was the pacification of disorder in the state of Sung. Internal events which were gravely villainous were [generally] avoided as tabooed subjects [by Confucius]. But in this case, why was it recorded as if he had personally witnessed it? It was remote in time. What was personally witnessed was recorded in different words; what was

heard through contemporary accounts by elders alive was recorded in different words; what was heard and known of through transmitted records was recorded in different words. But Duke Yin was also remote in time. Why was he avoided as a subject tabooed? Duke Yin was upright and noble, whereas Duke Huan was mean and worthless.²¹

²¹ Ibid., 4:3a–4a.

²² *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu* [Luxuriant Dewes of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*] (Taipei: Chung-kuo Tzu-hsueh Ming-chu Chi-ch'eng Pien-yin Chi-chin-hui, 1977), vol.1, pp. 3a–b.

²³ Quoted in Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese philosophy*, vol.2, p.82 (translation modified).

²⁴ Mink's words are quoted in Adrian Oldfield, "Moral judgments in history," *History and Theory* 22.3 (1981): 276.

Moral consideration thus played an important role in determining the style of recording. Both Duke Yin and Duke Huan belonged to a distant age, the events of which were known only through transmitted records. Accounts relating to them should, in principle, not be influenced by the general rule of eschewing direct description of recent rulers as a token of respect. But in this case, Confucius bent the rule in order to praise Duke Yin's nobility and integrity by according him subtle treatment. On the other hand, Duke Huan's deeds were stated explicitly, a device to demonstrate his lack of virtue.

Thus, although the term "Three Ages" was not used in the *Kung-yang Commentary*, the notion of a temporal tripartition was certainly present. Tung Chung-shu himself did not actually use the term "Three Ages." Rather, he employed the term "Three Ranks" (*san-teng* 三等) to describe the three types of events recorded in the *Annals*, namely, those personally witnessed by Confucius (*yuchien* 有見), those heard of through contemporary accounts by living elders (*yu wen* 有聞), and those heard of through transmitted records (*yu ch'uan-wen* 有傳聞). Each "Rank" of events received the appropriate treatment by Confucius in order "to express the sentiment best suited to each circumstance."²²

Tung further explained how Confucius used his chronicles as a vehicle for moral judgments:

[Confucius'] purpose, which is sometimes extensive and sometimes restricted, and his text, which is sometimes detailed and sometimes laconic, both accord with [his principles of recording]. I have thereby come to understand the manner in which he treats what is near with close attention and what is remote with less attention, what is dear to him with affection and what is less dear with less affection. I also understand how he values what is precious, belittles what is mean, attaches weight to what is weighty, and treats lightly what is light. Likewise I understand how he treats substantially what is substantial, ungenerously what is ungenerous, praises what is good, and condemns what is bad.²³

Confucius, therefore, infused into his narratives moral meaning, and in the process delivered "synoptic judgments" of a kind, to borrow Louis Mink's term. In such judgments are indications as to "how a series of events, or the actions of particular individuals, are to be taken. They are assessments of meaning and significance without which history remains no more than story." Through synoptic judgments, Confucius held "together in thought events which, by the destructiveness of time, no one could experience together."²⁴

It was Ho Hsiu who established the notion of "Unfolding the Three Ages" as one of the central tenets of New Text learning, giving it historical and

²⁵ Note that before Ho the term “three ages” had already been used. For instance, Yen An-lo 顏安樂, who was one of the most important New Text erudites in Western Han, had employed the term; but Yen’s works are no longer extant. See Tuan Hsi-chung, “Kung-yang Ch’un-ch’iu,” pp.70-1.

²⁶ *Ch’un-ch’iu*, 1: 13b.

²⁷ Quoted in Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese philosophy*, vol.2, p.83 (translation modified).

²⁸ *Ibid.* (translation modified).

political meaning.²⁵ Ho divided the twelve reigns of the Lu house into three groups, adding that those events witnessed personally were contemporary affairs of Confucius’ and his father’s time, those heard of through the accounts of living elders were events from the days of Confucius’ father and grandfather, and those known through transmitted records belonged to the period when Confucius’ father and forefathers were alive. Each epoch deserved a distinctive language (*i-tz’u* 異辭), whose stylistic variations embodied moral-educational purposes: “Different language demonstrates that there are substantial favours and ungenerous ones, and great principles and insignificant ones. At a time when favours are scarce and principles are lacking, [the rule of different wording] is used to order human relations and prioritize human behaviour, thereby establishing the way to create orderly rule out of disorder.”²⁶

Ho then expanded this stylistic-cum-moral notion of a three-stage succession of the Lu house, and turned it into a tripartite historical schema that had political and cultural connotations. He now identified the age that Confucius knew of through transmitted records as the age where “there was order arising amidst decay and disorder” (*chih-ch’i yüshuai-luan chih chung* 治起於衰亂之中), as Confucius himself had clearly shown. Confucius, in depicting this age,

directed his mind primarily toward the general [scheme of things]. Therefore he considered his own state [of Lu] as the centre and treated the rest of the Chinese hegemony (*chu-Hsia* 諸夏) as external [to his scheme]. He first treated what was close at hand in detail and then took care of what was farther away. He recorded the major events while giving passing reference to lesser ones. He wrote about lesser villainies within [his own state], but not those outside. Thus the great officials of the large states would be designated as such, while those of the small states would be generally called “persons” (*jen* 人). Likewise in the case of meetings that failed to reach agreements, were they within [his own state], he would record them. Meetings in other states which had failed would not be recorded.²⁷

Here, Ho introduced a new element into the notion of “Three Ages,” namely the politico-territorial idea of “distinguishing the centre and periphery” (*i nei-wai* 異內外), which constituted the third of the three “Categories” of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Lu as a state formed the internal core; the rest of the Chinese hegemony constituted the surrounding periphery. Moreover, the idea of an age distinguished the nature and character of a particular stage in history: the first age saw the emergence of order out of disorder.

Ho went on to describe the age of which Confucius heard through oral testimony. In this age, Confucius

made it apparent that there was an order arising of Approaching Peace (*chien chih sheng-p’ing* 見治升平). Therefore he considered the Chinese hegemony as the centre and treated the outlying barbarian tribes as something outside [his scheme]. Thus he recorded those meetings outside [his own state] which failed to reach any agreement, and the great officials of even small states.²⁸

Here a cultural element was injected into the precept of *i nei-wai*, juxtaposing the Chinese hegemony as *nei*(內, internal, the core, centre) and the barbarian tribes as *wai*(外, external, the surrounding, periphery). A broader vision of civilization emerged, envisaging a cultural-historical stage of “Approaching Peace.”

Lastly, for the age which Confucius personally witnessed, Ho claimed that Confucius

made it evident that there was an order arising of Universal Peace (*chu chih t'ai-p'ing* 著治太平). [At the same time], the barbarian tribes had been elevated and accepted as part of the feudal hierarchy. All under Heaven, far and near, large and small, were as one. He thus exercised his mind still more profoundly in recording events, therefore exalting [acts of] benevolence and righteousness, while deriding [the use of] double personal names.²⁹

Thus the ultimate in Ho's scheme of the “Three Ages” was the stage not only of political maturation but also of cultural expansion. This beatific vision of the age of Universal Peace was in some ways similar to the idyllic age of “Great Unity” (*ta-t'ung* 大同) described in the chapter “Li-yun 禮運” (The Evolution of Ritual-Norms) in the *Li-chi* 禮記 (Record of Rites). The basic similarity was the idea that “the world was common to all” (*t'ien-hsia wei kung* 天下為公). The crucial difference was that in “The Evolution of Ritual Norms,” the age of great unity was situated temporally in antiquity, associated with the great rulers and ministers of the Three Dynasties. As a result, the age tended to take on a mythico-Utopian quality. It represented a retrospective vision of unrepeatable happiness in the golden age, lingering on in present consciousness as if only to dramatize the yawning chasm between the past and present, whose diluted ideal could only be an age of “Small Tranquillity” (*hsiao-k'ang* 小康).³⁰ But if the *Li-yun*'s ideal was pushed back into a mythical past in the Utopian realm, Ho Hsiu's age of Universal Peace was immediately attainable, tangibly arising in the present. If the former ideal was *above* historical reality, a conception *out of* time, the latter ideal ensconced itself in time as part of a historical succession—from Disorder, through Approaching Peace, to Universal Peace. Ho Hsiu's conception was consistent with the central Kung-yang view of the House of Lu as the new source of legitimate authority, eventually culminating in Confucius' receiving the Mandate of Heaven to transform institutions. In other words, Confucius would bring back the golden age. Ho Hsiu, in general terms, also made clear that since a new king inherited the decadence and disorder of the preceding age, his duty was to rectify people's wrongs and implement the Way of Heaven.³¹

It seems likely that Ho Hsiu's idea of an age of Universal Peace was derived from the ideal of universal rule described in the very first entry of the *Kung-yang Commentary*. There, the ideal of “instituting a great universal system of rule” (*ta i-t'ung* 大一統) was deemed to have been realized by King Wen, whose son King Wu established the Chou dynasty. Just as King Wen had prepared the founding of the glorious Chou domain as the decadent

²⁹ Ibid., pp.83–4 (translation modified). Ho Hsiu suggested that Confucius disapproved of the use of double names because he saw it as a violation of *li* (ritual-norms). Protocol required a son, in both speech and writing, to refrain from using any character included in the personal name of his father or the preceding male ancestor. Ho therefore contended that the use of double personal names was undesirable because it imposed on the son the added burden of having to avoid not just one but two characters.

³⁰ On the *Li-yun* ideal of this Golden Age see Yang Hsiang-k'uei, *Ta-i-t'ung*, pp.26–36.

³¹ *Ch'un-ch'iu*, 5:6a.

³² Quoted in Hsia Ch'ang-p'u, p.85.

³³ Quoted in Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese philosophy*, vol. 2, p.84 (translation modified).

³⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.146.

Shang collapsed, so too, now, did Confucius install a new regime as the moribund Chou crumbled. This idea was further developed by the Han New Text scholars, including Ho Hsiu, so that the establishment of the Han dynasty was tacitly considered as the rise of yet another age of great peace and unity. The Han apocrypha in general claimed that Confucius had foreseen the emergence of the Han out of great disorder, and therefore he had clairvoyantly prescribed the correct institutions for the Han. Even Ho Hsiu, who was disinclined to subscribe to the prognosticatory extravagance of the apocrypha, was nevertheless convinced of Confucius' purposeful bequest to the Han. His annotation to the last entry of the *Kung-yang Commentary* stated: "The end [of this account of Lu] is indeed joyful. Subsequently, the sagely Han received the Mandate and became king. It is known that it [the Han] is as virtuous as [the reigns of] Yao and Shun. Confucius prescribed the institutions for it."³²

Ho summed up the significance of the idea of the "Three Ages," by expounding on its social, institutional and cosmological implications:

There are Three Ages because according to the rites, the period of mourning for parents is three years; for grandparents, one year; for great grandparents, three months. Filial love begins with the immediate parents. Therefore, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* bases itself on [the reign of Duke] Ai (496–468 BC) while recording [as far back as Duke] Yin (722–712 BC), thereby pursuing [the events of] the ancestors. Its 242 years [of history] take [the reigns of] twelve dukes as the organizing principle because the number of Heaven [i.e. the twelve months of the year] could thus be made complete. [In this way], it adequately succeeds in setting a pattern for good government.³³

In all, Ho Hsiu broadened the meaning of the precept of the "Three Ages." He expanded the "Three Ages" as a system of regulatory stylistic principles into a three-stage historical schema with overt political and cultural connotations. It became a vision of political and cultural growth in history, showing that history was made up of cycles of diachronic tripartition, whose zenith was the arising of "Universal Peace," an ideal realizable here and now. But after all, Ho Hsiu did not clearly expound a totalizing schema capable of charting the course of historical development after Confucius' time. It was the Ch'ing New Text scholars who developed a systematic scheme for the succession of historical ages.

Chuang Ts'un-yü's Reinterpretation of Han New Text Ideas

Chuang Ts'un-yü was a prolific scholar who wrote exegeses on the various classics. In pursuing his classical scholarship, he called for textual accuracy and critical reasoning while ruminating on "the method of study" (*tu-shu chih fa* 讀書之法):

What is being noted must be concretely present. What is being upheld must be based on sound reason. One must strive strenuously to repair even the slightest of discrepancies. One must fully understand the border between truth and doubtful truth. [Study] is essentially to nurture one's spontaneously moral mind and to benefit one's spirit and intelligence.³⁴

The first part of the couplet he wrote for his studio reads: "Study with pleasure the words of the classics, preserving the profound essential substance. Meanings and principles bring delight to the heart and mind."³⁵

His catholic interests notwithstanding, Chuang's academic stature lay in his works on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the Kung-yang tradition which revived the Han New Text exegetical tradition. His major work on this classic was the *Ch'un-ch'iu cheng-tz'u* 春秋正辭 (Correcting Terms in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*), which was modelled after a Yuan-dynasty text by Chao Fang 趙沄 (1319–69).³⁶ In this work, Chuang showed clearly that he accepted the major categories and interpretations of Han New Text discourse. Chuang's learning, as such, was in many ways mimetic. In the very first fascicle (*chüan* 卷), he spelt out his views on the major notions of "Preserving the Three Systems," "Instituting a Universal System of Rule," and "Unfolding the Three Ages."

On the idea of "Preserving the Three Systems," he wrote:

The establishment of the [respective] beginnings of the three dynasties was bestowed by Heaven. With the dual alternation of Simplicity and Refinement, institutions and implements became complete and comprehensive. The teaching of the [Han] masters in classics [stated] that being respectful and humble [toward the preceding two dynasties meant] sagemess. It then also established the precept that one family alone did not [receive the Mandate of Heaven].³⁷

In this brief passage, Chuang in fact touched not only on the "Three Systems," but also on two related ideas, the cycle of Simplicity and Refinement, and the corollary of dynastic change. To elucidate the "Three Systems," he cited Ho Hsiu's words:

Hsia took the month when the Big Dipper (*tou-chien* 斗建) stood in *yin* as its beginning, started its year with dawn to symbolise the appearance of things, and assumed black as its primary colour. Yin [i.e. Shang] took the month when the Big Dipper stood in *ch'ou* as its beginning, started its year with the cock's crow to symbolise the budding of things, and assumed white as its primary colour. Chou took the month when the Big Dipper stood in *tz'u* as its beginning, started its year with midnight to symbolise the sprouting of things, and assumed red as its primary colour.³⁸

Here Ho Hsiu identified the Three Systems with the three dynasties of Hsia, Shang and Chou, each with its own calendar and cosmic colour.

Chuang claimed that the practice of "Preserving the Three Systems" must be upheld, thereby honouring the previous two dynasties. He quoted Confucius: "Yin followed the ritual of Hsia; its modification and additions can

³⁵ Quoted in Lu Pao-ch'ien, "Chuang Ts'un-yü," in Wang Shou-nan, ed., *Cbung-kuo li-tai ssu-hsiang-chia* [Chinese thinkers over the successive ages] (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1978), vol.8, p.15.

³⁶ On the format of this compilation by Chuang and its comparison with Chao's original work see Elman, *Classicism*, pp.173–83. This work is included in *Huang-Ch'ing ching-chieb* [Classical exegesis in the imperial Ch'ing dynasty], comp. Juan Yuan (Taipei: I-wen Yin-shu-kuan, n.d.), pp.3897–3997. This compilation is hereafter cited as *HCCC*.

³⁷ *HCCC*, p.3897.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3898.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3898.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3897.

Figure 2

An example of Chuang Ts'un-yu's calligraphy (taken from *T'ang Chih-chun*, Chin-tai ching-hsueh yü cheng-chih [Peking: Chung-hua Shu-chu, 1989])



be known. Chou followed the ritual of Yin, and its modifications and accretions can [also] be known Chou had the advantage of surveying the two preceding dynasties. How replete was its culture!" To further illustrate the meaning and significance behind the idea of the "Three Systems," Chuang referred to the words of the Han classical master Liu Hsiang 劉向 (fl. 77–6 BC): "The king [of a new dynasty] must link together the Three Systems in order to show clearly that the Mandate of Heaven is conferred on many, not just on one family."³⁹

On the second principal New Text notion of "Unfolding the Three Ages," Chuang wrote:

[*The Spring and Autumn Annals*] were based on the [reign of] Duke Ai while recording [as far back as the reign of] Duke Yin, praising and blaming [events and people] with empathy and sympathy. Thus, [Confucius'] purpose was sometimes extensive and sometimes restricted; his text was sometimes detailed and sometimes sketchy. [He] intelligently described [events and people] without endangering himself; [he] righteously [imposed blame and praise] without reviling his superiors. [In cases where] guilt could not be ascertained, his wording could be used [as a guideline]. Extirpating disorder, orderly rule began, gradually reaching [the age of] Approaching Peace (*sheng-p'ing* 升平). The twelve [reigns of the House of Lu] conformed with [Heaven's] pattern [of twelve months in a year]. [The age of] Universal Peace (*t'ai-p'ing* 太平) was thus established.⁴⁰

This passage appears rather cryptic in itself, for it compresses the various meanings and manifestations of the notion of "Unfolding the Three Ages" into a brief statement of explanation, and also presumes knowledge of the Han New Text views on the question. As already shown, in the Han New Text tradition, the notion of the "Three Ages" had various meanings. Here, Chuang identified two major meanings. One referred to phraseological manipulations in conveying Confucius' delicate treatment of historical events and personages from different periods; the other referred to Confucius' view on schematic historical development. The first part of the passage pointed to Confucius' subtle use of language, which felicitously narrated events belonging to different periods (i.e. the period of which Confucius had heard through transmitted records, the period of which he had heard through contemporary accounts by living elders, and the period which he had personally witnessed). The second part of the passage alluded to Ho Hsiu's idea of the historical progression from the Age of Disorder, through the Age of Approaching Peace, and finally to the Age of Universal Peace. Chuang in fact used the words of both Ho Hsiu and Tung Chung-shu words on the question of the "Three Ages" extensively and almost verbatim, without elaborating on them.

However, Chuang did comment on the *Annals'* use of language with reference to the three different periods of the Lu House from the vantage point of Confucius' temporal location. In the entry in the *Annals* for the third month of the seventh year of Duke Yin (which was within the age of which

Confucius had heard through transmitted records), there is a line which states: "The Marquis (*bou* 侯) of [the state of] T'eng died (*tsu* 卒)." Chuang explained the significance of the choice of words:

T'eng was a lowly state. For the age of which Confucius had heard through contemporary accounts by living elders, the word *tsu* was first used. For the age that Confucius had personally witnessed, the word *tsang* 葬 was then used. How is it that for the age of which Confucius had heard through transmitted records the title *bou* and the word *tsu* were used? It was because his [i.e. the Marquis of T'eng's] son had paid tribute [to Lu]. [Confucius therefore] wrote about his father with compassion [To use the titles] "Marquis (*bou*) of T'eng" and "Marquis of Hsueh" was to consider the ruler envisioned in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as the new king. [To use the titles] "Viscount (*tsu* 子) of T'eng" and "Duke (*po* 伯) of Hsueh" was to consider the Chou dynasty the immediate predecessor. This has been well recognized by the New Text scholars.⁴¹

In Chuang's scheme of things, the ideal of "instituting a Great Universal System of Rule" (*ta i-t'ung*) associated with the notion of the age of Universal Peace was one of the most profound principles of the *Annals*. He explained this central Kung-yang idea by citing the *Li-chi* (Records of Rites): "Heaven does not have two suns, a territory does not have two kings, a country does not have two rulers, and a family does not have two honoured heads. It is so because each of them is ruled by one." On this score, Chuang even cited the Ming Neo-Confucian, Wang Yang-ming 王陽明 (1472–1529): "What the *Spring and Autumn Annals* consider as the instituting of a universal system of rule is the sharing of common customs and traditions everywhere (*liu-bo* 六合, literally, the six cardinal directional points), and the use of common currencies throughout the entire country (*chiu-chou* 九州, literally, the nine divisions of China under the legendary ruler, Yü)." In other words, *ta i-t'ung* was the forging of a culturally and politically unified entity.

Chuang then concluded with the words of Tung Chung-shu used in the latter's appeal for the adoption of Confucianism as the official ideology of the Han:

[The idea of] instituting a universal system of rule in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is an immutable universal principle, the perennial proper way from ancient times to the present. Now the masters in classics have their different methods and people hold different views. The hundred schools each point to their own unique direction, holding dissimilar principles and ideas. Therefore, the ruler above has nothing with which to uphold a unified system. Laws and institutions have changed time and again. The ruled below do not know by what to abide. Your ignorant servant [i.e. Tung] urges that all not within the Six Classics be cut short and not allowed to progress further. With the extinguishing of heterodox teachings, the ruling regime could then be unified and laws and measures could then be made clear. People would then know what to follow.⁴²

⁴¹ Quoted in Li Hsin-lin, "Ch'ing-tai chin-wen-ching hsueh-shu" [A discourse on the New Text Classics in the Ch'ing period], *Kuo-li T'ai-wan shih-fan ta-hsueh kuo-wen yen-chiu-so chi-k'an* 22 (June 1978): 61.

⁴² HCCC, p.3898.

⁴³ Ibid., p.3920.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Tang Chih-chün, "Ch'ing-tai ching-chin-wen-hsueh te fu-hsing" [The revival of New Text classical learning in the Ch'ing dynasty], *Chung-kuo-shih yen-chiu* 2 (June 1980): 151.

⁴⁵ Cited in *ibid.*

During the period covered by the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the universal system of rule was instituted by the Chou dynasty. An entry in the *Annals* stated: "Duke [Chuang's] son, Sui, went to the capital [of Chou], and at the same time went to Chin." In the fascicle on the "Son of Heaven," Chuang expanded the meaning of this entry and wrote: "It was the intent of the Duke of Chou that all under Heaven be united under the House of Chou. It was not permissible for it to share power with the state of Chin."⁴³ It should be remembered that the Chou dynasty in the Spring and Autumn period had been greatly weakened in both prestige and actual authority. It was only through the institution called "the hegemon" (*pa* 霸) that the Chou domain could maintain a semblance of unity and ward off external threats. The hegemon, instead of the Chou king, assumed leadership of the Chou feudal states while respecting and honouring the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Chou king. Two of the most prominent hegemons were Duke Huan of the state of Ch'i and Duke Wen of the state of Chin. Chuang Ts'un-yü, looking at this period of history, acknowledged the weakness of the Chou House, but he nevertheless issued an injunction against any derogation of the authority of Chou. It should remain the great universal system of rule.

In the first fascicle on "honouring and obeying Heaven," Chuang made clear the importance of the Son of Heaven, and insisted that ministers and officials must not "persist in treachery in serving the ruler."⁴⁴ Nonetheless, Chuang was appreciative of the work achieved by the two Dukes. Chuang praised them for honouring the Chou kings and resisting the encroachment of the foreign states. They were able "to assemble the various feudal lords, and unified and rectified the kingdom of Chou," "returning the Mandate" (*kuei-ming* 歸命) to the Chou kings. They "extended to the utmost the virtuous principle of being a minister, and cultivated the proper rituals and propriety among the various feudal lords." According to Chuang, the *Annals* did not explicitly commend the two dukes for their enterprises because as long as "the Son of Heaven is present, a feudal lord is not allowed to be the mandated lord of the feudal lords." Therefore, the *Annals* had "in actuality praised [them] without praising them with actual words" (*shih yü erh wen pu-yü* 實與而文不與).⁴⁵

In appearance, Chuang Ts'un-yü subscribed to the conceptual vocabulary of Han New Text learning, but in actuality, his writings were not simply mimetic texts replicating the Han original. His New Text learning consisted of dated reflections which departed from the earlier version. On the surface, Chuang seemed to have accepted the Han New Text idea of "Preserving the Three Systems" without much modification. But in fact, Chuang had reformulated the notion. In Han times, the notion of the "Three Systems," integrated with the metaphysical idea of the cyclical alternation between Simplicity and Refinement, had in effect created a teleology that conflated the cosmos and history in a charted course of historical succession. Writing on the three "Systems" or "Beginnings," Tung Chung-shu had made it clear that the tripartite sequence was the "model" of movement in history:

The way to take what is correct as a model is to rectify what is fundamental, so that what is secondary will respond, and to rectify what is internal, so that what is external will respond. Then, as movements and activities are initiated or stopped, there will be nothing that does not follow [an orderly sequence] in its transformation. This may be called taking what is correct as a model.⁴⁶

Tung furthermore advanced the doctrine of the "Three Teachings" (*sanchiao* 三教) so as to highlight the archetypal nature of the succession of the three dynasties of Hsia, Shang and Chou:

Hsia exalted faithfulness (*chung* 忠), Yin respectfulness (*ching* 敬) and Chou refinement (*wen* 文). He who would follow these [dynasties], if he is to save himself [from preceding excesses], must [likewise] use these Three [Teachings]. Confucius has said, "Yin followed the ritual of Hsia; its modifications and additions can be known. Chou followed the ritual of Yin, and its modifications and additions can [also] be known. Whatever others may succeed Chou, their character, even a hundred ages hence, can be known." He meant by this the [continued] practice of these Three [Teachings] by the kings of the hundred [succeeding] ages.⁴⁷

Tung Chung-shu thus saw the succession of dynasties in terms of the typical repetitive succession of faithfulness, respectfulness and refinement.⁴⁸ Ho Hsiu, speaking similarly in general terms, established the law of alternation between Simplicity and Refinement: "When the king [of a new dynasty] arises, the reason why he must change from Simplicity or from Refinement is that he is the inheritor of the decay and disorder [of the preceding period] and [wishes] to save men from their faults."⁴⁹

In what way was Chuang's view different? Chuang said, we may recall, that after the Three Dynasties, "with the dual alternation of Simplicity and Refinement, institutions and implements became complete and comprehensive." The implication was that the Refinement which had succeeded the Simplicity had brought forth, in a cumulative sense, a better state and society. In the Han view, change for the better did not involve and entail improvement through the process of building upon the achievements of the previous age. Rather, it envisioned improvement in terms of replacement, say, Simplicity replacing Refinement. It created a circular teleology which defined the nature of a certain dynasty or age in the light of its ultimate goal, whether it was Simplicity or Refinement. The emphasis was not on the present state of affairs, but on the inevitable process of supplantation and reversion.

What Chuang did was to deliver history from entrapment in a cyclical tripartition. The Han New Text scholars, including Ho Hsiu, had tended to view Confucius as the uncrowned king who, with foresight, had prescribed the correct institutions for the Han which was yet another "System" in the cyclical flux of history. Chuang in effect dismantled the metaphysico-historical view of the patterned sequential replacement of "Systems." The pattern of historical replacement ended with the Spring and Autumn period. With the rise of Confucius and the dissemination of his teachings in the

⁴⁶ Quoted in Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese philosophy*, vol.2, p.61.

⁴⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.69 (translation modified).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.75.

⁵⁰ HCCC, p.3897.

⁵¹ F. W. Mote, "The arts and the 'theorizing mode' of the Chinese civilization," in *Artists and traditions: uses of the past in Chinese culture*, ed. Christian Murck (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp.3-8.

Annals came the consolidation of the principles and institutions of governance and ethics: "The *Spring and Autumn Annals* in response to Heaven, received the Mandate and created institutions, ... which did not rest with the [state of] Lu. [They] are for the governance and order of ten thousand ages. How could it be that only the Han coveted them?"⁵⁰ The cyclical tripartition was no more after Confucius.

Tung Chung-shu, in elucidating his doctrine of the "Three Teachings" *vis-à-vis* the "Three Systems," cited Confucius' words on the succession from Shang to Chou, with this concluding statement: "Whatever others may succeed Chou, their character, even a hundred ages hence, can be known." Significantly, this line was missing in Chuang's quoting of exactly the same passage from the *Analects*. Thus, he appeared to have underscored the severance between the Three Dynasties and the notion of the "Three Systems"; the Spring and Autumn period ushered in a new time-frame. In doing so, he created a historical space for antiquity. The Spring and Autumn period marked the end of one historical series and the inauguration of a new one. For the same reason, the "Three Systems" in Chuang's scheme referred to the actual historical succession of Hsia, Shang and Chou, not the prevailing Han New Text version of Sung (Shang), Chou and Lu (*Cb'un-ch'iu*).

But if Chuang subtly historicized antiquity by destroying the pan-historical implication of the idea of "Three Systems," he affirmed the supra-historical significance of the teachings of the *Annals* which persisted as the most efficacious guide to ethics and government "for ten thousand ages." On this score, Chuang's belief typified the traditional Chinese view of the ancient past, with its classics and sages, as the repository of enduring values. This upholding of constancy in history provided a firm basis for the sustaining of moral values. As Frederick Mote has pointed out, the strong identification with antiquity and the resulting habit of analogical thinking was a Chinese mode of theorizing which, in the absence of any authority higher than humanity's rational minds and their norms, tended to ascribe paramount importance to past experience as the guide to actions and the repository of supreme moral values. But this mode of thinking suggests no servile imitation of the past, for "the entire purpose of civilization and men's individual lives was to realize the maximum from this present moment, not blindly to respect some past nor to forego the present in preparation for some anticipated future."⁵¹ If Mote is right, then this view of the past is also remarkably similar to that of Schelling, who stated:

A man who is not master of himself has no past or, rather, he never comes forth from the past but keeps living in it. It makes a man feel good and live better if, as they say, he has put something behind him, that is, posited it as past. Only by so positing it does he find the future bright and find it easy to undertake what lies ahead. Only the man who is strong enough to tear himself loose from what is subordinate in him is capable of creating a past for himself. And he alone enjoys a true present, as he also looks forward to a real future. Even these

moral reflections alone would make clear that *no present is possible but what rests on a decided past, and no past but one that, as vanquished, forms the foundation of a present.*⁵²

To cast it in Chuang's terms, then, the *Annals*, as a classic, a period or an abstract conception, was the created and "decided past" mandated by Heaven to establish institutions and prescribe moral norms. It had brought, and would continue to bring, rule and order "for the thousand ages," thereby evoking a meaningful continuum of past, present and future.

In sum, unlike the Han New Text thinking, Chuang's New Text learning was informed by a keener sense of historical change: "*The Spring and Autumn Annals* are the patriarch of rites, propriety and righteousness. With it, rule and order could be managed. Laws and institutions could be exhausted, [but] the way of the *Annals* is never exhausted."⁵³ If laws and institutions could become moribund, then they must also be changed as time progressed, even though they should, if they were to be effective at all in achieving orderly rule, be established and reformed according to the perennially valuable principles of the *Annals*. Chuang found his constants in the *Annals* while at the same time discovering the inevitability of changes in history. Writing on the hegemony of the Chin 晉 state in the declining years of the Chou dynasty, he remarked:

It was the Chin state which brought disorder to the grand order of protection (*ta-fang* 大防, i.e., the institution of Chou kingship which protected China from the barbarians). The various lords took Chin as the legitimate [authority]. They in fact took sheer strength as the legitimate [authority]. From then on, [they] followed whoever had sheer strength. How could they know benevolence and righteousness? [They] took those who celebrated and en-joyed interests (*li* 利) as those having virtues.⁵⁴

Chuang maintained that the benevolent and righteous kingship of Chou was the best system. It represented the "Great Universal System of Rule" envisaged in the *Annals*. Yet change, unsavoury though it might be, occurred, altering the fabric and nature of authority, and Chuang, we may recall, in spite of his preference for direct, moral Chou rule, nevertheless supported the drive for hegemony undertaken by Duke Huan of Ch'i and Duke Wen of Chin. Thus Chuang claimed that in the *Annals*, "what was written was invariably about the extraordinary (*i-ch'ang-shih* 異常事), so that changes (*p'ien* 變) were mentioned."⁵⁵

It should be noted that in spite of Chuang's promotion of the Kung-yang tradition, he did not exclude the Tso and Ku-liang traditions, for each had their respective merits: "[As for] the ancient books and classics, Tso Ch'iu [author of the *Tso Commentary*] was well versed [in them]; Kung-yang had a deep and profound understanding [of them]. Reviewing the old, [we come to] know the new. Ku-liang [author of the *Ku-liang Commentary*] corrected faults and shortcomings."⁵⁶ In fact, Chuang went so far as to vindicate the

⁵² Quoted in Fritz Medicus, "The work of Schelling," *Clio* 13.4 (Summer 1984): 356 (my emphasis).

⁵³ *HCCC*, p.3976.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3949.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3917.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3897.

⁵⁷ On Ch'ing scholarship on this Classic see Elman, *Classicism*, pp.30-1, 207-12.

⁵⁸ Quoted by Chuang's later New Text follower, Kung Tzu-chen 龔自珍 (1792-1841). See *Ting-an wen-chi* [Collected writings of Kung Tzu-chen] (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1965), pp.17-18.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

sixteen Old Text chapters of the *Book of Documents*, which in his day had been proved a forgery.⁵⁷ Upon hearing that there were proposals to abolish the forged portions as part of the official curriculum, Chuang opined:

The mere effort to distinguish the authenticity or forgery of ancient texts is not only a shallow craft but also shortsighted. Moreover, since students in the world have already understood [its spuriousness], surely eminent scholars should not keep harping on it. Eight out of ten [segments] of the ancient text [of the *Book of Documents*] are lost. Owing to the existence of the forged text, two out of eight have been preserved. As descendants of the ancient sage-emperors, we cannot set our eyes on unorthodox writings. Relying on our study of the main ideas of the Five Classics when we are young, we grow up having acquired a thorough knowledge of the way to rule the world.⁵⁸

Chuang accepted the general scholarly consensus that the Old Text *Book of Documents* was indeed apocryphal. Nevertheless, it contained words of great value:

Fortunately, those words are preserved today. [They] are all truthful words of the sages. These words are still relevant to this late age [of ours]. It is appropriate to disregard the direction taken by contemporary [scholarship] and teach [the Old Text *Book of Documents*] to the students.⁵⁹

In other words, any classical text, even a false one, as long as it contained at least some of the true teachings of the sages, had to be preserved.

Chuang Ts'un-yü did not establish a New Text school of learning as such in his time, but his scholarship on the *Kung-yang Commentary* contributed to the growing interest in the New Text classical tradition. It would be his maternal grandson, Liu Feng-lu, who established New Text learning as an identifiable scholarly enterprise in the Ch'ing intellectual universe.

Liu Feng-lu and the Consolidation of New Text Learning

⁶⁰ The word "project" here is used in Herbert Marcuse's sense, that is, a conscious choice and pursuit of a particular alternative among other major alternatives. It is a creative process of going beyond a particular intellectual situation. By thus embodying a specific project, the entire universe of Liu's intellectual discourse was shaped by New Text learning. Cf. Marcuse, *One-dimensional man* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1968), p.xvi.

⁶¹ This work is included in *HCCC*, pp.14025-40.

"This maternal grandson [of mine] will surely transmit my learning," opined Chuang Ts'un-yü approvingly after Liu Feng-lu, then still quite young, had answered with evident mental dexterity Chuang's inquiries about the boy's studies. Without question, Liu Feng-lu's claim to scholarly prominence was built on his works on the *Kung-yang Commentary*. Liu studied with Chuang, and inherited and expanded his intellectual bequest. However, unlike his grandfather, who had embraced the Kung-yang tradition without excluding rival schools, Liu championed Next Text classicism exclusively, developing it into a definable project in the Ch'ing world of learning.⁶⁰

In Liu Feng-lu's first major work on the *Annals*, *Ch'un-ch'iu Kung-yang-ching Ho-shih shih-li* 春秋公羊經何氏釋例 (Explication of the Precedents in Mr. Ho [Hsiu's Commentary] to the *Ch'un-ch'iu Kung-yang Classic*),⁶¹ with

a preface dated 1805, he maintained that the goal of learning was "to seek knowledge of the sages," and that "the Way of the sages was fulfilled in the Five Classics." In particular, Liu saw the *Annals* as the "key to the Five Classics," unmatched in its power "to bring the confused and chaotic back to the right path." The superiority of the *Annals* was well expounded by the Kung-yang school which had a readily traceable history in the transmission of the classic. According to Liu, Tung Chung-shu and Ho Hsiu were the most important figures in the history of classical studies. Tung had established the Six Classics as the official learning and contributed to the "great prosperity of classical studies," and through his scholarly commitment to the *Annals* had set the tone for classical studies in the Western Han, which stressed practicality and utility through learning from Antiquity. Deterioration and degeneration had then set in, and by the beginning of the Eastern Han, the apocrypha and other false and trivial studies had become dominant. It was Ho Hsiu who, working in the tradition established by Tung, brought about a process of reform with his meticulous scholarship and careful thinking. None of the masters in the classics could match his erudition. But after the Eastern Han, classical learning had experienced a continual decline. "The Confucian style of scholarship," Liu observed, "no longer prospered [and] various heterodox teachings competed for adherents." Although the T'ang dynasty had been able to establish a unified empire and institute the classics as the officially approved content of study, classical learning thereafter was in general marred by serious flaws, such as "abandoning the methods and teachings of traditions and schools," "breaking the roots and using only the branches," and "building

Figure 3

Preface to Liu Feng-lu's Shang-shu chin-ku-wen chi-chieh [Collected explanatory notes to the New and Old Text Classic of Documents. This is a hand-copied version, reprinted by the Commercial Press, Taipei, 1973



⁶² Ibid., pp.14025–6.

⁶³ Included in *ibid.*, pp.14143–57.

paths of digression.” The consequence was that “the sages’ profound principles [revealed] in subtle language were all clouded over.”

In this brief review of the history of classical learning, Liu considered Tung and Ho as instrumental in establishing and transmitting the grand principles of the classics. Most of the works of the Han masters on the classics were no longer extant. Only the Maos’ work on the *Odes*, those of Cheng Hsuan 鄭玄 (AD 127–200) on the *Rites*, and Yü Fan’s 虞翻 works on the *Changes* had established clear precedents and examples for the interpretation of the respective classics. But since the *Annals* was the most valuable classic, whose essence Tung and Ho had captured, it was only natural that their works be studied: “In seeking to reveal the purposes of the sages and what the seventy disciples [of Confucius] had transmitted, is it appropriate to abandon [the writings of Tung and Ho]?”⁶²

Liu reiterated his views on the classics and the Kung-yang tradition in a supplementary work, the *Kung-yang Ch’un-ch’iu Ho-shih chieh-ku chien* (公羊春秋何氏解詁箋, Comments on Mr. Ho’s Elucidation and Philological Explication of the *Kung-yang Ch’un-ch’iu*).⁶³ With a preface dated 1809, it explored the difficult and problematic questions raised in Ho Hsiu’s sub-commentary. The *Annals* was the classic *par excellence*, Liu told us again. It “began with the *yuan* (origin) and ended with [the capture of the] *lin*, penetrating the way of Heaven and encompassing human affairs. Using it to grasp the meaning of all the other classics is as precise as counting numbers and distinguishing white from black.” Moreover, the Kung-yang exegetical tradition elaborated by Tung Chung-shu and Ho Hsiu was the most complete. Most of the Han exegetical schools and traditions had long been lost. Only a few survived with complete texts, for instance, the Maos’ version of the *Book of Odes*, the Tzu-hsia transmission of the section on “mourning garments” (*sang-fu* 喪服) in the *Record of Rites* and Yü Fan’s commentary on the *Book of Changes*. Each of them, however, had shortcomings: “The Maos were detailed in their philological explication of the lessons of the classic but were brief in [explaining] the subtle wording. Mr. Yü was well versed in the changes of the [cosmic] emblems but rarely [touched on] the profound principles.” Tzu-hsia’s ideas on the *Records of Rites* were well preserved by the later Han classical master Cheng Hsuan. But those ideas were limited to “mourning garments,” which constituted only one set of rites out of the five in the classic. Compared to the Kung-yang tradition, they all left something to be desired. The *Kung-yang Commentary* “knew the categories thoroughly and arrived at a complete understanding [of the classic].” It “rendered salient the inconspicuous and expounded the mysterious.” Both Tung Chung-shu and Ho Hsiu succeeded in capturing the profound principles of the *Kung-yang Commentary*. They personified respectively the essence of learning in the Western and Eastern Han: “Learning in the Former Han was devoted to [illuminating] the essential substance. Therefore, what Master Tung transmitted was not the scholarship of trivial philological explication of words and

phrases. The Later Han [stressed] sequence, regularity, meticulousness and precision. Ho Shao-kung ... ought to be regarded as the archetype." Liu in particular lauded the accomplishments of Ho Hsiu: "Mr. Ho lived at a time when the Old Text classics were popular. He expanded the ideas of various schools of teaching, systematically transmitting the meanings [of the classics]. His accomplishment in transmitting the classics was rarely matched by his contemporaries ... I would say that those who have criticized Mr. Ho since Chin and T'ang have all failed to grasp his teachings and judge his works."⁶⁴

It is clear that Liu Feng-lu built his scholarly headquarters on New Text classical ground. Liu's first major New Text work had the deliberate goal of introducing Ho Hsiu's ideas. He accepted the central Kung-yang notion of "Linking the Three Systems" with the related idea of the alternation of Simplicity and Refinement. But, perhaps influenced by Chuang Ts'un-yü's interpretation, Liu also alluded to the termination of the cycle, seeing the Spring and Autumn period as the beginning of a different series of temporal historical developments. Liu established his argument by first affirming the need "to link together the Three Systems": "Of old, Master Yen asked how a country should be administered. Confucius said, 'Follow the seasons of the Hsia. Ride in the state carriage of Yin. Wear the ceremonial cap of Chou ... Let the music be Shao with its pantomimes.' Indeed all kings must link together the Three Systems so that the way of governance will not be one-sided and undistinguished."⁶⁵

The *Book of Odes*, according to Liu, also embodied the idea of the "Three Systems":

Much in the *Odes* talks about the Three Beginnings (*san-cheng*) [of the Three Systems], but none is as clear as the Three Sacrificial Odes (*san-sung* 三頌) [of Chou, Lu and Shang]. Confucius ... talked about the demise of Shang and Chou by ending [his *Odes*] with the Three Sacrificial Odes. Is this not clear proof that [he] regarded Chou as the immediate predecessor, saw Sung as the more remote predecessor, and took *Lu-sung* 魯頌 (Sacrificial Odes of Lu) as [a reversion to] Hsia, [thereby establishing Lu] as the new king? Having taken [the king envisioned in] the *Lu-sung* as the new king and placing it after the *Chou-sung* 周[頌], and then placing the *Shang-sung* after the *Lu-sung* in order to show clearly that it was Yin which succeeded Hsia, is it not the same as stating that the ways of the Three Sovereigns alternated cyclically in like manner? Therefore one cannot talk about the Five Classics with one who does not understand the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The *Annals* is the key to the Five Classics.⁶⁶

Elsewhere, in his study on the *Analects* based on Ho Hsiu's annotations and ideas, Liu again elucidated the idea of the "Three Systems" when he explained this utterance by Confucius: "Chou had the advantage of surveying the two preceding dynasties. How richly endowed was its culture! I follow Chou." Liu commented: "There is a triple changing of the beginning of the year. Refinement and Simplicity alternate cyclically. Therefore, kings must

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.14141. Liu also wrote a series of works to refute Cheng Hsuan's works which criticized Ho Hsiu: *Fa mo-shou p'ing* [A critique of *Fa mo-shou*], *Ku-liang fei-chi shen-Ho* [An elaboration on Ho's *Ku-liang fei-chi*] and *Chen kao-huang p'ing* [A critique of *Chen kao-huang*]. Moreover, Liu devoted a separate work in two *chuan* to exposing the demerits of the *Tso Commentary*, entitled *Tso-sbib Ch'un-ch'iu k'ao-cheng* [A philological investigation of the *Tso Commentary*]. Liu had also written another work entitled *Shen Ho nan Cheng* [Expounding Ho and criticizing Cheng] in five *chuan*, in which he dissected the shortcomings of both the *Tso* and the *Ku-liang Commentaries*. But this work is no longer extant.

⁶⁵ HCCC, p.14030.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.14031.

⁶⁷ *Lun-yü sbu-Ho* [The *Analects* in accordance with Ho (Hsiu)], included in HCCC, pp.14209–14221. The quote here is from p.14212.

⁶⁸ HCCC, p.14030.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese philosophy*, vol.1, p.282 (translation modified).

link together the Three Systems. Chou surveyed Hsia and Yin, changing the Simplicity of Yin and adopting the Refinement of Hsia. Confucius created the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, changing the Refinement of Chou and following the Simplicity of Yin. This is what [Confucius] described as ‘following Chou’. To ride in the state carriage of Yin was to follow Simplicity. To wear the ceremonial cap of Chou was to follow Refinement.”⁶⁷ Liu thus gave the idea of the “Three Systems” a classical basis and origin.

Significantly, he also problematized the concept by suggesting that it carried different meanings for the ancient sages and the later Confucians respectively, thereby hinting that the Spring and Autumn period inaugurated a new beginning, a new series of developments which had broken off from the cyclical alternation of antiquity:

Speaking from the vantage point of the later Confucians (*bou-ju* 後儒), [linking the Three Systems] means emulating the later kings (*fa bou-wang* 法後王). Speaking from the vantage point of the sages, [it] means the cyclical alternation of the ways of the Three Sovereigns, which reverted to the beginning when coming to the end, and returned to the origin when exhausted. [It] does not merely show that the Mandate of Heaven was bestowed on many, not just on one family.⁶⁸

The key phrase here is “emulating the later kings.” The exact meaning of “the later kings” was by no means clear. Hsün-tzu had used the term to refer to the early kings of Chou, as opposed to the sage-kings of high antiquity. It was in fact an important concept in Hsün-tzu’s perception of Antiquity and Chou institutions:

A king’s institutions should not depart from those of the Three Dynasties [Hsia, Shang, Chou]; its methods should not differ from those of the later kings But there were many sage-kings. Which shall I follow? When rites are too ancient, their forms are no longer intact. When music is too ancient, its details are lost. The officers in charge fail to keep these when they are too ancient. Hence it is said: If you wish to see the footprints of the sage-kings, look where they are clearest—that is to say, to the later kings.⁶⁹

What did Liu mean by “later kings”? They naturally could not refer to the ancient sage-rulers such as the Three Sovereigns, for Liu specifically separated them from the later kings. Moreover, it is semantically incongruous for the term to mean the early sage-kings. Did Liu use it in the same way as Hsün-tzu? This is quite unlikely, for if “later kings” referred to the early Chou kings, then where did the state of Lu and Confucius fit in? How could the concept of “taking the king envisioned in the *Ch’un-ch’iu* as the new king” and the attendant idea of “crowning Lu” be substantiated? Judging from the immense importance of Confucius and the *Annals* in Liu’s scheme of things, it seems highly likely that “the later kings” referred to Confucius in particular and the Lu regime in general:

There is invariably a triple changing of the beginning of the year; therefore the *Annals* modified Refinement and adopted Faithfulness. Refinement and Simplicity must alternate cyclically; therefore the *Annals* altered Refinement and adhered to Simplicity. It received the mandate in order to honour Heaven and Earth; therefore it first established the fine beginnings, eventually accomplishing the task of securing orderly rule. The phoenix sent forth propitious omens; the hundred beasts danced [in joy]; the music of Shao with its pantomimes was thus composed. Henceforth, upholding and implementing the way of "beginning with the Origin and ending with [the capture of] the *lin* [i.e. the way of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*]" would mean the absence of calamities in the thousands of ages to come.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ HCCC, pp.14030-1.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.14211.

⁷² Ibid., p.14212.

The idea that Confucius had laid down flawless guidelines for posterity was more clearly expressed in Liu's work on the *Analects* when he explicated this statement by Confucius, "Whatever others may succeed Chou, their character, even a hundred ages hence, can be known":

By "succeeding Chou," [Confucius] meant "taking Chou as the immediate predecessor," "recognizing Sung as the more remote predecessor," and "regarding the king envisioned in the *Annals* as the new king." Modifying the Refinement of Chou, adding on the Faithfulness of Hsia, altering the Refinement of Chou—these are the sage's deeds which cannot be confounded in the hundred ages hence. Following them results in orderly rule; diverging from them results in disorder.⁷¹

The implication of this comment is that Confucius' deeds and words were so perfect that they became the archetype, the paragon, which succeeding ages were to follow and emulate. While Confucius worked in accordance with the pattern of dynastic succession of antiquity, the hundred ages since his time would labour in the shadow of Confucius the sage.

The notion of the pivotal location of Confucius in history was even more directly articulated when Liu explained the significance of the following statement by Confucius: "I can describe the rituals of the Hsia, but the descendant state of Ch'i cannot offer adequate corroboration. I can describe the rituals of Yin, but the descendant state of Sung cannot offer adequate corroboration. In all, it is because of the insufficiency of their records. If they were adequate, I could then corroborate my views." Liu glossed the statement as follows:

The Master learnt of the seasons of Hsia from Ch'i. With [this knowledge] he described the rituals of Hsia. From Sung, he learnt about the *ch'ien* 乾 and *k'un* 坤, with which [he] described the rituals of Yin. Regrettably, their records were all insufficient for any adequate corroboration. Therefore he used the histories and writings of the various states, appropriated [sources] belonging to the same category as the seasons of Hsia, and the [broad] meanings of *ch'ien* and *k'un*, investing the state of Lu with the principle of kingship (*wang-fa* 王法), relegating Ch'i and taking Sung as the more remote predecessor, and making modifications and additions in accordance with the rituals of Chou so as to rule the hundred ages hence.⁷²

⁷³ Ibid., p.14109.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.14087.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Thus in Liu's view, Confucius implemented the practice of "linking the Three Systems," out of which grew the principle of kingship, efficacious for the rule of the hundred ages hence. In fact, despite Confucius' mission to save the declining Eastern Chou—Confucius had asked, "If there were one willing to employ me, might I not create an Eastern Chou?"—Liu contended that "Heaven did not desire that Confucius rescue Eastern Chou from chaos, but rather mandated him, through the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, to rescue the ten thousand ages from chaos."⁷³ Since Confucius occupied such a crucial place in history, it is small wonder that Liu Feng-lu emphasized the notions of "crowning Lu" and "regarding the king envisioned in the *Annals* as the new king":

What is known as "crowning Lu" is to consider the king envisioned in the *Annals* as the new king. The Master [Confucius] received the Mandate to create institutions, thinking that building them on empty words would not be as far-reaching and as poignant as [revealing them] in actual deeds. He therefore referred to the histories and records, imbuing them with the purposes of the kings. Mencius said that the *Annals* consisted of the affairs of the Son of Heaven. Why was it that in creating the institutions of the new king, which awaited their implementation by later sages, the state of Lu was chosen? It is said: "To write in accordance with the history of Lu was to avoid the act of usurpation in creating institutions." Moreover, the history with which Confucius was most familiar was that of Lu. Therefore Lu was projected as the capital in order that he could elaborate on the essential substance of governance.⁷⁴

Confucius became king by virtue of his creating the institutions to be implemented by the later sages. Such a claim to authority did not challenge the sovereignty and legitimacy of Chou. To propound his ideas through the history of the Lu house was precisely to avoid the suspicion of usurping the authority of Chou.

Liu then used the metaphor of sun and fire to illustrate the meaning of "crowning Lu," pinpointing the difference between the sage-kings and the Lu king envisioned in the *Annals*:

When a sage occupies the throne, it is as if the sun illuminates the sky. Nothing in the multitude of states that is obscure and concealed is not made translucent Such was the case with Yao, Shun, Yü, T'ang, Wen and Wu. When a sage does not occupy the throne, it is as if fire lights up the earth. Without the aid of firewood and the like, its brightness cannot be brought into existence and its use cannot spread. Had Heaven not given birth to Confucius, antiquity would have been like a long night. The case of the *Annals* was analogous. Thus when the sun has returned its brightness to the west, fire is used to succeed it. With the death of Yao, Shun, Yü, T'ang, Wen and Wu, the *Annals* was used to rule the world. Henceforth, even for a hundred ages people were to be familiar with it.⁷⁵

Liu here elucidated the symbolic nature of the idea of "crowning Lu." Although Confucius was not a king, he was a sage, and his ideals expressed

in the *Annals* were just as exalted as those of the sage-kings, especially in an age when the authority of the Chou king had been weakened to the point where chaos and disorder reigned supreme. In an era of conflicts among feudal lords and barbarian encroachment on the Chinese hegemony, the *Annals* “unified the Three Beginnings and rectified the ten thousand ages.” Liu further described the accomplishment of Confucius:

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.14074.

[Confucius] received the Mandate to create institutions, referring to the treasured writings of the one hundred and twenty states, passing judgment on the actions of the two hundred and forty years [of Lu history], lambasting King P'ing above and commoners below, lambasting the Dukes of Lu internally and the states of Wu and Ch'u externally... . The *Spring and Autumn Annals*, wishing to expel the barbarian state of Ch'u, thus first corrected the [problems in the] Chinese hegemony; wishing to correct the [problems in the] Chinese hegemony, it first corrected the [problems in the] capital; wishing to correct the scholars and commoners, it first corrected the ministers; wishing to correct the ministers, it first corrected the various feudal lords; wishing to correct the feudal lords, it first corrected the Son of Heaven. Since the capital and the Son of Heaven could not be [directly] corrected, they were corrected by investing Lu with kingship; since the various feudal lords and ministers could not be [directly] corrected, they were corrected by way of illuminating the righteous amongst them.⁷⁶

The *Spring and Autumn Annals*, as the embodiment of the pragmatic ideals of Confucius, sought to combat indirectly the problems that beleaguered the Chou regime. Given the gravestate of degeneration of the Chou house, hope lay in the rise of a new System, as expressed in the ideas of “crowning Lu” and “regarding the king envisioned in the *Ch'un-ch'iu* as the new king.” Confucius himself once lamented: “For long I have not dreamed as I did in the past that I saw the Duke of Chou.” But with the promulgation of the *Annals*, the hundred ages to come would know the way to good government.

In sum, Liu Feng-lu did what Chuang Ts'un-yü did not do, that is, to undertake a focussed exposition of the three *chih* (Points) of the first *k'o* (Category) of the *ta-i* (Great Principles) of the *Kung-yang Commentary*. But as with Chuang Ts'un-yü, Liu conceptualized the idea of “linking the Three Systems” in such a way as to dismantle the Han teleological scheme by situating the “Three Systems” historically in antiquity. Confucius and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* heralded a new beginning and established for posterity the way of governance, the upholding of which would usher in order. What Liu sought to erect was a usable symbol to explain and legitimize modes of action through which political and moral ideals could be realized. The ideas of “crowning Lu” and “regarding the king envisioned in the *Annals* as the new king” were such symbols.

These symbols, notwithstanding their claim to perpetuity, were in fact founded on a particular order of time. Liu's conception of the symbolic roles of Confucius and the *Annals* was founded on an order of time which, to

⁷⁷ Frank Kermode, *The sense of an ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.72.

⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, pp.70–5.

⁷⁹ Ernst Cassirer, *An essay on man* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1944), p.172.

borrow Frank Kermode's word, could be described as "angelic." Kermode has shown how St Thomas developed a rationale for angels who were in between God and man. While God was eternal and perfect, thus transcending time, man was mortal and imperfect, irrevocably time-bound by birth and death. Angels, being incorporeal yet not pure beings like God, had to live in a particular order of time, "participating in both the temporal and eternal. [This order of duration] does not abolish time or spatialize it; it coexists with time, and is a mode in which things could be perpetual without being eternal."⁷⁷

In Liu's scheme, Confucius was not Heaven: he received the Mandate from Heaven. He was a sage whose words and deeds possessed a kind of perpetuity in that they became manifestly perennial guides to action. Thus what Liu conjured up was, on the one hand, a palpably recognizable form of immortality in terms of sagehood, a powerful symbol seeking to reconcile the temporal flux defined by beginnings and ends, and, on the other, an image of endlessness. This order of time did not nullify the uniqueness of historical events. Rather, it coexisted with history. Confucius and the *Annals* signified the *perennitas* of the way of governance created with the sanction of antiquity. It helped make sense of the ethical, moral, social and political problems with which posterity would have to come to grips.⁷⁸

Seen in a different light, Liu's scheme resolved the tension between Being (Heaven and eternity) and Becoming (humanity and history). The realm of humanity and its changing mundane affairs was no longer pitted against the eternal realm of Heaven as two disparate realms of being. Rather, the dualism became a logical one, denoting two conditions or categories of empirical knowledge. Ernst Cassirer has posited that change alone does not define the world of history. This world consists inexorably of a substantive element of being which lends an identity of form to any description of the historical realities of place and time. Great historians have striven to unravel precisely what the constant features of human nature are behind the temporal flux of the human world. Jacob Burckhardt, for instance, saw the ascertaining of the constant, recurrent and typical elements as the goal of a historian.⁷⁹ Liu Fenglu found these elements in the *Annals* of Confucius: they partook of both perpetuity and change. The worlds of humanity and history were to be measured against the grand design erected in the *Annals*. But the symbolism in the latter must also be understood through a grasp of the actual historical data provided by the former.

To interpret Liu's New Text thought in such a manner is not to claim that he had already developed a modern historical consciousness which saw the historical process as totally contingent and particular. However, his interpretations of "Crowning Lu" and the "Three Systems" did demolish the Han New Text teleology of tripartite cyclical alternation by placing it in antiquity, thereby historicizing it. On the other hand, the timeless archetype of Confucius and the *Annals* served as a powerful symbol, according to which the

ensuing ages would pursue proper actions to realize moral and political ideals.

⁸⁰ HCCC, p.14102.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Consequently, Liu found confrontation with change in the historical world an inevitability. Confucius himself was cognizant of this, as evidenced by his treatment of the barbarian states in the Spring and Autumn period. The ideal of the *Annals* was the age of Universal Peace when the core of the Chinese hegemony, the Lu state, would be able to pacify the world and create a centre of leadership to which the various barbarian states would be drawn as feudal lords. But the reality was that in the period, states such as Ch'in, Ch'u and Wu, which had been regarded as culturally inferior, were able to establish leadership in the Chinese hegemony, effectively overshadowing the house of Chou and other Chinese states. Instead of castigating them or deliberately ignoring the circumstances, Confucius examined them dispassionately and meted out judgments in accordance with the practical realities of the day. In a section entitled "Ch'in Ch'u Wu chin-ch'u-piao" 秦楚吳進黜表 (A Table of Promotion and Demotion with regard to the States of Ch'in, Ch'u and Wu), in his first explicatory work on Ho Hsiu, Liu Feng-lu wrote:

Of old, when the sage [Confucius] compiled the *Book of Documents*, concerning Eastern Chou he preserved only "The Charge to Prince Wen" (*Wen-hou chib ming* 文侯之命) and "The Speech of the Duke of Ch'in" (*Ch'in-shih* 秦誓), in order to illustrate the grand principles of its [Eastern Chou's] rise and fall. When editing the *Book of Odes*, he included Ch'in [odes] in [the section on] *feng* 風 (folksongs as lessons in manners). In the preface to the [Ch'in *feng* ode] "The Reeds and Bulrushes" (*Chien-chia* 蒹葭), [Confucius] wrote: "[The Ch'in state] did not yet employ the rituals of Chou." In the preface to the [Ch'in *feng* ode] "The Mountain of Chung-nan" (*Chung-nan* 終南), he wrote: "[Ch'in] was capable of capturing the land of Chou." Thus, he determined that the replacement of Chou and the changing of its institutions began with [the rise of] Ch'in. How profoundly deep and precisely clear were his words!⁸⁰

Liu then went on to describe how Confucius considered Ch'in as a state with righteous rule and good administration:

Initially, Ch'in was a small state in a remote region. The Chinese hegemony excluded it and compared it to the northern and western barbarians. But its territories were the former land of Chou. It possessed the teachings of Kings Wen and Wu on loyalty and trustworthiness. It [did not] have the intention to indulge in perversity, vanity or extravagance, nor did it have a tradition of lewdness, sloth, torpidity and laziness. Therefore, its [language and sounds] in the *Book of Odes* were considered to be those of Hsia. In the *Annals*, there is no record of any act of usurpation of the [Chou] kings or treachery against the Chinese hegemony, nor of such calamities as the usurping or killing of kings by ministers. Therefore the *Annals* treated it as a small state, regarding it as part of the internal core.⁸¹

In fact, according to Liu, Confucius also bestowed accolades on the state of Ch'u whose internal and external policies were well implemented. Because

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.14028.

the sage measured the fortunes of the leadership of the outer and core states according to their propriety and righteousness . . . , he praised the integrity of Duke Chuang of Ch'u and Duke Mu of Ch'in. He concluded that had there been no Duke Huan or Duke Wen, the Chinese hegemony would have come into their [Duke Chuang's and Duke Mu's] hands much earlier. It would not have had to wait until the final reigns of Duke Ting and Duke Ai for Ch'u to establish its sovereign domain.⁸²

It was quite understandable, therefore, that Confucius should have lamented: "The Chinese state is the new barbarian state," inferior to Ch'in and Ch'u. Liu concluded:

Reading the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Documents*, it may be known that it was Ch'in that replaced Chou. As for the degeneration of the institutions of Chou, even the sage could not have revived them."⁸³

In other words, through his exposition of the "Three Systems," Liu advanced the view that historical change was inevitable. It was thus appropriate that Confucius assessed circumstances in accordance with their particular needs and problems. Liu's positing of an "angelic" order of time and his conception of sagely ideals with trans-historical efficacy were balanced by his acceptance of the human order of successive time and his recognition of historical change.

Liu's interpretation of the other central New Text notion, "Unfolding the Three Ages," did not differ significantly from Ho Hsiu's. We recall that it was Ho who invested this notion with historicist and political meaning. In its original form it was a vehicle for moral judgments, using different language to describe events from different periods and in the process make the appropriate evaluation. While Ho Hsiu expanded the notion into an amalgam of stylistic-cum-moral prescription and historical schema, Liu Feng-lu's version was equally encompassing. In his explication of Ho Hsiu's commentary, Liu began by explaining "Unfolding the Three Ages" in terms of the purposeful phraseological manipulations in the *Annals'* narrative:

The [*Kung-yang*] *Commentary* states: "*Li* (禮, ritual-norms) are born of the dispassionate criticism of those closest to oneself and the categorizing of the exalted and upright." The *Spring and Autumn Annals*, in accordance with *li*, achieved Universal Peace. The meaning of *k'un* and *ch'ien* were used therein to discuss the way of *the yin*, and Hsia seasonal categories were used to examine the way of Hsia. Without clear categorization, how could meaning be properly established? Therefore the twelve reigns were divided into three categories: [in the category of] events personally witnessed by Confucius (*yu chien*), there were three reigns; [in that of] events heard of through the accounts of living elders (*yu wen*) there were four reigns; [in that of] events heard of through transmitted records (*yu ch'uan-wen*) there were five reigns. Respecting *yu chien*, [Confucius] used subtle language; respecting *yu wen*, he expressed pain and sorrow over disasters; respecting *yu ch'uan-wen*, he conquered his feelings of sympathy and empathy [and expressed himself dispassionately]. In

so doing, a distinction was made between the governments of the core and those of the outer realm, the gradual transformative power of kingship was illuminated, and [the principle of] using detailed or scant description implemented.⁸⁴

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.14028.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.14029.

⁸⁷ The six formation types (*liu-shu*) mentioned here by Liu refer to the six major principles according to which Chinese characters are formed. For a succinct explication of these principles see R. H. Mathews, *A Chinese-English dictionary* (Shanghai: China Inland Mission and Presbyterian Mission Press, 1931), p.598. Further information can be found on pp.80, 133, 202, 347, 374 and 380.

In this passage, Liu summarized what Tung Chung-shu and Ho Hsiu had contended, namely, that moral meaning was infused into the narrative of the *Annals* by the use of appropriately chosen language. This particular strategy also illuminated the principles defining the political culture: the distinguishing of the inner and the outer, and the moral suasive power of proper rulership.

Liu concluded by pointing to the highly symbolic nature of the *Annals'* message: "The weaker the state of Lu became, the more extensive the transformative [power] of the *Annals* . . . ; the more chaotic the world became, the more efficacious the words of the *Annals* in bringing about orderly rule."⁸⁵ Thus the intensity and efficacy of the *Annals'* words were in inverse proportion to the moral level of the day. The hopelessness of the actual situation stood out in sharp relief against the power of the exalted ideals expressed in the *Annals*. The nature and function of the *Annals* thus became clear: it was a pragmatic and employable symbol of what ought to have and could have been done. As reality drifted further and further away from the ideals of the *Annals* and plunged into chaos, the order envisaged in the *Annals* emerged as a magnificent ideal construct which, nonetheless, was practically realizable here and now.

Liu interpreted the idea of "Unfolding the Three Ages" as an ideal historical schema. The schema started at the point when order is emerging from disorder, moved on to the age of "Approaching Peace," and culminated in an age of "Universal Peace."⁸⁶ The political realities had developed in an exactly contrary direction. Thus the moribund Chou state correlated (paradoxically) with the *Annals'* envisioned age of Universal Peace.

Liu's discussion of the notion of the Three Ages seemed thus far to be confined to the Spring and Autumn period. But in his *Ch'un-ch'iulun* 春秋論 (A Treatise on the *Ch'un-ch'iu*), he hinted at its broad implications:

The *Annals* illuminated the laws of rulership by way of the history of Lu, changing the institutions of Chou and awaiting the later sages [who would realize its ideals]. It was like the borrowed characters (*chia-chieh* 假借) in the six formation types (*liu-shu* 六書), and like the practice of abstracting meaning by taking passages out of context when studying the *Book of Odes*. Therefore, although the [Dukes of] Ch'i, Hsiang, Ch'u and Ling were seen as departing from the Way, and the deeds of Chi-chung, Shih-man and Ku-shu viewed with suspicion, they were all borrowed in order to illuminate the principles of attacking evil, of righteous revenge, of acting in accordance with the exigencies of circumstance, and of the surrender of states, commending them in [subtle] words, not with explicit praise. The *Annals* established the laws of a hundred kings. In no way were they designed for one event or one person. Therefore it was said that respecting *yu chien*, [Confucius] used subtle language; respecting *yu wen*, he expressed sorrow and pain over disasters; respecting *yu*

⁸⁸ The *Ch'un-chiu lun* is included in *Ch'ing-ju hsueh-an* [Studies on the Ch'ing Confucians], comp. Hsu Shih-ch'ang (Tientsin, preface 1938), 75: 23b.

⁸⁹ *HCCC*, p.14048.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.14034.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.14059.

ch'uan-wen, he conquered his feelings of sympathy and empathy [and expressed himself dispassionately] In the age of *so-wen*, he envisioned orderly rule and Approaching Peace; in the age of *so-chien*, he envisioned Universal Peace.⁸⁸

Judging by Liu's contention that the *Annals* "established the laws of a hundred kings," it seems plausible to argue that he rendered the Three Ages into symbolic data that would find their substantiation in later historical events and people. Such a conception was in accord with Liu's tendency to see the *Annals* as sempiternally symbolic, something at once consummated yet awaiting consummation in the realm of history. In other words, with Confucius' illumination of the laws of rulership, the Three Ages had evolved and Universal Peace had been achieved. But since such laws were "the laws of a hundred kings," the Three Ages, logically, would see their manifestation in the hundred ages to come.

In the final analysis, Liu Feng-lu's New Text learning was directed towards the problem of building a good society and government by harking back to the *Annals* as interpreted in the Kung-yang tradition. Notions of "Linking the Three Systems" and "Unfolding the Three Ages" were largely normative and political in nature. The moral-educational component in the "Three Ages" concept disclosed life in the light of the proper, or improper, behaviour of individuals in the public arena. The "Three Systems" approach sought to bring harmony to what was an inescapable fact of life in a political society, namely, the succession of authorities. Liu's New Text thought, dwelling on what had actually happened and on the experience encapsulated in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* delivered promises of certainty in the management of political affairs. The questions addressed by Liu's classical scholarship were, after all, pragmatic ones: "Management of the world (*ching-shih* 經世) was the purpose of the ancient kings. The sage [Confucius] discussed it without reserve."⁸⁹ Liu maintained that "the *Annals* linked together the institutions and rituals of the Three Dynasties and revealed them to people [by describing actual] circumstances. Its purpose was the management of the world."⁹⁰ What the *Annals* prescribed for posterity was the "governance of the ruler" (*wang-cheng* 王政).⁹¹ The *Annals* was not only, as Tung Chung-shu had claimed, "the grand ancestor of *li* (ritual-norms), but it was also a "book of law and punishment" (*hsing-shu* 刑書):

The way espoused by the *Annals* began with the Origin and ended with [the capture of] the *lin* [It was] awe-inspiring and majestic, but was not tested. [It] had laws and punishments, but [these] were not used. It was the ultimate path to Universal Peace. But the significance [of the *Annals*] was great as regards the extirpation of disorder. Thus, severe laws were used in the establishment of punishment The original intent [of the work] was, however, to destroy the will [to do evil], to restrain [evil] before [it] materialized. It established severe laws but the implementation of the laws [was based on] clemency. Using them rarely was to educate; using them repeatedly was to be tyrannical The *Annals* revealed that which was constant and concealed that

which was expedient. Virtue came first; punishment and law came last
Punishment and law ran counter to virtue but were also in accord with virtue.
They belonged to the category of measures imposed by necessity."⁹²

⁹² Ibid., p.14083.

Thus the *Annals*, as norms or laws, were of practical value in the pursuit of good government and moral rulership.

Epilogue: Ruminations on Internal History

It has been the primary goal of this essay to delineate an internal history of New Text learning. This history is admittedly not a continuous one. The New Text classical tradition first emerged in the Western Han and established a system of ideas, a verbal culture with specific precepts, meanings and vocabulary. It prescribed a particular way of making sense of the classics and of the ancient past, and projected such an understanding onto the future by suggesting a teleological historical schema. It was only in the eighteenth century that a group of scholars, including Chuang Ts'un-yü and Liu Feng-lu, again appealed to this structure of ideas and succeeded in establishing its development as a significant project within the Ch'ing intellectual universe. Yet despite the temporal disjunction, New Text learning of the Han and of the Ch'ing displayed a great measure of unity, inasmuch as the latter incarnation adopted the general content of Han classicism. But as this essay has also sought to show, Ch'ing New Text learning, as a time-specific cultural entity, was not mimetic. Both Chuang and Liu ultimately distilled new meaning and import from the ancient exegetical tradition.

⁹³ Mandelbaum, *History of ideas*, p.54.

To embark on an analysis of the internal history of New Text learning, as this paper has done, is to reveal the changes that the Ch'ing New Text scholars wrought. Indeed, the notion of *change* here is more properly conceived in terms of the concept of *development*. Maurice Mandelbaum has urged us to differentiate between them in a historical enterprise that seeks to illuminate the relationship between two putatively connected events or phenomena:

The concept of development is to be differentiated from the general notion of change, in that 'development' always includes the implication of a directional pattern in which the change proceeds. Unlike random changes, ... the notion of development involves a directional order, not merely with respect to time but also with respect to some quality possessed by the successive members of the series."⁹³

That there is this directional pattern results from the substantive content of the progenitor. To the extent that Ch'ing New Text learning consciously harked back to the original Han verbal culture, the changes it made were naturally developmental in nature. It is precisely the aim of this essay to trace those "developments" having a "directional pattern" within the New Text intellectual tradition, through the pursuit of an internal history of ideational contents.

⁹⁴ Here I adopt Paul K. Conkin's definition of intellectual history. See his "Intellectual history: past, present, and future," in *The future of history*, ed. Charles F. Delzell (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1977), pp.113–14, and also John C. Greene, "Objectives and methods in intellectual history," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (1957–58): 58–9.

⁹⁵ "A brief defense of political and intellectual history ... with particular reference to non-Western cultures," in *Historical studies today*, ed. Felix Gilbert and Stephen Graubard (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p.450.

On-cho Ng

Department of History
Pennsylvania State University
Pennsylvania, USA

After all, then, this has been a defence of intellectual history as internal history focussed on "concepts and beliefs" and "the content of thought."⁹⁴ While the external non-ideational context of a system of ideas—the biography of a thinker, the political and social circumstances, the material exigencies—often sheds light on why and how it appears, such a context often says little about what the precise content of that thought is. Chuang Ts'un-yü and Liu Feng-lu were officials and lineage leaders; as such, their political and social lives may have penetrated their intellectual universe. But they were also bona fide scholars. As Benjamin Schwartz has reminded us:

Intellectuals, unless they are blatant propagandists, have always regarded themselves as being engaged in a truth-seeking or truth-proclaiming enterprise designed to cope with the mysteries of man and the universe. They have thus always implicitly attributed to their own conscious efforts a certain degree of transcendence over various class interests, psychological motives, and other factors which can be viewed as the hidden springs of their behavior. Indeed, most of them have tended to assume that their ideas could even have effects on the world surrounding them.⁹⁵

Thus, Chuang's and Liu's scholastic turn to the New Text tradition might simply have been their search for and proclamation of truth. Thoughts are not necessarily ideology.

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