

Historic Analogies and Evaluative Judgments: Zhuge Liang as Portrayed in Chen Shou's "Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms" and Pei Songzhi's Commentary*

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One dimension of historical criticism in China pivots on the use of historic analogies and metaphors to express evaluative judgments. In one's choice of earlier historic and mythic figures to be employed to frame a personage's narrative, one sets the tone of one's historical criticism; however, the use of historic figures as analogies could be complex and nuanced. One particularly revealing case is how historic analogies were used to portray and evaluate Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234). Zhuge Liang was the leading advisor for Liu Bei's 劉備 (161–223, r. 220–223) strategy for countering the Cao 曹 family's usurpation of the Han 漢 throne. After Liu Bei died, his son Liu Shan 劉禪 (207–271, r. 223–263) succeeded him as head of the Shu-Han 蜀漢 kingdom centered in Yizhou 益州 (the area of Sichuan province), and Zhuge took charge not only of administration but also of military affairs. As prime minister, he oversaw the civil government and promoted alliance with Sun Quan's 孫權 (182–252) state of Wu 吳 that controlled most of central and southern China. As the Shu kingdom's top military officer, Zhuge directed five major campaigns against the Wei 魏 kingdom, which had usurped the Han throne and ruled North China. None of his five campaigns made much headway into Wei territory before retreating back into the mountains; moreover, only thirty years after Zhuge's death, Liu Shan surrendered the Shu kingdom to the Wei. Thus, Zhuge failed to achieve his goals of liberating North China from the Cao family regime, unifying all of China, and restoring the Han dynasty. In spite of Zhuge Liang's failures, his dedicated loyalty to what he regarded as a noble cause and his just administration of the kingdom attracted positive appraisals. In the official dynastic history, the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (*Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms*), Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297) presented a highly favorable portrait of Zhuge; moreover, he collected and edited Zhuge's writings for publication in 274.¹ Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (372–451) supplement to the *Sanguo zhi* amassed various narratives and accounts that Chen Shou had not included, and these appended sources, serving as a commentary, have traveled with the official history since 429. These are the primary sources for this present inquiry.

Recently, Professor Eric Henry, in an article in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, has analyzed the various stories included by Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi in terms of their precedent narrative motifs. Professor Henry observes: "It is relationships such as these to earlier narrative that are primarily responsible for the commanding position occupied by Zhuge Liang in the pantheon of Chinese heroes. ... One would be hard put to name any early culture hero whose attributes are not

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¹ Chen Shou: *Sanguo zhi*. Pei Songzhi's commentary, of course, accompanies Chen's text.

somehow reflected in the Zhuge Liang portrait.”² In short, Professor Henry presents Chen Shou as a “man in the grip of a legend.”³ Professor Henry further characterizes Pei Songzhi’s portrait as structuring of various additional stories to prove the view that Zhuge was indeed a “sage”:

The idea behind these stories is that one manifestation of the extraordinary insight possessed by sages is their appreciation of ugly women. A sage will often marry such a woman and then profit from her advice, which, since she is ugly, is invariably honest, prescient, and discriminating. A sage is never dazzled or bewitched by false and alluring appearances; he cannot be seduced by luxury, flattery, or beauty; instead he goes straight for the substance hidden beneath. As Chen Shou says of Zhuge Liang in his summation, “He sought out that which was fundamental in every affair; he sought out the reality beneath each appearance and had nothing but contempt for empty show.” Thus the ugly wife story, properly understood, is normative rather than biographical: it illustrates Zhuge Liang’s imperviousness to delusion and *rounds out his character as a sage*.⁴

As evident in his quotation from Chen Shou’s summary evaluation, Professor Henry is suggesting that Pei Songzhi’s structured commentary echoed and reinforced what was already Chen’s assumption – Zhuge was indeed a sage.

Nonetheless, was Chen Shou really as hopelessly caught “in the grip of a legend”? Were there really no significant differences between Chen Shou’s and Pei Songzhi’s evaluations and narrative framing of Zhuge Liang? Was the historical verdict on Zhuge already so settled? I am not at all denying that Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi highly revered Zhuge Liang. Obviously, both historians regarded him as an exceptionally able official and a good person, worthy to serve as a model person or hero to later readers. Indeed, the tone of their narratives do occasionally have an almost worshipful quality. Nevertheless, I would still caution that it is easy—in the light of later developments in the apotheosis of Zhuge—to enhance that tone disproportionately. Succinctly stated, my inquiry will explore Chen Shou’s and Pei Songzhi’s narrative metaphors to see if there were tensions and progressive changes within and between their portrayals of Zhuge Liang.

1. Sages Among Other Analogies

Chen Shou actually never called Zhuge Liang a “sage” (*sheng* 聖). The term is indeed used in the Zhuge biography in the *Sanguo zhi*; however, it refers not to Zhuge, but to the ruler he served. In his “(Former) Campaign Memorial” (“[Qian] chushi biao [前]出師表”), Zhuge used the term, *sheng*, to address Liu Shan.⁵ Liu Shan was also addressed as *sheng* by the advisors who urged him to authorize a memorial shrine near Zhuge’s tomb in Mianxian 沔縣.⁶ In the preface to Zhuge’s collected works, Chen Shou twice used the term *sheng* and included this preface near the end of his biography of Zhuge. Besides referring to the Duke of Zhou (Zhougong 周公; mid-11th century B.C.) as a sage, Chen directly addressed his own ruler and likened his ruler to the ancient sages.⁷ Needless to say, neither Liu Shan nor the Jin 晉 emperor was really a sage. But this honorific and respectful form for one’s ruler was not unusual in imperial China. Parenthetically, as Professor Huang Chin-hsing 黃準興 shows, calling the reigning emperor a sage had potential for undermining the grounds for Confucians

² Henry, Eric: “Zhuge Liang in the Eyes of His Contemporaries”, in: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52 (1992), pp. 589-612, here p. 611. In the text, I have changed Henry’s Wade-Giles spelling to *pinyin* 拼音 for consistency.

³ Henry, “Zhuge Liang”, p. 596.

⁴ Henry, “Zhuge Liang”, pp. 610-611; emphasis is mine.

⁵ *Sanguo zhi* 35/919.

⁶ *Sanguo zhi* 35/929.

⁷ *Sanguo zhi* 35/931.

to remonstrate against their ruler, but this negative potential was fully realized only when an emperor, specifically Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662–1722), was widely regarded by literati as a sage indeed.⁸ In any event, the tendency during the Han through the Tang 唐 to restrict the term's usage, at least in referring to one's contemporaries and near contemporaries, to the ruler apparently problematized it as a model image to be applied to scholars and/or officials like Zhuge Liang.

Rather than the metaphor of “sage,” Chen Shou's narrative structure reveals different analogies for Zhuge Liang. These analogies were famous ministers: Guan Zhong 管仲 (d. 645 B.C.), Yue Yi 樂毅 (late 3rd century B.C.; another spelling is Le Yi), and Xiao He 蕭何 (d. 193 B.C.). Serving the first hegemon of the Spring and Autumn Period, Guan Zhong assembled the feudal lords, protected the states in the Central Plain from being militarily and culturally overrun by the powerful kingdom of Chu 楚 and its southern, “barbarian” culture. During the Warring States Period, Yue Yi served King Zhao 昭王 of Yan 燕 (r. 311–279 B.C.) and led an alliance of five states against the powerful state of Qi 齊. In one devastating battle in 284 B.C., Yue Yi crushed the Qi army and seized over seventy of its cities; thereupon, he restrained his forces to give the two remaining Qi cities an opportunity to respond to his benevolence and thereby to surrender. Yet, when King Zhao died, the successor king of Yan distrusted Yue Yi and removed him from commanding the campaign against Qi. Xiao He contributed advice crucial to Liu Bang's 劉邦 (256–195 B.C.) triumph in the civil wars following the defeat of the Qin 秦 and his establishment of the Han dynasty.

Chen Shou presents Zhuge as similar to these grand ministers at the beginning and the end of the Zhuge biography. In the first paragraph, Chen Shou claimed that the young Zhuge “often compared himself to Guan Zhong and Yue Yi.”⁹ According to Chen Shou and the stories he had heard, almost everyone, except Zhuge's two close friends, disagreed with these comparisons because the youth's latent talents were not yet manifest. Quoting from his own preface to Zhuge's collected writings, Chen Shou returned to these analogies.

In earlier times, Xiao He's recommendation of Han Xin 韓信 (d. 196 B.C.) and Guan Zhong's promotion of Wangzi Chengfu 王子城父 had the purpose of complementing their own strengths, for they themselves could never combine [civil administration and military command]. Liang's ability at political administration was on a level with Guan and Xiao, but among the famous [Shu] generals of the era, there was no Han Xin or Chengfu. Is it not for this reason that Zhuge's meritorious goal was never achieved and his intended contribution never completed?¹⁰

Citing these particular analogies highlighted Chen Shou's major thesis that Zhuge was a great administrator, but rather lacking as a military commander. Using these analogies also underscored the tragic element of Zhuge's ultimate failure. In his concluding evaluation of Zhuge Liang, Chen Shou returned to these analogies. Here again, although “comparable to Guan and Xiao in talent for understanding and administrating affairs of state,” Zhuge's repeated military campaigns “were unable to succeed” because military strategy was not his strong point.¹¹

A voice in the expanded *Sanguo zhi* that challenged Chen Shou's view on these points belonged to Guo Chong 郭沖, the Jin subject whose backhanded compliments repeatedly provoked Pei Songzhi's rebuttals. Guo proclaimed that Zhuge's brilliant situational strategies far surpassed those of Guan Zhong.¹² Guo Chong's narrative representation of Zhuge's strengths would, however, best

⁸ Huang, Chin-shing: *Li Fu and the Lu-Wang School in the Ch'ing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

⁹ *Sanguo zhi* 35/911.

¹⁰ *Sanguo zhi* 35/930-931.

¹¹ *Sanguo zhi* 35/934.

¹² *Sanguo zhi* 35/917.

be read as ironic, even if later hero-lauding works incorporated elements from his stories without taking note of the ironies.

A distinctly different voice already quoted by Chen Shou had begun to project Zhuge Liang to a higher metaphorical level of analogies. Bestowing a posthumous title and honors on Zhuge, Liu Shan's eulogy for the first time elevated Zhuge through comparison to Yi Yin 伊尹 and the Duke of Zhou, for Zhuge's merit was like that of these two cultural heroes.¹³ Yi Yin had assisted King Tang 唐王 overthrow the Xia 夏 dynasty and establish the Shang 商 house. After setting up the administration of the Shang government, Yi Yin helped King Tang's successor, the young ruler Taijia 太甲. Similarly, the Duke of Zhou had assisted King Wu 武王 overthrow the Shang dynasty and establish the Zhou house. Besides being the chief civil administrator, he served as regent for King Wu's young successor. Both chief ministers were traditionally regarded as effective administrators who reunified the country and secured new dynasties. More importantly, sharing in the merits accredited to the founding kings of these two of the Three Dynasties, the golden age of antiquity, Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou were widely esteemed as sagely ministers in the service of sage-kings Tang and Wu.

Besides analogies to sages, Liu Shan's eulogy also attempted other changes in retelling the Zhuge Liang story. Commenting on Zhuge Liang's campaigns to liberate North China, Liu Shan announced that Zhuge "alone embodied and held responsibility for both civil administration and military command. ... Falling ill and dying just as victory was near, how could such a calamity occur?"¹⁴ In focusing on Zhuge's virtues and bestowing posthumous titles, Liu Shan's expressed purpose was "to teach future generations clearly and ensure that historical records would not be distorted."¹⁵ The specific posthumous titles were "Wuxiang hou 武鄉侯" (Wuxiang Lord) and "Zhong wu hou 忠武侯" (Loyal and Martial Lord). In my gloss here, the first title is presented as a traditional place name, while the second is taken as a descriptive characterization of Zhuge's loyal and martial qualities. The word 武 in both titles is the same, and strictly speaking, the second title might better be read as Loyal Wu [xiang] Lord. Yet, since the word 武 primarily denotes martial or military, the title could easily be read and used as a celebration of what later generations regarded as his two most enduring qualities—his loyalty and his military skills. This reading of the title would be contextually encouraged by Liu Shan's opening theme of Zhuge's uniqueness in combining both civil (文 文) and martial (武 武) leadership. Looking at this eulogy in the light of later developments in retelling the Zhuge narrative, we can observe an instructive example of the importance of eulogy or valedictory in setting the official word or line on a personage.

The analogies and images projected in Liu Shan's eulogy clearly differed from Chen Shou's own projections of Zhuge Liang. Although Liu Shan's eulogy and Zhuge's posthumous titles emphasized excellence in both civil administration and military affairs, Chen Shou's evaluations highlighted Zhuge's strength in the former, but weakness in the latter. Liu Shan expressed confidence that if Zhuge's life had not ended so untimely and abruptly, his military plan would have triumphed. Based on an analysis of Zhuge's performance and the generals available to Shu, Zhuge's failure to achieve success was, to Chen, a certainty and easy to explain. Even though Liu Shan's eulogy had likened Zhuge to sages Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou, Chen Shou chose rather to adopt analogies to a lower level of notable ministers of more recent eras. Indeed, the opening paragraph of Chen's narrative attributed such analogies to Zhuge himself; moreover, Chen's concluding evaluations explicitly returned to, and validated this level of, historical analogies.

¹³ *Sanguo zhi* 35/927.

¹⁴ *Sanguo zhi* 35/927.

¹⁵ *Sanguo zhi* 35/927.

While references in Liu Shan's eulogy to sage-ministers and the certainty of victory portrayed a rather romantic image of Zhuge Liang, Chen Shou's historical analogies preserved and highlighted the tragic note to Zhuge's failure to achieve his ultimate goals. Liu Shan's eulogy was addressed to Zhuge's spirit directly and reverently, while the immediate person for Chen Shou to address was the Jin emperor who commissioned the official history. In Liu Shan's inflated metaphors to ancient sages expressed in an edict decreeing official posthumous titles, he engaged language that might be termed "eulogistic" and even "monumental." Even though Liu Shan's eulogy conflicted with Chen Shou's own evaluative judgment of Zhuge, Chen still preserved and included Liu Shan's eulogy within the Zhuge biography. Chen Shou certainly did not perceive how Liu Shan's imagery would prefigure voices that would eventually eclipse Chen's own explicit evaluation.

The potential power of the imagery in Liu Shan's eulogy began to become more apparent in Pei Songzhi's commentary to Chen Shou's history. In Pei's use of supplementary materials to reconstruct the Zhuge narrative, he ended the biography with an extended quotation that echoed Liu Shan's metaphor of sage-ministers Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou. Significantly, this voice was literally in "monumental" language, for it was written in 304 or 305 on orders of the Jin emperor Huidi 惠帝 (r. 290–307) to be inscribed on a stone stele to commemorate Zhuge Liang's home in Nanyang 南陽. (Nanyang was where Liu Bei had come seeking advice and where Zhuge set forth his famous Longzhong 隆中 strategy for using Jingzhou 荊州 and Yizhou as a base, in alliance with Wu, to liberate North China from Cao Cao's 曹操 grasp and restore power to the Han dynastic house.) The official commissioned to erect a memorial stele at the site of Zhuge's home in Nanyang chose Li Xing 李興 to write the eulogy. Like Chen Shou, Li's family was from Shu and had served under Liu Shan. As in the case of Liu Shan's eulogy, the one by Li Xing addressed Zhuge's spirit directly and lauded his deeds and contributions.

The most relevant content similarity between the two eulogies is the historical analogies used as contextual backdrop for Zhuge Liang. On one level, Li Xing compared Zhuge's inventions and contributions favorably with various historical figures, such as his eightfold array with Master Sun Wu's 孫吳 strategies and his wooden ox cart with the ancient inventor Lu Ban 魯班 from the ancient state of Lu. Touching on Chen Shou's Zhuge analogies to Yue Yi and Guan Zhong, Li Xing argued that Zhuge surpassed both officials because Guan had violated propriety with a ritual act beyond his status and Yue Yi had not served his state to the end. On the level of analogies to sagely ministers, Zhuge's serving Liu Shan was comparable to the Duke of Zhou's service as regent. Both men, according to Li, did not usurp authority or provoke complaints. Like Confucius's state of Lu, the people of Shu acquired a sense of shame, so Zhuge's teachings had a moral effect on the people, too.

Li Xing's eulogy used powerful language to elevate Zhuge Liang: "In comparing you, if not [sage-king Yao's 堯 advisor] Gaoyao 皋陶, then it would be Yi Yin, certainly not Guan Zhong and [the Qi prime minister] Yan Ying 晏嬰 (d. 500 B.C.). How can sage Xuan 宣 alone be so worthy of praise!"¹⁶ Here, Xuan denoted Wen Xuan 文宣, i.e., Confucius (551–479 B.C.).¹⁷ Although Confucius was not as highly revered during the Wei and Western Jin period as he was during most other historical periods, he was still regarded as a sage, and the praise of Zhuge here reached a heretofore unprecedented level. Earlier in the eulogy, Li had already drawn a parallel to Yi Yin, for King Tang had humbly paid courtesy calls three times before winning Yi Yin's service to the government. Li's language about Zhuge even soared to a spiritual plane: "Our heroic master alone received [such talent]

¹⁶ *Sanguo zhi* 35/937.

¹⁷ Although its examples of usage are from the Tang period, see *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典, edited by Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風, et al. Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 1994, Vol. 6, p. 1528.

from Heaven's spirit. Aren't you [recipient of] the spirit's intelligence and man's purest essence?"¹⁸ In short, the eulogies presented by Liu Shan and Li Xing thus took a notable step toward the eventual apotheosis of Zhuge Liang.

Besides working for the Jin emperor, Li Xing had something else in common with Chen Shou, for both men's fathers had served as officials under Liu Shan.¹⁹ Thus, the Jin was using former elite literati from Shu to write the official version of Zhuge's historical biographical and set the interpretative tone for dealing with the principal Shu hero. The laudatory, even reverential, tone of the official accounts is striking, especially given the fact that these Jin emperors were direct descendants of Zhuge's nemesis Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179–251).

In short, in the hands of Chen Shou and especially Pei Songzhi, Zhuge Liang was beginning to undergo a transformation in Chinese historical consciousness. A major vehicle for this elevation was the symbolic language employed. Chen Shou used analogies to more recent historical ministers, Guan Zhong, Yue Yi, and Xiao He. Despite the laudatory quality of these comparisons, Chen Shou still used them to highlight what he observed as Zhuge's strength at civil administration and weakness at military planning and execution. Pei Songzhi seemingly took his clue from Liu Shan's eulogy to project a Zhuge as more talented at military strategy and more successful than Chen Shou had presented. Liu Shan's more potent level of analogies to liken Zhuge to sage-ministers Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou were also reinforced in Li Xing's eulogy. Pei Songzhi's subtle restructuring of the biography to conclude with Li's eulogistic language reveals his distance from Chen Shou's historical judgment. Culminating with Li Xing's eulogy, the biography now gave the final word in the official history to this eulogistic reappraisal. The eulogistic language commissioned by the Jin emperor to be preserved on a stone stele designating a pilgrimage site at Zhuge's home in Nanyang implicitly laid one foundational stone for building the historical Zhuge Liang into a more monumental figure.

2. From Framing Analogies to Historical Criticism

Noting that laudatory analogies did not pass uncontested even in the first century of Zhuge lore, Professor Henry apparently considers Chen Shou's disregard for such evidence as proof that Chen was caught in the grip of a legend and thus incapable of critically evaluating Zhuge Liang. Professor Henry's main article of evidence for jealousies and doubts about Zhuge among his contemporaries in Shu is the famous "Latter Campaign Memorial" ("Hou chushi biao 後出師表"). The Zhuge Liang of this "latter" memorial contrasts sharply with the wise and authoritative elder statesman of the "Former Campaign Memorial." During the intervening year, Zhuge's advanced column under the command of Ma Su 馬謖 (d. 227) had been defeated at Jieting 街亭. Zhuge's critics at court seized the opportunity to oppose his reckless military adventurism and expensive campaigns against the Wei, and Zhuge was forced to make a rather self-serving and defensive apology for his policies. Taking this "Latter Campaign Memorial" at face value, Professor Henry presents it as reproducing an "identifiable court document."²⁰ The authoritative tone of the alleged genre apparently silenced Professor Henry's otherwise impressively skeptical voice. He is cognizant of Pei Songzhi's statements that Chen Shou did not include this memorial in Zhuge's collected works and that Pei identi-

¹⁸ *Sanguo zhi* 35/936.

¹⁹ Li Mi 李密 (224–287) had earned some renown for refusing to serve after Liu Shan surrendered. Having been raised by his paternal grandmother who had the Han surname Liu, he cited his deference to her as his reason for not serving; however, after she died, he served as an official under Jin Wudi.

²⁰ Henry, "Zhuge Liang", p. 607.

fied it as coming ultimately from a memoir, the *Moji* 默記 by a certain Zhang Yan 張儼 (fl. 266). However, Professor Henry appears simply to take these facts as proof that Chen Shou omitted this memorial because it was inconsistent with his image and legend of Zhuge Liang.²¹ The inconsistency is indeed quite evident, but is it fair to reduce Chen's intention to this factor? Pei Songzhi surely was implicitly endorsing Chen Shou's rejection of the authenticity of this "document" because the *Moji* was a Wu source, not a Shu one. In other words, how could an obscure writer in Wu be quoting an internal Shu memorial, especially one of such a sensitive nature? Since Chen Shou had earlier worked in Liu Shan's library, which held state records, and was given access to the archives of all three former kingdoms while writing his official history,²² he was in a special position to judge whether or not the memorial was a fake. As Chen Shou elsewhere remarked in passing, there were already in the mid-third century numerous stories circulating about Zhuge Liang;²³ hence, he suggested that he selected ones he considered to be most trustworthy. Such modern Chinese historians as Professors Tian Yuqing 田餘慶 and Deng Guangming 鄧廣銘 (1907–98) have told me that they also reject the authenticity of the so-called "Latter Campaign Memorial." At the very least, shouldn't we be cautious about quoting it as the authoritative source and indicting Chen Shou as unable to engage in historical criticism for not including it?

While Professor Henry regards Zhuge Liang's ultimate failure to achieve his goals as enhancing his status as a *romantic* hero to the Chinese, Chen Shou's remarks about Zhuge's failures convey a more *tragic* tone.²⁴ For instance, Chen Shou regarded Zhuge's failures to be unavoidable because "the mandate of Heaven already had an ordained recipient; it could not be striven for with intellect or strength."²⁵ Influenced perhaps by a Japanese tradition celebrating "the nobility of failure,"²⁶ Professor Henry, however, proclaims that Chen's statement "gives us the first foretaste of Zhuge Liang as a sort of Promethean figure who, though unable to change fate, can, through sheer intellect and determination, make Heaven falter in its preordained course."²⁷

Zhuce Liang's failures were surely what compelled Chen Shou to focus soberly, realistically and critically on Zhuge's military record. Chen's famous conclusive evaluation about Zhuge stated: "In successive years, he mobilized troops without being able to succeed apparently because responding to circumstances in making strategy was not his strong point."²⁸ The preface to Zhuge's collected works provided more details: "Liang's abilities were greatest in the area of army training and administration and were relatively slight in the area of inventive surprise tactics. His ability to govern peo-

²¹ Henry, "Zhuge Liang", p. 606. See *Sanguo zhi* 35/924.

²² Chang Qu 常璩 (c. 292–361): *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 (*jiao zhu* 校注), annotated by Liu Lin 劉琳. Chengdu: Ba-Shu shushe, 1984, 11/849-50; see also *Jin shu* 晉書, edited by Fang Xuanling 方玄齡, 82/2137-2138, and de Crespigny, Rafe: *The Records of the Three Dynasties*. Canberra: The Australian National University, Centre of Oriental Studies, 1970, p. 6.

²³ *Sanguo zhi* 35/931.

²⁴ Although obviously influenced by Hayden White's usage of these terms, I am trying to utilize them in a more generic sense rather than in his cultural contextualization within Christian terms of the Fall, etc. See White, Hayden: *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983, for instance, pp. 8-9.

²⁵ *Sanguo zhi* 35/930-31; tr. Henry, "Zhuge Liang", p. 593.

²⁶ See especially Morris, Ivan: *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan*. New York: New American Library, 1976.

²⁷ Henry, "Zhuge Liang", p. 593.

²⁸ *Sanguo zhi* 35/934.

ple surpassed his ability to create battle plans.”²⁹ Elaborating, Chen Shou stated that Zhuge’s opponents included outstanding men of ability; moreover, even though Zhuge reportedly always had fewer troops, he was forced to assume the more difficult role of attacker. Furthermore, because he did not have great generals, he had no choice except to go beyond his administrative expertise to venture into the arena of actually leading the troops to war. In short, it was not surprising that he failed to overcome his opponents. Chen’s judgments about Zhuge were expressed in the genre of addressing Jin emperor Wudi 武帝 (r. 265–289) who was, of course, a descendant of Zhuge’s ultimate military opponent Sima Yi.

As recent scholarship has underscored, the politics surrounding Chen Shou’s work were quite complex. Recounting Chen Shou’s entanglement in the politics of Wudi’s court, Dr. Martin Hanke draws attention to how a court faction centered around Xun Xu 荀勗 opposed Chen Shou’s historiography and promoted the historical accounts in the *Wei shu* 魏書 and the *Wei lie* 魏略 instead; moreover, that faction managed to attain Chen Shou’s dismissal from court. Furthermore, both Dr. Hanke and Professor Fan Jiawei highlight passages in Chen Shou’s history that reveal his appreciation for Wu’s and Shu’s claims to legitimacy.³⁰ Such recent scholarship provides additional grounds for rejecting a traditional claim that since Chen Shou served the Jin emperor, his negative evaluation of Zhuge’s military weaknesses simply reflected the bias of his political context.³¹

An additional claim of Chen Shou’s alleged negative bias is also found in Pei Songzhi’s supplement to the *Sanguo zhi*. In accounts of Zhuge’s son, Zhuge Zhan 諸葛瞻 (227–263), one reported statement made to the elders of Shu in 347 claimed that Chen Shou bore a grudge for having been insulted by his administrative superior Zhuge Zhan.³² Since Pei Songzhi made no comment, he could be read as endorsing this charge. Thus, there is a hint of tension or difference here between Pei’s and Chen’s images of Zhuge.

Instead of engaging these specific debates about dynastic legitimacy (*zhengtong* 正統) and political bias, I would rather develop my point that Chen’s quite reasonable judgments about Zhuge’s shortcomings suggest that it is unfair to reduce Chen merely to a man in the grip of a legend. For instance, Yuan Zhun’s 袁準 (ca. 237 – ca. 316) *Yuanzi* 袁子 reached a judgment—balanced similarly to Chen Shou’s—about Zhuge’s weaknesses.³³ Perhaps the similarity of Chen’s judgment to that of this early Jin source—written by someone who had lived in the Zhuge’s enemy state of Wei—might give us pause before asserting that Chen was so biased in Zhuge’s favor that he was merely in the grip of a legend. Even if Chen was not on a quest (like Peter Novick ascribed to some American historians) for “that noble dream” of objectivity,³⁴ Chen Shou apparently attempted to be fair and responsible with his data.

²⁹ *Sanguo zhi* 35/930; tr. Henry, “Zhuge Liang”, p. 592.

³⁰ Hanke, Martin: *Geschichtsschreibung im Spannungsfeld zwischen Zentrale und Region am Beispiel der Jin-Dynastie (265–430)*. Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft, 2002, pp. 86-146; and Fan Jiawei: “Sanguo zhengtong lun yu Chen Shou dui tianwen xingzhan cailiao de chuli jian lun Shou shu wu <zhi> 三國正統論與陳壽對天文星占材料的處理兼論壽書無〈志〉”, in: *Jiegang bian* 結綱編, edited by Huang Qinglian 黃清連, Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1998, pp. 131-180. I am indebted to Achim Mittag for bringing these two sources to my knowledge.

³¹ These traditional complaints against Chen Shou are weak; see, for instance, the summaries of this issue in Eric Henry, “Zhuge Liang”, p. 592, note 3, and de Crespigny, *Records*, pp. 3, 11-14.

³² *Sanguo zhi* 35/933.

³³ *Sanguo zhi* 35/934-935.

³⁴ Novick, Peter: *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*. New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

What Chen Shou regarded as Zhuge Liang's greatest strengths centered on his administration of the Shu kingdom. In his conclusive evaluation, Chen began:

In Zhuge Liang's performance as prime minister, he nurtured and protected the common people, promulgated good relations, used principle to regulate officials, handled government business in accord with actual circumstances, and demonstrated sincerity and fairness in handling state affairs.³⁵

After this general accolade, Chen Shou turned to the potentially more problematic topic of Zhuge's administration of punishments. (After all, Chen's father had been an officer under Ma Su, the commander whom Zhuge had reluctantly executed after Ma Su's disregard for explicit instructions had led to his defeat and to the failure of Zhuge's first campaign against Wei.) Still, Chen's conclusive evaluation asserted that Zhuge was fair:

Anyone, even his antagonists, contributing to society and completely loyal to the throne would be rewarded; anyone, even his intimate friends, violating laws or neglecting duties would be punished. He would pardon those who repented even if the offense was serious, but he would punish those whose eloquence sought to conceal an infraction even if minor. ... Although penal administration was strict there was no bitterness because he was fair in his judgments and clear about his admonitions.³⁶

Quoting from his preface to Zhuge Liang's collected writings, Chen Shou reiterated and elaborated on this theme of how Zhuge's strict regulations and severe punishments cultivated civic virtues among the people. As part of his defense of Zhuge, Chen quoted Mencius: "Let the people be put to death in the way which is intended to preserve their lives, and though they die, they will not murmur at him who puts them to death."³⁷ Citing Mencius' approval of a benevolently minded use of laws and punishments implicitly deflected the reader's attention from possible parallels between Zhuge and the *Realpolitik* or Legalist (*fajia* 法家) tradition.

Chen Shou included a story about Zhuge's administration that contradicted his own projected image of Zhuge. In his biography of Fa Zheng 法正 (176–220), Chen claimed that Fa Zheng "would repay any kindness as small as one meal and any provocation as small as a disapproving glance, so he killed a number of people that had insulted him." Thus, some people appealed to Zhuge Liang to advise Liu Bei to stop Fa Zheng from "taking the law into his own hands."³⁸ Responding to such pleas, Zhuge reiterated the extreme insecurities Liu Bei had suffered because of Cao Cao (155–220) and Sun Quan; moreover, such insecurity ended only after Fa Zheng helped him gain possession of a secure base in Shu. Thereupon, Chen quoted Zhuge: "How could Fa Zheng be stopped from obtaining what he wants and doing as he pleases!" Elaborating on Zhuge's point, Chen concluded: "Liang knew that the First Sovereign was exceptionally fond of, and trusted, Zheng, and so answered as he did."³⁹

Chen Shou's narrative at this point conflicts with his own projection of Zhuge as an impartial and fair upholder of the law irrespective of the persons involved. Here, Zhuge not only refused to intercede with Liu Bei to curb Fa Zheng's excesses but also justified ignoring Fa Zheng's violation of law on the grounds of the confidence that Fa Zheng had won from Liu Bei. At worst, this account tarnishes Zhuge's image for upholding a strict and fair standard that was to be applied to everyone. At best, it runs counter to Chen's picture of a Zhuge who failed to understand how to adjust

³⁵ *Sanguo zhi* 35/934.

³⁶ *Sanguo zhi* 35/934.

³⁷ *Mengzi* VIIA.12; tr. Legge, James: *The Four Books*. New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1966, p. 941; quoted by Chen Shou in *Sanguo zhi* 35/931.

³⁸ *Sanguo zhi* 37/960.

³⁹ *Sanguo zhi* 37/960.

principles to meet the practical demands of different situations and circumstances. In short, Chen Shou was not so caught in a legend that he could not critically evaluate Zhuge or include materials in conflict with his image of Zhuge.

Pei Songzhi appended to this account a comment by Sun Sheng 孫盛 (ca. 302 – ca. 375). Citing historical analogies to bad precedents, Sun cautioned that setting aside punishments in dealing with the ruler's favorites always created havoc in the government and disrupted ethical principles, so how could anyone be allowed to indulge personal whims in taking advantage of others? In short, "Mr. Zhuge's words come close to violating the administration of punishments."⁴⁰ Letting Sun's criticism stand without further comment, Pei Songzhi implicitly agreed. Here again, letting a critical comment stand unchallenged, Pei Songzhi could be read as disagreeing with Chen Shou and taking a much more critical stance toward Zhuge. While there is a logical consistency between Chen Shou's critical evaluations of Zhuge's weaknesses and his framing Zhuge's story in terms of historical administrators, there was more unresolved tension, or at least a gulf, between the criticisms that Pei Songzhi let stand against Zhuge and the elevation of Zhuge to sagely status implicit in his—Pei's—citation of Li Xing's monumental eulogy.

Conclusion

Chen Shou's narrative structure and language placed Zhuge Liang in an honored position as a significant prime minister comparable to Guan Zhong, but avoided comparing Zhuge to such sage-ministers as Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou. Despite an otherwise consistent set of analogies, Chen did include what is certainly the earliest document asserting a claim that Zhuge merited this higher, sagely level of historical analogies. That document was Liu Shan's edict eulogizing, and bestowing posthumous titles on, Zhuge. Since among the self-proclaimed purposes in Liu Shan's text were to teach future generation and to ensure that the historical record would not be distorted, Liu Shan hoped, however vainly, that history would proceed in such a way that Zhuge's service to the founder and successor rulers of Shu-Han would prove to be a parallel to that of Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou. Both Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou had served the founders of a new dynasty and helped successors secure the fortunes of the dynasty. In the romantic imagery of the eulogy, Liu Shan could project a Zhuge on the verge of success, unattained only because of his untimely death. Chen Shou could have no such illusions, for he was too painfully aware of the historical fate of Liu Shan and the Shu-Han kingdom. Having served as an official in Liu Shan's state library before his ruler's surrender to the Wei and now employed by the new dynasty that unified China, Chen Shou had to confront the history of the divided period and set forth historical judgments on those active in the Three Kingdoms. Despite his obvious respect for Zhuge Liang, Chen faced the fact of Zhuge's tragic failure and explained it in terms of Zhuge's own weakness in strategic command and the dearth of talented generals in Shu. Rather than sagely ministers of the golden era of the Three Dynasties in antiquity, the only appropriate analogies were to historically significant, but much less successful and even somewhat tragic, figures of the troubled times in the relatively recent past.

Paradoxically, the second document eulogizing Zhuge Liang as analogous to sage-ministers Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou was composed around 305 on orders from the Jin dynasty. Enough time had apparently passed since the demise of the Shu-Han kingdom that the Jin state could sponsor a stele proclaiming that Zhuge should be compared to sagely ministers like Yi Yin, for Zhuge far excelled the talent and character of notable ministers like Guan Zhong. Li Xing, the author of the stele eulogy, further extolled Zhuge's various talents ranging from practical inventor and military strategist

⁴⁰ *Sanguo zhi* 37/961.

to moral exemplar. Whether the site of Zhuge's tomb in Mianyang or his home in Nanyang, these eulogies on steles became part of the larger monument to be appreciated by those making pilgrimage. As eulogies, both addressed Zhuge's spirit; thus, they were not designed to be the genre of official historical writing, like Chen Shou's, submitted to emperors and promulgated as the authoritative interpretation of the past. Yet, Pei Songzhi's commentary to the Zhuge biography had culminated with Li Xing's eulogy. As evident in the sources he collected, and particularly in his comments on some of that materials, Pei Songzhi had an even higher regard for Zhuge than Chen Shou had demonstrated; thus, Pei implicitly positioned Li Xing's eulogy to stand in lieu of his own conclusive evaluation of Zhuge Liang. Painfully aware of Zhuge's failures, Chen Shou took a sober and realistic view of Zhuge's military abilities, so he could not embrace the inflated analogies of sagehood that Liu Shan's eulogy proclaimed and that Pei Songzhi would endorse. Evolving through Chen's text and Pei's commentary, Zhuge's image as hero was progressively elevated historically and allegorically from effective administrator to sage. Later escalations of analogies used to plot Zhuge's story should not, however, blur our recognition of the incremental stages toward Zhuge Liang's apotheosis.