

# Some Preliminary Notes on the Authenticity of the Treatise on Music in *Shiji* 24

Hans van Ess (München)

## 1 The problem and its discussion in Chinese scholarship since the Qing period

Despite a general growth in interest in China's first comprehensive history, the *Shiji* 史記, the treatises contained in this book have not yet received much attention in Western sinology. One reason for this is that the third-century commentator Zhang Yan 張晏 identified the three treatises on rites, music and the pitch pipes as belonging to those chapters which Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) in a famous passage has described as “missing”:

而十篇缺，有錄無書。<sup>1</sup>

But ten chapters are missing, there are records, but there is no text.

Ever since this statement was made, Chinese scholars have levelled criticism against these treatises. Many said that they were at least partly written by Chu Shaosun 褚少孫,<sup>2</sup> about fifty years after the death of Sima Qian 司馬遷. However, there also have always been voices saying that at least some of these chapters were authentic material written down by Sima Qian himself.<sup>3</sup> Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722–1798), for example, wrote in his *Discussions on the Seventeen Histories* (*Shiqi shi shangque* 十七史商榷):

禮書，樂書雖是取荀卿禮記，其實亦是子長筆，非後人所補。<sup>4</sup>

Although the Treatises on Rites and the Treatise on Music were taken from Hsün Qing and from the *Records on Rites*, this is actually also the brush of [Sima] Zizhang (Qian). They have not been inserted by later scholars.

In his *Shiji zhibi* 史記札記 (Detailed Notes on the Records of the Scribe), Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾 (1818–1891) said:

太史公禮樂二書皆采綴舊文為之，僅有前序，其文亦疏緣。禮樂者，聖人所以紀綱萬事，宰制群動，太史公列為八書之首，而於漢家制度無一語及之，此必史公欲然有不足於心者，故虛立其篇名而隱其文，蓋猶叔孫通傳魯兩生之言『禮樂所由起，積德百年而

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1 *Hanshu* 漢書 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1962), 62/2724. Compare similar statements in *Shiji* (Peking: Zhonghua, 1959), 130/3321, n. 3321, *Houban shu* 後漢書 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1965), 40A/1325, and *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Peking: Zhonghua 1959), 13/418 which, however, discusses only the loss of the Annals of Emperor Jing 景 and Emperor Wu 武, repeating Ban Gu's words “there are records, but there is no text”.

2 For more details on Chu Shaosun, see Dorothee Schaab-Hanke, “Did Chu Shaosun contribute to the tradition of the Scribe?,” *Oriens Extremus* 44 (2003/04), 11–26.

3 The most convenient place to look for these opinions is *Lidai mingjia ping Shiji* 歷代名家評史記, ed. Yang Yanqi 楊燕起, Chen Keqing 陳可青 and Lai Changchang 賴長揚 (Peking: Beijing shifan daxue, 1986), 225–254. This section deals with authenticity in general. A special section of comments is devoted to the Treatise on Music on 416–420. There, too, the main focus is laid on questions of authenticity.

4 *Ibid.*, 230.

後可興也，吾不忍為公所為』<sup>5</sup>，但與明其義而已。三代禮樂無復可徵，秦漢以下不足言矣，此史公之意也，概以為褚少孫所補非也。<sup>6</sup>

The two treatises on rites and music of the Lord Grand Scribe have both been made by assembling old texts. At the beginning there are just prefaces, the text of which is also rather loose. Rites and music are what the sages used as a framework for all things and to direct the various activities. The Lord Grand Scribe ranked them at the top of the eight treatises, but [in them] did not mention the rules and regulations of the house of Han with a single word. This must be because the Lord Grand Scribe was disgusted and discontented at his heart. Therefore he emptily established the chapter-titles but hid the corresponding text. This was probably similar to [Sima Qian's text] in the biography of Shusun Tong on the speech of the two scholars from Lu who said: "As far as the point from which rites and music start is concerned, one can revive them only after one has accumulated virtue for a hundred years. We can not bring ourselves to do what you are doing!" These [words] were just written to illuminate his righteousness. Rites and music of the three dynasties could not be re-established anymore, and those existing since the Qin and the Han were not worth mentioning. This was the opinion of the Lord Grand Scribe. To think that this was inserted by Chu Shaosun is certainly mistaken.

What Guo Songtao suggests here is that Sima Qian himself inserted treatises on rites and music which were based on texts written by earlier authors and which thus showed the model of the glorious past. According to Guo, Sima Qian did this because he wanted to make the reader understand that by not speaking about the Han he expressed his dissatisfaction with their regulations.

As most of the treatises of the *Shiji*, the Treatise on Music, "Yueshu" 樂書, is divided in two parts, the first being a short historical introduction, the second a theoretical dissertation on the subject. While the majority of the dissertations have often been suspected of having been written or inserted into the *Shiji* by other authors, the historical introductions are usually believed to have been written by Sima Qian himself. Fang Bao 方苞 (1668–1749), a famous member of the Tongcheng pai 桐城派 in Anhui, believed that in his introduction to the Treatise on Music Sima Qian criticized Emperor Wu of the Han harshly, and that he intentionally did not write a dissertation on music because he thought that Emperor Wu's rule was so bad that there simply was no discussion necessary about it. He therefore asked:

而少孫未之或知邪？<sup>7</sup>

Did Chu Shaosun maybe not understand him?

Fang thus criticizes Chu Shaosun for inserting a text where the historian had intended to leave a blank.

It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that more and more voices started to say that even the introduction to this treatise must be a later forgery.<sup>8</sup> However, it is clear that literati at that time were following a trend of the time which was generally more critical of

5 *Shiji* 99.2722.

6 *Shiji zhuji* (Taipei: Shijie, 1960), 124.

7 *Fang Bao ji* 方苞集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1983), 2.43 ("Shu yue shu xu hou" 書樂書序後).

8 Compare, for example, the statement by Wu Rulun 吳汝綸 in *Lidai mingjia ping Shiji*, 419, a quotation of his works, published in 1904. The most prominent Chinese commentators who before that time thought that the treatise on music was entirely lost and that even the preface was inserted by a later person are Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–1296), *Kunxue jiyen* 困學紀文 (Sibu congkan ed.), 11.9a-b, and Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩 (1745–1819), *Shiji zhuji* 史記志疑 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1981), 758 f.

traditional scholarship than the average scholar of earlier epochs had been. Today, a great variety of different opinions on this matter is prevailing in China. These opinions reach from a general belief in the authenticity of these chapters to statements arguing that they must wholly have been added by a later hand.<sup>9</sup> However, as actually no new evidence could be added to what was already known in imperial China, all of the more recent arguments necessarily go back to statements which were made in the remoter past. It is the aim of this paper to reconsider the claim that the insertion of the “Yueshu” must have been made by an author who lived after Sima Qian. As will be demonstrated, it is not easy to assess which arguments are conclusive and which turn out, on closer look, to be philologically unsubstantial. Thus, the following lines are not meant as a definitive treatment of the Treatise on Music in the *Shiji* but rather as a short note on the arguments against or in favour of its authenticity.

## 2 The introduction to the treatise

### 2.1 Theoretical considerations

The introduction to the treatise begins with a confession of the Lord Grand Scribe:

余每讀虞書，至於君臣相敕，維是幾安，而股肱不良，萬事墮壞，未嘗不流涕也。

Whenever I read the passage which in the documents of Emperor Shun describes how the mutual help of a ruler and his ministers can bring about peace and how all affairs in the empire will be ruined if the members of the body are not good, I could not help but cry.

Similar introductions are to be found in other chapters of the *Shiji*: The biography of Mengzi 孟子 and the chapter on the Confucian scholars start in the same way.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, in the chapter on Yi and Ji 益稷 in the *Documents*, the metaphor “members of the body” pointing to the ministers has in fact been used, but its text is nevertheless different from the one in the *Shiji*. The text of the *Documents* runs:

9 The most important representative arguing that the preface is authentic whereas the treatise itself a later addition is Zhang Dake 張大可, “*Shiji canque yu bucan kaobian*” 史記殘缺與補竄考辨, in *Shiji yanjiu* 史記研究 (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin, 1985), 162–187. Compare the similar argument in An Pingqiu 安平秋, Zhang Dake, Yu Zhanghua 俞樟華, *Shiji jiaocheng* 史記教程 (Peking: Huawen, 2002), 384–397. Li Changzhi 李長之, *Sima Qian de renge yu fengge* 司馬遷的人格與風格 (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1948, repr. Hongkong: Taiping, 1963), 151–155, says that no chapter of the *Shiji* was lost and that the structure of the text is intentional. Zhao Shengqun 趙生群, *Shiji wenxian xue congkao* 史記文獻學叢稿 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji, 2000), 38, assumes that the text has completely been added later. Compare also the opinion of Qiu Qionsun 丘瓊蓀, *Lidai yueshi liuzhi jiaoshi* 歷代樂志律志校釋 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1964), 1–12, quoted by Martin Kern in “A Note on the Authenticity and Ideology of *Shih chi* 24, ‘The Book on Music’”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119.4 (1999), 673, who shares this opinion, as most other Western scholars do. See, for example, A.F.P. Hulsewé and Michael Loewe, *China in Central Asia: The Early Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 132 f, n. 332, and Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods (221 B.C.- A. D. 24)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 180. The modern ancestor of this radical opinion is Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫 who in his article “*Taishigong wangpian kao*” 太史公亡篇考 in *Yu Jiayi lunxue zazhu* 余嘉錫論學雜著 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1963) argues that all ten chapters which Zhang Yan mentioned were indeed lost.

10 *S. Shiji* 74.3115 and 121.2343 It would lead us too far away from our subject to discuss these passages. Yet it is interesting to note that they all deal with “Confucian” subjects. See Takigawa Kametarō’s commentary on other similar passages in Takigawa Kametarō (1865–1946), *Shiki kaichū koshō*, 史記會注考證 (reprint of Tokyo: Tōhō Bunka Gakuin, 1934, Taipei: Tiangong, 1993, 24.2.

“元首明哉，股肱良哉，庶事康哉！”又歌曰：“元首叢脞哉，股肱惰哉，萬事墮哉！”<sup>11</sup>  
 “When the head is intelligent, / The members are good; / And all business will be happily performed!” Then he sang: “When the head is vexatious, / The members are idle; / And all affairs will be ruined.”

Whoever may have written the passage in the *Shiji* was certainly not a bad author: he left out the self-critical remark by the ruler who is the speaker and put all the blame for problems which might arise in the empire on the “members of the body” by reverting the passage “the members are good” into “if the members are not good”. This, of course, is the brush which men such as Fang Bao recognized as being the one of Sima Qian himself.

The preface continues with a brief theoretical consideration about the reason why music is important. The author stresses the effect of restraint, using first the word “yue” 約<sup>12</sup> and then “jie” 節.<sup>13</sup>

海內人道益深，其德益至，所樂者益異。滿而不損則溢，盈而不持則傾。凡作樂者所以節樂。君子以謙退為禮，以損減為樂，樂其如此也。<sup>14</sup>

The deeper the way of man between the seas gets, the more exalted its potency becomes, the more extraordinary its music/what he takes pleasure in gets. [Yet] if something, when full, is not diminished it will overflow, and if something, when stuffed, is not upheld it will fall. Generally speaking, to make music serves the purpose of restraining pleasure. The superior man considers modestly stepping back as [the guiding principle] of ceremonial behaviour and reducing and declining as the one of music. He rejoices when it is like this.

The text thus contains a warning: music should be used to restrain one’s feelings when one’s power reaches the summit; it is a medicine against hubris. It then goes on to say that music is used by good rulers to order their people. When, however, the music of Zheng and Wei 鄭衛 prevails, the hearts of men will be filled with licentious thoughts. On the other hand, even animals will be moved by harmonious sounds.

而況懷五常含好惡，自然之勢也。

How much more so then those who embrace the five constant relationships, harbour likes and dislikes? This is a natural disposition!

## 2.2 The music composed under Emperor Wu of the Han in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*

From the text we then learn that, unfortunately, the music of Zheng became more and more fashionable and that even Confucius could not do anything against this trend. As a consequence the manners degenerated more and more until finally the Qin could unify the world. Yet, the Second Emperor was only interested in pleasure and did not listen to the advice of chancellor Li Si 李斯 who told him that in the remote past Zhou 紂, the last ruler of the Shang, had perished because of a similar behaviour. The Second Emperor rather accepted the advice of his eunuch Zhao Gao 趙高 who told him that the times had changed and that he did not have to think about the past. Music is not mentioned in this context, but it is clear that the

11 Translation by James Legge, *The Chinese Classics 3, The Book of Documents*, 90.

12 君子不為約則修德。

13 Scott Cook, “Xun Zi on Ritual and Music,” *Monumenta Serica* 45 (1997), 19, deals with the importance of the concept of *jie* (restraint) in the context of ritual.

14 *Shiji* 24.1175.

author of the introduction wants to remind his reader that one of the reasons why the Qin fell was that they celebrated huge parties and did not remember that a good and successful dynasty should have performed music only for solemn state ceremonies.

In his preface, the author says next to nothing about the first emperors of the Han but instead proceeds to write that Emperor Wu upon his accession wrote 19 stanzas and ordered his favourite Li Yannian 李延年, a eunuch and at the same time the brother of one of his most beloved concubines, to compose music for them. The fact that mention is made in the text of these nineteen stanzas, though the latest one of them (number 18) was only written as late as in 94 B.C., is certainly not an argument against the authorship of Sima Qian: There are many other passages in the *Shiji* which must have been written during Sima Qian's lifetime, but after the purported last end of his writing in 101 B.C., and there are even more opinions regarding the question whether these passages can or cannot still have been written by Sima Qian or not than there are opinions regarding the question of the authenticity of the Treatise on Music.<sup>15</sup> To the author of the present article it seems highly improbable that an author of the quality of Sima Qian should have been unable to add or change a bamboo-strip here or there when facts which he had described in the first draft of his book had changed after 101 B.C.

According to the preface the scholars each of whom had mastered only one of the canonical texts were, unfortunately, unable to understand the words which the Emperor had used in his composition, and a general assembly of all scholars who knew the five canonical scriptures had to be convened in order to enable them to grasp the meaning.<sup>16</sup>

This account is strange, indeed. At first sight one might think that its intention is to ridicule the Confucian scholars who were too narrow-minded to understand what the emperor and his musicians had composed. On the other hand, we know that Li Yannian and concubine Li came from an extremely low background. They had been members of a singing-group and

15 Martin Kern, "A note," 675, thinks that this is one of the pieces of evidence speaking against Sima Qian as the author of the treatise. He briefly discusses the possibility that the hymn on the Heavenly Horses could have been counted as two whereas in *Hanshu* it is numbered as one. For a treatment of the possible authors who could have written passages in the *Shiji* which deal with the time after 101 B.C., see Zhang Dake, *Shiji yanjiu*, 138–161. On p. 155, Chang comes to the conclusion that most of these passages indeed seem to reflect Sima Qian's own attitudes. For a different opinion, see Zhao Shengqun, *op.cit.*, 32–57.

16 The sentence 皆集會五經家 has been interpreted in two different ways. Kern, "A Note," 675, thinks that it means that scholars who knew all the five canonical scriptures, an innovation which came into being only under the Eastern Han, had to be convened, not only those who knew just one tradition. The commentary by Hu Sanxing 胡三省 in Takigawa 24.6 does not clarify the matter: 漢時五經之學，各專門名家，故通一經者不能盡通歌詩之辭意，必集五經家，相與講讀，乃得通也。"At the time of the Han the study of the five canonical scriptures was done by famous masters who each specialized in one school. Therefore those who studied one canonical scripture were not completely able to understand the meaning of the words of these songs. One had to convene the specialists on the five canonical scriptures and discuss and read together with them before one could penetrate their meaning." Zhang Dake in his *Shiji xinyizhu* 史記新注 (Xi'an: Huawen, 2000), 711, offers quite a different interpretation of this passage which is, in my view, well grounded. According to him, it is not said in the text that each of the specialists convened by Emperor Wu mastered *all* five canonical scriptures, but rather that each of them had merely mastered one of the Five Classics. Thus, only by sharing their knowledge with each other, they were able to provide sufficient expertise for all five canonical scriptures. The stress is on the word *jie* 皆: *all* specialists who knew one of the five canonical scriptures were called. Therefore, this is not an argument against the authenticity of the Treatise on Music.

gained favour with the emperor not because of their high qualification as experts in music but because of the fact that concubine Li was a good dancer. Li Yannian slept together with the emperor – whatever this may mean – and he rose to high prominence because of this, not because of his competence. He was killed together with all his siblings when after the death of concubine Li the love of the emperor towards the Li family slackened.<sup>17</sup>

It is obvious that, just as Fang Bao understood it, the *Shiji* account of Emperor Wu's composition of the songs for the ceremonies in the temple of the ancestors of the Han carries a strong undertone of disgust on behalf of the author. He condemns the Emperor for firstly having himself been incompetent to the task of writing a proper text for his ritual music and, secondly, for employing the wrong officials to compose the music for them. This impression is further enhanced by the fact that the preface says that only when the specialists had been convened and explained, studied and read the songs together were they able to “penetrate and understand their meaning and to appreciate the text which was close to elegance.”<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, the *Hanshu* which contains a similar but slightly longer text, both in its treatise on rites and music and in the chapter on the Emperor's male favourites mentions that in addition to Li Yannian who made the music, the famous poet Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 B.C.) was involved in the composition of the stanzas.<sup>19</sup> This fact is not mentioned in the *Shiji*, and one wonders whether Ban Gu included this element precisely because adding name and authority of the greatest writer of the age of Emperor Wu enhanced the value of the music which had been slightened by the preface contained in the *Shiji*. Although there may be similarities in the structure of the temple hymns and the poetry of Sima Xiangru,<sup>20</sup> the author of this paper does not think that we should accept the statements of Ban Gu without further

17 *Shiji* 125/3195. The whole story is a remake of the more important one of Empress Wei 衛 who, too, had been a singing-girl and risen from a lowly background to become Emperor Wu's main wife.

18 乃能通知其意，多爾雅之文。Because translators usually did not take into consideration that the whole paragraph was intended as a critique of the way how these stanzas were composed, they understood that the last sentence contains a positive remark after all. Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, vol. 3 (Paris: Leroux, 1895–1905), 235, rendered it as “qu'on rassemble tous ceux qui s'entendent aux cinq ouvrages canoniques et qu'ils s'entraident pour expliquer ensemble et pour s'exercer à lire (ces poésies), alors ils parviendront à en pénétrer la signification. Le style (de ces odes) est souvent voisin de la perfection.” The translation of Martin Kern, “A Note,” 674, follows this closely: “(...) only if one assembles all the erudites of the Five Canonical Books and has them together discuss and recite the texts may one comprehensively understand their meaning; they often are in phrases approaching the elegant standard.” Rudolf Viatkin, *Istoriceskie sapiski*, vol. 4 (Moscow 1986), 72, says: “The style of a large part of these hymns was excellent.” Compare the translations in Wang Liqi 王利器 et al., *Shiji zhuyi 史記注譯* (Xi'an, Sanqin, 1988), 885, and in Wu Shuping 吳樹平 and Lü Zongli 呂宗力 et al., *Quanzhu quanqi Shiji 全注全譯史記* (Tianjin: Tianjin guji, 1996), 1129, both of which have similar solutions. Yet, the problem is that the sentence “they often are in phrases approaching the elegant standard” would run 爾雅之文多也, not the other way round. The only way to arrive at a smooth rendering is to understand *duo* 多 as a verb subordinated to *neng* 能 in the same way as *tong* 通, which is perfectly common in Han Chinese. Interestingly, Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian 資治通鑑* (Peking: Guji, 1956), 19.636, has deleted this sentence in his own version of the story – to use this kind of open criticism of the literary style of one's emperor was impossible under the Song, and Sima Guang apparently could not imagine that a Han scholar would have dared to write a sentence such as this one.

19 *Hanshu* 22.1045, 93.3725.

20 Martin Kern has pointed these similarities out in his article “Western Han Aesthetics and Fu,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63.2 (2003), 432.

questioning. Why should Ban Gu – who wrote about one and a half century after Sima Xiangru – have known this fact, whereas the author of the preface to the Treatise on Music in the *Shiji*, just the same as Sima Qian when he wrote his biography of Li Yannian, would not? The histories should not be read as mere collections of historical documents. They are pieces of literature which, each in a different way, want to tell stories. The assumption that Sima Xiangru should have collaborated in the fabrication of the temple-hymns fits very well with the story of Ban Gu, but not with the one of Sima Qian. Although Ban Gu's text is in many regards similar to the one in the *Shiji*, it does not contain any negative remarks about the quality and the intelligibility of the songs: Sima Xiangru's texts may have been difficult, but they were perfectly understandable! Martin Kern has justly cast doubts on the claim that Sima Xiangru was the author of these hymns. The fact that Ban Gu mentions Sima Xiangru is a clear piece of evidence that the *Shiji* text is earlier than its counterpart in the *Hanshu*.<sup>21</sup> The same may be said about the fact that the *Hanshu* does not include the strange sentence about "closeness to elegance". The *Hanshu* clearly has the *lectio facilior*, which makes it plausible that it is later than the text contained in the *Shiji*.

In a paragraph which also poses some textual problems the *Shiji* continues by describing the role which music played during the sacrificial ceremonies of the Han:

漢家常以正月上辛<sup>22</sup>祠太一甘泉<sup>23</sup>，以昏時夜祠，到明而終。常有流星經於祠壇上。使僮男僮女七十人俱歌。春歌青陽，夏歌朱明，秋歌西嶠，冬歌玄冥。世多有，故不論。<sup>24</sup>

The [sovereign] of the house of Han regularly at the first hsin-day of the first month brought a sacrifice to the "Grand Unity" at [the altar] at Ganquan. When it became dark they [prepared for] a sacrifice at night, finishing at day-break. As there often were meteorites crossing the sky over the site of the altar, [the sovereign] ordered seventy boys and girls to sing together. In spring they sang the "Green Light", in summer the "Red Brightness", in autumn the "Western Brilliance" and in winter the "Dark Obscure". Many contemporaries possess [these texts], therefore I do not discuss them here.

The passage is strange for two reasons: First because it says that the Han used to offer sacrifices to Taiyi only during the first month, but that then there were songs to be chanted at the sacrifice during all the four seasons of the year. Secondly, it seems difficult at first sight to

21 See Martin Kern, *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer. Literatur und Ritual in der politischen Repräsentation von der Han-Zeit bis zu den Sechs Dynastien* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), 60 and 179–185 for doubts concerning the plausibility of the claim that Sima Xiangru was the author of the songs. Kern elsewhere discusses similarities and differences between Sima Xiangru's language and rhymes: See pp. 295, 298 and 302 f.

22 Yan Shigu on *Hanshu* 22.1046, quoted by Takigawa 24.6, explains that the first *xin* day was taken in accordance with the rules for the sacrifice to Heaven in the suburb on which see *Liji*, "Jiaode xing" (Shisan jing zhushu, repr. Peking: Zhonghua, 1980), 1452B. According to both Yan and Kong Yingda (*ibid.*), a *xin* day is taken because of the phonetically identical and semantically close character *xin* in the expression *zixin* 自新, "to renew oneself".

23 It is usually held that the state cult to Taiyi, the Grand Unity, was inaugurated only in 113 B.C. See e.g., *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 1: The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.–A.D. 220*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge, etc: Cambridge University, 1986), 171 and 663. This opinion is based on a passage in *Shiji* 28.1395 and in *Hanshu* 6.185. *Shiji* 28.1386 suggests that there was a sacrifice to Taiyi established around 133 B.C. which was, however, not performed at Ganquan. The sacrifice was certainly older than the Han. See Li Ling, "An Archaeological Study of Taiyi (Grand One) Worship," *Early Medieval China* 2 (1995–96), 1–39.

24 *Shiji* 24.1178.

explain what the meteorites should have to do with the sacrifices. Martin Kern points to the fact that later in the Han the falling of meteorites was seen as an inauspicious omen.<sup>25</sup> Yet, there is another explanation for this strange mentioning of meteorites: the Treatise on Astronomy in the *Shiji* reports the story that Duke Wen of Jin 晉文公 (r. 636–628) once found “something like a stone” (*ruo shi yun* 若石云) to which he sacrificed at a place called “Chen-Granary” (Chencang 陳倉).<sup>26</sup> It is said that sometimes the spirit related to this altar did not come during the course of a year, but that in other years it came frequently. It always came at night and it emitted a “brightness just like a meteorite” (*guang hui ruo liuxing* 光輝若流星). The sacrifice was called “Treasure from Chen”.<sup>27</sup> This was the most popular festival among the local population because the people were excited by the brightness of the meteorites. Therefore there were sacrifices to the Treasure of Chen during all the four seasons.<sup>28</sup> Obviously, Emperor Wu imitated these popular Qin sacrifices, mixing up the exalted sacrifice for Taiyi with the one of the Treasure of Chen. All four songs deal with the aspect of light, which is probably the reason why they were chanted and why the author of the treatise made this connection between the meteorites and the sacrificial hymns: They were addressed to the bright spirit. It is this subject which the author of the treatise is interested in: The songs were made on an *ad hoc* basis, not because of a special philosophy of music. This, then, is the reason why the author singled out their titles among the nineteen hymns and mentioned them. In order to understand the chronological relationship between the text as contained in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*, which is needed for dealing with questions of authenticity, we have to take a look at the way how Ban Gu structured this passage:

以正月上辛用事甘泉園丘，使童男女七十人俱歌，昏祠至明。夜常有神光如流星止集于祠壇，天子自竹宮而望拜，百官侍祠者數百人，皆肅然動心焉。<sup>29</sup>

When the sovereign at the first *xin*-day of the first month travelled to the round altar at Ganquan he ordered seventy boys and girls to sing together. One sacrificed in the darkness until day-break. At night there was often a divine light [looking] like meteorites which stopped and assembled over the site of the altar. The son of Heaven himself sat in a bamboo-palace, looking up and doing obeisance. There were several hundred officials who assisted at the sacrifice. They all stood in awe and their hearts were moved by this.

Ban Gu's version is larger than the one in *Shiji*, and it has a more logical order because the textual problems of the *Shiji* version are not to be found in the *Hanshu*. In my opinion, this is a text which again shows all signs of a *lectio facilior*. It is therefore not improbable that it is a re-written version of the passage contained in the *Shiji*, not the other way round. The *Shiji* text writes in a condescending manner, and it seems that its author did not think that the sacrifices and the music of the Han reached the high standard required for a solemn ceremony. On the other hand, the *Hanshu* text sounds very reverential.

25 Kern, *Die Hymnen*, 276f.

26 For this place which was located to the west of Xianyang s. Tan Qixiang 譚其驥, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集, vol. 1, (Peking: Ditu, 1982), 43–44, 3.8.

27 *Shiji* 28.1359.

28 *Shiji* 28.1376. The passage is difficult.

29 *Hanshu* 22.1045.

### 2.3 The Divine Horses

Finally, the author of the preface to the *Shiji* Treatise on Music describes that when under Emperor Wu divine horses were caught additional songs were composed. This is the most controversial account of the treatise, and because of this it is usually assumed that it must have been added to the preface by a later hand.<sup>30</sup> The passage is most interesting as far as its content is concerned:

又嘗得神馬渥洼水中，復次以為太一之歌。歌曲曰：「太一貢今天馬下，霑赤汗兮沫流赭。騁容與兮躡萬里，今安匹兮龍為友。」後伐大宛得千里馬，馬名蒲梢，次作以為歌。歌詩曰：「天馬來兮從西極，經萬里兮歸有德。承靈威兮降外國，涉流沙兮四夷服。」中尉汲黯進曰：「凡王者作樂，上以承祖宗，下以化兆民。今陛下得馬，詩以為歌，協於宗廟，先帝百姓豈能知其音邪？」上默然不說。丞相公孫弘曰：「黯誹謗聖制，當族。」<sup>31</sup>

Again, after one once had obtained a divine horse from the Wo-wa river a new song for the Great Unity was composed. The text of the song text says: “The Grand Unity brings tribute, / The heavenly horse descends. / Soaked with red sweat, / Bathed in liquid hematite. / Dashing forward lightly and carefree, / It crosses ten thousand miles. / Today, what could compare with it? / The dragon is its friend.” Later when Ferghana was attacked one obtained a thousand-mile horse which was named P’u-shao, and again a song was composed on that occasion. The song text runs: “The Heavenly Horse is arriving, it comes from the western pole. / Passing through ten thousand miles, it turns to the one who has potency. / Assuming numinous majesty, We subdue the outlying countries. / When we waded through the flowing sands, The Barbarians from all four directions surrendered!” The Commandant of the Capital, Ji An, stepped forward and said: “In general, when kings create music, they do it above in order to present it to their ancestors, and below in order to reform the common people. Now Your Majesty obtains a horse, write a poem which is used as a song and harmonize it in the temple of your ancestors. How shall the deceased emperors and the hundred families understand these tones?” The sovereign remained silent and was displeased. Chancellor Gongsun Hong said: “Ji An has slandered regulations made by the sage. His clan should be extinguished.”

As Liang Yusheng and others have pointed out,<sup>32</sup> there are at least two incidents which do not seem to go together well in this account at first sight. According to the Basic Annals of Emperor Wu of the Han in *Hanshu* chapter 6 the horses from the Wowa river were caught in 113 B.C. while Ji An and Gongsun Hong had died in 112 (or 109)<sup>33</sup> and 121 B.C. The second song, written after the thousand-mile horse was obtained, must have been composed in 101 when both statesmen were dead for many years already. And finally, it is said that Ji An never

30 S. Zhang Dake, *Shiji yanjiu*, 181.

31 Compare the translation by Kern, “A Note,” 674, which I am following with minor changes.

32 A convenient overview is given by Kern, “A Note,” 675, who, however, misinterprets the position of Sima Guang’s *Zizhi tongjian kaoyi* 資治通鑑考異 which will be discussed below.

33 *Shiji* 120.3109 mentions that, while Ji An was Clerk of the Western part of the Capital (you neishi 右內史), the Hunxie 渾邪 King of the Xiongnu surrendered. This event which is mentioned in several passages in *Shiji* and *Hanshu* can be dated rather conclusively to the year 121 B.C. The text continues to say that several years later, when the *wuzhu* coins were cast – an event which, according to *Hanshu* 6.179, took place in 118 B.C. –, Ji An was appointed as Governor of Huaiyang. He died seven years later, which would yield the year of 112 or 111 B.C. Xu Guang 徐廣 (352–425), quoted in *Jijie* 集解, *Shiji* 120.3111 n. 5, says that he died in the year 112, whereas *Hanshu* 50.2322 says that he died ten, not seven years after his last appointment. As is well-known, the characters for seven and ten are quite similar so that it is difficult to judge which of our texts is mistaken.

was Commandant of the Capital.<sup>34</sup> Has the story of the conflict between Ji An and Gongsun Hong just been invented by a mediocre *litteratus* who knew the famous account in *Shiji* 112, the biography of Gongsun Hong, in which another clash between the two statesmen is reported?<sup>35</sup> The biography of Ji An, too, is full of anecdotes concerning disputes between them.<sup>36</sup>

If we accept such an interpretation we are confronted with the problem that we have to assume that well-known scholars such as Wang Mingsheng or Fang Bao came to severely flawed conclusions because they did not pay attention to obvious mistakes in the *Shiji* text. Therefore, Takigawa Kametarō has suggested that the original text did not speak of Gongsun Hong and Ji An but of Gongsun He 公孫贄 and Ji Ren 汲仁.<sup>37</sup> According to him, it is possible that the names were altered by later editors. This reasoning is not implausible, since Gongsun Hong and Ji An were in Sima Qian's eyes the protagonists representing the two major factions at the court of Emperor Wu, and therefore an inattentive editor who knew the main argument of the *Shiji* but not the exact historical details may have chosen these two names simply because to mention them seemed to add more credibility to the story.<sup>38</sup> Yet, there may be other explanations for the ostensible inconsistencies in this preface, which can claim at least as much plausibility as the one advanced by Takigawa.

#### *The Problem of the Title of Ji An*

One especially salient problem with all arguments against the authenticity of the passage in question is the fact that in one way or the other they are all based on evidence which does not come from the *Shiji* but from the *Hanshu*.<sup>39</sup> Let us first turn to the question of the title of Ji An. His biography in the *Shiji* says that his first major metropolitan office was that of a "Chief Commandant of the Nobility" (zhujue duwei 主爵都尉). This title of which Sima Qian says that Ji An was "ranking among the nine ministers" (*lie yu jiuqing* 列於九卿)<sup>40</sup> was at the same time apparently the highest title ever assigned to him. When Gongsun Hong became Chancellor in 124 B.C., out of his hatred against Ji An and also because he knew that the Emperor disliked Ji An as well, he demanded that Ji should be transferred to the potentially dangerous position of a Clerk of the Western part of the Capital (you neishi 右內史). Probably around the year of 118 B.C.,<sup>41</sup> shortly after the death of Gongsun Hong, Ji An was removed from the capital and appointed as Governor of Huaiyang 淮陽.

34 Sima Guang, *Zizhi tongjian* 19.636 (commentary taken from *Zizhi tongjian k'aoyi* (Sibu congkan ed.), 1.4.

35 *Shiji* 112.2590f.

36 *Shiji* 120.3108f.

37 Takigawa Kametarō 瀧川龜太郎 (1865–1946), *Shiki kaichū kosho* 史記會注考證, (Taipei: Tiangong, 1993, repr. of Tōkyō: Tōhō Bunka Gakuin, 1934), 24.8–9.

38 The two camps based their arguments on Huang-Lao and on Confucian thought respectively. I have pointed to the existence of these factions in my two articles "The Meaning of Huang-Lao in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*," *Études Chinoises* 2 (1993), 161–177, and "Éducation classique, éducation légiste sous les Han," in *Éducation et Instruction en Chine, vol. 3*, ed. Christine Nguyen Tri and Catherine Despeux (Paris and Louvain: Peeters, 2004), 23–41.

39 This means that data from a text – which is full of textual problems in itself – are taken as a standard against which *Shiji* has to stand. Philologically, this method is absolutely unacceptable.

40 *Shiji* 120.3105.

41 S. n. 31.

In the preface to the “Table on the Hundred Officials” (baiguan gongqing biao 百官公卿表) included in *Hanshu* 19A – which provides the basis for those who assume that Ji An can never have been what Hans Bielenstein has translated as “Commandant of the Capital” (zhongwei 中尉) – we find first an entry on this office,<sup>42</sup> then a few entries on other offices, and finally one on the Clerk of the Capital (neishi 內史, again Bielenstein’s translation) whose commandery was divided into an eastern and a western part in 156 B.C.<sup>43</sup> In 104 B.C. there was another change in names, and the Clerk of the Western Part of the Capital (you neishi 右內史) became Governor of the Capital (jingchao yin 京兆尹) whereas the one of the Eastern Part became Eastern Supporter (zuo bingyi 左馮翊). The next entry in *Hanshu* 19A discusses the Palace Commandant over the Nobility (zhujue zhongwei 主爵中尉) whose title was changed from “Palace Commandant” (zhongwei) into Chief Commandant (duwei 都尉, thus yielding zhujue duwei 主爵都尉) in 156 and into Western Sustainer (you fufeng 右扶風) in 104 B.C. Apparently there was a considerable overlapping between the duties and the staff of these three officers as well as with those of the Commandant of the Capital. Together they controlled the capital area. Important to us is that the title “Chief Commandant of the Nobility”, a title which Ji An – according to his biography – held for several years, had indeed once been named differently: Palace Commandant of the Nobility (which is the same as the Chinese title zhongwei 中尉, “Commandant of the Capital”. This was the title of the office which, according to the preface to the Treatise on Music, Ji An held.

At the same time it is relevant to acknowledge that *Hanshu* 19A says that after 104 B.C. the Western Sustainer (you fufeng 右扶風) who had formerly been called Chief Commandant of the Nobility “controlled the Western territory of the Clerk of the Capital” (zhi neishi youdi 治內史右地). Thus, when Ji An was transferred to the position of Clerk of the Western Part of the Capital he exerted duties which shortly afterwards fell into the responsibility of an official who before that time actually had the title Commandant of the Capital or Palace Commandant (zhongwei). Finally, it should be noted that the only position ranking on an equal level with the Nine Ministers – a level which Ji An reached according to the *Shiji* when he became Chief Commandant of the Nobility” – was, according to *Hanshu* 19A, the one of the Commandant of the Capital.<sup>44</sup>

I think that the preface to *Hanshu* 19A is a late attempt at a systematization of what must have been an extremely confusing situation which prevailed under Emperor Wu. It was written at a time when after more than two centuries of Han rule a fixed hierarchy had evolved. The author clearly projected this stable hierarchy back into a time, the concrete circumstances of which he did not know anymore. For some traditional Chinese commentators the authority

42 *Hanshu* 19A.732.

43 S. *Hanshu* 19A.736. I am following Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University, 1980), 79 and 87, throughout this passage.

44 The neishi, the zhujue duwei and all the offices later evolving out of them got a salary of “equivalent to two-thousand bushels” (*Hanshu* 19A.737) which was slightly less than the salary of the Commandant of the Capital, namely “fully two-thousand bushels” just as the Nine Ministers (ibid., 733). If we take the sentence “ranked among the Nine Ministers” seriously, then Ji An should have held a title equivalent to the Commandant of the Capital, not one equivalent to the others, since the zhongwei is the only officer which is in the *Hanshu* table was ranked among these Nine Ministers. This suggests that Ban Gu’s table is a later systematization which projects a hierarchy of titles of his own time back into the times of Emperor Wu.

of Ban Gu was so strong that they did not dare to call his statements into doubt, although others such as Wang Mingsheng or Fang Bao were certainly less obedient. Today, however, we should be able to reconsider what Ban Gu says. It seems plausible that the author of the preface of the Treatise on Music, who, of course, did not know Ban Gu's systematic treatise yet, used the title "Commandant of the Capital" for Ji An's position because it fitted with both positions he had held in the capital, namely the one of the Chief Commandant over the Nobility, which was the higher one,<sup>45</sup> and the one of the Clerk of the Western Part of the Capital which was slightly less honorable.

### *The Problem of the Dates*

The second problem is the supposed inconsistency between the account of the Treatise on Music and the dates which the *Hanshu* gives for some of the events. Sima Guang has decided to include the story about the horses from the Wo-wa river and the subsequent composition of a song on them among the *Zizhi tongjian* entries for the year of 120 B.C. He also thought that the criticism of Ji An was worth to be transmitted, but he deleted the counter attack of Gongsun Hong which in the Treatise on Music ends the account.<sup>46</sup> The reason for him to make this inclusion was that in the Treatise on Music of the *Hanshu* the date for the composition of the song is given as 120 B.C., or in Chinese as the third year of the reign-period Yuan-shou 元狩. Strangely, all critics who condemn the *Shiji* Treatise on Music disagree with Sima Guang and do not take this *Hanshu* date seriously but generally agree that another date given in the sixth chapter of the *Hanshu*, namely 113 B.C.,<sup>47</sup> must be correct. Homer Dubs has pointed to the fact that this report of a horse being born in a river originated from a similar one reported for the year 121 B.C. The *Hanshu* notes:

夏馬生余吾水中。南越獻馴象能言鳥。<sup>48</sup>

In the summer, a horse was born in the midst of the Yuwu river, and the [kingdom of] Nanyue presented [to the Emperor] a trained elephant and a bird that could talk.

As far as our subject is concerned it is more than curious that right before this entry the death of Chancellor Gongsun Hong is mentioned. The Chinese date for these two events is "second year of the Yuanshou reign-period". It is well-known that it was an extremely common mistake of scribes who copied texts to confound the similar characters 二 for "two" and 三 for "three". The *Shiji* does not provide its readers with a date for any of the events discussed above. The *Hanshu* does so, but it is obvious that inconsistencies have crept into its account, most probably because the events dated back to a remote past which was too far away to be known exactly. It does not seem implausible that Ban Gu, who may (or may not) have had vaguely dated material on two different horses caught by the Han, mentioned the horse born in the Yuwu river in his account of the year 121, because this river was within Xiongnu territory, whereas the Wo-wa river was in

45 When he held this title, Ji An was ranked among the Nine Ministers, a statement which is not made when it is mentioned that he was transferred to the position of you neishi. At least in later times it has always been common to use the highest title which a man had held during his life when speaking about him posthumously.

46 *Zizhi tongjian*, 19.636 f.

47 *Hanshu* 6.184.

48 *Hanshu* 6.176. Translation by Homer H. Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, vol. II (Baltimore: Waverly, 1938–1955), 60. Dubs' reference to this passage is on p. 75.

Central Asia.<sup>49</sup> In 121 the Han were still busily engaged in their wars against the Xiongnu, in 113 Central Asia was on the agenda. Because of these considerations, when writing his entries to the Basic Annals section, Ban Gu had to disregard the date 121 or 120 B.C. for the capturing of the horses at the Wowa river, attached to the song in the Treatise on Music in order to write an account which was coherent in itself.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, Sima Guang suggested that, if one followed the *Shiji* record, Ji An may have criticized the first song but not the second one.<sup>51</sup> This, too, is an interesting detail: Sima Guang does not seem to have been puzzled by the fact that the author of the *Shiji* preface at first mentioned an event which Ji An witnessed, and then introduced another event (which Ji An could not have witnessed. In his opinion, Sima Qian probably inserted this second event simply because it fitted so neatly with the prior event. According to this reading, Sima Qian then recurred to a dispute which had in fact taken place between Gongsun Hong and Ji An after the first event and before the second one.

*Shiji* accounts quite often do not proceed in a strictly chronological way, and it is important to take this tendency into consideration, because otherwise one easily misunderstands the text.<sup>52</sup> The text needs exactly 48 characters to tell the story of the thousand-mile-horse. After all we know about texts written on bamboo-strips today, it is clear that depending on the length of strips on which the *Shiji* was written this must have been either one strip or two strips. For Sima Qian or for his successors it cannot have been difficult to insert these strips into the text at a place at which the natural flow of the argument was not disturbed too much by this manipulation. It rather served to strengthen the argument which had been made when the first draft of the text, which did not contain this passage, was written: The emperor was not satisfied with one song, but he even went on with his scandalous compositions when a second horse was caught!

To sum up: It is quite possible that the author of the preface to the Treatise on Music in the *Shiji*, who must have written before Ban Gu, thought that a dispute between Gongsun Hong and Ji An concerning the composition of songs for the imperial sacrifices must have taken place shortly before Gongsun Hong died. Whether this is a true account or not – i.e. whether the horse was caught before the death of Gongsun Hong, which is perfectly possible if we give up our slavish belief in the dates provided by Ban Gu, or shortly afterwards – is of no relevance at all to the debate on the authenticity of this preface. What is important is that the narrative does indeed fit with the style of the man who wrote the accounts about the time of Emperor Wu in the *Shiji*. It could well be imagined that someone who bore the same

49 I am following the reconstruction of Tan Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*, vol. 1, 33–34, and 39.

50 Liang Yusheng, 759, thinks that the opposite was true. According to him, Ban Gu attached the date of 120 B.C. to the song in the treatise of music because of the account on the horse born in the Yuwu river in 121. What clearly is at work here is that all commentators instinctively believe into the authority of the *Basic Annals* more than into the one of a treatise. There is no obvious reason for this.

51 *Zizhi tongjian kaoyi* as contained in *Zizhi tongjian* 19.637. Liang Yusheng, 758, dislikes this idea – he does not give, however, a reasonable account for his own view.

52 See my review of Grant Hardy, *Records on Bronze and Bamboo*, in *Monumenta Serica* 49 (2001), 517–528. A great deal of corrections made by Liang Yusheng have to be regarded with suspicion because Liang, probably because of his familiarity with later Chinese standard histories, always tries to read the text as if it were structured as a chronological argument. This does not work: Sima Qian demands that his reader knows the text and that he or she is able to hop back and forth.

grudge as Sima Qian against the Emperor and against Gongsun Hong during the last decade of the second century B.C. (or during the nineties of the first century B.C., when Gongsun Hong was dead for about twenty years) recalled the many disputes which had taken place between the Chancellor and Ji An and ended the preface with one of them. Who but Ji An would have been a better candidate for a protest against Gongsun Hong? *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*. After all, as mentioned above, we should not forget that the *Shiji* is a piece of literature, not a mere enumeration of facts. Of course, we should not disparage Ban Gu because he did try to establish some basic facts. Yet, that according to him the story of the author of this preface becomes an impossibility should not mislead us to think that it can not have been written by Sima Qian himself or by someone living close to his time. That Ban Gu did not write about this dispute in his account on music does not speak against its authenticity: To mention a criticism of the emperor which was as harsh as the one of Ji An in the *Shiji* amounted to a degree of disrespectfulness which is nowhere to be found in the *Hanshu*, the *Shiji*, on the other hand, is full of similar examples of *lèse majesté*.

#### 2.4 The *Hanshu* text as a rewritten version of the *Shiji* account?

A final point has to be addressed here. After writing about the ceremony during which there was a divine light looking like a group of meteorites over the altar, the *Hanshu* omits the whole end of the *Shiji* preface beginning with the words: “In spring they sang the ‘Green Light’, in summer the ‘Red Brightness’, in autumn the ‘Western Brilliance’ and in winter the ‘Dark Obscure’. Many contemporaries possess [their text], therefore I do not discuss them here.” Instead it inserts at this point the text of all the hymns composed under the founder of the Han and under Emperor Wu. Among the productions of the latter we find the text of the songs on “Green Light”, “Red Brightness”, “Western Brilliance” and “Dark Obscure”, which are only briefly mentioned in the *Shiji*, as well as the one of the hymns composed on the occasion of the capture of the divine horses. There are small differences between the texts transmitted in the *Shiji* and in the *Hanshu*, a fact which makes it highly improbable that the author of the *Shiji* preface copied from the *Hanshu*. For example, the text for the lines “Taiyi gong xi tianma xia” 太一貢兮天馬下, “The Grand Unity bestows us/the heavenly horse descends,” contains the word “gong” 貢 for “tribute” in the *Shiji*, whereas the *Hanshu* writes “Taiyi zhu tianma xia” 太一況天馬下,<sup>53</sup> thus replacing “tribute” by a word properly meaning “to bestow”.<sup>54</sup> That the deity Grand Unity should bring tribute to Emperor Wu is, of course, ridiculous as far as the author of the *Shiji* preface is concerned. It should be understood as an example of Emperor Wu’s hubris, something against which the first paragraph of the preface had warned. The differences as regards the choice of words in the *Hanshu* version are, therefore, most probably intentional. The second poem in the *Shiji* runs:

53 *Hanshu* 22.1060. It seems that the words *gong* and *kuang* were in Han times phonetically just as close or apart as they are today.

54 See the notes by Kern, *Die Hymnen*, 219 and 229 f.

- |   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | 天馬來兮從西極， | The Heavenly Horse is arriving, it comes from the western pole.                                |
| 2 | 經萬里兮歸有德。 | Passing through ten thousand miles, it turns to the one who has potency.                       |
| 3 | 承靈威兮降外國， | Assuming numinous majesty, We subdue the outlying countries.                                   |
| 4 | 涉流沙兮四夷服。 | When we waded through the flowing sands,<br>The Barbarians from all four directions surrender! |

Compare the version in the *Hanshu*:

- |   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | 天馬徠，從西極， | The Heavenly Horse is arriving, it comes from the Western pole.                        |
| 2 | 涉流沙，九夷服。 | When it waded through the flowing sands,<br>it made the ninefold barbarians surrender! |
| 3 | 天馬徠，出泉水， | The Heavenly Horse is arriving, coming out of the waters of a spring.                  |
| 4 | 虎脊兩，化若鬼。 | With its tiger-striped back it changes like a ghost.                                   |
| 5 | 天馬徠，歷無草， | The Heavenly horse is arriving, going through the land without grass.                  |
| 6 | 徑千里，循東道。 | Passing through a thousand miles it follows the way to the east. (...) <sup>55</sup>   |

To put it more precisely: the text of the *Shiji* as compared to the one of the *Hanshu* is of an incredible insolence: It says that the emperor lauded himself as being the “one who has potency” whom the horse, running ten-thousand miles, naturally had to turn to (*Shiji* line 2). This line is replaced in the *Hanshu* by an innocent sentence which says that the horse went one thousand miles on its way to the east (*Hanshu* line 6). *Shiji* line 3 (Assuming numinous majesty, We subdue the outlying countries) is missing in the *Hanshu* version altogether, obviously because these lines also express strong self-praise on behalf of the emperor. Because of this omission, line two of the *Hanshu* text (When it waded through the flowing sands, it made the barbarians surrender!) has to refer to the horse, whereas the logical subject of the corresponding line 4 of the *Shiji* version (When we waded through the flowing sands, The Barbarians from all four directions surrender!) must be the emperor who here again boasts with his triumph over the barbarians.

It is obvious that by using an almost salacious tone the *Shiji* text disparages Emperor Wu whereas the *Hanshu* version is a very tame piece of reverential literature. That the hymn in the form given in the *Shiji* should have actually been sung in the temple of the ancestors of the Han does not seem very probable. Once again, it seems plausible to me that we are rather confronted with a text the wording of which has been intentionally exaggerated in a grotesque way by an author who was hostile to the politics of Emperor Wu. It is possible, though not imperative, that the text as contained in the *Hanshu* transmits the authentic wording of the hymn.<sup>56</sup> Yet, it seems more probable that the text as we find it in *Hanshu* was written as a reaction to the incrimination contained in the *Shiji*. A further piece of evidence suggests this. After rendering the text of all the ancestral hymns, the *Hanshu* text adds:

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55 *Hanshu* 22.1060f.

56 Once again, it should be clear that *Shiji* is a literary text, not a quarry for historical details. However, it is, of course, also possible that after *Shiji* became known someone realized that the text of the hymn was inappropriate and changed its wording to the form which later Ban Gu transmitted.

其餘巡狩福應之事，不序郊廟，故弗論。<sup>57</sup>

Other services such as those performed on the occasion of tours of inspection, hunts, blessings and omens do not concern the [ceremonies for the sacrifices] in the suburb and in the temple of ancestors. Therefore I do not discuss them here.

The last sentence, of course, deserves our special attention. Whereas the *Shiji* had said that it did not need to discuss the texts of the sacrificial hymns since everybody knew them anyway (世多有，故不論), the *Hanshu* claims that there is no need to discuss affairs *other* than the music which was to be performed during the solemn sacrifices in the suburb and the temple of the ancestors. Of course, this is the exact opposite of what the *Shiji* says. Again the reader gets the impression that Ban Gu knew the *Shiji* text and that he consciously contradicted his predecessor. The only hymn which the author of the *Shiji* text had found worth quoting was the one on the divine horse. And he did that only in order to show that Emperor Wu had gone as far as to even present his ancestors a song on horses which he had captured in the north and in the far west. By quoting the text of *all* the sacrificial hymns of the Han, Ban Gu had the opportunity to show that these songs were not as improper as suggested by the *Shiji* author.

## 2.5 The final sequence of the preface in the *Shiji*

An interesting feature of the preface of the *Shiji* text is its abrupt ending:

黯誹謗聖制，當族。

Ji An has slandered the wise [imperial] regulations. His clan should be extinguished.

There is no attempt at concealing what has been said, neither is a conclusion offered nor is there a sentence leading over to what follows. Referring to a similar case of an abrupt ending of a treatise Cui Shi 崔適 (1852–1924) has declared that this is a definitive proof for the fact that some person writing after Ban Gu wrote *Shiji* chapters on the basis of *Hanshu* chapters which he had at his disposal.<sup>58</sup> However, more than two centuries before Cui Shi, whose book was first published in 1909, Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) has suggested that this phenomenon is a stylistic element which Sima Qian intentionally used as a means to express his personal views. Gu Yanwu does not mention the Treatise on Music, probably due to the problem regarding its authenticity, but offers examples from five *Shiji* chapters supporting his argument.<sup>59</sup> This would thus be a further piece of evidence in favour of the authenticity of the preface, although this aspect should not be overestimated, since it is so obvious that this is a stylistic feature of the *Shiji* that any author living after Sima Qian could have been able to imitate.

<sup>57</sup> *Hanshu* 22.1070.

<sup>58</sup> Cui Shi, *Shiji tanyuan* 史記探源, (Peking: Zhonghua, 1986), 15 f, speaking about the treatise on the economy, *Shiji* 30.

<sup>59</sup> Gu Yanwu, *Rizhi lu* 日知錄 (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu, 1997), 1118. The first of these examples is contained at the end of the treatise on the economy which Cui Shi used as support for his claim that chapters of the *Shiji* had been recopied from the *Hanshu*.

### 3 The main treatise in the *Shiji*

In the remaining pages a brief and only very preliminary look at the second and major part of the Treatise on Music in the *Shiji* may be allowed.<sup>60</sup> This second part, which has been called a later forgery even more often than the first one, is by and large a differently arranged copy of the “Yueji” 樂記, a chapter of the *Liji* 禮記.<sup>61</sup> Only small parts of the *Shiji* and *Liji* texts are quoted in Ban Gu’s *Hanshu*, where they serve as a short theoretical introduction to music in general. What is interesting about this selection is that it does not speak of the subject which the *Shiji* text is most concerned with: Ban Gu quotes those parts of the “Yueji” which say that music is meant to improve the hearts of the people and “move the good hearts of the people” (*zū yì gǎndòng rén zhī shānxīn* 足以感動人之善心).<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, this is exactly what the effect of the music of the Han was said to be: “They all stood in awe and their hearts were moved by this” (*bǎi rén jī sùrán dòng xīn wéi* 百人皆肅然動心焉).<sup>63</sup> Thus, it seems that Ban Gu by and large approved of the effects of the sacrificial music conceived by Emperor Wu, although he did not laude it as ideal.<sup>64</sup>

The *Shiji*, on the other hand, tells a story of decline: It starts with the statement that tones are born from the heart of man, but it almost immediately adds that they also respond to a stimulus from outside. Therefore, there is a difference between music in an ordered state and one in a state where chaos prevails. There is a strongly pessimistic note here: Right at its beginning the text speaks of the music from Zheng and Wei 鄭衛 which is the music of chaotic times. However, there is music which is even worse: The one from Sangjian 桑間 and from

60 A full discussion of this treatise would amount to another article. Here I will have to confine myself on three or four aspects which may be relevant to our topic.

61 A third sequence of the text is by the way given by Zheng Xuan as quoted in Kong Yingda’s sub-commentary to *Liji* (Shisan jing zhushu, repr. Peking: Zhonghua, 1980), 1527A. This fact should not surprise us too much – it just shows that for traditionally transmitted texts the same is true as for excavated ones. The phenomenon is exactly the same as the one which we have recently seen, for example, in the case of the Tzu-i chapter of the *Liji* to be found in the Guodian as well as the Shanghai museum text corpus. It should be clear that such differences do not allow us to make easy judgements about which of the versions is earlier and which later. For a comparison of the different versions of the “Ziyi” chapter of the Book of Rites, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Rewriting the Zi Yi: How One Chinese Classic Came to Read as it Does,” in his recently published monograph *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany: SUNY, 2006), 63–93.

62 *Hanshu* 22.1037.

63 *Hanshu* 22.1045.

64 Of course, there is criticism in Ban Gu’s treatise as well: He says that this music was not “noble” 雅 and that the sounds of Zheng 鄭 filled the palace halls (*Hanshu* 22.1070). Yet, this criticism has to be seen in the light of Ban Gu’s own agenda which he implicitly outlines at the end of his treatise: He wants to convince Emperor Zhang 章 (76–88) of the necessity of a reform. As is well known, Emperor Zhang did indeed want a large-scale reform but was slowed down by his bureaucracy. See my *Politik und Gelehrsamkeit in der Zeit der Han. Die Alttext/Neutext-Kontroverse* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), 78–83; cf. Tjan T’joe-som, *Po Hu Tung. The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden: Brill, 1949–1952), 166. On the other hand, to transmit the harsh language of the Treatise on Music in *Shiji* would have been unacceptable. Therefore, Ban Gu was confronted with the difficult task to manoeuvre between the extreme and almost anti-dynastic position of the *Shiji* preface, the necessity not to offend his ruler and his own wish for institutional reform which was in line with the Emperor’s purposes.

Pushang 濮上. The music of Pushang was played in states which were doomed to perish.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, the introduction to the chapter makes mention of the music from Zheng which prevailed at the time when Confucius lived – and it continues with the times of the Second Ruler of the Qin, times which were even worse than those when Confucius lived. Repeatedly it is emphasized in the text that it is important that the ruler plays the right music. Everything else is dangerous. It is interesting to note that towards the end of this theoretical essay on music we find a reference to the music which was formerly played in the temple of ancestors:

先王惡其亂，故制雅頌之聲以道之 … 足以感動人之善心 … 是先王立樂之方也。是故樂在宗廟之中，君臣上下同聽之，則莫不和敬；在族長鄉里之中，長幼同聽之，則莫不和順。<sup>66</sup>

The former kings hated the disorder [resulting from improper music] and therefore arranged sounds for the Elegantiae and the Praise-Songs in order to guide [the people, in a way which] (...) made them move the good hearts of the people (...) This was the recipe of the former kings when they established music. Therefore, when [at the times of the former kings] music was played in the temple of ancestors, and ruler and subjects, superiors and inferiors listened to it together, then there was no one who was not harmoniously reverent. When it was played in a clan or a community and old and young listened to it, then there was no one who was not harmoniously obedient.

This passage is important in two respects. First, the preface to the Treatise on Music ends with a dispute between Gongsun Hong and Ji An about a song which was in Ji An's opinion inappropriate for being performed in the temple of ancestors. On the other hand, the theoretical part of this treatise ends with a paragraph which describes how music in the temple of the ancestors should be performed correctly. Curiously, what is the end of the theoretical part of the treatise in the *Shiji* is the introduction to the Essay on Music in *Xunzi* 荀子 20. If the *Xunzi* text fragments were prior to its counterparts in *Shiji* and *Liji*, then one possible explanation for the different arrangement in both sources would be that the editor of the *Shiji* treatise intentionally placed the above passage at the end of the text in order to make it correspond to the sequence of the preface. This structure then may have found its way back into the *Liji*.

Secondly, the passage on the temple of ancestors is not quoted in the *Hanshu* introduction to the Treatise on Music although that text ends with the words directly preceding it: “made them move the good hearts of the people (...) This was the recipe of the former kings when they established music.” For a contemporary reader of this *Hanshu* passage, who was also familiar with the *Liji* text, it must have been obvious that Emperor Wu's way to perform music in the temple of his ancestors was in accordance with the high standard set by the sage kings of high antiquity: The sentence “They all stood in awe and their hearts were moved by this” in combination with the description of the ceremony during which the Emperor “sat in a bamboo palace” with several hundred officials next to him showed that everything was done just in the way how the *Liji* prescribed it – and it would not have been necessary even to mention this.

Following after the theoretical part there are three Confucian anecdotes in the *Liji* and in the *Shiji*, though they have been arranged in a slightly differently way in the two texts. All these anecdotes stress the danger resulting from bad music. Of utmost importance is the fact that the *Shiji* chapter on music ends with a fourth anecdote which has no parallel in the *Liji* version

65 *Shiji* 24.1182.

66 *Shiji* 24.1220.

of the “Yueji”: This anecdote tells the spooky story of Duke Ling of Wei 衛靈公. When he was on his way to Jin at Pushang, he listened to music which, according to the music master Shi Kuang 師曠, had been performed at the court of the last ruler of the Shang dynasty. To no avail Shi Kuang tried to dissuade Duke Ping of Jin 晉平公 who, after Duke Ling had told him of his adventure, insisted in wishing to hear this music. Duke Ping ordered that the music from the river Pu was played. The text ends with the dry comment: “There was a great draught in the state of Jin, and the soil remained red for three years.” (晉國大旱，赤地三年)<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, chapter 30 of the *Shiji*, the treatise on the economy, and the last of the eight treatises, ends in a similar fashion: “There was a small draught in the empire” (是歲小旱). One advisor suggested: “Boil Sang Hongyang [the man who was apparently held responsible for the bad shape into which the empire had slid], and it will rain.” (烹弘羊，天乃雨)<sup>68</sup> Moreover, we should not forget, that the theoretical part of the Treatise on Music speaks of the music of the river Pu as one which was performed in states which were doomed to perish. Thus, the second part of the Treatise on Music seems to fit quite well with the overall tone of the *Shiji*. It menaces those who play the wrong music that they will have to pay for this. The introduction to this chapter quite openly says about Emperor Wu that he did perform inappropriate music.

There are even more cross-references which show that the “Yueji” text fits indeed well with the overall tone of the preface of the Treatise on Music. As we saw above, the introductory passage of the preface contains the sentence: “Generally speaking, to make music serves the purpose of restraining pleasure.” (凡作樂者所以節樂)<sup>69</sup> In the theoretical part it is said: “Whereas rites restrain the hearts of the people, music serves to harmonize the sounds of the people.” (禮節民心，樂和民聲)<sup>70</sup> This is not exactly the same, but a similar thought. The preface says right after the passage just quoted:

及其調和諧合，鳥獸盡感，而況懷五常含好惡，自然之勢也。<sup>71</sup>

If [music] is harmonized and played in a balanced way, even birds and wild animals are moved. How much more so than those who embrace the five constant relationships, and harbour likes and dislikes? This is a natural disposition!”

The interesting details in this passage are the “likes and dislikes”. This is a compound which occurs only nine times in the *Shiji*: once in the treatise on the rites, once in the one on the pitch-pipes, once in chapter 62 and 84 respectively, and five times in the Treatise on Music.<sup>72</sup> Of these five times we find the compound once in the introduction but four times in the “Yueji” section. This suggests that both parts of the treatise of music are carefully harmonized, even more so since this particular combination does not play an important role in other early treatises on music such as the one in the *Xunzi*.

Finally, there is another strange correspondence: As is well-known, chapter 130 of the *Shiji* contains short prefaces to each chapter. Usually these prefaces pick up one or two sentences or at least words which are important in the chapter they introduce. The preface for the Tre-

67 *Shiji* 24.1236.

68 *Shiji* 30.1442.

69 Cf. p. 51.

70 *Shiji* 24.1186. *Liji*, 1529B. Compare *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1998), 1.24.

71 *Shiji* 23.1176.

72 *Shiji* 23.1170; 24.1176, 1184, 1186, 1187 and 1224 f.; 25.1240; 62.2132; 84.2499.

tise on Music mainly speaks about the licentious music of Zheng and Wei which is an important topic of the *Yueji* chapter. But what is more relevant is that it starts with the sentence: “The purpose of music is to change the manners and to alter the customs.” (樂者所以移風易俗也)<sup>73</sup> The phrase “to change the manners and to alter the customs” occurs altogether three times in the *Shiji*. Once, which does not need to interest us too much here, in the biography of the Qin chancellor Li Si,<sup>74</sup> but twice in the *Yueji* part of the Treatise on Music.<sup>75</sup> Other texts on music, such as the chapters dealing with this topic in *Lǚshì chūnqiū* 呂氏春秋, do not offer the same amount of correspondences between the thought of the preface of the Treatise on Music and its theoretical part.

## Conclusion

I have put forward several reasons for why I believe that when Ban Gu wrote his own Treatise on Music he must have known the introduction to the *Shiji* chapter on music. In my opinion, there is not much evidence speaking against Sima Qian himself as its author, although it is, of course, perfectly possible that one of his immediate successors may have written it. Moreover, although it would be necessary to look at the extant pieces of evidence in more detail, a preliminary result is that there seems to be an intimate relationship between the introduction to the Treatise on Music and the message of the main essay. It seems possible that the way how the different parts of this *Liji* chapter are arranged in *Shiji* has something to do with the preface, too: The anecdotes contained in the treatise are arranged in a way which corresponds to the arrangement of the *Shiji* preface to the treatise. This suggests that the *Yueji* chapter was added to the introduction by someone who had understood the program of the *Shiji*. Again, apart from the remark by Zhang Yan there is no reason to exclude Sima Qian himself as this man. The overall tone of the *Yueji* chapter as it prevails in the *Shiji* fits very well with the music of the rest of the *Shiji*. If not Sima Qian himself added the main treatise to his introduction, then this must have been done by someone who was perfectly familiar with his intentions.

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73 *Shiji* 130.3305.

74 *Shiji* 87.2541.

75 *Shiji* 24.1206 and 1211. Here we find both passages in *Xunzi* (Xinbian zhuzi jicheng, Peking: Zhonghua, 1988), 20.381, 382. Yet, they are fragments of one and the same text.