WHEN THE SOUTH MATTERS:
IMAGINATION OF CHU AND CLASSICIZATION OF CHUCI (VERSEs OF CHU)

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the construction of *Chuci* (a collection of poems purportedly written by the legendary figure Qu Yuan and his followers) as a southern anthology and literary tradition from Han (202 BCE- 220 CE) to Song (960-1279). It demonstrates that, rather than inherent in the text *per se*, the traits conventionally recognized as marks of the anthology’s southernness were cultural and political constructs with an agenda to articulate a southern identity for both state and literati. To that end, the dissertation examines the anthologizing practices, together with a close reading of commentaries, prefaces, letters, and imitations. The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One examines the Han compilation and valorization of *Chuci* in relation with Qu Yuan’s Chu identity. The trajectory of conception of *Chuci* through Six Dynasties (222-589) and Tang (618-907) are arranged thematically in three chapters. Each chapter probes one of the literary images of Chu—a symbol for displacement, a culture of lewd rites, and a fallen state—and its impact on the *Chuci* exegesis and assessment. The entire narrative ends in Chapter Five at the Song when previous proliferation of meaning and debates on the anthology’s value were transformed into a new country-wide recognition of its canonical status, with Southern Song literati identification of Chu as a tragic predecessor. In particular, by defining *Chuci* as a style exclusively bound to the southland, Southern Song literati claimed their exclusive ownership of the cultural heritage of the anthology and further implicitly claimed for the Song court’s cultural authority in the face of military threat from the northern nomads.
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The dissertation has not been previously published in any form, but I was fortunate to have presented parts of my research and received comments on refining my argumentation at various conferences. The second part of Chapter Two was presented at the Western Branch meeting of
the American Oriental Society in 2017, under the title of “Displacement and *Chuci* as a Voice of Plaint: Liu Zongyuan in the South.” The first part of Chapter Five was presented as “Southern Genre and Southern Triumph: The Song Redefinition of *Sao*” at the annual meeting of Association of Asian Studies in 2018. Another part of the chapter was presented as “Zhu Xi’s Reconfiguration of *Chuci*” at the Western Branch meeting of AOS in 2018. At these meetings, David Knechtges, Paul Kroll, Michael Fuller, Nicholas Williams, and Yang Zhiyi, among others, generously shared their wisdom and knowledge with me and helped refine my ideas.

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Introduction

“Overall, since Qu Yuan composed the ‘Lisao,’ [poets from] the Southland followed his practice. Masterpieces were successively composed, and they were named ‘Verses of Chu’ altogether.”

—Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), preface to the Collective Commentary of Chuci 楚辭集註

This is Zhu Xi’s introduction of Chuci 楚辭 (Verses of Chu) in his commentary composed a millennium after the anthology’s compilation in the Han 漢 (202 BCE-220 CE). The introduction explains the anthology’s creation and nomenclature with its prominent author and geographical origin—the anthology was made possible by Qu Yuan’s 屈原 (traditional dates 343-278 BCE) progenitorial composition of the “Lisao” 齊領 (Encountering Sorrow) and a succession of southern poems in following Qu Yuan’s path. Since Qu Yuan was a native of Chu 楚 (fell in 223 BCE), a state south of other major powers before the Qin unification in 221 BCE, and the other poems were all (presumably) written in the Southland (nanguo 南國), they were anthologized under the title of “Verses of Chu.”

In Zhu Xi’s introduction, the Chuci is an anthology that encompasses a southern literary tradition. Its temporal scope extends beyond that of Chu, because many of Qu Yuan’s followers selected in the anthology lived in the Han. Thus, though not named as such, the verses in Chuci

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1 Zhu Xi’s Chuci studies include Chuci jizhu 楚辭集註, Chuci bianzheng 楚辭辨證, Chuci houyu 楚辭後語, and Chuci yinkao 楚辭音考. The first three are reproduced together under the first title of “Chuci jizhu” in the modern time. See Chuci jizhu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001). My use of “Chuci jizhu” does not include the bianzheng and houyu.

2 From the Han on, “Chuci” may point to two different yet related things: a) the anthology of works by Qu Yuan and other writers from Chu and Han, which were collected in Wang Yi’s Chuci zhangju and survived in Hong Xingzu’s Chuci buzhu, and b) “verses of Chu” in general, which points to a literary tradition with Qu Yuan believed to be the representative and progenitor. I use the italicized Chuci for the first sense, and the quotation-marked “Chuci” for the second. A more detailed discussion of the meaning of “Chuci” is offered in chapter one.

3 Zhu Xi’s Chuci jizhu selected a different group of Han writers’ works than the widely circulated Han version of
are indeed “verses of the Southland,” representing the legacy of southern literature. No other poets’ names—except for that of Qu Yuan—are mentioned, implying that their collective identity as southerners is more important than their individual name, however renowned they may be.

None of Qu Yuan’s followers are identified as a northerner, as if his “Lisao” never exerted an influence in the north or verses of the Northland deserve no place in an anthology called “Verses of Chu.” This is despite the fact that the *Chuci* as compiled in the Han does not lead to this impression for its inclusion of “Qijian” 七諫 (Seven Admonishments) by Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154-93 BCE), a native of Yanci 廣次 (in the northern-west part of modern Shandong). But that as it may, in Zhu Xi’s opinion, the *Chuci* is an anthology exclusively attached to the Southland.

Zhu Xi’s claim about *Chuci*’s southernness is echoed in the early twentieth century conception of *Chuci* as representing a distinctively southern style of literature, one of the dual origin of Chinese poetry (the other one is the *Book of Odes* 詩經 that represents the northern style). That said, the *Chuci* never defines its “Chu-ness” or “southernness” in explicit terms. As “verses from Chu,” the state’s name is not even mentioned once in Qu Yuan’s poetry. “Chu” as a place name is mentioned in the “Dazhao” 大招 (Great Summons), “Qijian” 七諫 (Seven Admonishments), “Jiutan” 九嘆 (Nine Laments), and “Jiusi” 九思 (Nine Longings), most of which are Han compositions supposedly with a vague sense of “Chu-ness” in mind. But neither is their “Chu-ness” defined in these poems. What is it that distinguishes the *Chuci* as “Chu” or “southern” verses? Why did the geographic origin of the verses matter? How did the conception of Chu shape the reception of *Chuci*? What were the southerners’ roles in the reception? Had the

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*Chuci*, Wang Yi’s 王逸 (ca. 89- ca. 158) *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句 (Chapter and Verse Commentary on *Verses of Chu*; preserved in Hong Xingzu’s *Chuci buzhu*). I will return to this issue in chapter 5.
anthology been always recognized as a property monopolized by the Southland before Zhu Xi’s
time? Why did Zhu Xi make the claim to confine the anthology to the Southland? Finally, what
difference does it make when the Chuci is associated with the Southland, rather than “China” as
a whole?

The dissertation investigates the conception of Chuci’s southernness from the anthology’s
inception in the Han through the Southern Song 南宋 (1127-1279), when Zhu Xi’s claim was
made. Through scrutinization of hermeneutic, anthologizing, imitation, and literary critical
practices with regard to Chuci, the dissertation demonstrates that the traits conventionally
recognized as marks of the anthology’s southernness were cultural and political constructs with
an agenda to articulate a southern identity for both state and literati. In other words, the marks of
Chu culture and landscape as identified in the Chuci were not so much innocent qualities
inherent in the text awaiting discovery. Song scholars for the first time defined the Chu-ness of
Chuci in explicit terms, cut off its relations with the north, and regionalized it as an anthology of
the Southland exhibiting a “Chu spirit” with due emphasis on loyalty and patriotism—qualities
in urgent need in a period facing serious military threat from the Northern nomads. Whereas
before the Song, scholars of the Southland never owned the Chuci. As “verses of Chu,” their Chu
quality embraced a spectrum of dimensions that can be appropriated to support a variety of
cultural ideals and counter ideals.

**Constructedness of Meaning in Reception Theory**

In the narrow sense, the dissertation offers a historical overview of the cultural significance
of Chuci’s southernness and its construction. More broadly conceived, the dissertation concerns
the production of meaning in light of reception theory that emphasizes the reader’s integral
active role in interpreting and evaluating the text. Reception theory maintains that there is no original meaning to be recovered before the moment of reading and interpretation. Instead, “[all] meaning is constituted or actualized at the point of reception.” 4 In the study of classics, reception theory has challenged the traditional idea that classics is a self-contained entity with a fixed boundary and an essential nature to be grasped on its own terms.

The primary advocate of reception theory is the German scholar Hans Robert Jauss, who, in the late 1960s, proposed the notion of “horizon of expectations,” with an attempt to establish interpreting strategies. 5 In his conception, rather than a transparent practice, reading is always mediated by a “horizon of expectations,” which include textual knowledge of conventions (such as genre, style, or form) and social knowledge (such as moral values). Thus, on the one hand, Jauss’s model analyzes a text’s relationship with other texts in a given tradition. On the other hand, the reader’s textual experience will dramatically alter when historical conditions change, making possible new interpretations and evaluations. In this way, it perceives literary works in the diachronic framework where individual works “gradually accumulate meaning through asymmetric layering.” 6 The model of “horizon of expectations” is forward-looking, portraying the development of literature as a dynamic process.

With its emphasis on the reader, reception theory moves away from the author and the act of production. It goes well with post-structuralist notions of the death of the author that reacts

against grounding interpretation in the author’s intention and biographical context. As Foucault argues, rather than “an indefinite source of significations” of a work, the author is a product of interpretation, a function that conforms to the “principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning.” The author is a property of the text that guarantees the unity and stability of its interpretation. Reader-centered reception theory, on the contrary, opens up more interpretative possibilities. As Jauss argues, a literary work “is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is not a monument that monologically reveals its timeless essence.” Instead, a literary work is a dialogic event between text and reader perpetuated by readers’ responses that may vary from one generation to the next, from one reader to another. In this light, it would be meaningless to determine the validity or invalidity of an interpretation, as all interpretations are embedded in their social, political, and intellectual contexts.

The proliferation of meaning in the reader’s response, however, does not equal reception studies with psychological studies of the reader’s mind, or the reader’s response with arbitrary and subjective impressions. To begin with, as Jauss insists, the “horizon of expectations” is at least to some extent trans-subjective in view of genre conventions:

A corresponding process of continuous horizon setting and horizon changing also determines the relation of the individual text to the succession of texts which form the genre. The new text evokes for the reader (listener) the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected, changed or just reproduced. Variation and correction determine the scope, alteration and reproduction of the borders and structure of the genre. The interpretative reception of a text always presupposes the context of experience of aesthetic perception. The question of the subjectivity of the interpretation and the taste of different readers or levels of readers can be asked significantly only after it has been decided which transsubjective horizon of understanding

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determines the impact of the text.\textsuperscript{10}

In this way, in the “process of the continuous horizon setting and horizon changing,” a sense of “methodological mastery” is generated.\textsuperscript{11} Individual readers’ responses may be assessed against the “objective capacity of such literary frames of reference” formed by the inter-textual relationship.\textsuperscript{12} Besides the formal aspect, the trans-subjective quality may also be applied to the social aspect of the model. A reader’s individual perception is formed within the collective and anonymous ideologies of a given age, against which the individual perception can be assessed. Jauss’s model of “horizon of expectations,” according to Paul de Man, implies a “synthesis between the private and the public dimensions of the literary work.”\textsuperscript{13}

In the meantime, the reader’s response is not arbitrary because reader is not the sole source of meaning. Instead, the meaning of a text is always a negotiation between what the text says and what the reader understands it as saying in the here and now. The relationship between reader and text is a two-way dynamic. The text anticipates an ideal reader and provides instruction for the reader to follow. The real reader aims to be the ideal reader and suppresses his idiosyncratic self. In the meantime, however, the real reader also resists to be the ideal reader through his individual responses, while the text’s instruction only works when the reader is equipped with certain tools, knowing how to follow its instruction.\textsuperscript{14} Lastly, the degree to which the reader may produce meaning is limited by the social and collective nature of language, which is not the property of any individual.\textsuperscript{15}

That said, Jauss’s model for the historical understanding of literature does not give access to  

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, 23
\textsuperscript{11} Paul de Man talks about the “methodological understanding” in his introduction to Jauss’s collective essays. See Paul de Man, “Introduction,” in Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, xii-xiii.
\textsuperscript{12} Hans Robert Jauss, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” 23.
\textsuperscript{13} Paul de Man, “Introduction,” in Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, xiii.
\textsuperscript{14} Ika Willis, Reception (New York: Routledge, 2018), 109.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 107.
any fully objective or explicit form of “horizon of expectations.” The codes and ideologies at work in the reader’s horizon seldom exist as openly stated propositions, but remain unconscious to the reader. Indeed, the unconscious never fades away because “in a perception, conscious attention is possible only upon a background, or horizon, of distraction.”\textsuperscript{16} This opaque nature of “horizon of expectations” is even more true for the inquiry into a past reader’s response, because the social, political, and intellectual conditions of his time are far removed from the here and now and cannot be fully reconstructed through the available materials. As de Man observes, “[a] dialectic of understanding as a complex interplay between knowing and not-knowing, is built within the very process of literary history.”\textsuperscript{17}

The “complex interplay between knowing and not-knowing” brings awareness to the limitation of “horizon of expectations” not only in the sense that the horizon of the reader in question is opaque. It also brings awareness to the limitation of this dissertation as a scholarly work, which is a “double reception” in the sense that it reads and receives various historical readers’ reception of an ancient text. As a reading subject, my own “horizon of expectations” is also opaque. The dissertation stands within history rather than outside of it, affected by the ideologies of its own time without being fully conscious of them.\textsuperscript{18} As such, just as that of the historical readers, the interpretation of this dissertation is no less subjective. It awaits future reception, if any, to reveal its unconscious retrospectively.

At this point it is worthwhile to revisit the statement in reception theory that “all meaning is constituted or actualized at the point of reception.” The statement constitutively perceives a gap

\textsuperscript{16} Paul de Man, “Introduction,” in \textit{Toward an Aesthetic of Reception}, xii.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, xii.
\textsuperscript{18} As Duncan Kennedy puts it, “we do not yet understand ourselves,” which necessitates the “coming clean” about our ideological drive at a future time, either by ourselves or by a future reader. Duncan Kennedy, “Afterword: The Uses of ‘Reception’,” in \textit{Classics and the Uses of Reception}, eds. Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Malden: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 290-91.
between the author and the reader, between the past and present. In the meantime, however, the past and present are not entirely distinct entities. The accumulated layers of a text cannot be stripped away once and for all through reception studies, because in the act of reading and interpretation, the text is “refashioned” from the “writer’s text” to be the “reader’s text.”19 As Charles Martindale argues, “reception involves the acknowledgement that the past and present are implicated in each other,” interpenetrating each other.20

More importantly, the statement privileges the reader and the present with an epistemological confidence, because the reader at the present moment is able to retrospectively “illuminate” the “obscurities” of the text from the past, supply its “omissions,” and “reveal” its “suppressions.”21 Jauss’s model for historical reception, as de Man observes, is implicitly embedded with a hermeneutic goal to better understand and determine the meaning of a literary work.22 The goal, in Kennedy’s view, has a tendency of reification to presume that text has a “real” and concealed meaning—one that even the writer failed to realize—but is “discovered” and “made real” at the moment of reception.23 Yet in the meantime, the premise of reception theory—the constructed and contingent nature of meaning—acts against the tendency towards reification, and instead maintains that there is no final or correct meaning of a text. The two tendencies coexist in the act of reception. One may disrupt the other but may not remove it completely.24

Using reception theory in the study of Chuci, my dissertation attempts not to provide new or correct interpretations for the Chuci as a text and its authors. Instead, acknowledging the

19 Duncan Kennedy, “The Uses of ‘Reception’,” in Classics and the Uses of Reception, 289. Kennedy discusses the refashioning of text and calls it “allegorical interpretation” (“speaking otherwise”).
21 I am borrowing Duncan Kennedy’s description of the act of reception.
23 Duncan Kennedy, “Afterword: The Uses of ‘Reception’,” in Classics and the Uses of Reception, 290.
24 Ibid, 290.
“complex interplay between knowing and not-knowing,” I pay special attention to the historicity of interpretation and seeks to demonstrate its continuity and change over time. The dissertation explores the ways in which an individual interpretation is made possible by its intellectual and social conditions. In the meantime, I seek to demonstrate how the individual interpretation stands out against previous perceptions that exist as its background knowledge, and how it becomes part of the background knowledge, against which later interpretations stand out. In this way, the dissertation seeks to make some contribution towards “knowing” how meaning—specifically, the southernness of Chuci—is constructed.

In its investigation of constructedness of meaning, my dissertation does not attempt to provide a linear narrative in which the Chuci is gradually canonized as a southern anthology and literary tradition. Anna Shields perceives a tendency towards the teleological view of history in recent reception studies of premodern Chinese literature,25 and the dissertation, in an attempt to avoid this tendency, portrays a complex picture where the significance and interpretation of Chuci’s southern origin is ever contested by intellectuals of contrasting positions and at different moments in history. It examines the ways in which the Chuci was associated with the Southland by the Song, and sheds light on the values and interpretations produced in these associations. The materials used in the dissertation all concern Chuci’s southern association, but it does not try to maintain that this is the only channel through which the anthology was understood historically. Neither is the Song an end point or apex of receiving the Chuci as such—its reading has of course inspired new interpretations in later ages. The Song is designated as the point to end the narrative of this study because, in a manner to reconfigure the tradition as accumulated to its time, Song literati for the first time wrote the Southland permanently into the definition of Chuci,

proposing a Chu-centered perspective that turns *Chuci* into an exclusive property of the south.

The study of *Chuci*’s reception also necessarily involves the reception history of Qu Yuan, its progenitor and prominent author. This is because, in the traditional Chinese poetic thought that “poetry articulates [the poet’s] intention” 詩言志, a poem is equaled with the poet’s mind in the sense that one can be known through inquiry into the other. Thus, the reader’s reception of a poem is inseparable from his understanding of the poet as a person. As Wendy Swartz observes, “the extent to which the literary was a distinct category needs to be established and not assumed, and a study of literary reception in the Chinese tradition must examine literary questions in relation to nonliterary categories, such as history, biography, and morality.”

In the case of *Chuci*, the interpretation and evaluation of its poems were constantly interpenetrating with those of Qu Yuan’s character. In addition, the act of reception examined in the dissertation is not limited to the interpretation of texts and authors in *Chuci* in the form of commentary and evaluation. I also consider the practice of compilation—selection of authors and works, determination of their classification and order, and insertion of various kinds of “paratexts”—as also part of interpretation and will examine them as well.

Lastly, studying reception in manuscript culture also involves the acknowledgement of instability of texts in the sense that there is neither an “original” author’s text nor a definite

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27 Robert Ashmore argues in the case of Tao Yuanming that “questions of the quality of his work and questions of the quality of his person have been superimposed and inextricably woven together,” which is “largely true of traditional Chinese literary criticism.” Robert Ashmore, *The Transport of Reading: Texts and Understanding in the World of Tao Qian (365-427)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 41.

28 Anna Shields has demonstrated how these practices can be revealing to reception studies in the case of Li Bai. Anna Shields, “Avatars of Li Bai: On the Production of Tang Poetry and Tang Poets during the Northern Song Dynasty,” forthcoming. In Gerard Genette’s study of printed books, the materials supplied by the author, editor, and publisher to accompany the main text, such as its cover, title, preface, epigraph, and notes, are all “paratexts.” Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Jane Lewin trans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1997). I am borrowing the term to refer to the materials accompanying the main text in the material culture, such as preface, postface, title, and colophon.
reader’s text for *Chuci*.\(^9\) In the culture that texts are circulated by words of mouth and by copying, the author’s text is unattainable because it is always subjected to alteration in the process of transmission. Besides, the transmitter and reader have more freedom to create his own text by selecting and preserving the “correct” variant while marginalizing or even removing those that do not conform to their presumed authorial intention.\(^10\)

In the case of *Chuci*, in addition to the heated debate on Qu Yuan’s authorship,\(^31\) the shape of poems attributed to him before their compilation in the Han is largely unknown. Compilation in early China could mean textual arrangements of “a multiplicity of writings that were considered to belong to a common corpus and whose coherence with one another may have been

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\(^9\) Tian Xiaohei identifies the stability of texts as the presumption of the reception theory, a presumption based on the print culture in which the reader engages with texts primarily through interpretation. Whereas in the manuscript culture, as she shows in the case of Tao Yuanming’s poetry, the reader’s role goes beyond interpretation. Tian Xiaohei, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture: The Record of a Dusty Table* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 18-19. Christopher Nugent’s study of the circulation of Tang poetry also address this issue of reader’s production of text. Christopher Nugent, *Manifest in Words, Written on Paper: Producing and Circulating Poetry in Tang Dynasty China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010).

\(^10\) Many variants are available through *Chuci* quotations in various sources. For a comprehensive collection of *Chuci* variants, see Huang Linggeng 黃靈根, *Chuci yiwen bianzheng 楚辭異文辨證* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2000).

\(^31\) Whether or not the works under Qu Yuan’s name can indeed be all attributed to him, their authenticity and scenario of composition—Qu Yuan, the Chu advisor and royal family member, giving expression to his intention during exile—was largely not suspected until the twentieth century. Traditional commentators such as Wang Yi expressed their uncertainty regarding the attribution of “Zhaojun” and “Dazhao.” Wang Yi suspected that “Dazhao,” rather than a work of Qu Yuan, may be composed by Jing Cuo 景差 from Chu. “Zhaojun” was attributed to Song Yu by Wang Yi, and to Qu Yuan by Sima Qian. In modern times, Qu Yuan’s authorship is revisited with a refreshed notion of authorship represented by Foucault’s theory. Okamura Shigeru 岡村繁 considers Qu Yuan to be a character in, rather than the author of, the texts attributed to him. Examining the emergence of authors in the imperial context of Han, Martin Kern sees Qu Yuán’s authorial name as a function and property of the text, a classifying tool that invites attribution of certain texts while excluding others, and a principle of interpretation, in Foucault’s sense. Similarly, Stephen Owen sees Qu Yuan’s authorship as growing out of the need to interpret the poems that previously circulated in Chu and entered a new intellectual milieu in the Han. See Okamura Shigeru 岡村繁, “*Soji to Kutsu Gen—Hirō to sakusha to no bunri ni tsuite*” 楚辭と屈原—ヒーローと作者との分離について, in *Nippon Chūgoku Gakkai hō* 日本中國學會報 18. 10 (1966): 86-101. Martin Kern, “*Shiji li de ‘zuozhe’ gainian*” 《史記》裡的‘作者’概念, in *Shiji xue yu shijie hanxue lunji xubian 史記學與世界漢學論集續編*, ed. Martin Kern and Lee Chi-hsiang 李紀祥 (Taipei: Tangshan chubanshe/Tonsan Publications, 2016), 23-61. Stephen Owen, “Poetry and Authorship: The Songs of Chu (Chuci),” in *How to Read Chinese Poetry in Context—Poetic Culture from Antiquity Through the Tang*, Cai Zongqi ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 30-31. Based on these scholars’ discussions of authorship, this dissertation takes Qu Yuan’s authorial role and persona as established alongside the celebration and compilation of Chu verses in the Han. In other words, Qu Yuan probably had not become the author of poems attributed to him before the Chu verses started to gain in importance in the Han, but remained a protagonist.
found in their partial overlap.” Poems in the Chuci may have existed as such a corpus and gone through acts such as authorship determination, textual combination, division, formal standardization, and repetition removing in the anthologizing process. After being anthologized as the Chuci, the poems by Qu Yuan and others came down to us through generations of transmission and editorial intervention. As an anthology, the Chuci in imperial times remained a dynamic corpus. It was never closed, with authors and their works continuously added to and subtracted from the anthology in different commentators’ hands according to their interests.

Hong Xingzu’s 洪興祖 (1090-1155) Chuci buzhu 楚辭補註 (Comprehensive Commentary on Verses of Chu) that is considered the modern standard version of Chuci is only collection among many, while “Verses of Chu” can be compiled with different selections of poems. Besides, the Chuci buzhu itself is a result of selective reception of previous versions of Chuci, and it has

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33 The Chuci buzhu came to be the standard version from Qing 清 (1644-1912) on. The Siku quanshu 四庫全書 scholars identified the Buzhu as the “good version in particular” 特為善本, while the Jizhu was criticized for its over emphasis on pronunciation. See Yongrong 永瑢 et al., “Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao” 四庫全書總目提要 (Shanghai: Dadong shuju, 1926), 3092-3093. In the Ming, however, the Chuci jizhu served as the primary source for Chuci interpretation. See Huang Linggeng’s preface of Chuci wenxian congkan 楚辭文獻叢刊. http://www.nlpress.com/Info.aspx?id=135. Accessed Oct. 8th, 2015.
34 The Chuci buzhu is in complement to Wang Yi’s Chuci zhangju 楚辭章句 (Chapter and Verse Commentary on Chuci) in the Han. The buzhu presumably followed the textual order of zhangju and came to replace it in circulation. As a result, the buzhu becomes the primary source for the zhangju. Other available compilations of Chuci include Zhu Xi’s Chuci jizhu and Wang Fuzhi’s 王夫之 (1619-1692) Chuci tongshi 楚辭通釋. The poems selected in the two anthologies both differ from that of Chuci buzhu. Additionally, Huang Bosi 黃伯思 (1079-1118), a compiler and collator of Chuci in the Song noted that he had seen Yang Xiong’s 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE) “Fan ‘Lisao’” 反離騷 (Refuting “Encountering Sorrows”) included in one version of Chuci. Huang Bosi, “Jiaoding Chuci xu” 校訂楚辭序, in Chen Zhensun 陳振孫, Zhizhai shulu jieti 直齋書錄解題 (1774 reprint), 15.2-3.
35 Hong Xingzu was collating multiple versions available to him—including the anonymous Chuci shiwen 楚辭釋文 and the Chuci annotated/owned by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), Chao Jiong 晁迥 (948-1031), and Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061)—before arriving at his own “definitive edition” 定本. This account is drawn from the postface of Hong Xingzu’s Chuci buzhu, which is quoted in Chao Gongwu’s 柯公武 Junzhai dushu zhi 郡齋讀書志. See Sun Meng 孫猛, Junzhai dushu zhi jiaozheng 郡齋讀書志校證 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 806. The postface is not included in the received buzhu. It is speculated that Hong Xingzu deleted the postface from the published edition to avoid accusation from Qin Hui 秦檜 (1091-1155), who was said to harbor a personal grudge against Hong and have him demoted after Hong wrote a preface for Cheng Yu’s 程瑀 Lunyu jie 論語解. For a discussion, see You Guo’en 樑國恩, Qu Yuan 屈原 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 83; Zhongguo
gone through its own process of transmission as a manuscript before coming into print. Beyond the versions in print, a manuscript version of a part of Chuci is available in the Wenxuan jizhu  文選集註 (Collective Commentary on Selections of Refined Literature), a Tang 唐 (618-907) manuscript preserved in Japan and reintroduced to China in the twentieth century. In sum, the text of Chuci that inspires reception from the Han onward is already a product of reception.

Inquiry into the Southernness of Chuci in Modern Scholarship

The Chuci originated in Chu, Qu Yuan’s motherland that was the southmost among the Warring States. In modern scholarship, its southern origin automatically qualifies the Chuci to be a southern anthology and inspires numerous efforts to define its southernness by looking for its southern features. The discovered southern features, in turn, affirm the Chuci as a southern anthology. The studies of, for example, You Guo’en 游國恩, Hoshikawa Kiyotaka 星川清孝, and Sadao Takeji 竹治貞夫, have reached a consensus that the Chuci is representative of southern literature with its employment of Chu dialect, its description of Chu landscape, and the way it is influenced by Chu customs (in particular the belief in shamans and spirits). Among

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36 Huang Linggeng, Chuci yiwen bianzheng, 1. The earliest extant copy was published by Jigu ge 汲古閣 in the Ming 明 (1368-1644).
37 A large portion of poems in the Chuci were compiled into the Wenxuan 文選, hence the preservation of Chuci poems in Wenxuan jizhu. The manuscript is now reproduced in Zhou Xunchu 周勋初, Tang chao Wenxuan jizhu huicun 唐朝文選集註匯存 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999). For a discussion of the rediscovery of the manuscript, see Fu Gan 傅剛, “Wenxuan jizhu de faxian, liuchuan, yu zhengli” 文選集註的發現、流傳與整理, Wenxue yichan 5 (2011): 4-17.
38 You Guo’en, Chuci gailun 楚辭概論 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1934), 39-49; “Qu Yuan zuopin jieshao” 屈原作品介紹, in his Chuci lunwenji 楚辭論文集 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi lianhe chubanshe, 1955), 283-284. Hoshikawa Kiyotaka, Soji no kenkyū 楚辭の研究 (Tenri: Yōtokusha, 1961), 24-35. Takeji Sadao, Soji kenkyū 楚辭研究 (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1978), 8-13, 588-89. Different from the other two scholars, Hoshikawa Kiyotaka argues that the term “Chuci” was named after the verses of Chu invocators 祝史, who were in charge of the preparation of sacrifices, and that Qu Yuan’s poems were derived from these invocators’ verses. But as Sadao Takeji points out, the two may not be directly related because the form of the latter is tetrasyllabic and the content of the
all, scholars attach great weight to its formal features. In his careful textual study, Sadao Takeji notes that the use of caesura particle *xi* 六, except for in the *Chuci*, is seen in various other early texts, including the *Shijing* (in some cases, *xi* is regularly used in every line of a poem\(^{39}\)) and *Laozi* 老子.\(^{40}\) Still, Sadao Takeji takes the regular and frequent use of this caesura in the middle or at the end of the lines to be a “regional feature” 地方色 of *Chuci*;\(^{41}\) this formal feature then defines the “sao-style” 騥體, a (purported) southern style.\(^{42}\)

The goal of scholars’ search for the southernness of *Chuci* in early twentieth century scholarship was to contrast the *Chuci* with *Shijing*, the classic designated as the ancestor of “northern” literature. In his study of *Chuci*’s southernness (finished in 1925), You Guo’en portrayed its poems as a reform of the classical tetrasyllabic form in the north represented by the *Shijing*, a “stagnant” 呆板 form that restrains the free expression of meaning.\(^{43}\) Developed from the tetrasyllabic form and under the influence of previous southern literature (the *Laozi* and Chu songs), You argued that the heterogeneous meter of “Lisao” finally managed to break with the restraints of *Shijing*, signifying the creation of a new literary form.\(^{44}\)

Contrasting the *Shijing* and *Chuci* in geographical terms that correspond to their poetic function was a major scholarly interest in the study of early twentieth century literary scholars. In earlier literary historical narratives in the century, based on the presumption of geographical

\(^{39}\) Mao #5 (“Zhongsi” 龔斯), Mao #75 (“Ziyy” 正衣), Mao #97 (“Xuan” 遠), Mao #111 (“Shimu zhijian” 十硯之簡), Mao #143 (“Yuechu” 月初), and Mao #147 (“Suguan” 素冠).

\(^{40}\) For a list of the uses of *xi* outside *Chuci*, see Soji kenkyü, 397-424.

\(^{41}\) Soji kenkyü, 588.


\(^{43}\) You Guo’en, “Chuci yu beifang wenxue” 楚辭與北方文學, in his Chuci gailun, 15.

\(^{44}\) You Guo’en, “Chuci yu beifang wenxue” and “Chuci yu nanfang wenxue” 楚辭與南方文學, in his Chuci gailun, 3-38.
determinism, various general observations of the south/north contrast had already been proposed. In general, the *Chuci* was seen as an innovative youth growing out of the matured northern literature. Liu Shipei 劉師培 (1884-1919) in 1904 identified the *Chuci* as a southern lyrical tradition characterized by fantasy and imagination while the *Shijing* was an opposite tradition of recording events in reality. Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) emphasized the aristocratic nature of northern literature, which represented the governmental and practical disposition to deal with moral and political issues. Wang argued that, the southern *Chuci*, by contrast, manifested a personal, impractical, and escapist approach in its abstract imaginations. Xie Wuliang 謝無量 (1884-1964) likely contrasted the *Shijing* and *Chuci* as literature of aristocracy and commoner, but he favored the latter for its revolutionary spirit with which to destroy the old regimes and its customs. The literary historical view of the north-south division of Chinese literature remains influential and was also endorsed by the Western scholars with variations. Acknowledging the dual ancestorship of Chinese poetry, David Hawkes made a different distinction between the two anthologies. According to him, the northern *Shijing* belongs to the common knowledge of the Zhou noblemen—sacrifice, diplomacy, feasts, and education—while the southern *Chuci*, with its “personal, essentially literary character,” deals with matters “outlandish and unorthodox.”

The above overview of the scholarly attempts to define the *Shijing* and *Chuci* in

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48 Ibid, 25-27. Hawkes does not specify what the “outlandish and unorthodox” refers to in his discussion. From the context, it may include Chu divinations and “lewd sacrifice.” Be that as it may, it is clear that Hawkes perceives a sharp contrast between the two—the *Chuci* deals with what the *Shijing* does not deal with.
geographical terms is far from complete. But it should suffice to reveal that the conclusions made in these major attempts are disparate—the “northerness” and “southerness” as found in the two anthologies focus on different aspects and are valued differently. Moreover, the scholars’ conclusions are drawn from a highly selective reading of the two anthologies. For example, to characterize the *Shijing* as a record of reality necessarily de-emphasizes various origin myths in the “Hymns,” and to characterize the *Chuci* as personal, literary, and unorthodox must de-emphasize the stanzas in “Lisao” that discuss models of governance and sage kings.49

More importantly, the “observations” constitute views of reception with a certain horizon of expectation. The geographical division of literature at the beginning of the twentieth century, as Lawrence Schneider argues, largely belonged to the intellectual effort in the New Culture movement to define China’s “national essence,” and the favor of *Chuci* was to establish the south as the base to fight against the Manchu and the old culture.50 The search for *Chuci*’s southern features, therefore, is a product of a highly politicized project. That project required a sharp contrast between the south and north, a repression of their similarities, and a generalization of the two cultures that flattened out their diversity. Fundamentally, assessment of the southernness and northerness in the geographical division of literature did not concern the qualities of the two anthologies *per se*, but was in service to the search of an ideology with which to build a new nation.

Critically analyzing the horizon of twentieth century scholars, Schneider points out Qu Yuan’s significance as “an archetypical southerner” of symbolic values at the time.51 In his own

49 That said, the “Airs” and “Elegantiae” are not records of reality, but its representations. Besides, to characterize the *Chuci* as “literary” means to define the *Shijing* as purely a canon. although the *Shijing* was primarily a classic in pre-modern times, its poems were also considered models of good literature. See Wang Zuomin 汪作民, *Shijing wenxue chanshishi* 詩經文學闡釋史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005).

50 Wang Guowei as a pro-Manchu scholar would be an exception. Lawrence Schneider, *A Madman of Ch’u*, 96-98.

51 Schneider, *A Madman of Ch’u*, 4.
research, he argues for a “southern mode of poetry” derived from Qu Yuan’s poems. By the “southern mode,” he means exile poetry featured by description of the south as hostile landscape of uncivilized wilderness. Qu Yuan is a focal point in this poetic mode as an exiled poet whose homeland is usually the place of exile for officials in history. In Schneider’s assessment, Qu Yuan is a dissident who rigorously remonstrates with the king in poetry, and he is “conventionally thought of as barbarian” due to his southern origin. In this respect, Schneider joins Hawkes’ perspective to identify the south as an unorthodox and outlandish culture. Following the twentieth century scholarship under his review, he implicitly characterizes both Qu Yuan and the southern poetic mode by an anti-authority stance. The poetic mode is one that gives voice to the repressed.

Examining the reproduction of “Southland” as a trope in medieval literature, various contributors in the recent volume of essays *Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry* treat the *Chuci* as a storehouse of “the cultural memory of the South.” They show, in research of many key poets, the role that invocation of Qu Yuan and the south play in the construction of medieval poets’ identity as native southerners or banished officials. The Southland in their poetry is both a barbaric land of alienation and an exotic land of fascination.

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52 Schneider, *A Madman of Ch’u*, 61-69. Schneider seems to have limited the scope of “southern mode of poetry” to the poems invoking both Qu Yuan and the southern landscape.

53 Ibid, 60. After his claim of Qu Yuan’s conventional barbarian image (without giving any textual evidence), Schneider argues a few pages later that Qu Yuan came to represent “civilized political values” after Wang Yi’s secular and allegorical reading. See *A Madman of Ch’u*, 67. This “civilized” image, however, was not created by Wang Yi; it existed already in Jia Yi’s “Diao Qu Yuan” and Liu An’s “‘Lisao’ zhuan.” Besides, Ban Gu’s charge of Qu Yuan being *kuangjuan* 狂狷 does not make Qu Yuan a barbarian, even in a loose sense, or a mad person. In the early Chinese context, *kuangjuan* meant fervency and self-discipline. For example, in *Analects* 13.21: “Since I cannot get men pursuing the mean, to whom I might communicate my instructions, I must find the fervent and self-disciplined. The fervent keeps forging ahead; the self-disciplined refrains from what is wrong 不得中行而與之，必然狂狷乎！狂者進取，狷者有所不為也. Chapter 90 of *Hou Han shu* is devoted to the idiosyncratic (“Duxing liezhuan” 獨行列傳), in which Confucius’ definition of *kuangjuan* is invoked at the beginning; moral conduct 操行 is seen as a shared quality of the figures in the chapter. For a discussion of Ban Gu’s critique, see Tang Bingzheng 湯炳正, *Chuci leigao* 楚辭類稿 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1988), 87-90.

54 See the chapters by David Knechtges, Tian Xiaofei, and Paul Kroll in *Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry*, Ping Wang and Nicholas Williams eds. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong
For the purpose of their study, discussion of Qu Yuan and *Chuci* is secondary and in service to discussion of the Southland as a cultural symbol.

All the above studies take for granted the conception of *Chuci* as a symbol of the Southland, a regional anthology that constitutes the “Matière de Chu”\(^{55}\) in its comprehensive preservation of Chu culture, whereas the dissertation investigates the construction of this conception. It finds that the conception is largely indebted to Song scholarship with its statement on the Chu-ness of *Chuci*. Although Wang Yi in the Han identified some local elements in *Chuci*, it was in the Song that the local elements became a focal point of scholarship, where much more traces of Chu were “discovered” (if not asserted) and the representation of Chu locality was written into the definition of *Chuci*. As a result, the *Chuci* was declared as a distinctively and exclusively southern anthology that displays solely ancient Chu culture.

The modified perspective of *Chuci*’s southernness leads to a rethinking about the dual ancestorship of Chinese poetry. Because the regional features “discovered” by Song literati are largely a construct with its own agenda, the conception of *Chuci* as a symbol of the south and southern literature is far from an innocent and objective observation. It also shows that the prevalent modern view on the northern/southern division of Chinese poetry lacks historical depth, because in history, the *Shijing* remained as the sole origin of poetry, the canonical model against which the *Chuci* was assessed.

My dissertation also seeks to complicate our understanding of the canonization process of *Chuci*. Examining various ways in which the *Chuci* was understood alongside the cultural

\(^{55}\) Hawkes uses the term “Matière de Chu” to point out the nature of Chuci as “a vague collective title for the various works associated with Qu Yuan and the early Chu poets, just as Matière de Bretagne was used in medieval Europe as a collective title for the vast corpus of prose and verse woven round the legend of King Arthur and his knights and the quest of the grail.” Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 28-9. The term borrowed from Hawkes is to stress the regionality of *Chuci* in the dissertation.
representations of Chu, it brings to light how perceptions of *Chuci*’s geographical origin shaped its interpretation and evaluation. The Chu origin has aligned the anthology with not only those in the marginalization of power, but also those in power. Out of their empathy or antipathy for the cultural images of Chu, the powerful and powerless together produced a multiplicity of southern identities—identities to be either proud of or ashamed of—for the *Chuci*, for themselves, and for their rivals. The southern qualities that *Chuci* acquired in this process served as crucial factor in defining the position of *Chuci* in literary history. As such, the dissertation complements the previous Qu Yuan-centered *Chuci* reception studies to shed light on the other side of the story, i.e., the role of Chu in *Chuci* interpretation.\(^5^6\)

Lastly, in my investigation of *Chuci*’s multiple southern qualities produced over time, I offer a broad survey of the cultural significance of Chu and Southland at various moments in history. In this way, the dissertation enriches our understanding of the cultural construction of the south in Chinese literature from the Han to Song.

**Chu and Southland as Geographical Concepts**

Chu and the Southland 南國 are both geographical and cultural concepts. Here I primarily focus on their cultural aspect—i.e. their representation in literature—but an overview of their geographical scope is necessary. This is because, although the geographical and cultural aspects may operate on different planes, they are also often intertwined in literature.

To begin with, the boundaries of Chu and the Southland are both fluid and ever shifting. The reason for Chu’s fluid boundary is its expansion and contraction resulted from wars with

\(^{5^6}\) For example, Liao Dongliang 廖棟樑, *Lingjun yuying: Gudai Chuci xue lunji* 靈均余影：古代楚辭學論集 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2010); Yi Zhonglian 易重瑾, *Zhonguo Chuci xue shi* 中國楚辭學史 (Changsha: Hunan chubanshe, 1991); and Li Daming 李大明, *Han Chuci xue shi* 漢楚辭學史 (Chengdu: Dianzi keji daxue chubanshe, 1994).
neighboring states. Chu was a major political power south of other states before the Qin unification. It originated in the region between Yangzi River and Han River (in modern Hubei and Hunan provinces), the Chu heartland and base for its expansion. In its prime in the Warring States, the territory under the control of Chu extended east into modern Jiangsu, south bordering Guangxi, west bordering Chongqing, and north into Henan, “dividing the world into halves” 中分天下.\(^{57}\) In 278 BCE, however, Qin conquered the Chu capital Ying 郢 in its heartland, pushing Chu east- and northward to found its capital first at Chen 陳 (modern Huaiyang in Henan) and then at Shouchun 壽春 (modern Shou county in Anhui). In 223 BCE, Chu was finally destructed by Qin. In the Western Han, Chu was used as the name of an enfeoffed state centering around Pengcheng 彭城 (in northern Jiangsu, close to the places of origin of Liu Bang and Xiang Yu),\(^{58}\) but this Chu state within the Han empire is usually not the referent of “Chu” in later literature—the Chu in Warring States is.

The “Southland” is more vague a geographical concept than Chu. Since south is a relative concept, the referent of Southland is dependent on the context in which it is used.\(^{59}\) The term does appear in the “Jusong” 橘頌 (Ode to the Tangerine) of “Jiuzhang” 九章 (Nine Declarations), that the tangerine “receives its mandate not to move, and grows in the Southland” 受命不遷，生南國矣.\(^{60}\) Wang Yi 王逸 (ca. 89- ca. 158) identified the Southland as “Jiangnan” 江南.

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\(^{57}\) The quote is from *Huainanzi* 淮南子. See Zhang Shuangdi 張雙棣, *Huainanzi jiaoshi* 淮南子校釋 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1997), 1568. For a detailed discussion of the Chu expansion, see Zhao Bingqing 趙炳清, *Chuguo jiangyu bianqian zhi yanjiu* 楚國疆域變遷之研究 (Ph.D. dissertation, Fudan University, 2013), 51-255.


\(^{59}\) For example, nanguo 南國 in Mao #204 (Siyue 四月) refers to the area that Yangzi River and Han River intersect. In Mao #259 (Songgao 宋高), it refers to Nanyang 南陽 in modern Henan. For Lord Xinling 信陵君 (d. 243 BCE) of Wei 魏, nanguo refers to Xuchang 許昌 in modern Henan (belonging to Han 韓) that is south of the Wei territory. See *Shiji* 44.1859-60.

\(^{60}\) *Chuci buzhu*, 153.
江 南 (lit. south of Yangzi River), place of Qu Yuan’s exile, in the sense that the area was the southern frontier of Chu—the Qianzhong 黔中 commandery (in the west of modern Hunan).⁶¹

While in Zhu Xi’s use quoted at the beginning, the Southland refers to Chu in its entirety. Besides, “Jiangnan” appears in the last line of “Zhaohun” 招魂 (Summoning of the Soul): “O soul, return! Lament for the south of the river”魂兮归来哀江南.⁶² In broader Qin and Han texts Jiangnan refers to the vast area south of the middle reaches of Yangzi River, including primarily the entire modern Hunan, together with east of Hubei and north of Jiangxi.⁶³ From the Six Dynasties on, Jiangnan gradually shifts to refer to the Taihu region (south of the lower reaches of Yangzi River), the modern referent of “Jiangnan” that has inspired numerous literary imaginations.

The scope of Chu and that of Southland/Jiangnan overlap considerably but are not identical. Neither were these terms always used interchangeably since the inception of Chuci. Qu Yuan and other Chuci poets might not have primarily identified themselves as “southerners,” either. That said, as the dissertation shows, Chu as the southernmost state in its own time was represented as a southern culture in posterity, and this representation was one critical element in the cultural construction of the south from the Han onward.

**Structure and Chapter Outline**

The dissertation examines the construction of Chuci’s southernness from Han to Song in five chapters. The Han is the starting point of this study, because the period provides for us not only

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⁶² *Chuci buzhu*, 215. Wang Yi likely identified the Jiangnan as place of Qu Yuan’s exile.
⁶³ Zhou Zhenhe 周振鹤, Shi “Jiangnan” 释“江南,” in his *Sui wuya zhi lu* 随无涯之旅 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2007), 324-25.
the earliest records of Qu Yuan and his works, but also the Chuci anthology and its commentaries that lay the foundation for all later editorial and hermeneutic efforts. The emergence of Chuci in the Han, therefore, is the necessary subject of the first chapter. The three chapters in the middle examine the interpretation of Chuci in relation with its Chu origin in the Six Dynasties and Tang in four major aspects of the cultural images of Chu—as a southerner’s home and land of pride, as a place for exile with a landscape teeming with miasma and ferocious animals, as an area prone to lewd rites, and as a fallen state that could have steered away from its fate. All these images can find their traces in the Han, and they together provide a context for the Chuci to be continuously reintroduced to successive generations of readers. The study ends in the Song dynasty in Chapter Five, because all the previous literary representations of Chu and interpretations of Chuci were reconfigured in the period to give rise to a Chu-centered conception. The anthology’s geographical affiliation was for the first time explicitly taken as a hermeneutic problem, to which Song literati provided answers of their own.

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64 The earliest records of Qu Yuan and his works are provided in the Han sources. Although the Chu area saw a great number of Warring States manuscripts excavated during the past several decades, reference of Qu Yuan or his works, if ever written down before the imperial period, is still yet to be unearthed. Fragments of two lines in the received Chuci, one from the “Lisao” and the other from the “Shejiang” in the “Jiuzhang” are found in the manuscripts excavated at the No. 1 tomb at Shuanggu dui Fu Yang (in modern Anhui province). The tomb belongs to Xiahou Zao 夏侯灶 (d. 165 BCE), Marquis of Ruyin 汝陰 in the Han, and was sealed no later than 165 BCE. The manuscripts are probably dated to the same period. For more information of the tomb and pictures of the fragmented manuscripts, see Fuyang Han jian zhengli zu 春陽漢簡整理組, “Fuyang Han jian Chuci” 阜陽漢簡《楚辭》, Zhongguo yunwen xuekan 中國語言文學刊 6 (1987): 78-79.

65 Commentaries and annotations on the Chuci were continued to be composed in the Six Dynasties and Tang, according to the “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 and “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 in the dynastic histories. The titles are as follows: Guo Pu’s 郭璞 (276-324) Chuci zhu 楚辭注, Huangfu Junzun’s 黃祖君 的 皇甫徹訓 (third cent.) Canjie Chuci 參解楚辭, Xu Miao’s 徐邈 (343-397) Chuci yin 楚辭音, Mr. Zhuge’s 諸葛 (fifth cent.) Chuci yin 楚辭音, Meng Ao’s 孟奧 (fifth cent.) Chuci yin 楚辭音, Liu Yao’s 劉杳 (487-536) Chuci caomu shu 楚辭草木疏, Zhiqian’s 智騫 (late sixth cent.) Chuci yinyi 楚辭音義, and Chuci shiwen 楚辭釋文 (anonymous). Commentaries of selected pieces of the Chuci should be found in the Wenxuan 文選 commentaries by Gongsun Luo 公孫羅 (approx. seventh cent.), Li Shan 李善 (630-689), the Five-Official 五臣 (eighth cent.), and Lu Shanjing 陸善經 (eighth cent.). Among all, only Li Shan’s and the Five-Official’s commentaries are extant. Lu Shanjing’s commentary is partly preserved in the Tang manuscript Wenxuan jizhu 文選集註, which was found in Japan and reintroduced to China in the twentieth century (now reproduced in the Tang chao Wenxuan jizhu huicun 唐鈔文選集註匯存). Among them, the extant commentaries are all based on Wang Yi’s and seldom go beyond his interpretation.
The *Chuci* emerged in the Han as a result of reception. The poems identified to have a Chu origin (primarily those attributed to Qu Yuan) were compiled with a strong underlying goal to better understand the rise of Qu Yuan as a cultural hero. The recognition of Qu Yuan as the progenitor of “verses of Chu” also refashioned the title’s connotation. Chapter One examines the “marriage” of “verses of Chu” and Qu Yuan in the Han. Qu Yuan rose in the Han for his polyvalent Chu identity—an anti-Qin advisor, a royal family member, and a virtuous but unjustly treated subject—that speak to the interests of different groups of readers at court. To these readers, Chu was a major competitor of Qin; it was also a state of crisis—both aspects find their corresponding conditions over the course of Han.

Chapter Two examines *Chuci* imitations by two kinds of Chu sojourners, those that depart from their home in the south and those that are exiled from the court to the south. The poets have personal experience in the south in both cases, and the *Chuci* is invoked to depict the south as either a beloved hometown or a formidable foreign land. Qu Yuan’s Chu as represented in the *Chuci* intertwines with the south experienced and imagined by later poets in these imitations, which in turn consolidated the *Chuci* as a voice of plaint.

Chapter Three examines the cultural availability of *Chuci* imagery centering on “the aromatic plants and the fairest” 香草美人. The moral-political reading proposed in Wang Yi’s imagery scheme was paralleled by various sensual readings of desire that may reveal the influence of Chu rites in the formation stage of *Chuci* poems. The moral-political reading of flora in *Chuci* reveals an urgency to comprehend these poems in a new intellectual milieu in the Han, and rescues them from potential accusations entailed by their association with the negative image of Chu, a state of “lewd rites.” The association, nonetheless, avails the *Chuci* to be a language of desire and southern exoticism in other interpretations in the Six Dynasties and a *chuanqi* story of
the Tang.

The voluptuous conception of Chuci imagery lent the text to be a target of moral accusations in the Six Dynasties and Tang. In particular, Tang literati in the intellectual trend of restoration of wenzhang condemned the Chuci as a progenitor of the ornate and “decadent” palace style of the Southern Dynasties, marking the starting point of the decline of wenzhang. Chapter Four traces the criticism in the Six Dynasties and Tang. The criticism is to be understood within the context of identity wars between southern and northern literati, and the assumption in the unity of textual order and political order. In view of Chu as a “perished state,” Chuci as either a product of the perished Chu or the reason for it to perish can no longer serve as a model for literature.

In the Song, a Chu-centered conception of Chuci was proposed on top of the previous Qu Yuan-centered conceptions. In this conception, the Chuci was regionalized and celebrated to be an exclusively southern anthology with a list of local features. Chapter Five contextualizes the regionalization and celebration within Song literati’s identification of Chu as a tragic predecessor. Like King Huai of Chu, the last two emperors in the Northern Song were both detained as prisoners in the north and died in this foreign land. This shared fate and the Song court’s flight to the south gave rise to a strong empathy towards Chu among Southern Song literati. The regionalization in this context is an act to own the Chuci and its legacy—a legacy inaccessible to its northern enemies—as a way to establish cultural authority for the Southern Song.
Chapter one. Rise of Chu Anthology and Paragon in the Han Empire

The Han dynasty was a foundational and monumental stage for the celebration of Chuci and Qu Yuan. It was a period when poems were attributed to the Chu poet and introduced to a wider audience in the empire, when the poems were for the first time anthologized and glossed. As the Han provides the first available record of Qu Yuan and Chuci, all later conceptions were mediated through and built upon the lens of Han sources. This chapter examines the rise of the Chu poet and his anthology and argues that Qu Yuan gained in significance in the period largely due to his Chu identity.

The chapter begins by revisiting the traditional perspective of Qu Yuan as the progenitor of “Chuci” (not the anthology but Chu literature in general). I show that, before the anthology, “Chuci” was a common noun encompassing various threads (discursive, panegyric, and rhetoric, etc.), often associated with deceitful craft of powerful courtiers and not Qu Yuan. The Han elevation of Qu Yuan retrospectively portrayed the poet as the progenitor of “Chuci” and gave rise to the compilation of the Chuci anthology, which Wang Yi (ca. 89- ca. 158) later delineated as a collection of poems written by the master Qu Yuan and his disciples. With Qu Yuan identified as the progenitor and master, the anthology came to represent the sincerely self-expressive and remonstrative voice of the disempowered—a sharp turn from the connotation of “Chuci.” I then further explore the Han celebration of Qu Yuan and argue that it was primarily a result of the intellectuals’ play with his polyvalent Chu identity. As an advisor firmly fighting against both the brutal Qin and the domestic court corruptions, Qu Yuan addressed the interests of Han rulers, imperial family members, and non-kinsfolk officials in their self-fashining and self-legitimation. In these cases, Qu Yuan and Chuci were invoked to recall the history of Chu as
a precedent in order to discourse on contemporary issues such as sovereignty, ideal rulership, and duty of a subject.

From “Chuci” to Chuci

Before becoming the anthology title (Chuci), “Chuci” was a general term, literally meaning “words of Chu.” Comparing these verses to those of the King Arthur, Hawkes understood the “Chuci” as “Matière de Chu” and identified Qu Yuan as the central persona around whom the verses were collected and woven together.

Long before Wang Yi used it [“Chuci”] as the title of his anthology it was in use as a vague collective title for the various works associated with Qu Yuan and the early Chu poets, just as Matière de Bretagne was used in medieval Europe as a collective title for the vast corpus of prose and verse woven around the legend of King Arthur and his knights and the quest of the grail. Chu ci was, as it were, the Matière de Chu, the name of a literary tradition.¹

The King Arthur analogy betrays Hawkes’s suspicion of Qu Yuan’s and other early Chu poets’ authorship. It is implied that the authorial attribution could be retrospective, and the attribution might largely depend on the single fact that Qu Yuan and these “poets” were the protagonists of these texts. Nevertheless, Hawkes presumed that “Chuci” and Qu Yuan were bound together in the very beginning, while many Chinese and Japanese scholars identified various forms of “Chuci” (existed before Qu Yuan) from which Qu Yuan developed his writing style and composed verses that later inspired the compilation of the anthology.² I examine below the

²Much ink has been spent on the speculation of the nature of ci and its origin. The major arguments include: a) “Chuci” as a poetic style, developed from ancient ditties and song lyrics (ci) in the Chu dialect, represented by You Guo’en 湊國恩 and Takeji Sadao 竹治貞夫; b) “Chuci” as a literary style of Chu originated from “words of sacrificial scribes” 祭史の辞 as represented by Hoshikawa Kiyotaka 星川清孝, or from shamanic incantations as represented by Fujino Iwatomo 藤野巖友; and c) “Chuci” in its received shape is to be understood as literature for the ritual purpose of praying for the dead and eulogizing the gods and goddesses, represented by Ishikawa Misao 石川三佐男. See You Guo’en, Chuci gailun 楚辭概論 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1934), 1-3; Takeji Sadao, Soji kenkyū 楚辭研究 (Tōkyō: Kazama Shobō, 1978), 14-19; Hoshikawa Kiyotaka, Soji no kenkyū 楚辭の研究 (Tenri: Yōtokusha, 1961), 176-186; Fujino Iwatomo, Fakei bungakuron 巫系文學論 (Tōkyō: Daigaku Shobō, 1969), 3;
trajectory in which “Chuci,” from a general term, came to be a proper noun, title of an anthology. As I argue, the trajectory was one in which a largely panegyric and rhetorical tradition was reoriented to a self-expressive and remonstrative voice, through the identification of Qu Yuan as the progenitor.

It would probably wait until around Liu Xiang’s time that the term “Chuci” became an anthology title, since Liu Xiang’s compilation was the earliest one mentioned by Wang Yi. Before Liu Xiang, the term “Chuci” could possibly point to a wide range and loose body of (any) rhythmic words that circulated mainly in the Chu area. It is unclear how Liu An, if he ever collected and compiled of Chu verses, would title the anthology, as the extant part of Liu An’s “Lisao’ zhuan” never mentioned the term “Chuci.” Moreover, in the available sources of Western Han, neither “Lisao” and “Chuci,” nor Qu Yuan and “Chuci” were mentioned together. Association was only to be found between Qu Yuan and “Lisao.” It was until around Ban Gu’s time that “Chuci” was explicitly recognized as a literary tradition with Qu Yuan serving as its progenitor and “Lisao” its representative work.

The earliest extant use of “Chuci” was the Shiji record about the rise of power of Zhuang Zhu 莊助 (d. 122 BCE; surname changed to Yan 嚴 in the Hanshu to avoid the taboo on Emperor Ming’s [57-75] personal name) and Zhu Maichen 朱買臣 (f. 140-120 BCE) at Emperor

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Ishikawa Misao, Soji shinkenkyū 楚辭新研究 (Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, 2002).

3 Hawkes argues, however, that Liu An was the first compiler of Chuci based on his tripartite division of the poems in the anthology. According to him, poems from “Lisao” to “Zhao yinshi” reflected Liu An’s version, to which Liu Xiang added poems composed between Liu An and himself when compiling his version. Wang Yi further added his own poems to Liu Xiang’s version, completing the current shape of the anthology. Hawkes, Songs of the South, 28-38. A possible scenario it is, Liu An’s compilation is not sustained by available sources.

4 A paragraph of the lost “Lisao’ zhuan” is quoted in Ban Gu’s preface and the Shiji biography. See Chuci buzhu, 49; Shiji 84.2482.

5 Liu Xiang might have conceived the “Chuci” as a literary tradition, but since his anthology was not extant, the Hanshu was the earliest available source for such an account.
Wu’s court.

In the beginning, the Senior Scribe Zhu Maichen, a local of Kuaiji, studied the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Zhuang Zhu sent someone to have a conversation with Maichen. Through his mastery of “Chuci,” Maichen gained imperial favor as Zhu did. Serving as Palace Attendant and as Superior Grand Master of the Palace, Maichen rose to power.

The event was also recorded in the *Hanshu*.

Yan Zhu, a man from Kuaiji enjoyed noble status due to imperial favor. He recommended Zhu Maichen to the throne. When summoned to have an audience with the emperor, Zhu Maichen made a speech by explaining the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and invoking the “Chuci.” The emperor was greatly delighted and appointed Maichen as Superior Grand Master of the Palace. Maichen then served as Palace Attendant together with Yan Zhu.

With the Chu origin (Western Chu 西楚 according to *Shiji*) of the Han royal house, the early Han emperors were renowned for their preference for Chu culture. The preference not only manifested in the performance of ritual hymns and their own reputed/purported compositions, but also in the imperial interest in “Chuci.” In the case of Zhu Maichen, mastery of “Chuci” in

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6 In the Han, Palace Attendant was a position granted to an official already with a post.
7 *Shiji* 122.3143.
8 *Hanshu* 64A. 2791.
9 The royal family came from Pei 沛 County in modern Xuzhou, Jiangsu, which was once controlled by Chu in the Warring States and part of Chu state in the early Western Han.
10 For example, as the *Hanshu* records, the ritual hymns “Anshi fangzhong ge” 安世房中歌 (Songs of a Pacified Age for the Inner Halls) were performed in Chu melodies 楚聲. For a discussion, see Chen Kaimei 陳開梅, “Han diwang de jiaomiao jige: ‘Anshi fangzhong ge’ he ‘jiaosi ge’” 漢帝王的郊廟祭歌: 《安世房中歌》和《郊祀歌》, in Chen Kaimei, *Xian Tang songti yanjiu* 咸唐詩體研究 (Guangzhou: Zhongshan daxue chubanshe, 2007), 126-52. The “‘Lisao’ zhuan” 蕭公子漁說 was also composed at imperial command in Emperor’s Wu’s court.
11 Emperors Gaozu 高祖 (r. 202-195 BCE) and Wu 武 (r. 141-87 BCE) were attributed to some *ge* 歌 and *fu* 賦 in the meter of “Jiuge” and “Jiuzhang.” Gaozu reputedly composed the “Dafeng ge” 大風歌 (Song on Great Gale), see *Shiji*. The Hanshu credited Emperor Wu with the “Li furen fu” 李夫人賦 (Fu on Lady Li) and “Tianma ge” 天馬歌 (Hymn to Horse from Heaven), see *Hanshu* 外戚傳 and 武帝紀. The preface of “Qiufeng ci” 秋風辭 (On Autumn Wind) attributes the piece to Emperor Wu, but its authenticity is suspected by David Knechtges. For a discussion of these poems, see David R. Knechtges, “Han Wudi de fu” 漢武帝的賦, in *Disan jie guoji cifuxue xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 第三屆國際楚辭學學術研討會論文集 (Taipei: Guoli zhengzhi daxue wenxueyuan, 1996), 1-14. Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎, “Kan no Kōso no ‘Taifū uta’ nit suite” 蒼の高祖の大風歌について, *Chū goku bungaku hō* 2 (1955): 28-44.
front of the throne served as a stepping stone for imperial favor and appointment. Zhu Maichen’s mastery was highly likely to be displayed orally through a court presentation, as specified in the *Hanshu*—Zhu Maichen explained (*shuo* 說) the *Annals* and invoked the “Chuci” as a discourse (*yan* 言; lit. to speak with the language of “Chuci”\(^\text{12}\)) when Emperor Wu had an audience with him. The juxtaposition of “Chuci” and *Annals* in the *Hanshu* also imply a similar function of the two—both were presented for the purpose of illustrating the ideal governance.

While certainly not the anthology, “Chuci” here may point to at least three possibilities: a) old ditties 古歌謠 in the Chu dialect, b) *cifu* pieces composed by Zhu Maichen (all lost),\(^\text{13}\) and c) works (in whatever shape) attributed to Qu Yuan and/or other earlier Chu poets.\(^\text{14}\) I suggest that, like the case of *fu*, “Chuci” in the early Western Han was also a broad term that almost any rhymed composition associated with Chu could be called “Chuci.”\(^\text{15}\) Considering the administrative importance of Zhu Maichen’s position—to provide personal service to the throne as a counselor—the talents he managed to claim through the presentation of “Chuci” should be far beyond merely literary capabilities and performance skills. It was more likely to be his understanding on the management of state affairs that secured his position. In other words, Zhu Maichen’s presentation of “Chuci” in this context was, similar to the function of *fu*, an argumentative and emphatic speech for the purpose of persuasion. “Chuci” here was closer in relationship to the Warring States rhetorician’s tradition associated with rhetorical devices such

\(^{12}\) I take the meaning of *yan* here in the same sense of *Analects* 16.13: “If you do not learn the *Shi*, you will not grasp the language with which to speak.” 不學詩，無以言。

\(^{13}\) According to the “Yiwen zhi,” Zhu Maichen composed three *fu*. See *Hanshu* 30.1749. In the Han, the terms *ci* and *fu* were used interchangeably. For example, “Huaisha” was referred to as a *fu* in the *Shiji*.

\(^{14}\) Lacking of further information, Dong Yunting 董運庭 has expressed his uncertainty about all the possibilities after a review of them. See Dong Yunting, *Chuci yu Qu Yuan ci zai kaobian* 楚辭與屈原辭再考辨 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005), 61.

as metaphoric images, historical catalogues (a series of historical examples on a topic), and illustration of propriety through display of desire, etc, all used for didactic purposes to illustrate ideal rulership and governance. The content of presentation was specified as “Chuci” was probably due to the invocation of Chu tones and materials. Coming from Kuaiji (modern Zhejiang), close to the origin of the Han royal family, Zhu Maichen should be able to add certain “Chu flavor” to his presentation to satisfy the emperor’s interest in Chu culture.

The “Chu flavor” in this context, however, was not necessarily associated with Qu Yuan due to lack of materials. To begin with, Zhu Maichen’s hometown was Eastern Chu 東楚, while Qu Yuan was from Southern Chu 南楚. According to the “Huozhi liezhuan” 貨殖列傳 of Shiji, the two areas differed considerably in their local customs. It is unclear whether the verses of Qu Yuan circulated in the Eastern Chu or not. In addition, aside from never mentioning “Chuci” and Qu Yuan together, the Shiji also showed a certain level of contempt to the ci of Southern due to its deceptive nature.

The Southern Chu preferred verses that persuade men with cunning and untrustworthy words.” 南楚好辭，巧說少信.

Here ci 詞 pointed to crafted words that would lead to manipulation and deception. In this view, crafted words could be a tool serving evil intents. Such a distrust in words—crafted words in

16 “Illustration of propriety through display of desire” 以色誘於禮 was understood as a rhetorical device of the Shijing in the Kongzi shilun 孔子詩論, meaning sexual desire in the “Guanju” was to direct one to transform desire and arrive at morality. For a discussion, see Jeffrey K. Riegel, “Eros, Introversion, and the Beginnings in Shijing Commentary,” HIAS 57.1 (1997): 143–77. In Martin Kern’s opinion, the description of desire and beauty in the fu such as Mei Sheng’s “Qifā” was for the same purpose. See his “Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the Fu,” HIAS 63.2 (2003): 383-437. This interpretation may also be applied to the desire sections in poems such as “Lisao.”

17 The rhetorical devices were also used in the “Lisao” for similar purposes, although the text was commonly understood as a self-lamentation of ill-fate.

18 Shiji 129.3267-68.

19 Shiji 129.3268.
particular—was a common philosophical position in traditional Chinese thought, and was often invoked in the criticisms against the Warring States rhetoricians for their employment of beautiful words to entice wrong decisions of a ruler and against ruler’s lacking of firm moral stance. Taking into consideration the honor Qu Yuan received in his biography, it was less likely that the “Chuci” in the sense of crafted words of Chu involved Qu Yuan’s works in the Shiji. Instead, the connection between Qu Yuan and “Chuci” was probably not yet established. On the one hand, there was the Qu Yuan biography where his verses were held to be self-expressive and battling against deceptive words, where the term “Chuci” never came up. On the other hand, there was the crafted and deceptive words from the Southern Chu closely associated with the rhetorician tradition. In other words, Qu Yuan’s verses were anything but the ci of Southern Chu in the Shiji.

Notably, the tension between Qu Yuan’s verses and the ci of Southern Chu may indeed reveal the close relationship between the two. The rhetorician’s literary devices are as extensively used in Qu Yuan’s poems, implying that the former was an important source out of which the latter rose. The presentation of Qu Yuan’s poems as an opposition to the rhetorician’s words may reflect the hostility to the rhetoricians’ wavering political stances and lacking of loyalty in the Han, when loyalty and integrity was required in a unified empire. The later association of Qu Yuan with “Chuci”—Qu Yuan identified as its prominent author—can be seen as a further move diminish the heritage of rhetoricians and moralizing their tradition.

20 Suspicion of language—spoken word may not match the action; language do not speak the truth—can be found in various early Chinese texts such as the Analects, Xunzi, Laozi, and Zhuangzi. For a discussion, see Mark Lewis, Writing and Authority in Early China (New York: SUNY, 1999), 84-86, 91-93.

21 See the Qu Yuan biography in chapter 84, “Arrayed traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia” 屈原賈生列傳. It should be noticed that this biographical account is a patchwork of various, sometimes inconsistent, sources. For a discussion, see David Hawkes, “General introduction,” in his Songs of the South, 15-66.
After Zhu Maichen, Mr. Pi 被公 from Jiujiang 九江 was another man to present “Chuci” to the throne—Emperor Xuan’s 宣 (r. 74-49 BCE; Emperor Wu’s great-grandson). As recorded in the *Hanshu*, “Chuci” referred to a written text to be read out aloud.

Emperor Xuan restored Emperor Wu’s old practices of explaining and discoursing on the Six Arts together with a vast variety of writings, for the purpose of exhausting his wide interests for the wonder. Mr. Pi from Jiujiang, capable of “Chuci,” was summoned for an audience to chant and read it aloud.

The event was also purportedly recorded in Liu Xin’s “Qilüe” (not extant) according to the *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔.

In an edict, the Filial Emperor Xuan summoned Mr. Pi, who was commanded to chant the “Chuci.” Porridge was invariably given to him in every chanting.

In the *Hanshu*, Mr. Pi was said to not recite “Chuci” from memory (song 誦) but to recite and read [from a text] (songdu 誦讀; du 讀 presumes the existence of a text). Moreover, in Mr. Pi’s story, “Chuci” was treated as one of the “vast variety of writings” 羣書 in complement to the “Six Arts.” As such, there was a shift of perspective in terms of “Chuci.” In Zhu Maichen’s case in the *Shiji*, it was rhetoricians’ words primarily orally circulated and performed from memory, while in Mr. Pi’s case in the *Hanshu*, the “Chuci” was—or at least in part—a written corpus that could be read. The shift in the scholars’ understanding of the medium of “Chuci” transmission might part and parcel of the transformation from a ritual/performance centered culture in the Western Han to a textual centered one in the Eastern Han, when meaning (of a work) was

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22 The person was otherwise unknown in history.
23 *Hanshu* 64B.2821.
primarily produced by the written text instead of the immediate ritual/performance context.25 Standing after this change when the old cultural milieu was no longer familiar, in Ban Gu’s perspective, it would make more sense that “Chuci” were written texts.

Another difference with Zhu Maichen’s case is that, Mr. Pi’s presentation of “Chuci” was contextualized in an account of poetic expositions (cifu 談賦) and as such likely to point to verses loosely related with the verses in the received Chuci anthology—“Chuci” was a much larger textual corpus, possibly a source of Liu Xiang’s anthology and our received version. This was because Mr. Pi’s presentation was before Liu Xiang’s appointment as Grand Master for Splendid Happiness 光祿大夫 to collate writings in the imperial library, when his Chuci anthology was likely to be compiled. In the Hanshu, Mr. Pi’s presentation was contextualized in the biography of Wang Bao 王褒 (d. 61 BCE), to whom the “Jiuhuai” 九懷 (Nine Cares) in the Chuci anthology was attributed (yet his “Jiuhuai” was not invoked in the biography). The entire biography was to debate the function of cifu or wen in general.

Wang Bao’s style name was Ziyuan, and he was from the Shu area. Emperor Xuan restored Emperor Wu’s old practices of explaining and discoursing on the Six Classics together with a vast variety of writings, for the purpose of exhausting his wide interests for the wonder. Mr. Pi from Jiujiang, capable of “Chuci,” was summoned for an audience to chant and read it aloud. The emperor further summoned those with brilliant talents—Liu Xiang, Zhang Ziqiao, Hua Long, and Liu Bao, etc.—to await imperial edict at the Golden Steed Gate. During the reigns of Shenzue and Wufeng, all under heaven was thriving and peaceful, and auspicious responses from heaven were numerous. The emperor had many song poems composed and intended to set them to music. The Counselor-in-chief Wei Xiang recommended Zhao Ding from Bohai Commandery and Gong De from State of Liang, both specializing in knowing the tone and playing zither. The two were summoned and awaiting the emperor’s edict. Thereupon, Wang Xiang, the prefect of Yizhou, planned to propagate morals to commoners. Hearing about Wang Bao’s brilliant talent, Wang Xiang requested a meeting with him and asked him to compose poems “The Mean and Harmony,” “Pleasure in Official Duties,” and “Dissemination of Morals.” Then Wang Bao selected some meddlers to learn and sing the poems in the tune of “Deer Cry.” At the time, He Wu, the later Marquis of Fanxiang, was still a young boy and was selected as a singer.

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25 For a discussion of this transformation, see Martin Kern, “Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of Fu,” 407-431.
After a long time, Wu and others went to study at Chang’an and sung at the Imperial Academy. There the poems came to the ears of the emperor, who summoned Wu and his fellows for a performance. Emperor Xuan bestowed each of them silk and said, “You are singing about majestic virtue, and how can I deserve such a praise?” After Wang Bao composed eulogies for the prefect, he also wrote a biography for him. The prefect of Yizhou consequently recommended Wang Bao for his outstanding talent in the memorial. Thereupon, the emperor summoned Wang Bao to the court. After his arrival, the emperor commanded Wang Bao to eulogize the sage king’s intention to recruit worthy officials.

The emperor commanded Wang Bao and Zhang Ziqiao et al to await imperial edict [to serve the emperor]. The emperor had Wang Bao et al accompany him in hunting for numerous times. Each time they passed a palace or mansion, Emperor Xuan would command them to compose eulogies and bestow them different kinds of silk in accordance with their poems’ qualities. Most appraisers consider these poems to be excessively frivolous and not concerned with urgent affairs. Yet the emperor responded that, “Are there not games like dice and chess? To play board games was still better than doing nothing at all.” The grandiose rhapsodies share the same intent with the Odes, while the small ones are magnificent in language and appealing. It is just like the existence of delicate silk in seamstresses’ textile works and tunes of Zheng and Wey in music, with which all the folks pleased their ears and eyes. The rhapsodies, compared with them, still embody thoughts of benevolence and uprightness, moral illustration through remonstration, and a comprehensive overview of birds, beasts, and plants. In this sense, the rhapsodies are far better than the performances of entertainers and games like dice and chess.” A while later, the emperor promoted Wang Bao to the post of Grand Master of Remonstrance.

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26 Hanshu 64B.2821-22.
27 Cf. Analects 17.22: The Master said, “It is hard for those who stuff themselves with food the whole day without using their mind [to do anything meaningful]? Are there not who play board games? It would still be better than doing nothing at all.”
28 Hanshu 64B.2829.
The competing functions of *cifu*—eulogy and remonstration—are both present in the biography. On the one hand, Emperor Xuan commanded the composition of eulogistic ritual poems to “propagate moral education” 宣風化 and praise “majestic virtue” 盛德. Following the example of Emperor Wu, Emperor Xuan summoned performers from across the empire to the court and enjoyed their singing. In such situations, the emperor would constantly bestow silk to those performers, similar to the case of Mr. Pi in Liu Xiang’s account. On the other hand, the panegyric function of *cifu* was criticized for being “excessively frivolous and not concerned with urgent affairs” 淫靡不急.

The biography reflects an Eastern Han perspective of Western Han ritual/performance culture. In the Western Han context, praise and remonstration were perfectly compatible, in that oral performances eulogizing exemplary deeds were capable of achieving modeling and suasive effect. In the Eastern Han, however, as the ritual/performance centered culture faded away, the previous mode of suasion-through-praise also lost its necessary cultural environment to take effect. In accordance, the Eastern Han classist culture that celebrated the Mao exegesis of *Shijing* would perceive a tension between praise and remonstration, and strongly stressed the significance of the latter. As such, the old mode of suasion was no longer considered possible, and hence the criticism on Western Han panegyric *fu*. Thus, in an Eastern Han perspective, Emperor Xuan, upon hearing criticism of panegyric *fu*, (was arranged to) come to their defense by invoking the *Analects* to maintain that a) panegyric writings were better than making no efforts in writing at all, and b) these writings shared the *Shijing*’s functions to illustrate virtue, remonstrate, and provide necessary knowledge about nature and society. After all, as the emperor commented, even the *Shijing* involved the songs of Zheng and Wey that were—in that case, what fault was there in Wang Bao’s writings? Therefore, the emperor appointed Wang Bao as a Grand
Master of Remonstrance 諫大夫.

“Chuci” in the passage participated in the debate of cifu’s function. On the one hand, the “Chuci” presentation was inserted into a larger context of the enterprise of eulogy composition in Emperor Xuan’s reigns, implying a similar function of “Chuci” to serve as a means to celebrate the emperor’s “majestic virtue.” Besides, Mr. Pi’s presentation of “Chuci” was for the emperor’s pleasure and “interest for wonder” 奇異之好, without leading to an employment at the inner court. Probably, for Emperor Xuan, “Chuci” was, just as in Confucius’ comment on the function of Shijing and his extension of the comment on rhapsodies 辭賦,29 a treasure store for a comprehensive learning of the name of creatures in nature. Eulogistic and exotic elements are to be found in the received anthology. For example, in the “Lisao,” the protagonist’s claim for self-cultivation and moral lessons drawn from ancient sage kings and worthy advisors could serve to “propagate moral education”; and the euphonic and eulogistic tone of the “Donghuang taiyi” 東皇太一 of “Jiuge” could serve to praise the “majestic virtue.” “Chuci” as a larger textual repertoire and source of received Chuci anthology might well include much more stanzas like these. Furthermore, Ban Gu specifically stressed that Emperor Xuan’s interest in “Chuci” was to restore the old practices of his great-grandfather Emperor Wu,30 an emperor renowned for his fondness for grandiose eulogies about his great success. Whatever the “Chuci” might refer to, at least in Ban Gu’s understanding, eulogistic function was its indispensable feature.

On the other hand, a similar criticism of cifu as a panegyric genre is to be found in the

29 Cf. Analects 17.9: The Master said, “My children, why do you not study the Book of Odes? From the Odes… we acquire the knowledge of various names of birds, beasts, and plants.” 子曰：“小子！何不學詩？詩……多識於鳥獸草木之名。”
30 Emperor Xuan was not the son of the preceding two emperors, who were either dethroned or had no son. Emperor Xuan was selected as heir based on his blood connection with Emperor Wu (he was the son of Emperor Wu’s first Crown Prince, Liu Ju). The gesture of restoring Emperor Wu’s practices was a means of self-legitimation.
“Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 of *Hanshu* (with no reference of the term *Chuci*), where indirect admonition 諫 is considered the purpose of writing. Under this view, the “Yiwen zhi” conceived the history of *fu*, to which “Chuci” belong and for which Qu Yuan’s works were recognized as a progenitor, as a decline. Xunzi’s and Qu Yuan’s *fu* that still preserved the “noble intent of ancient *Shijing*” 古詩之義 (i.e. the embedded purpose of “indirect admonition”) were “gorgeous and led to [behaviors of] principle” 麗以則. By contrast, later writers (Song Yu 宋玉 and Tang Le 唐勒 of Chu; Mei Sheng 李乘, Sima Xiangru 司馬相如, and Yang Xiong 揚雄 from Han) all diverted from the correct path and came to compose epideictic *fu* 辭人之賦 that were “gorgeous and led to [behaviors of] excessive frivolousness” 麗以淫.\(^{31}\) As such, the tradition of *fu* reached its climax at its very inception in Qu Yuan’s works.

The decline narrative finds a parallel in Ban Gu’s “Treatise on Geography” 地理志, where a clear connection is established between Qu Yuan and “Chuci.” In the treatise, Qu Yuan is identified as the progenitor of “Chuci,” a literary tradition originated from Chu.

At first, after being slandered and exiled, the virtuous official Qu Yuan of Chu composed the “Lisao” and various other *fu* for self-commiseration. Later there were the sort of people like Song Yu and Tang Le who expressed their admiration of him, upon which they established an illustrious reputation. After the rise of Han, Liu Pi, son of Emperor Gaozu’s elder brother, summoned the pleasure-seeking young men to his enfeoffment at Wu. Among them, Mei Sheng, Zou Yang, and Master Yan rose to fame during the time of Emperors Wen and Jing. Prince of Huainan, Liu An, at this time took Shouchun as his capital and summoned honors retainers to compose writings. As for Wu, there was Yan Zhu and Zhu Maichen—they were noble and distinguished in the Han and their refined works

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\(^{31}\) *Hanshu* 30.1756. It should be noted that Ban Gu’s evaluation of Qu Yuan in various sources was not consistent. The discrepancy between his preface of “Lisao” and that of “Chuci,” have been long noticed and debated. It is often speculated that the two prefaces were written at different stages in his life, revealing a change of mind. Mao Qing 毛慶 specifically points out that the change was to the Emperor Ming’s need to suppress remonstrations at court, as the emperor issued an edict commenting that Sima Xiangru the eulogizer was a typical loyal official, while Sima Qian the remonstrator a negative example. Mao Qing believes that Ban Gu’s critical preface to “Chuci” was composed after the edict, and the eulogizing preface to “Lisao” before. See Mao Qing, “‘Zhongcheng zhiqingan’ hu, ‘loucai yangji’ hu?—Ban Gu pingjia Qu Yuan maodun zhi xiangxi” “忠誠之情”乎, “露才揚已”乎?——班固評價屈原矛盾之詳析, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* 1 (2011): 91-99.
sprang up. Thereupon “Chuci” was handed down through generations. Its deficiency was the cunningness and lack of credibility.

In this account, the “Chuci” as a tradition was transmitted (two implications of chuan 傳) from Warring States to Han by generations of writers from the Chu area (Zou Yang was a local of the Qi area but served in the Chu; the territory of Wu was incorporated into Chu in late Warring States). Development of the tradition was accounted in three stages. In the first stage, Qu Yuan the fountainhead initiated the tradition by self-lamentation and self-expression. In the second stage, the Chu writers Song Yu and Tang Le, Qu Yuan’s two admirers who were still not far removed from Qu Yuan both in terms of time and their writing, inherited and carried forward Qu Yuan’s legacy. In the third stage, the Han writers, through their own recognition by the emperor and their power at court, further developed the “Chuci” into a now prominent tradition in the Han.

Yet this third stage of proliferation was not the golden age for the tradition. Like that of fu, the tradition of “Chuci” was also one of decline. The progenitor Qu Yuan was a worthy official 賢臣, while those in the Han were either frivolous “young men fond of pleasure” 娛遊子弟 or the powerful ministers like Zhu Maichen who would plan a political frame-up out of personal grudge and revenge. Unlike Qu Yuan, their morality was corrupted; Qu Yuan’s works gave voice to an advisor at the marginalization of power, while works in the Han became a voice of the powerful—in particular, in the case of Zhu Maichen, “Chuci” empowered him to closely assist the emperor. In view of the stark contrast between Qu Yuan and the Han writer, “Chuci” was

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32 Hanshu 28B.1668.
33 Shiji and Hanshu both depicted Zhu Maichen as a narrow-minded and revengeful person. Out of his personal
said to turn into a tradition with the “deficiency” of “cunningness and lacking credibility.” The works of the Han writers were just the opposite with Qu Yuan’s, which were sincere and trustworthy because they were composed out of Qu Yuan’s political frustration (the trustworthiness is guaranteed by the poetics of the “Great Preface”—poetry gives form to one’s state of mind that was stirred by the outer environment; the composition is an automatic process without any human manipulations, such as cunning and craft).

The decline narratives of fu in the “Yiwen zhi” and that of “Chuci” in the “Dili zhi” were essentially one, as ci and fu were used interchangeably in the Han and Qu Yuan’s works were commonly referred to as fu, an umbrella term for almost all rhythmic works that were to be verbally presented (“Chuci” would be included in fu). The Eastern Han decline narrative was established for the purpose of reforming the contemporary grand fu with the textual ideals illustrated in classics, in this case the Shijing. Qu Yuan’s works were placed at the juncture between the Shijing and Han grand fu, to provide a possibility to reclaim the classical values of admonition. In other words, Qu Yuan’s works demonstrated what fu had once achieved and what ought to be achieved in the future. For such a purpose, Qu Yuan’s works were defined in the classist language—the sensual, entertaining, and liturgical elements in his poems were all shadowed by his self-expressional mode of composition, which guaranteed the poems’ sincerity and function of remonstration according to the “Great Preface.”

grudge towards Zhang Tang, who was once below him and later assumed a high post, paying no respect to him, Zhu Maichen framed Zhang Tang up with the crime of corruption for revenge. Consequently, Zhang Tang committed suicide and yet was found to be innocent.

34 These elements were noticed by commentators, critics, and writers in later ages. I will discuss their perspectives in the following chapters. For modern scholarship on these elements, see for example, Arthur Waley, The Nine Songs: Study of Shamanism in Ancient China (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1973).
“Chuci” in Ban Gu’s “Dili zhi” was a literary tradition tied to Qu Yuan, but it was by no means the anthology. “Chuci” was possibly already used as the anthology title with Liu Xiang’s efforts of compilation and collation, gestures of crystalizing the “Chuci” tradition in text, by selecting representative authors and works (a gesture we repeatedly see in history; the tradition was reconceptualized in a similar manner in the Song, as we shall see in chapter five). If Liu Xiang’s anthology was faithfully reproduced by Wang Yi, as Hawkes surmised, then the anthology and Ban Gu’s “Dili zhi” may reflect two different perspectives of “Chuci” as a literary tradition. Liu Xiang’s anthology, however, left no other traces except that it contained sixteen *juan*. That said, it was Wang Yi’s anthology and commentary that remained influential in later ages. I will compare the “Dili zhi” and Wang Yi’s commentary in the received *Chuci* to discuss the shifted perspective on “Chuci” in the Eastern Han.

In the “Dili zhi” narrative, geographically, “Chuci” was a literary phenomenon in the Southern Chu and Eastern Chu, as the major contributors were either native of Chu/Wu (Qu Yuan, Song Yu, Tang Le, Yan Zhu, Zhu Maichen) or enfeoffed in the area (Liu Bi and Liu An). In terms of content, “Chuci” was largely presented as a panegyric tradition, since Ban Gu’s decline narrative stressed the prevailing influence of contemporary grand *fu* in the tradition. Both aspects changed with the *Chuci* anthology and Wang Yi’s commentary.

To begin with, the *Chuci* authors were not limited to the Three Chu (Western, Eastern, and Southern) areas in the *Shiji* with the inclusion of Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154-93 BCE), a native of Pingyuan 平原 Commandery (in modern Shandong). The geographic scope of “Chuci” was extended to the north. The inclusion deemphasized the authors’ geographical affiliation with Chu, reflecting a perspective that regarded “Chuci” as a literary tradition not merely transmitted

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35 *Chuci buzhu*, 48.
in Chu, but in the entire empire. *Chuci* was not a regional anthology but was accessible to different cultures within the empire.

In addition, the “Chuci” tradition as reflected in the anthology emphasized moral exemplarity instead of panegyric function. In the anthology, the “pleasure-seeking young men” and the controversial rhetorician-ministers in Ban Gu’s account of the “Chuci” lineage were all left out. Instead, Wang Yi extended Qu Yuan’s intention to the entire *Chuci* by claiming that all later poems were composed out of the author’s admiration of and lament for Qu Yuan, their master, and for the sake of giving expression to Qu Yuan’s intent and virtue. Qu Yuan became both the progenitor and the one-and-only theme of the *Chuci*.

The term “Chuci” was introduced in Wang Yi’s preface to the “Jiubian” 九變 (Nine Changes) where he conceived the “Nines” poems by Qu Yuan and later poets as the central form and theme that run through the *Chuci*.

The “Jiubian” is composed by the grandee of Chu, Song Yu. *Bian* means changes, i.e. stating morals and using changes to persuade the ruler. Nine is a *yang* number, pointing to the discipline and order of the Way. Therefore, the heaven has nine stars to set straight the Phecdia and Aloth; the earth has nine territories to give rise to the myriad states; and the human being has nine apertures to make the spirit aspiring and eyes perceptive. Qu Yuan harbored the nature of loyalty and steadfastness, yet he was slandered and wronged. Grieving for the ruler’s blindness and the state’s proximity to crisis and perishing, he invoked the number of heaven and earth, arrayed the essence of human figure, and composed the eulogies of “Nine Songs” and “Nine Declarations,” in order to indirectly admonish and remonstrate King Huai. It was to make clear that his own words matched the caliber of heaven and earth, and could be followed and put to practice. Song Yu was Qu Yuan’s disciple. Regretting for his master, loyal yet exiled, he composed the “Nine changes” to recount his master’s intent. When it came to the rise of Han, men such as Liu Xiang and Wang Bao all grieved at Qu Yuan’s words and modeled upon them in their own composition. Therefore, these works are called “verses of Chu.”

《九變》者，楚大夫宋玉之所作也。變者，變也，謂皦道德以變說君也。九者，陽之數，道之綱紀也。故天有九星，以正機衡；地有九州，以成萬邦；人有九竅，以通精明。屈原懷忠貞之性，而被讒邪，傷君闕蔽，國將危亡，乃援天地之數，列人形之要，而作《九歌》、《九章》之頌，以諷諫懷王。明己所言，與天地合度，可

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36 Hong Xingzu recorded a variant *bian* 辨 for *bian* 辯; the former was glossed as “to distinguish” 別, and the latter “to govern” 治. *Chuci buzhu*, 182.
Wang Yi explained his emphasis on the “Nine” series by the significance of the biggest yang number nine, which, in the contemporary intellectual milieu emphasizing the correlation between the realms of nature and society, embodied the ultimate way of operation for heaven, earth, and human being. As such, the title and the structure of “Jiuge” and “Jiuzhang” were Qu Yuan’s intentional design, a claim for authority—“It was to make clear that his own words [of remonstration] matched the caliber of heaven and earth, and could be followed [by the king] and put to practice” 明己所言，與天地合度，可履而行也. In accordance, suasion and illustration of rulership were recognized as the primary authorial intent and theme of “Jiuge” and “Jiuzhang,” and further of the entire Chuci. The form and theme of the two “Nines” suites were inherited by later Chu and Han poets. According to Wang Yi’s prefaces of their works, each of the poets recounted Qu Yuan’s intention as embodied in the “Jiuge” and “Jiuzhang.” As such, in Wang Yi’s conception, the Chuci anthology and tradition as represented by the “Nine” series was primarily a political discourse on good government. With Wang Yi’s commentary, “Chuci” became a much more narrowly defined written tradition, now represented by the anthology Chuci.

By placing the “Nine” series at the center of Chuci, Wang Yi paid no heed to Ban Gu’s

37 Chuci buzhu, 182. Ci 詞 and ci 辭 are interchangeable. See Feng Qiyong 馮其庸 and Deng Ansheng 鄧安生, Tongjiazi huishi 通假字匯釋 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2006), 941.
38 As Timothy Chan observes, Wang Yi and Ban Gu, although contrasted their opinions on Qu Yuan, both invoked the language of prognostic and weft (chenwei 讖緯) texts in their works. For a list of the chenwei language shared by Wang Yi’s Chuci commentary and Ban Gu’s Baihu tong 白虎通, see Timothy Chan, Considering the End: Mortality in Early Medieval Chinese Poetic Representation (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 13.
39 The “Jiuge” has eleven pieces in the suite instead of nine, contradicting the number implied by the title.
40 Note that this was not to reduce the significance of “Lisao” the “classic.” The poem “Lisao” was recognized as a classic in Wang Yi’s anthology. The practice probably already started before Wang Yi, as he labored to gloss the character in the title “Lisao jing” (jing as “path” 徑) while feeling no obligation to justify the explanation.
decline narrative, nor did he show any contempt for the Han writers as Ban Gu did. Wang Yi believed that Qu Yuan’s spirit of remonstrance was well carried into the Han writers’ works. Rather than diverting from it, writers like Liu Xiang and Wang Bao—Wang Yi himself was also implicitly ranked among them—were claimed to have inherited Qu Yuan’s legacy by composing “Nines” poems. The very gesture of composition would justify their value.

In the meantime, it was also due to Wang Yi’s intention to elevate the evaluation of these Han writings (including his “Jiusi”) that the “Nine” series gained foremost significance in his account of the Chuci tradition. Celebration of contemporary works was accomplished through consolidating their connection with previously established ones. As a result, the contemporary and the ancient both go through a process of (re)conceptualization, in which the ancient is shaped by the contemporary. In the case of “Nines,” the authorial intent of the “Nines” in the anthology before Wang Yi’s time were all reinterpreted and redefined based on his own intent in the “Jiusi.” Many “Nines” poems, if read without Wang Yi’s commentary, would yield no such impression of celebrating Qu Yuan’s intent to admonish the king to accept his ideal of government. In other words, suasion and illustration of ideal government were the goal that Wang Yi intended to achieve through the “Jiusi” (see the next part for more discussions about “Jiusi”), an intent projected onto the previous “Nines” writers and became the authorial intent for all writers in the Chuci. Wang Yi’s interpretation would contrast Sima Qian’s observation that, Qu Yuan’s followers such as Song Yu, Tang Le 唐勒, and Jing Cuo 景差 “all merely inherited Qu Yuan’s moderate language, but none would dare to remonstrate with the king straightforwardly” 皆祖屈原之從容辭令，終莫敢直諫.41 Be that as it may, Wang Yi’s commentary was to present a purified and single-faceted Chuci anthology and literary tradition.

41 Shiji 84.2491.
Finally, with the Qu Yuan persona overshadowing the entire anthology, the *Chuci* in Wang Yi’s commentary represented a voice of those at the marginalization of power—the integrate and capable advisors who were unfortunately deprived of the opportunity to assist the ruler. Such a conceptualization contrasted Ban Gu’s presentation of “Chuci” as, by and large, a tradition of powerful ministers at court. In line with the disempowered image, Wang Yi portrayed the *Chuci* almost as a master’s tradition (deprivation of power was also a stereotypical image of masters in the Warring States). Not only was Qu Yuan referred to as “Master Qu” 屈子, but in his overview of the *Chuci*, Wang Yi ranked Qu Yuan above the masters (Yang Zhu, Mozi, Zou Yan, Mengzi, Sunzi, and Han Fei) because he was “the sole heir who inherited the significance of *Shijing* poets” 獨依詩人之義.\(^{42}\) As such, Wang Yi established in the *Chuci* a master-disciple lineage—Song Yu was not merely an admirer of Qu Yuan, but for the first time was identified as his disciple.\(^{43}\) As such, what was transmitted in the *Chuci* were teachings of Qu Yuan, the moral exemplar and master of governance.

Wang Yi’s Qu Yuan-centered conception of *Chuci* overshadowed Ban Gu’s largely critical perspective thereafter. The representatives singled out by Ban Gu were seldom recognized as “Chuci” authors. (As I discuss later in the chapter, Wang Yi’s celebration of Qu Yuan and reconceptualization of “Chuci” was in reaction to the political corruption in late Eastern Han.) The reason that Wang Yi’s reconceptualization centered around Qu Yuan was not merely the poet’s personal qualities, but also his personal fate that intertwined with the fate of Chu. Qu Yuan rose in the Han as a Chu paragon, because his experience spoke to contemporary concerns in the empire.

\(^{42}\) *Chuci buzhu*, 47-48.

\(^{43}\) Materials of Song Yu is extremely scarce, and his biography is largely subtracted from various *fu* attributed to him.
Rise of A Chu Paragon in Legitimation of the Han Ruling House

Before Qu Yuan was identified as the progenitor of “Chuci,” he was mainly associated with specific titles such as “Lisao,” “Huaisha,” “Tianwen,” “Zhaohun,” and “Aiying” in the available Western Han sources. As a poetic persona and historical person, Qu Yuan already gained the Han advisor Jia Yi’s recognition in his “Diao Qu Yuan” (Lamenting Qu Yuan), a work of deep regret for Qu Yuan’s tragic fate and suicide when hearing the Qu Yuan story in his exile in Changsha. Thereafter Qu Yuan and “Lisao” were introduced to Emperor Wu’s court by Prince Huainan (Liu An), who presented a “tradition” on the “Lisao” on imperial command. Aside from Emperor Wu’s preference for Chu melodies, the imperial interest in Qu Yuan had to do with the necessity for the royal house to establish legitimacy for Han by way of faulting the Qin. Qu Yuan, on account of his purported perspicacity of Qin’s cruelty, would best serve such a purpose.

Among the seven states in the Warring States period, Chu was once the strongest rival of Qin and the last one to be conquered. Even after the Qin conquest, the Chu land remained a base that gave rise to numerous uprisings against the rule of Qin, and as such the Chu state received empathy widely in the Han. Among the uprisings, Xiang Liang (d. 208 BCE) and Xiang Yu (232-202 BCE), descendants of the noble Xiang clan of Chu, legitimized their rebellion on the pretext of revenging for King Huai of Chu, the king that Qu Yuan served and that died as a prisoner on the foreign land of Qin. The Xiang brothers installed King Huai’s grandson as the new king of Chu under the exact title of “Huai.” This act was commented in the *Shiji* as “to follow the wish of the people” in the voice of Fan Zeng (278-204 BCE), the

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44 *Shiji* 84.2503.
45 Chu was also selected as the name of Xiang Yu’s newly established regime after the fall of Qin.
*Shiji* expressed its deep sympathy that “Chu was the most innocent among the six states conquered by Qin.” Such a comment was made upon King Huai’s imprisonment in Qin, the turning point for Chu’s decline, because King Huai was deceived by King Zhao of Qin to enter the Wu Pass at Qin for a meeting about their alliance marriage, a scheme that had King Huai detained until his death. As such, it was believed that, the Chu people held deepest grudge against Qin. The king himself also won people’s sympathy decades after his death. This sentiment of revenge was encapsulated by a famous saying that, “Even if there remained only three households in Chu, the one that destroys Qin would definitely be Chu” 楚雖三戶，亡秦必楚.\(^{46}\) The discourse sympathizing with Chu and demonizing Qin as a brutal state was adopted—if not at least to some extent created—by the Western Han, when harsh hostility towards Qin as reflected in Jia Yi’s famous “Finding Faults with Qin” 過秦論 was widely seen.

The legend of Qu Yuan that placed him right at the turning point of Chu history played an important role in this Han discourse. In the Qu Yuan biography, before King Huai decided on the trip to Qin, Qu Yuan was said to have warned the king of Qin’s untrustworthiness by a perspicacious characterization.

> At the time, King Zhao of Qin requested to meet with King Huai for Qin’s marriage alliance with Chu. King Huai planned to go, but Qu Ping said, “Qin is the state of tigers and wolfs, and as such not to be trusted.”

時秦昭王與楚婚，欲與懷王會。懷王欲行，屈平曰：“秦虎狼之國，不可信，不如毋行。”\(^{47}\)

This speech portrayed Qu Yuan as a prophet standing at the turning point of the fall of Chu and unification of Qin. Qu Yuan’s firm anti-Qin stance aligned him with the interests of Han royal house to support their replacement of Qin and demonstrate their superiority in governance. As a

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\(^{46}\) *Shiji* 7.300.

\(^{47}\) *Shiji* 84.2484.
result, Qu Yuan, the advisor who spared no effort to protect Chu from the evil intention of Qin, became a Han national hero.\(^\text{48}\) In this sense, Qu Yuan’s legend would serve as a moral force that exposed the immorality and illegitimacy of Qin.

Notably, the vivid metaphor of “a state of tigers and wolves” was not Qu Yuan’s invention but a stereotypical image of Qin in the Han sources.\(^\text{49}\) In the Shiji and the Zhanguo ce 戰國策, the exact metaphor was brought up by different figures in various states,\(^\text{50}\) including King Huai’s father King Wei 威 (r. 339-329 BCE),\(^\text{51}\) and even King Huai would himself sympathize with the “tigers and wolves” characterization of Qin in a different occasion.\(^\text{52}\) In particular, in the “Hereditary House of Chu” 楚世家 of Shiji, it was a different Chu adviser, Zhao Ju 昭睢 (fl. 300 BCE) who tried to dissuade King Huai from entering the Qin territory to form an alliance by marriage in the exact metaphor.

King Huai of Chu was troubled upon reading the letter of the king of Qin—if he chose to go, he was afraid to be deceived, but if not, he was fearful of Qin’s rage. Zhao Ju said, “My lord, please do not go but dispatch troops for self-defense. Qin resembles tigers and wolves and is not trustworthy. It harbors the intention to annex other states.”

楚懷王見秦王書，患之。欲往，恐見欺；無往，恐秦怒。昭睢曰：“王毋行，而發兵自守耳。秦虎狼，不可信，有并諸侯之心。”\(^\text{53}\)

In this account of the same situation, Qu Yuan was completely unmentioned and “his” speech

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\(^{49}\) The metaphor of “tigers and wolves” seldom appeared before Han and was not necessarily applied to Qin. For example, in the Zuozhuan 左傳 (Zuo Tradition), it was people of Jin 晉 that were analogized to tigers and wolves. See Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 596.

\(^{50}\) These figures include Lord Xinling 信陵 and Liao 維 (known as “Liao the Defender-in-chief,” or Wei Liao 尉繆; appointed in Qin in 237 BCE) from Wei, Su Qin 蘇秦, Su Dai 蘇代, and You Teng 游騰 from Zhou, Yu the Minister 虞卿 from Zhao, and Fan Kuai 奉鈞 and Jia Shan 賈山 of Han. The metaphor is also seen in the Huainanzi.

\(^{51}\) When Su Qin proposed his “Vertical Alliance” 合縱 to King Wei of Chu, the king was persuaded and commented that, “Qin is a state of tigers and wolves that we cannot develop a close relationship with.” 秦，虎狼之國，不可親也。See Shiji 69.2254, 2261; Zhanguo ce 14.503.

\(^{52}\) You Teng of the Zhou court expressed to King Huai the Zhou’s hostility towards Qin with the metaphor that “Now Qin is a state of tigers and wolves” 今秦，虎狼之國. King Huai was satisfied. See Shiji 71.2308; Zhanguo ce 2.50.

\(^{53}\) Shiji 40.1728.
was attributed to Zhao Ju, the Chu adviser that assisted the king on many important military and strategic moves as recorded in various anecdotes in the Shiji and Zhanguo ce. Moreover, here the image of King Huai, who foresaw the possibility of trickery and hesitated about the trip, differed from that in the Qu Yuan biography, where the king was completely unaware of the danger. The discrepancy between the two parallel accounts in the Shiji may reflect the tension between different sources, and fundamentally the anecdotal nature of these “records.” The source of Qu Yuan’s biography felt an urge to choose the source that contrasted Qu Yuan’s perspicacity with the king’s ignorance, in order to stress its protagonist’s capabilities in state affairs, dramatize his tragedy, and arouse the audience’s empathy.

It would be an impossible and meaningless effort to decide on a “true record” between the two scenarios. A retrospective attribution made by the Han discourse or not, the speech applied to Qu Yuan well in that it best served the need of the situation and the persona’s character. As an advisor and royal family member who devoted himself to the future of Chu and whose personal misery granted him with profound insight, he must have been able to detect Qin’s agenda. Upright and steadfast, he must have remonstrated with the king when the king was about to be trapped by the deceitful marriage alliance. Also, it could not be anyone at the court of Chu, other than Qu Yuan, to be able to lay bare Qin’s plot, as the “Lisao” and Qu Yuan biography both projected him as the single and last capable and virtuous man at Chu. Furthermore, as a purported author of a large corpus of verses, it was much easier for Qu Yuan to be remembered, compared with Zhao Ju, to whom no work was attributed for perpetuating his name. As a result, the metaphoric prophecy came to be associated with Qu Yuan, while Zhao Ju’s speech was almost completely forgotten in later sources.

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54 Shiji 40.1726, 1728; Zhanguo ce 14.511, 524, 525, 526, 542.
After the Western Han, what was only implicitly implied in the *Shiji*—Qu Yuan’s exile was the cause for the fall of Chu—was clearly enunciated, and Qu Yuan became the single most important Chu advisor whose fate was closely tied to that of his state. It was believed that Qu Yuan’s personal tragedy amounted to the national tragedy of Chu. Such a view was first expressed in Ying Shao’s (140-206) *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義.

King Huai’s fawning officials Shangguan and Zijian suppressed the steadfast officials and sent them away. After composing the *fu* of “Lisao,” Qu Yuan drowned himself in the Miluo. As a result, the king was deceived by Zhang Yi and died in the foreign land of Qin. Chu was finally destroyed by Qin in King Fuchu’s reign. The people grieved for Chu and made for it a saying, that “Even if there remained only three households in Chu, the one that destroys Qin would definitely be Chu.”

When it came to the First Emperor, he inherited the deeds accumulated through six generations, raised long whips to tame his people, annexed the two Zhou and shook the world of dukes, assumed the position of the most revered and controlled all six directions of the universe, and combined in him the power of Five Emperors and Three Sovereigns, aweing the entire world. The appraisers at the time all resented it that Chu distanced Qu Yuan and that Wei would not appoint Lord Wuji—the reason for the cession of their territories, which gradually led to their destruction. Due to Qin’s ultimate fate of turning into foolishness and weakness, the weakening of its quaking force, and its undifferentiated treatment within the empire, it was repelled by the Han.

Here the conjunction *yin* 因 (because of [X], therefore) identified a clear cause-and-effect relationship between Qu Yuan’s exile from court and King Huai’s death, the prelude to the fall of Chu. The Qin unification was not accounted as an enterprise aided by heaven’s mandate and

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56 Cf. Jia Yi’s “Guo Qin lun” 過秦論: “When it came to the First Emperor, he inherited the glorious spirit of his six predecessors, raised his long whip to control the universe, swallowed up the Eastern and Western Zhou, and destructed the vassal states. He ascended the throne of supreme honor and ruled the six directions, and held the rod to lash all under heaven. His might shook the four seas.” 及至始皇，薦六世之遺烈，抗長策而御宇內，吞二周而並諸侯，履至尊而制六合，兼帝皇而威四海。Vu 于時議者，恨楚之疏遠屈原，魏不用公子無忌，故國削以至於亡。秦因愚弱之極運，震竒之肅條，混一海內，為漢驅除。See *Wenxuan* 51.2235.
57 Wang Liqi, *Fengsu tongyi jiaozhu*, 49.
people’s support, but a consequence of other states’ self-destruction, i.e. their failure in appointing worthy officials. As a major rival of Qin, Chu was especially faulted for not following Qu Yuan’s advice to resist Qin, a state of brutal force and evil government. The lesson of Chu and Qu Yuan then prepared the narrative to celebrate the Han defeat of Qin and rank the Han above all seven states before it, including the once strong Qin and Chu.  

Qu Yuan rose in Han as a Chu paragon whose fate intertwined with that of Chu. His celebration in the Han was rested on his role in sovereignty legitimation made available by his Chu identity, which aligned him with the interest of Han royal house. Aside from the interest of ruler, the Qu Yuan persona also addressed the concern of imperial family members and non-kinfolk officials in the empire, i.e. the way of their conduct and interaction in society, as I will show in the following two sections. 

A Royal Kinfolk’s Responsibility to Stay 

The appraisal of Qu Yuan the advisor involved a famous debate beginning in the Han over his resolution of suicide. One opinion, represented by Jia Yi, Yang Xiong, Ban Biao, and Ban Gu, maintained that Qu Yuan’s death was in vain, since he could have left Chu to realize his political ambition under a worthy ruler, following the practice of Confucius and other Warring States advisors. In this opinion, suicide contradicted the classist (ru 儒) principle of serving in

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58 The conception that the fall of Chu was a consequence of Qu Yuan’s exile did not end with the fall of Han. As Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215-282) commented in his “Shi quan lun” 說短論, that “Master Qu was distanced, hence the fall of Chu” 屈子疏而楚傾. Qu Yuan’s significance in Chu history as recognized in the Han stayed with the persona.  
59 See Jia Yi’s “Diao Qu Yuan” 弁屈原, Yang Xiong’s “‘Fan ‘Lisao’” and Fayan, Ban Biao’s “Dao ‘Lisao’,” and Ban Gu’s “‘Lisao’ xu” 離騷序. Much ink has been spent on Ban Gu’s opposing stances in different writings, as his “‘Lisao’ zan xu” 禦騷贊序 and “Yiwen zhi” both praised Qu Yuan as a moral exemplar for his allegiance and indirect admonishment through fu compositions. Among all, Liao Dongliang proposes to read the two evaluations not as contradicting each other but as two sides of the same issue. Qu Yuan was certainly worth of being praised for sticking to his moral standards and for his intention to right the wrongs of Chu, but in Ban Gu’s mind, he took the wrong way of vociferous remonstration; even worse, he ended his life when his remonstration showed no efficacy. For Ban Gu, remonstration should be indirect (feng 風 or 諫), and preservation of one’s life was the wise choice. For a discussion, see Liao, “Zhongcheng zhiqing, huai buneng yì—Lun Ban Gu de Chuci guan” 忠誠之請, 懷不能已—論班固的《楚辭》觀, in Liao, Lingjun yuying, 1-44, especially p. 15-28.
office in times of prosperity while retreating in chaotic times to protect oneself. Ban Gu even maintained that Qu Yuan’s suicide out of excessive frustration “disqualified him to be a vessel with discerning wisdom” 非明智之器. In other words, although Qu Yuan stuck firmly to his lofty moral standards, he still deviated from the ru pursuit of conduct of mean 中行 because of his unwise choices. The other opinion, represented by Liu An, Sima Qian, and Wang Yi, praised exactly Qu Yuan’s steadfast commitment to his integrity, for which he willingly sacrificed his life. In this view, Qu Yuan was the absolute moral exemplar whose lofty intent could “rival with the sun and moon in brightness” 與日月爭光可也.

As a debate carried forward in the next two millennia, its significance far exceeds the evaluation of Qu Yuan the person and his choice between life and righteousness. The debate is also an ethical issue that concerns with the ultimate value for a human being—should one be judged by one’s political achievements or by one’s moral worth? If by political achievements, should an ideal gentleman, the sage, act like a “brilliant strategist” that negotiates a way to

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60 Chuci buzhu, 50.
61 Kuangjuan 狂狷 was considered inferior to the mean, according to the Analects 13.21: “Since I cannot get men pursuing the mean, to whom I might communicate my instructions, I must find the fiery and unyielding. The fiery keeps forging ahead; the unyielding refrains from what is wrong 不得中行而與之，必也狂狷乎！狂者進取，狷者有所不為也. The Hanshu arrayed traditions characterized various upright and unyielding 剛直 officials devoted to fierce remonstration as kuangjuan. In those cases, the officials were often appraised as departing from the mean and as such could not serve as models of morality 不典不式. See Hanshu 67. 2928 (“Yang Hu Zhu Mei Yun zhu,” 楊胡朱梅云傳) and 100.4258, 4262 (“Xuzhuan” 叙傳, or “Self-narration”); the officials mentioned were Yang Wangsun 楊王孫, Hu Jian 胡建, Zhu Yun 朱雲, Mei Fu 梅福, Kuan Rao 寬饒, Zhuge Feng 諸葛饒, and Liu Fu 劉輔.
62 Shiji 84.2482.
63 Griet Vankeerberghen discovers two models of the sage in the Huainanzi. In one model, it is supposed that human beings lose control of their fate. When they encounter adverse circumstances that they can do nothing to change it but only to passively accept it. In such cases, the sage is not valued for his political achievements but for his moral worth and the firmness that he sticks to this worth. And he will also accept the consequence of his choice, for example, death. In the other model, with the premise that human beings have control of and are responsible for their own fate, a person is judged by his accomplishments. Adaptability to circumstances and efficaciousness are considered to be means to establish a person’s worth. The sage who is superior to ordinary people is supposed to be a “brilliant strategist” who has keen perception of patterns of the world and manipulates them into beneficial situations. See Vankeerberghen, The Huainan zi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 127-141.
establish himself by manipulating the situation into beneficial ones? As in the “Yufu,” Qu Yuan was advised by the fisherman that “[t]he sage does not stick to anything; rather, he can adapt himself to the times” 大聖人者，不凝滯於物而能與世推移，and that he should “follow the tide and make waves” 隨其流而揚其波 in a topsy-turvy world. Jia Yi’s regret that Qu Yuan should have left and Ban Gu’s criticism that Qu Yuan did not remain silent both reflected this view of human worth. Whereas Liu An, Sima Qian, and Wang Yi’s praise subscribed to the supremacy of moral worth.

Insisting on Qu Yuan’s moral purity, Liu An and Sima Qian offered little rationale to refute the other side’s argument that Qu Yuan should have followed Confucius to leave his homeland. Sima Qian even expressed his doubt in the appraisal of the Qu Yuan biography.

When I read Mr. Jia’s [Jia Yi] lament, I found it strange that Qu Yuan would have have come to such a point [i.e. drowning himself]—with so brilliant the talent, if Qu Yuan were willing to travel around and meet other dukes, what state would not provide a place for him? After reading the “Fu on Owl,” where death and life were deemed equal and resigning and remaining in office were both belittled, I realized it was my fault (to harbor doubt).

Sima Qian Immediately refuted his doubt, adopting Jia Yi’s transformative attitude that equaled life and death and belittled both ambition and destitution. The suicide debate was resolved in this Zhuangzi-like philosophy that renounced the valuable in the common sense. Wang Yi, however, attempted to resolve the debate within the classist tradition.

To Wang Yi, there was no room for doubt because “no principle would allow members of the same clan to leave each other” 同姓無相去之義. Repeatedly stressed in various places of the

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64 Shiji 84.2503.
65 After reading Jia Yi’s “Funiao fu” 鵬鳥賦, in which life and death, and leaving and arriving were equaled, Sima Qian realized that his doubts were improper, as sticking to one’s moral worth enjoyed the highest priority.
commentary, this principle rejected the previous criticism of Qu Yuan for not seeking opportunities to realize his political goals elsewhere, as the option to leave the king was reserved only for those non-royal-kins folks (yixing 同姓), to which Confucius belonged. As a royal kinsfolk (tongxing 同姓), it was Qu Yuan’s moral responsibility to stay. Once proposed, the rationale was widely accepted in later periods; Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090-1155) complemented Wang Yi’s principle that, “what is left [for a blood relative] is death and death only” 有死而已.

Wang Yi declared the principle of not leaving one’s clan members in his commentary without referencing its source. The principle was taken for granted for its authority, and Qu Yuan’s stay was portrayed as his self-conscious choice to conform to the principle. Yet the principle was not installed as a widely recognized ethical code in the Warring States. The prohibition of a subordinate to leave his state was more likely a moral code of the empire, when the itinerant rhetoricians’ traveling was no longer possible.

That said, according to Xu Zibin 許子濱, Wang Yi’s rationale was not his invention but was likely developed from a variety of previous propositions of the kind—“cherishing the kindred” 亲親 was regarded as the primary requirement of benevolence and foundation of a well-ordered

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66 See his commentary of “Lisao,” under line 110 (Chuci buzhu, 16); “Xiangjun” of “Jiuge,” line 24 (Chuci buzhu, 62); “Tianwen,” last line (Chuci buzhu, 118); and the preface of “Qijian” (Chuci buzhu, 236). Wang Yi also introduced Qu Yuan as a tongxing in the beginning of his preface. See Chuci buzhu 1. According to Yang Ximei 楊希枚, xing 姓 before the Qin was roughly equal to modern “gens, clan, or sib,” meaning the “exogamous unilateral kinship group that descended from the lineages and nuclear families with a single male/female ancestor. See Yang, Zai lun xian Qin xingzu he shizu 再論先秦姓族和氏族, in Xianqin wenhuashi luncong 先秦文化史論叢 (Beijing: Zhongguo shuhui kexue chubanshe, 1995), 209-10.

67 Chuci buzhu, 50. For Hong Xingzu’s invocation of “[n]o principle would allow members of the same clan to leave each other,” see Chuci buzhu, 16, 18, 36, 71.

68 The Gongyang Tradition 公羊傳 prominent in the Western Han praised Cao Ji 曹籍 (fl. around 670 BCE), brother of Duke Xi 偃 of Cao (r. 670-622 BCE), for leaving his homeland at the time of invasion after three disregarded remonstrations with his brother. Twenty-fourth year in Duke Zhuang’s reign: “After three remonstrations, with his advice not adopted, [Cao Ji] left the state of Cao. Thus, the gentleman considered that he accomplished the righteousness between the ruler and the subject.” 三諫，不從，遂去之，故君子以為得君臣之義也。See Gongyang zhuang, Duke Zhuang 24.7.
social system in the “Doctrine of the Mean” 中庸. The distinction between tongxing and yixing officials was already in the Mengzi, though the assigned responsibilities were different from Wang Yi’s principle. Besides, it was also widely accepted that departure from the state and ruler was forbidden for a blood relative in the gongyang and guliang traditions in the Han. In particular, Ban Gu’s Baihu tong 白虎通 expressed a similar idea to Wang Yi’s principle.

The reason a relative who remonstrates should not be exiled is that no principle would allow kin of flesh and blood to abandon each other.

What does it take as model that a subject should leave if his remonstration with the ruler is not followed? It takes as model that water flows downward and moisturize the soil… What does it take as model that a subject related with the ruler in blood should not leave? It takes as model that the branches and leaves of a tree do not grow apart.

Although Wang Yi spent much ink criticizing Ban Gu, Wang Yi’s principle and the above values in Baihu tong were closest, as Wang Yi and Ban Gu both emphasized a mutual (xiang 相) relationship where the superior and subordinate were each demanded a responsibility. For the emperor’s interest, his royal family members ought not to leave—meaning “to betray”—him. It required from them their sincere loyalty and support and warned them against rebellion (the rebellion of seven enfeoffed princes in 154 BCE greatly threatened the stability of the empire).

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69 Xu Zibin, Wang Yi Chuci zhangju fawei 王逸《楚辭章句》發微 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2011), 43. According to the “Zhongyong” 中庸, “[b]enevolence is the characteristic quality of human beings, and its greatest principle is to cherish one’s kindred; uprightness is to conform to what is right, and its greatest principle is to respect the worthy. The degree of intimacy and the rank of honor are the origin of ritual propriety.” 仁者人也，親親為大；義者宜也，尊賢為大。親親之殺，尊賢之等，禮所生也。See Zhu Xi 朱熹, Sishu zhangju jizhu 四書章句集註 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 28.

70 Mengzi distinguishes between “noble ministers who are relatives of the ruler” 貴戚之卿 and “ministers of a different clan from the ruler” 異姓之卿, see Mengzi 5B.18. The former, according to Mengzi, should “remonstrate with the ruler if he has great faults, and dethrone the ruler if he would not listen after many times of remonstration.” 君有大過則諫，反覆之而不聽，則易位。The latter should “remonstrate with the ruler if he has faults, and leave if the ruler would not listen after many times of remonstration.” 君有過則諫，反覆之而不聽，則去。This distinction differs from Wang Yi’s.

71 For a comprehensive list of textual references for this idea, see Xu Zibin, Wang Yi Chuci zhangju fawei, 94-145.

72 See Chen Li 陳立, Baihu tong shuzheng 白虎通疏證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 196.
For the interest of subordinates in the royal family, the emperor ought not to leave—meaning “to distance,” “exile,” and “assign no post to,” etc.—them, either. In the meantime, the principle presumed that blood tie was much closer a bound than any other type. As such, this principle was to guarantee the imperial kindred a post—hence power—at court. Although Wang Yi was invoking the subordinate’s responsibility in Qu Yuan’s case, the ruler’s duty as implied by the principle was never irrelevant. In his commentary, the principle conveyed an underlying complaint and blame of the king for not protecting Qu Yuan, his blood relative.

The significance of tōngxìng saw more emphasis from the late Western Han on, alongside the power monopolization of the imperial in-laws and eunuchs and the gradual marginalization of the Liu family. In one of his memorials to Emperor Yuan (r. 75-33 BCE), Yi Feng 翼奉 (fl. 75-35 BCE) described the situation at court.

From antiquity, royal kinsfolk was appointed at court for the sake of cherishing the kindred, and subordinates without a blood or marriage tie for the sake of valuing the worthy. This was the way that a sage king united the world… Now, however, not even one person among the emperor’s kinsfolk is at Your Majesty’s side, only the family of Your Majesty’s maternal uncle enjoyed intimacy, and subordinates without a blood tie are distanced. Clique of the two empresses fill the entire court; not only do they enjoy high positions, they excessively indulged in luxury and overstepped their authority. [The disaster brought by] Empresses Lü, Huo, and Shangguan will forebode our future, as [favoring the imperial in-laws] seriously deviates from the principle of cherishing the people and the long-term benefits of the descendants.

Excluded from the yìxìng subordinates (here referring to those without a blood or marriage tie with the emperor), the imperial in-laws were deemed an undisputed threat to the imperial lineage in nature because they robbed the tōngxìng of their share of imperial favor.

Wang Yi’s emphasis on tōngxìng may reflect the Liu family’s reaction to their

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73 See Hanshu 75.3173-74.
marginalization of power—possibly Liu Xiang’s concern in particular. Liu Xiang, a remote relative in the imperial lineage, pointed out the supposed hierarchy between the imperial lineage and other individual clans. According to Ban Gu,

[e]very time when Liu Xiang was summoned to have an audience with the emperor, he repeatedly spoke of the royal kinsfolk as the branches and leaves of the state—if the branches and leaves fell, the root would have no shelter. At the time the Liu family was distanced while the maternal kinsfolk monopolized power, salaries were not earned by the imperial family while power was seized by the in-laws. This was not the way to consolidate the Han lineage while weakening the individual [powerful] clans, to protect and preserve the altars to gods of earth and grain, and to bring peace and security to the descendants.

In other words, the royal kinsfolk (gongzu 公族; i.e. the duke’s paternal family members) was the core lineage of the entire Han empire in that a consolidated imperial lineage could shelter the empire and bring about political stability and prosperity. In this sense, the well-being of imperial lineage served as the foundation of and secure the well-being of those all under heaven. All other lineages, by contrast, could only represent a limited number of individual clans (simen 私門), while the growth of their power would only entail a weakened government.

The channel for a tongxing’s attempt to regain power was remonstration with the emperor, emphasizing one’s blood tie. Liu Xiang’s biography in the Hanshu depicted him as a remonstrator who, through his memorials, fought with imperial in-laws and eunuchs in his entire life. After Liu Xiang was degraded to commoner status for his involvement in the scheme to remove the imperial in-laws and the eunuchs, he sought to be restored to his post (fujin 復進) by

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74 Liu Jiao 刘交, Liu Xiang’s great-great-grandfather, was Liu Bang’s younger brother with a different mother.
75 This metaphor invoked the Zuozhuan 左傳: “The royal clan members are branches and leaves of the state; if they are expelled, the root will have no shelter. Even the dolichos creeper can protect its root and as such used as a metaphor for the gentleman, let alone the ruler!” 公族，公室之枝葉也；若去之，則本根無所庇蔭矣。茲織猶能庇其本根，故君子以為比，況國君乎？ See Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu 春秋左傳注, 557.
76 Hanshu 36.1966.
submitting a sealed memorial to warn the emperor of the disasters these officials brought to the empire.\textsuperscript{77} At its very beginning, Liu Xiang declared his responsibility to remonstrate with the king as a blood relative.

Previously, I, humbly, was fortunate to rank among the Nine Chamberians as a blood relative… I saw that strange calamities occurred together and Heaven and Earth lost their norms, both the symptoms of our state’s [lost of order]. I planned to remain silent to the end, but [I cannot]. Faithful officials, even if in the wilderness, will not disregard the ruler due to their sincere care, let alone me, a blood relative who still had not return Your Majesty’s past favor!

Liu Xiang emphasized twice his identity to declare his loyalty and imply his intention to be reappointed. Before addressing Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 33-7 BCE) with a list of the evils of Wang Feng 王鳳 (d. 22 BCE), the emperor’s maternal uncle, Liu Xiang was recorded to have stated to a friend about his mission to speak up.

The increasing severity of such strange calamities and the rampancy of the imperial in-laws will undoubtedly endanger the Liu family. I was fortunate to be a remote descendant in the imperial kinsfolk, receiving generous favors from Han through generations. I served three rulers as an old imperial clansman…If I do not speak up, who else would?

Liu Xiang was speaking for the entire imperial kinsfolk out of his self-consciousness as one of them. In both his memorial and speech, Qu Yuan was implicitly invoked. According to his biography in the Shiji, Qu Yuan was said to “care for the Chu and concerned with King Huai even in exile; he never left behind his intention to turn around the current situation, with the hope that the king would eventually come to his senses and the custom would finally change” 雖放流，顧眷楚國，系心懷王，不忘欲反，冀君之一悟，俗之一改也, echoing Liu Xiang’s memorial

\textsuperscript{77} Hanshu 36.1932.  
\textsuperscript{78} Hanshu 36.1932.  
\textsuperscript{79} Hanshu 36.1958.
highlighted in bold. In Liu Xiang’s first poem in the “Jiutan” 九嘆 (Nine Laments), Qu Yuan was likely referred to as the “remote scion in Boyong’s lineage” 伯庸之末胄. Like Qu Yuan, Liu Xiang fulfilled his responsibility to support and guide the ruler through remonstration; yet also like Qu Yuan, this duty caused Liu Xiang trouble because the ruler did not fulfil their responsibility to protect their royal relative.

It was probably Liu Xiang’s identity and political stance that evoked in him great sympathy for Qu Yuan and inspired him to collate, compile the Chuci, and to write the “Jiutan.” It was also in this political atmosphere dominated by in-laws and eunuchs that Qu Yuan received more empathy. By Wang Yi’s time, the crisis at court only became even more severe, which would later turn into the famous “Disaster of Partisan Prohibition” 黨鬱之禍. Around the time of the compilation of Chuci zhangju (ca. 120 CE), too opposite attitudes were adopted to deal with the political situation. Many virtuous and capable men would tend to lead a recluse’s life and win their reputation of moral purity by rejecting official appointments. Fan Ying 樊英 (fl. 120-150), a professional of esoteric art (fangshu 方術), rejected such offers for several times and only

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80 Shiji 84. 2485. Hawkes identified Liu An’s “tradition” as the source of this paragraph.
81 Chuci buzhu, 282.
82 Although lacking of further evidence, it was not impossible that the reasoning “[n]o principle would allow members of the same clan to leave each other” was Liu Xiang’s reasoning to justify Qu Yuan, which was inherited by Wang Yi. It was unlikely to draw a conclusion, however, that the (entire) zhangju commentary of Chuci was composed by Liu Xiang, just on account of his emphasis on tongxing 同姓.
83 In particular, towards the end of Eastern Han, Qu Yuan was raised as an exemplary adviser and loyal dissent among those persecuted by the powerful eunuchs.
84 Lu Kanru 陸侃如 dated the compilation to 116 CE. See Lu, Zhonggu wenxue xinian 中古文學繁年 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1985), 141. According to Li Daming, however, the Chuci zhangju was most likely to be submitted to the throne in the first year of Yongning 永寧 (120 CE), when Wang Yi served as jiaoshu lang 校書郎 (the colophon says Wang Yi was in this post at the time of submission and the post would gave him access to the Chuci manuscripts in the imperial library) and Dowager Deng who was fond of refined writings was in power. See Li Daming 李大明, “Wang Yi shengping shiji kaolüe” 王逸生平事跡考略, in Chuci yanjiu 楚辭研究 (Ji’nan: Qilu shushe, 1988), 421.
85 For a list of such cases, see the “Yimin zhuan” 逸民傳 of Hou Han shu 後漢書.
changed his mind to serve at court because of Wang Yi’s persuasion. Around the same time, Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139) proposed an “anti-escapist” principle for being a subject, which required one to choose not to retreat from corruption, but to remain at court and remonstrate with the ruler, even at the cost of his life. As Timothy Chan observes, Wang Yi’s commentary participated in this latter trend.

In this context, the Qu Yuan persona addressed imperial kinsfolk’s concern on their loss of power. In the meantime, his harsh admonition and resolution of death were justified. Beyond the imperial family’s interest in Qu Yuan, the third reason for the poet to rise in the Han was that, as an adviser, his persona addressed the concern of the large number of officials without a blood relation with the ruler. The persona of Qu Yuan gave rise to a heated debate regarding the conduct and responsibility of a subject in the Han.

A Subject’s Right to Resent and Duty to Remonstrate

Qu Yuan was a member of Chu royal family, but for most of his readers, he was the king’s subject, an official at court. If a member of the royal family was obliged to serve in government and to prepare to die, what about those non-kinsfolks? Should the similar set of rules be applied to them? Were they allowed to harbor plaint upon unjust treatment? Han intellectuals tried to find answers in Qu Yuan. Before Wang Yi, two opposite opinions were proposed on Qu Yuan’s remonstration and plaint, the positive one represented by Sima Qian and the negative one by Ban

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86 The source is Xie Cheng’s 謝承 (ca. 182-ca. 254) Hou Han shu 後漢書 (now lost), quoted in Li Xian’s 李賢 commentary. See Hou Han shu 82.2724. For a discussion, see Li Daming, Han Chuci xueshi 漢楚辭學史 (Chengdu: Dianzi keji daxue chubanshe, 1994), 290-92. Timothy Chan, Considering the end, 20.
87 Many memorials admonishing the emperor and criticizing the corrupted courtiers and eunuchs in fearless words were submitted to the throne. See, for example, Hou Han shu 56 (“Zhang Wang Zhong Chen liezhuán” 張王種陳列傳).
88 Timothy Chan, Considering the End, 30-35.
In the Shiji, venting one’s plaint for ill-treatment and remonstration were both legitimate for a subject. Plaint was identified as the primary impetus of the “Lisao” composition.

Faithful yet [Qu Yuan was] doubted, loyal yet slandered. How can he be without plaint? In general, Qu Yuan’s composition of “Lisao” sprang from his plaint.

Although the character yuan 怨 only appeared once in the “Lisao,” Sima Qian identified it as the single mood out of which the “Lisao” was composed. Given the bitter experiences of Qu Yuan, plaint was a spontaneous and reasonable reaction that he could not resist. Sima Qian’s view was in line with the legitimization of his own Shiji composition. For him, suffering and indignation would grant a person with clear vision and wisdom that worth being transmitted via their writings over generations; the past thinkers, including King Wen, Kongzi, Master Zuo, Hanfeizi, Sunzi, and Qu Yuan, etc. (and Sima Qian himself) invariably composed their classical texts by “giving vent to their indignation” 發憤. In the case of “Lisao,” as Sima Qian commented, out of Qu Yuan’s plaint and indignation, he produced a text illustrating principles of morality and governance.

For antiquity, he praised Emperor Ku, for the recent ages he spoke of Duke Huan of Qi, and for the period in the middle he narrated deeds of Tang [of Shang] and Wu [of Zhou], with which to remonstrate affairs of this generation. He clarified the glory solemnity of the Way and virtue, and made clear of the principles of good government and chaos, which were all illustrated in the “Lisao.”

Sima Qian and Ban Gu did not distinguish between tongxing and yixing. Their comments were both concerned a subject’s conduct in general.

Shiji 84.2482.

Chuci buzhu, 14 (line 87 of “Lisao”).

This perspective on the power of suffering is expressed in the “Bao Ren An shu” 報任安書 (Letter to Ren An) attributed to Sima Qian. See Xiao Tong 蕭統 et al, Wenxuan 文選 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 1864-85.

Shiji 84.2482.
Thus, for Sima Qian, one’s plaint and indignation would be perfectly compatible with one’s wisdom, which took the form of remonstration刺. Strong emotions associated with suffering could be a necessity to prepare one to be a thinker.

In contrast, although Ban Gu agreed on plaint and indignation being the impetus of the “Lisao” composition, he believed that such personal emotions—negative in nature as they would provoke one to go to extremes—infused in writings would only impede one’s vision and wisdom and hence devalue one’s writings.

Now Qu Yuan exposed his talent and showed off himself. He competed with the crowd of petty men in a jeopardized state and consequently suffered from their slanders. Qu Yuan, moreover, reproached King Huai and resented Zijiao and Zilan. His spirit anxious and his thoughts bitter, he forcefully reprimanded these people. With his wrath, rancor, and intolerance, he plunged into the river and died. In this regard, he was a man with impure qualities, arrogance and narrow-mindedness, and strictly upright conducts. … It would be an undeserved compliment to say that his “Lisao” combined in it the features of “Airs” and “Elegantiae” of the Odes, and could rival with them in terms of brilliance.

今若屈原，露才揚己，競乎危國群小之閒，以離讒賊。然貴數懷王，怨惡椒、蘭，愁神苦思，強非其人，忿懥不容，沈江而死，亦貶絜狂狷景行之士。……謂之兼《詩》風雅，而與日月爭光，過矣！

This criticism rejected Sima Qian’s compliment that Qu Yuan could “rival with the sun and the moon in brightness” by arguing that his conduct was guided by self-serving principles.

According to the Shiji, “[w]ithin the court, [Qu Yuan] planned and discussed state affairs with the king in order to issue edicts and decrees; for diplomatic affairs, he received visitors and held audience with various lords.”

Yet to Ban Gu, Qu Yuan’s proposals to the king and his diplomatic visits were primarily for the purpose of showing off his talents, or even for getting a promotion (yangji 揚己, lit. to raise oneself). Qu Yuan’s being slandered by Grandee Shangguan上官大夫 for refusing to show him

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94 Chuci buzhu, 49-50.
95 Shiji 84.2481.
the draft of the law codes was now a misfortune Qu Yuan brought on himself, because he
competed with the vicious courtiers in a perishing state and provoked their jealousy—if he could
have avoided attracting too much attention, he would not have suffered the slander.

Moreover, for Ban Gu, the “Lisao” was to vent Qu Yuan’s personal plaint and not for
suasion. Qu Yuan held personal “plaint and grudge” 怨惡 against his king and his fellows at
court. Propelled by his plaint and grudge, Qu Yuan was over fastidious because all his efforts
were devoted to pinpointing their errors. The character qiang 強, aside from indicating the vigor
that Qu Yuan put into his reprimand, also suggested a sense of insistence and no compromise.
With such an intolerant personality, Qu Yuan was also intolerable to the world (two senses of
burong 不容). His death, in accordance, was maintained to be a result of his excessive plaint and
intolerance towards the world. Ban Gu’s second point here was a response to Qu Yuan’s speech
to the fisherman recorded in the Shiji, where Qu Yuan announced his discordance with the world
before he composed the “Huaisha” and drowned himself.

Qu Yuan said, “All the world is muddy, alone I am pure; all the people are drunk, alone I
am sober. This is the reason that I have been banished.”
屈原曰：“舉世混濁而我獨清，眾人皆醉而我獨醒，是以見放。”
The fisherman said, “The sage does not stick to anything. Rather, he can adapt himself to
the times. If all the people are muddied, why not stir the mud and strike the waters? If men
are all drunk, why not chew the dregs and swallow the thin wine? Why should you indulge
in the lofty and profound thoughts, and bring exile upon yourself?”
漁父曰：“夫聖人者，不凝滯於物而能與世推移。舉世混濁，何不隨其流而揚其
波？眾人皆醉，何不舖其糟而啜其醨？何故懷瑾握瑜而自令見放為？”
Qu Yuan replied, “I heard that, he who has washed his hair should dust the hat, and he who
has bathed his body should shake his robes. How can one stain one’s body that is clean and
pure with the filth of worldly things? I would rather plunge into the Xiang River and bury
myself in the belly of fishes. How can I let my brightly white skin be covered by the dirt in
the world?”
屈原曰：“吾聞之，新沐者必彈冠，新浴者必振衣，人又誰能以身之察察，受物之
汶汶者乎！寧赴常流而葬乎江魚腹中耳，又安能以皓皓之白而蒙世俗之溫蠖乎！”

96 Shiji 84.2486.
In this conversation, Qu Yuan refused to compromise or negotiate on things that would contradict his principles. The absolute uprightness was celebrated by Sima Qian and Wang Yi, but for Ban Gu, insisting on absolute moral purity harmed Qu Yuan’s moral purity (bian jie 貶潔). In the meantime, although Qu Yuan was a man with “strictly upright conducts” 景行, his intolerance for errors and self-conceitedness made him a person arrogant and narrow-minded 狂狷. As a result, in Ban Gu’s opinion, the “Lisao,” a text written under such a rancorous mood and for the purpose of giving expression to a self-serving intent to release the author’s wrath and rancor, could not match the “Minor Elegantiae” 小雅, which was “full of plaint and remonstration without being seditious” 怨誹而不亂.

Refuting Ban Gu’s evaluation, Wang Yi considered Qu Yuan’s plaint and remonstration legitimate. Remonstration was even maintained as a necessary act required from all officials. In order to establish Qu Yuan the remonstrator a role mode, Wang Yi first defended the poet’s plaint and remonstration as unselfish conducts by invoking the Shijing, a classic whose primary function was to remonstrate.

[Among all Warring States masters, Qu Yuan] alone followed the principle of Shijing poets and composed the “Lisao,” above to remonstrate with the king and below to console himself.

Moreover, plaint of the Shijing poets takes indirect remonstration as its primary feature. [One poet would] present a speech to the king, saying, “Alas! Young man: When you could not distinguish right from wrong… Not only did I give face-to-face commands in front of you, I also lectured you by holding your ears.”⁹⁸ One’s speech of remonstration can be as urgent as such. When Zhongni commented on it, however, he considered it greatly decent. Compared with this speech, Qu Yuan’s words were cordial and submissive—did he ever try to hold the king by his ears because he was unwise? Yet the commentator maintained that Qu Yuan “exposed his talent and showed off himself,” “held plaint against and reproached the king,” and “forcefully reprimanded his colleagues.” These comments probably misunderstood Qu Yuan’s intent.

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⁹⁷ Chuci buzhu, 48.
⁹⁸ Cf. Mao 256.
In Wang Yi’s opinion, plaint was fundamentally impersonal because it was the inner expression of remonstration, a selfless act because the remonstrator was prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of public good. In other words, Qu Yuan’s forceful criticism in the “Lisao” (purportedly) revealing errors of the king and the courtiers were not for the sake of venting his personal grudge, suppressing his colleagues, or self-promotion. Instead, his resentment was for his failure in righting the wrongs, for the foreseeable decline of Chu because the king’s failure in taking his advice. Besides, Qu Yuan’s harsh words could also be justified, because even more radical precedents were to be found in the Shiijing and approved by Kongzi. Wang Yi argued that, Qu Yuan’s manner, when compared with the precedent, could only be characterized as “cordial and submissive” 優游婉順.

A more important move of Wang Yi to encourage remonstration was to identify it as a conduct of faithfulness (zhong 忠). In its general use in early China, zhong primarily pointed to one’s dedication and steadfastness to one’s duty, and was not limited to loyalty to the ruler as the character may imply in later periods. Under Wang Yi’s definition, faithfulness primarily pointed to the official’s resoluteness on harsh admonishment with the ruler, with martyrdom as its highest form.

As for the principle of being a subject, faithfulness and rectitude are considered lofty, and death for the sake of morality worthy. Thus, men give forth alarmist talk to preserve their state and kill themselves to accomplish benevolence. Therefore, it was only after Wu Zixu’s not resenting his body floating on the river and Bigan’s not regretting his heart being gouged out, that their faithfulness was established and conduct accomplished, and their honor illustrious and reputation renowned. If one cherishes the way of governance yet

99 Chuci buzhu, 49.
let the state go astray, or if one pretends to be stupid and does not speak out, then the state on the verge of falling cannot be supported and that at the moment of danger cannot be secured. Being submissive to the ruler’s will and drawing back to avoid trouble can preserve one’s life to die at a ripe old age, but an ambitious man will feel shameful and a stupid guy contempt. Now Qu Yuan harbored the quality of faithfulness and steadfastness, and the nature of purity and cleanliness. His uprightness was like a straight arrow, and his words cinnabar and malachite. At his post, he never concealed his plans for government; in exile, he would not care about his life. This was indeed a peerless conduct, and Qu Yuan was an outstanding luminary.

Under Wang Yi’s definition of faithfulness, Qu Yuan’s moves—“reprimanded King Huai” 貢數懷王 and “held plaint and loathing towards Zijiao and Zilan” 怨慰椒蘭 in Ban Gu’s perspective—were necessary in order to salvage an endangered state such that they deserved the highest honor. Compared with Qu Yuan, those who chose not to speak up for the sake of self-protection were unfaithful cowards shying away from their duty. In the meantime, the redefined zhong was also recognized as the single most outstanding character of Qu Yuan. In Wang Yi’s commentary, faithfulness appeared over two hundred and fifty times in total (often in binomes such as “faithful and trustworthy” 忠信, “faithful and rectitude” 忠正, and “faithful and steadfast” 忠貞, etc).100

The perspective that one fulfilled faithfulness to the ruler through remonstration was in particular directed against the escapists and recluses, whose value of honor was now considered to be violating the moral code and ignoring the state’s need. Wang Yi’s aim was to encourage all worthy men—within or outside the Liu family, with or without a post at court—to right the

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100 Statistics by Xu Zibin 许子濵, see his Wang Yi Chuci zhangju fawei 王逸《楚辭章句》發微 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2011), 167.
wrongs at court. Wang Yi’s aim was best manifested in his “Teachings in Yuzhou" 臨豫州教.

Those who can recommend hermits from mountains and marshes and remove the vicious from the court are to be given five hundred *hu* of grains.

能舉遺逸於山薮，黝奸邪於邦國，給穀五百斛。101

It remains unknown how Wang Yi’s teachings were practiced in Yuzhou—if practiced at all—but “recommendation of hermits” and “removal of the vicious” (two ways to deal with court corruption) were Wang Yi’s primary political concern for the Han court. These concerns were projected to the court of Chu dominated by petty men and in need of the virtuous in Wang Yi’s depiction.

As reflected in his *Chuci* commentary, the quest of fair ladies, a crucial theme of the “Lisao,” was interpreted as Qu Yuan’s journey to find like-minded hermits 隱士; various smelly plants and ferocious birds were identified to be images of petty men 小人 or toadies 佞人. In the succinct preface of the “Lisao,” phrases related with “slander” appear five times. 102 The “Jiusi,” a work written in the voice of Qu Yuan,103 almost took the removal of petty men as the singular theme. The nine pieces by and large shared the following motifs: a description of the contemporary situation that gentlemen were dismissed while petty men monopolized power; the protagonist’s cosmic flight in search of a mate after his unheeded advice to distance the slanderers and appoint the virtuous; the protagonist’s attachment to his homeland his choice to stay. These motifs were not exclusive to the “Jiusi,” as similar expressions and topics were to be found in the previous *Chuci* poems and frustration *fu*. But compared with the “Lisao” and

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101 The work has been lost, with a fragment preserved in the *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔.
102 These phrases are “to slander and malign” 謗毁, “to slander and vilify” 謗誣, “slander” 謗言, “slanderers and toadies” 謗佞, and “petty men” 小人. See *Chuci buzhu*, 1-3.
103 According to Wang Yi, the “Jiuhuai” and “Jiutan” that his “Jiusi” modeled upon were composed “in order to eulogize Qu Yuan’s intent” 以讚其志, implying that all three were written on behalf of and in the voice of Qu Yuan. *Chuci buzhu*, 314.
“Jiuzhang” that Wang Yi declared to be his models, his “Jiusi” stood out for its predominance by conspicuous descriptions on the corrupted court and the protagonist’s eager exclamation to dismiss the vicious. Whereas other major motifs in the “Lisao” and “Jiuzhang”—such as self-decoration as analogic to self-cultivation, the protagonist’s plaint for Numinous Excellence (a purported epithet for King Huai), and his divination, etc.—saw little traces in the “Jiusi.”

Wang Yi’s depiction of Chu that focused on its domestic affairs also differed from the Qu Yuan biography, where Chu existed in its inter-state relationship with Qin (i.e. Chu as a rival and victim of Qin). Although Qu Yuan was the central character in his biography, his personal experience was constantly contextualized in the Qin-Chu power dynamics. In the biography, Qu Yuan’s each unheeded advice, demotion, or exile would invariantly be entailed by incidents of Qin’s deception/defeat of Chu, and in the end by King Huai’s detention and death; Qu Yuan’s death was even considered the fundamental reason that “Chu lost territory day by day and, several decades later, it was finally destroyed by Qin” 楚日以削，數十年竟為秦所滅. By contrast, in Wang Yi’s preface of the “Lisao,” where a sketch of Qu Yuan’s biography was also given, the focus was almost entirely on the court of Chu. The Qin was mentioned by passing for King Huai’s detention (minus Qu Yuan’s characterization of tigers and wolves), while all other histories between Qin and Chu recorded in the Shiji were left out. It is also noteworthy that the imagery of “tigers and wolves” is no longer reserved for Qin’s cruelty in the “Jiusi,” but for

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104 According to the biography, “[a]fter Qu Ping was demoted [because of Grandee Shangguan’s slander]” 屈平既穠, King Hui 惠 of Qin sent Zhang Yi 張儀 to deceive Chu into cutting off the Qi-Chu Vertical Alliance, inflicted a severe defeat on the Chu army (312 BCE), and grabbed the Hanzhong 漢中 area of Chu. In the next year, King Huai traded Hanzhong for Zhang Yi’s execution yet in the end released him, misled by Zheng Xiu and Jin Shang. Qu Yuan had no means to intervene as “at the moment Qu Ping was already distanced and no longer in his [former] position” 是時屈平疏，不復在位. The narrative then moved to another severe defeat of Chu inflicted by allied armies of Qin, Qi, Han, and Wei in 301 BCE (War at Chuisha 垂沙). This defeat was followed by the famous Qin-Chu marriage alliance—in which Qu Yuan’s opposition was unheeded—that led to the detention and death of King Huai. See Shiji 84.2484.

105 Shiji 84.2491.
vicious officials at the court of Chu, the greatest culprits of the political disorder at the moment.

Tigers and rhinoceros compete at the court,
Jackals and wolves fight at my side.
Clouds and mists gather, the sun grows ever darker,
Whirlwinds blow, lifting up the dust.

As such, the state of Chu mattered to Wang Yi primarily in terms of its domestic court corruption, which mirrored the contemporary political situation in the second half of Eastern Han. Whereas to Sima Qian, it was the Qin-Chu combat that was relevant in the discourse of early Western Han. After all, in the second century, establishing the Han legitimacy over its predecessor Qin was no longer urgent compared with its own crisis.

Projecting the Han situation on Chu, Wang Yi also implicitly regarded himself as a like-minded to Qu Yuan. Not only did he compose the “Jiusi” in the voice of Qu Yuan, but he emphasized his geographical connection to the poet in the preface—“Yi came from the same territory and vassal state with Qu Yuan” 逸興屈原同土共國.107 The connection legitimized his exegetical authority on Qu Yuan’s text. In the meantime, as Laurence Schneider suggests, Wang Yi implicitly juxtaposed himself with Confucius and the Chuci with the Shijing—just like Confucius, the single person who transmitted the kingly way through editing the classics five hundred years after the death of sages, Wang Yi (also after five hundred years) was the transmitter who understood the moral value of Qu Yuan, the only one that rose above the Warring States masters to inherit the principle of the Shijing.109 Wang Yi’s commentarial efforts were as much a celebration of himself and his values as that of Qu Yuan.

Compared with Qu Yuan’s tone of despair for his own fate and his state’s fate, Wang Yi in

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106 Chuci buzhu, 315.
107 Wang Yi came from Nanjun 南郡 (in modern Hubei).
108 A Madman of Chu, 110.
109 Chuci buzhu, 47-48. Confucius was invoked at the beginning of the account for his compilation of the classics as an illustration of the kingly way.
the “Jiusi” was much more optimistic for the future of Chu—or indeed, for that of Eastern Han, as Chu here was to represent Eastern Han. In the coda 乱 of “Jiusi,” Wang Yi drew a promising blueprint.

The court of Heaven lights up, while clouds and rainbows vanish, Bright are the Three Lights, shining all over the world.¹¹⁰ [His majesty] repels lizards, and he brings in turtles and dragons, Their advices adopted, they assist him in positions crucial as Phecda and Alioth. His feat matches with that of Ji and Xie, he restores the accomplishments of Yao of Tang, With the only regret that such masterminds are not born with a double.

The court of Heaven was the court of Eastern Han, now celebrating the emperor’s perspicacity (another meaning of ming 明) to appoint the right men and dismiss the vicious; the adoption of wise advices would entail the restoration of political prosperity and stability to the empire. This blueprint was Wang Yi’s expectation for contemporary emperors—the Eastern Han court might be experiencing the same difficulty that Chu had, but unlike the kings of Chu, the Han emperors would be able to come to their senses and accomplish unprecedented feats.

It is worth noticing that the emperor’s feat depended almost entirely on his officials, the masterminds of good governance. All that the emperor needed to do was to follow 從 their advices, then he could expect a well-ordered world. Such a view on governance was also proposed in the “Encountering Scolding” 逢尤.

I long for the sagacious Wuding and King Wen for their perspicacity and wisdom, I grieve for King Ping and Fuchai who were led astray by the preposterous and folly. Lü Wang and Fu Yue were appointed, Yin and Zhou

¹¹⁰ The “Three Lights” 三光 refer to light of the sun, the moon, and stars.
prospered, Fei Wuji and Bopi monopolized power, Ying and Wu were weakened.

The ruler’s sagacity lied not in his own moral integrity or in his ability to handle any concrete government affairs in person, but in his wisdom to know his subjects’ talents and morals and to place them in the right position accordingly. Wuding and King Wen were deemed sagacious, because they appointed the virtuous Lü Wang and Fu Yue; King Ping of Chu and Fuchai of Wu were not sagacious, because they were misguided by (mi 迷) vicious officials Fei Wuji and Bopi.

A sage ruler needed not to interfere—the state was run by officials, the foundation of government and key for prosperity. The Eastern Han emperors were expected to fulfil this ideal and emulate the former sage kings. This view of sagely governance reflected the interests of learned scholars for their pursuit of a career at court. In this idealized government, virtuous men would be guaranteed a position and able to establish their own accomplishment. They should not even be punished for their remonstrations, and should be supported when battling the evil, as they were the agent of the ruler for such tasks.

Raise Heaven’s net to capture the evil,
Draw Heaven’s bow to shoot the vicious.

The repeated character “Heaven” in the couplet implied that it was Heaven’s—i.e. the ruler’s—decree to punish and root out the evil. Accordingly, the virtuous at court were now morally legitimate to, as Qu Yuan did, “compete with the crowd of petty men” 競乎群小, which was deemed unwise by Ban Gu.

Qu Yuan was defended in the late Eastern Han because his conduct was believed to provide a solution for the contemporary political crisis. For Wang Yi, Qu Yuan was the model for all

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111 Chuci buzhu, 326-27.
virtuous men—they were expected to serve at court to promote their policies and fight against the evil; their lives might be the price to pay, but they would harvest the reputation of faithfulness, the loftiest honor. The history of Chu was a warning to the Eastern Han emperors—only if advices of men like Qu Yuan were followed, could the Han avoid falling into a decline like Chu did. This bilateral requirement for both the emperor and subordinates was the lesson from Qu Yuan and the history of Chu.

Ruler’s Response to Qu Yuan the Remonstrator

The image of Qu Yuan as a blunt remonstrator remained influential in history. For officials at the marginalization of power with an intent to gain the ruler’s recognition through suasion, it was expedient to self-identify with Qu Yuan for their purposes. Invocation of Qu Yuan would imply their selfless intention, the urgency for the king to adopt their advice, and more significantly, their desired exemption from being punished. As such, the remonstrator image of Qu Yuan remained attractive to generations of officials who imagined themselves to be a contemporary Qu Yuan and wrote poetry in Qu Yuan’s voice (I will discuss the reception of this image in chapter two).

In the meantime, however, invocation and celebration of this image would pose a threat to the ruler—if an official is punished for remonstration, the ruler would by default become a king as unwise and ignorant as King Huai. In this sense, Qu Yuan as a remonstrator and Chuci as a text of remonstration were, more often than not, celebrated by the officials and not the rulers. Ban Gu’s disparate views on Qu Yuan in his two prefaces, one praising and one critical, was said to reflect the emperor’s disapproval of officials who reprimanded the ruler.¹¹² In history, a

¹¹² See footnote 31.
ruler—Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (r. 502-549; Emperor Wu 武 of Liang 梁)—did explicitly expressed his discontent of officials invoking Qu Yuan in their memorials:

[They all] claim that, “I am capable of reporting the gains and losses in the state affairs to the throne clearly, without any reservation, but I resent it that the court won’t adopt my advices [and assign me a higher post]. Some will recite the “Lisao” couplet that goes “[The road was] spacious and empty without a single [wise] man; thereupon [a worthy] can ride for a thousand li without reining his horse to a halt even once.” Others will recite the Laozi lines that, “Since few knows me, I am to be valued.” None is not capable of simply invoking such words when discoursing the gains and losses—those who gather on the first day of the year for the bestowal of wine in the White-Tiger Goblet are all capable. 言 “我能上事，明言得失，恨朝廷之不能用”。或誦《離騷》“蕩蕩其無人，遂不御乎千里”。或誦《老子》“知我者希，則我貴矣”。如是獻替，莫不能言，正旦虎樽，皆其人也。 Xiao Yan referred to the officials who invoked the “Lisao” (here the lines are from Liu Xiang’s “Jiutan”) as “men lowly and mean” 闡葺, who were pretentiously making a show about their political capabilities and selfless care for the dynasty’s prosperity. Their true intention, however, was to seek promotion (implied by the character yong 用) through the gesture of goading the emperor on things he had overlooked. On the one hand, Xiao Yan’s comment revealed that it was a prevalent practice to invoke Chuci and Qu Yuan to legitimize one’s remonstration, so much so that the two were sometimes abused. On the other hand, it reflected the ruler’s suspicion that the purpose of remonstration and the authorial intent of Chuci were self-serving, which was reminiscent of Ban Gu’s criticism on Qu Yuan, that he was “showing off himself” and “seeking promotion.”

Xiao Yan’s comment was part of his furious condemnation of He Chen 賀琛 (481-549) in

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113 Cf. “Lishi” 離世 of “Jiutan” 靡異: “The road is empty with no one treading on it; I thereupon galloped a thousand miles without reining in the horse.” 路蕩蕩其無人兮，遂不御乎千里 (lines 31-32). Wang Yi interpreted the couplet as the worthies’ departure due to unrecognition. Chuci buzhu, 287.

114 Cf. Laozi: “Those who know me are few, and therefore I am to be highly prized.” 知我者希，則我者貴。

115 Liang shu 38.546.
the *Liangshu* 梁書, where the emperor was reading his admonishing memorial on local officials’
dereliction of duty and decadence. The *Liangshu* presented an appraisal in contrast to the
emperor’s suspicion of remonstration. He Chen was implicitly praised and his remonstration
with the emperor was said to be based on his solid knowledge of the three ritual cannons. As He
Chen’s biography unfolds, the failure of He Chen’s attempt to admonish Xiao Yan was
immediately followed by a short account of Hou Jing 侯景 (503-552; an Eastern Wei general
who, after surrendering to the Liang, rebelled against it and usurped the throne) Rebellion that
had Xiao Yan starved to death and the Liang devastated. Thus, the historians made an implicit
connection between Xiao Yan’s failure to accept He Chen’s remonstration and the devastation of
Liang, echoing the Qu Yuan biography. This perspective was the perspective of the officials, yet
would contradict the perspective of a ruler such as Xiao Yan, who would not believe the officials’
claim that their advices for state affairs could be separated from their selfish goal of self-
establishment.

**Conclusion**

“Chuci” in the Han went through a trajectory from a common noun to a proper name, title
of an anthology. The anthology was named after its geographic origin Chu, but with Qu Yuan
identified as its progenitor, *Chuci* came to be a Qu Yuan-centered collection. Qu Yuan appeared
in the Han context as a Chu advisor, but he rose in the Han for his significance as a national hero
in the empire addressing the royal family’s and the non-kinsfolk officials’ concerns of power at
once. Early Han rulers sought to legitimate their sovereignty taking advantage of Qu Yuan’s anti-
Qin stance; the disempowered royal family members and non-kinsfolk officials sought to assert
their loyalty, defend their dissent, and fundamentally to regain power by identifying with Qu
Yuan. Accordingly, the *Chuci* that purportedly gave voice to the Qu Yuan persona was, more often than not, invoked for the purpose of empowerment. The implicit claim for power perpetuated interests in Qu Yuan and *Chuci* throughout history.

In the meantime, *Chuci* (at least purportedly) originated from Chu and was named after Chu. Exegesis, imitation, and evaluation unavoidably had to take into consideration the Chu land and culture from which the *Chuci* arose, that is, to recognize the *Chuci* as Chu-specific. The following chapters will examine the *Chuci* reception in relation to its geographical bound with Chu.
Chapter Two. The Chu Sojourner and Chuci as a Voice of Plaint

Qu Yuan rose in the Han as an anti-Qin advisor and blunt remonstrator. The poet and his poetry availed themselves to be a powerful tool for the Han royal house to defend their sovereignty and for all officials to voice their dissent against authority. In this sense, the poet became a national hero and the Chuci had no boundary. Yet in the meantime, the Chu identity of the poet also came into play to bind the reception of Chuci to its geographical origin in that Chuci was particularly a voice attractive to those who have personally lived on the Chu land. This chapter examines the reception of Qu Yuan in this respect as a Chu sojourner, which inspired generations of poets to invoke and imitate the Chuci in their own painstaking displacement from or to the Chu land. I argue that later poets’ invocation of Qu Yuan in this way shaped the perception of Chuci as a voice of plaint. Through the poets’ self-identification with Qu Yuan and intensive allusions to the Chuci, their works contributed to the formation of a stereotypical and single-faceted conception of Chuci as a voice of grievance.\(^1\) As a result, to compose in the Chuci-style became a gesture of self-lament, and the Chuci style came to predetermine the mode of expression in later imitations.

This chapter begins by discussing Zhong Rong’s 鍾嵘 (ca. 468-518) conception of poetry as a channel to vent the plaint of those displaced, where Qu Yuan served as an example. I then investigate two types of displacements—departure from home and exile from court—that are both represented in the Qu Yuan biography through a close reading of Lu Yun’s 陸雲 (262-303)

\(^1\) Works in the Chuci are miscellaneous in both form and content. Without Qu Yuan’s authorship and biography at the background, it may seem forced for plaint and self-expression to be applied to the works in which a personal voice is less evident, for example, the “Tianwen,” some pieces in the “Jiuge,” and the two “Summons.” I will continue to discuss the perceptions of Chuci other than a voice of plaint in the following chapters.
“Jiumin” 九愍 (Nine-fold miseries) and Liu Zongyuan’s 柳宗元 (773-819) “Minsheng fu” 閔生賦 (Fu on mourning for my life) and “Qiushan fu” 囚山賦 (Fu on being imprisoned in mountains). In both cases, these poets’ commitment to Qu Yuan is not limited to the claimed semblance of their mindset with that of Qu Yuan, but their personal experiences in the territory of Chu, Qu Yuan’s home and place of exile. When Lu Yun departed from Wu 吳 (222-280) to serve at the Western Jin 西晉 (266-316) court in the north (Luoyang 洛陽), he found in the persona of Qu Yuan the image of his father and himself, and projected his attachment to hometown onto the ancient state of Chu. Lu Yun’s longing for home, pride for his family, and mourning for the downfall of his indigenous kingdom were expressed and mediated by this appropriated Qu Yuan’s voice. Conversely, during the Tang, when Liu Zongyuan was stuck in his exile in the Chu land and yearning to return to the court, he found Chu a place of exile, an alien—and consequently fearful—territory he was forced to reside in. Accordingly, the horror for an alien Chu landscape and uneasiness to stay lingers in his writings invoking Qu Yuan, now a persona with a wretched and indignant tone.

In a word, these displaced poets were writing about the south, a place that approximated Qu Yuan’s Chu geographically, but because of their different moments in medieval political history and their personal experiences, they felt different kinds of identification with Qu Yuan. Nonetheless, their representations were later incorporated into Qu Yuan’s image. These poets contributed to shaping Qu Yuan’s persona as a poet of plaint, and Chuci as a voice of plaint.

The Chu Sojourner’s Plaint and Function of Poetry

The Qu Yuan biography presents not only a remonstrator at court, but also a sojourner who was banished from court and led a life on an alien land away from his hometown. Accordingly,
Qu Yuan was often referred to as a Chu sojourner (*Chuke* 楚客) in poetry. Chuke in its general sense can refer to either a stranger visiting Chu or a native of Chu staying in a foreign land. Both senses are represented in the Qu Yuan biography, as the poet was both a native of Chu and exiled to an unfamiliar land. We see in the previous chapter that Wang Yi’s emphasis on Qu Yuan’s remonstrator image oriented the poet’s plaint to mean a lofty intention of selfless goading and suasion, instead of merely the personal emotion of resentment as Ban Gu insisted. However, the personal aspect of plaint—bitter resentment and self-lament—never faded away and was embedded in the poet’s image as an exiled sojourner in many remarks. Take these two examples from the Liang and Tang dynasties respectively:

Further, Qu Yuan, who was from Chu, harbored loyalty and practiced principle of purity. The king did not follow his words, and the words the minister Qu Yuan presented were offensive to the ear, his thoughts were profound and his plans far-sighted, and thus he was banished to the southern part of the Xiang River. Once his upright integrity was hurt, and his plaint has nowhere to pour out. Looking down upon the abyss, he had the intention of “Embracing the stone.” Chanting by the marsh, his face was wan and sallow. Writings of the *sao* poets arose from this whole situation.

又楚人屈原，含忠履潔，君匪從流，臣進逆耳，深思遠慮，遂放湘南。耿介之意既傷，壹鬱之懷靡憩。臨淵有懷沙之志，吟澤有憔悴之容。騷人之文，自茲而作。

—Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531)

Therefore, the lines of “river bridge” are limited to grievance for parting; the chanting by the marsh returns to plaintive yearnings. [This is because] both poets were frustrated and at a loss, without any time allocated for other things.

故河梁之句，止於傷別；澤畔之吟，歸於怨思。彷徨抑鬱，不暇及他耳。

— Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846)

Both Xiao Tong and Bai Juyi identified Qu Yuan’s exile as the moment of his composition.

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2 “Chuke” 楚客 in the *Zuo zhuan* refers to diplomats from Chu. For example, see *Zuo zhuan* Xiang 26.7. But in the Tang and thereafter “Chuke” refers either specifically to Qu Yuan or generally to someone visiting an alien land.

3 Preface to the *Wenxuan*, 1.

4 “River bridge” 河梁 alludes to Li Ling’s 李陵 third (purported) poem to Su Wu 蘇武: “I mount the river bridge with you, hand in hand; where is the sojourner going at dusk?” 携手上河梁，遊子暮何之. See *Wenxuan*, 1052.

5 “Chanting at the riverbank” 河畔 alludes to the “Fisherman”: “After Qu Yuan was exiled, he roamed along the river, wandering and chanting” 屈原既放，游於江澤，行吟澤畔. *Chuci buzhu*, 179. Here it refers to Qu Yuan’s works in general.

Poetry

was a means to give expression to Qu Yuan’s frustration and sorrow for his unrealized ambitions and unfair treatment. Suasion and remonstration were not presented as function and purpose of Qu Yuan’s poems. Rather, the poems were products of the poet’s failed suasions. In these poems, he was no longer a fighter, but a depressed man at a loss. Bai Juyi even commented that Qu Yuan was too absorbed in his frustration so that “no energy was allocated for other things” 不暇及他, i.e. to condemn the ills of the day, a primary function of poetry in his opinion. Polemical as it may be, Bai Juyi’s remark points out a function of Qu Yuan’s poems—to express his personal resentment of displacement.

In the Liang, Zhong Rong, a contemporary of Xiao Tong, also discussed at length poetry’s function to voice one’s resentment of displacement in his Shipin 詩品 (Gradation of Poets), the first monograph on poetic remarks. In Zhong Rong’s perspective, Qu Yuan was the most prominent representative as a displaced poet.

At pleasant gatherings, one resorts to poetry to express connectedness; when departing from one’s group, one uses poetry to voice plaint. As for [situations where]: the Chu advisor [i.e. Qu Yuan] left his land, and the Han consort bid farewell to her palace;7 also, bones scattered across the desolate fields, and souls were chased around like tumbleweeds; then, carrying his spear, [a soldier] guarded the frontier with the aura of killing soaring up in the air at the border; further, a traveler in the northern coldness thinly clothed, and a widow’s tears ran dry in her boudoir; still more, a gentleman untied his pendant and left the court, without any intention to come back, and a lady won imperial favor upon tilting her eyebrows and caused the fall of a state with her second glance. All of these would touch and sway the human heart. How could one reveal the intent if not through the presentation of poetry, and how could one set free the feelings if not through prolonged chanting? Therefore, it is said that, “[The Book of] Odes can be used to make connections, and to voice one’s plaint.” Nothing ranks above poetry when it comes to the pacification of the impotent and lowly, and the revitalization of the secluded.

嘉會寄詩以親，離群託詩以怨。至於楚臣去境，漢妾辭宮；或骨橫朔野，或魂逐飛

7 The “Han consort” that “bid farewell to her palace,” as Wang Ping argues, has become a fusion of images of various historical ladies (Liu Xijun, Wang Qiang, and Cai Yan) that saw poetry composed by/for them. Wang Ping, “Plaint, Lyricism, and the South,” in Ping Wang and Nicholas Williams eds., Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 79-108.
In this remark about the nature and function of poetry, Zhong Rong’s scale tilted almost completely to the aspect of “voicing one’s plaint” 可以怨 rather than “making connections” 可以群, though both were uses of the *Shijing* in Kongzi’s remark. All the circumstances listed are cases of displacement, that is, men out of their proper places—officials and consorts are removed from the court, bones and souls from the grave, soldiers and travelers from their hometown, and in the last case, a state on the verge of destruction. Consequently, the “intention” 義 and “feeling” 情 that rise in such circumstances constitute plaint. Poetry gives vent to plaint, a stirred state of mind, yet at the same time, poetry pacifies and restores “peace” 安 to it. For “the impotent and lowly” 窮賤, that is, those lacking of resources—mainly political—to realize their ambitions, poetry provides a sphere where they can make their voices heard and their names known. The achievement in poetry now remedies deprivations elsewhere. To a “secluded and lonely” 幽居 soul, that is, a man separated from his peers, poetry is a means to reaffirm the identity, knowledge, and commitments that he shares with his group, like-minded people (no matter in the past, present, or future) who are able to understand, sympathize, and support each other. In this sense, plaintive poetry, a product of “separation from one’s group” 離群, provides a mental channel for one to be “placed back” to that group and to reclaim one’s sense of belonging. Physical solitude no longer cuts one off from the world or keeps one in low spirits (two dimensions of 悶), because the person is now reconnected to his peers and revitalized

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9 *Analects* 17.9.
through poetry. In either case, plaintive poetry is not simply a refuge, but a rewarding and meaningful enterprise.

Qu Yuan, topping Zhong Rong’s list as a representative of a sojourner displaced both from the court and from his hometown, combined in himself the images of “the impotent and lowly” and “the secluded.” Banished from the court, Qu Yuan lost the opportunity to realize his ambitions; departing from his hometown, he was cut off from his acquaintances. The sense of loss and irrepressible grief were crucial in each scenario. Plaint as a spontaneous response to such situations also became the central character of the poetic lineage traced back to the Chuci.\(^\text{10}\)

In the Shipin, Li Ling 李陵 (134-74 BCE) was identified as the immediate heir of the Chuci, a poet of plaint.

Li Ling’s style originated from the Chuci. His writings were wretched, a descendant of the plaintive [Chuci]. Ling was born into a renowned family with outstanding talents, yet in the face of his fatal adversity, he sounded forth dejected voice and finally met his death. Nonetheless, if Ling had never suffered from hardship, how could his writings reach this level?

其源出於《楚辭》。文多悽愴，怨者之流。陵，名家子，有殊才，生命不諧，聲頽身喪。使陵不遭辛苦，其文亦何能至此！\(^\text{11}\)

Standing at the beginning of a tradition, the Chuci was to Li Ling’s poetry what an origin was to a stream 流. As the only poet in the Shipin identified to be the direct heir of the Chuci, Li Ling was implied to be the closest to Qu Yuan in not only temporal but literary critical terms—they composed the most poignant and touching poems—poetry of plaint—out of their sufferings in life. In this scenario, Li Ling’s experience as a poet perfectly mirrored that of Qu Yuan, a royal

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\(^\text{10}\) For a convenient illustration of the poetic lineages in Zhong Rong’s perspective, see Wang Yunxi 王運熙, “Zhong Rong Shipin lun shiren de jicheng guanxi jiqi liupai” 鍾嵘詩品論詩人的繼承關係及其流派, in Wang Yunxi, Zhongggu wenlun yaoyi shijiang 中古文論要義十講 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2004), 199-209. According to Zhong Rong, all Han and Six Dynasties poets were heirs of one of three texts, the “Airs of States,” “Minor Elegantiae,” and Verses of Chu. The heritage of each text was passed down through generations of poets, a lineage much resembling the master-disciple transmission.

\(^\text{11}\) Cao Xu, Shipin jizhu, 88.
family descendant (Li Ling as a “son of a renowned family” 名家子) with spectacular political and literary gifts (“outstanding gifts” 殊才), who, upon encountering ill fate (“fatal adversity” 命不諧), vented his plaint in the “Lisao” (“to sound forth in a dejected voice” 聲頺) and finally plunged into the Miluo River (“to meet one’s death” 身喪). In both Qu Yuan’s and Li Ling’s cases, though suffering was a misfortune for them as individuals, it was to some extent deemed necessary for their poetic achievements. As a strong momentum driving them to write, their suffering bestowed them a heart more sensitive to the vicissitudes around them and eyes more perceptive to comprehend the truth of life and further to write affectively. More importantly, their sufferings were both caused by displacement. Qu Yuan was removed from the court and died in exile, while Li Ling also spent his late years on a foreign land after fighting against hopeless odds in a war with Xiongnu. Li Ling was one of the soldiers “guarding the frontier” 外戍 and gentlemen “departing the court” 出朝 according to Zhong Rong’s list of plaintive poetry. As such, displacement and plaint are characteristic of both Chuci and Li Ling’s poems.

In Zhong Rong’s understanding, the Chuci tradition—at least at this beginning stage of Qu Yuan and Li Ling—was marked by plaint, a spontaneous response to one’s displacement and suffering. Poetry of this kind is highly personal, and as such un-imitable, because suffering in life and suffering only was the “secret” teacher. If without such experiences, one would not be able to write poetry either of this kind or this well (two connotations of “to reach this level” 至此). Just as the “Lisao” is always introduced by an account of Qu Yuan’s life (for instance, in the Shiji and Wang Yi’s preface), the Li Ling entry in the Shipin is accompanied by a micro biography. In the Shipin, a concise literary critical work primarily commenting on the poets’ stylistic

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12 Except for Lady Ban 班 (d. ca. 6 BCE) and Shen Yue 沈约 (441-513), other poets identified as heirs of Li Ling in the Chuci lineage were not characterized with plaint.
characters, the Li Ling entry is the single case where a biography is sketched to explain the style and achievement of his poetry. It shows the significance of displacement and suffering in producing plaintive poetry represented by the *Chuci* and Li Ling poetry.

Notably, in the *Shipin*, plaint is not exclusive to *Chuci* but common to poetry in general. Many poets in the lineage of *Shijing* are remarked to have written plaintive poetry. What is distinctive of *Chuci* and its immediate heir Li Ling is their suffering from displacement. Qu Yuan as a Chu sojourner and *Chuci* as a voice of plaint became stereotypical images through compositions of generations of poets with similar experiences. When these poets set out on their painstaking travels, they invariably identified themselves with Qu Yuan the Chu sojourner in the *Chuci* language and style, as we see below.

**Displaced from One’s Southern Hometown**

For centuries Chu was the major representative of the conceptual south. In the Warring States, its territory once extended east to the sea after its defeat of Yue in 306 BCE, incorporating the land of Yue and Wu (previously conquered by Yue in 473 BCE). Long after the fall of Chu, its territories were still often called “the old Chu” 舊楚. In the vicissitudes after the fall of Han, the Chu heartland in the south was under the control of a quick succession of southern dynasties. It was in this period that the old Chu, a fallen state in the south, lent itself to be a symbol of homeland for Lu Ji 魯機 (261-303) and Lu Yun, the brothers native to the kingdom of Wu (229-280; often “Sun Wu” 孫吳 or “Eastern Wu” 東吳 to distinguish it from

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13 We do have anecdotal accounts recorded elsewhere in the Shipin. For example, under the Xie Lingyun entry, an anecdote about Xie’s nickname “Ke’er” 倪兒, and under the Jiang Yan biography, an anecdote about the exhaustion of his talent. At those places, however, no anecdote resembled a “micro biography” as in the Li Ling entry and no connection was drawn between the anecdote and the poet’s style. Even the anecdote in the Jiang Yan entry was to provide one explanation for Jiang’s lack of good writings towards his later years—that Jiang returned the five-color brush to Guo Pu in his dream—Jiang was not considered an heir of Guo in the entry.

14 Areas such as Xuzhou and Shouchun were controlled by the Northern Dynasties.
the Warring States Wu) and serving at the northern court of Luoyang 洛陽 after the Western Jin 西晉 (265-316) conquest.

The Lu brothers never claimed to be natives of Chu but those of Wu. Neither was Chu a conventional substitute for Wu as Han was for Tang. Wu and Chu were distinct in their culture and remained independent states for long. In literary writings, however, Chu, the one time owner of the south defeated by the north, served as a veil for the Lu brothers to express their yearnings for Wu, a kingdom that experienced the same fate. As David Knechtges shows, when Lu Ji encountered the south-and-north cultural difference and the prejudice from the north, he composed a “Yushan fu” 羽扇賦 (Fu on a Feather Fan) to maintain his proudness of his Wu identity.⁵ In the fu, the feather fan, a popular product of the Wu area (and not yet existent in the Warring States), was anachronistically set to the Warring States Chu at King Xiang’s 襄 (r. 298-263; King Huai’s son) court, where the propriety of its use was questioned by the northern lords who favored zhuwei 塵尾, a swatter that could function as a fan. Reasonably inferring that the fragmented fu ended with a triumph of the feather fan (representing Lu Ji the southerner) over the swatter (representing the northern courtiers), Knechtges believes that the ancient Chu context stands in provisionally for Wu, showing Lu Ji’s attachment to the recently perished Wu and constructing a southern identity for the poet.⁶

For Lu Yun, Chu served a similar function to represent homeland in his “Jiumin,”⁷ where

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¹⁷ The projection of Chu as one’s home is not limited to Lu Yun’s case. For example, In his “Ai jiangnan fu” 被江南賦 (Fu on Lamenting the Southland), Yu Xin 羿信 (513-581) used the Qin conquest of Chu to refer to the destruction of Jiangling 江陵 (in modern Hubei), capital of Liang 梁 (502-557), by the Western Wei 西魏 (535-557). Shen Jiong 沈炯 (503-561), another Liang courtier trapped in the Western Wei, entrusted his wish to return home in
his yearnings for Wu was projected onto Qu Yuan’s longing for Chu and conveyed through the Chuci language. The “Jiumin” is commonly considered an imitation of the “Jiuzhang,” and Lu Yun claimed that the “Jiumin” gave faithful expression to Qu Yuan’s mind. But as I shall argue below, the “Jiumin” reflects Lu Yun’s efforts to commemorate his own family and express his nostalgia. The “Jiuzhang” was emulated to realize Lu Yun’s ideals of literature, and the Qu Yuan persona was adapted to construct a southern identity.

The major sources of inspiration for the “Jiumin” were Qu Yuan’s “Jiuzhang,” “Lisao,” “Yuanyou” 遠遊 (Far-off journey) and “Yufu,”18 judging from the remaining titles (the last two titles in the “Jiumin” were lost). Some titles were specifically designed to correspond to the “Jiuzhang” poems, as the table shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jiumin</th>
<th>Jiuzhang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shejiang 涉江 (Crossing the river)</td>
<td>Shejiang 涉江 (Crossing the river)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beiying 悲郢 (Grief for Ying)</td>
<td>Aiying 哀郢 (Lament for Ying)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusi 绾思 (Knotted thoughts)</td>
<td>Chousi 抽思 (Pouring out my thoughts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganshi 感逝 (Touched by things gone by)</td>
<td>Xi wangri 惜往日 (Cherishing the gone days)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “Jiumin” took inspiration from the “Jiuzhang” in terms of title, structure, and language, and Lu Yun considered himself an “author of the ‘Nines’ poems” 作九者,19 yet he did not favor

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18 Based on the several corresponding titles between the “Jiuzhang” and “Jiumin,” it is usually believed that the former was the model of the latter, and each poem in the “Jiumin” was designed to “imitate” a specific one in the “Jiuzhang,” with the sequence of the poem slightly altered. See, for example, Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi; Liu Yunhao, Lu Shilong wenji jiaozhu. In my opinion, the other pieces in the Chuci, at least the “Lisao,” “Yuanyou,” and “Yufu,” also served as Lu Yun’s models, judging from his inclusion of Qu Yuan’s auspicious birth, his cosmic flight, and his dialogue with the fisherman in the “Xiushen” 修身 (Self-cultivation), “… zheng 彝 (… journey; character lost), and “Xingyin” in the “Jiumin” respectively. It is also not likely that the “Jiumin” is a one-by-one imitation of “Jiuzhang,” because some “Jiuzhang” pieces—such as the “Jusong”—lacks a correspondent in the “Jiumin.”

19 Liu Yunhao, Lu Shilong wenji jiaozhu, 1086.
the “Jiuzhang” as he told his brother Lu Ji in a letter.

I once heard [Pan] Yangzhong praising the “Jiuge,” but I did not much like them when reading the *Chuci* previously. In a recent reading, however, I found that it was indeed pure and sublime like surging waves. Thus, Yangzhong truly understands the “Jiuge,” the ancestor of all such kinds of writings. When I look at the “Jiuzhang,” I feel that it does have some good phrases scattered here and there, but overall it is blocked up by disorderly words and fails to entertain me. Yet when I look at the “Jiuge,” I cannot help but returning home, closing my door to guests, and devoting all my thoughts to it. You, my dear brother, have always reserved a part of your life for writing, but you still have not composed in this single type. If your health permits, I hope that you could try your hand at it, because otherwise I am afraid that the “Jiuge” would be transmitted for the millennium, unparalleled.

Reminiscent of Wang Yi’s configuration of *Chuci* lineage focusing on the “Nines” poems, Lu Yun treated these poems as a category (as suggested by cizhong and cicao) in the *Chuci*. By composing the “Jiumin,” Lu Yun, like Wang Yi, placed himself in the lineage. In his overview, the “Jiuzhang” was posited to the opposite of the “Jiuge,” ancestor of the category. To him, the former, a jumble of disorderly words (lit. a writing full of weeds) that he “did not much like,” was hardly gratifying, while the latter, with its purity, was enchanting.

Lu Yun’s another letter to his brother on the “Nines” poems may further clarify the reason he

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20 Liu Yunhao argues that Yang 湘 is mistaken for Tang 湘. Yangzhong 湘仲 is the style name of Pan Tao 潘滔, nephew of Pan Ni 潘尼. Liu Yunhao, *Lu Shilong wenji jiaozhu*, 1064.

21 I opt for the variant reading *pi* 否 (to block) over *bu* 不 (not) as suggested by Liu Yunhao, for the latter will contradict context. In Lu Yun’s comment, the “Jiuzhang” is “a writing of disorderly words” 稗文 (lit. a writing full of weeds) that he “did not much like” 不大愛. Thus it should be that “the ‘Jiuzhang’ is blocked and it is hard for to entertain me” 吾難舉意, instead of “not hard [for it] to entertain me” 不難舉意. For a similar use of the variant, see Mao 199, “On your return you do not enter; your heart is blocked [from me] and hard to be understood.” 遷而不入，不難知也。

disliked the “Jiuzhang”—its insufficiency of in articulation of sentiment 情, the characteristic of “Nines” poems as a category.

These [i.e. “Nines” poems as a category] are writings about sentiment, but sentiment is indeed lacking, while it was pretty good at general discussions. 
此是情文，但本少情，而頗能作況說耳。23

Judging from the previous letter, the “Jiuge” may serve as a model for the category for the “purity” of its sentiment, i.e. its concentration on articulation of sentiment without being overwhelmed by “generic sayings” 汰說.24 On the other hand, the “Jiuzhang” was critiqued for “general talks,” i.e., the existence of too many irrelevant elements and the diluted quality of feeling. The “Jiuzhang” are “weedy,” because a) there are too many threads that do not contribute to the expression of sentiment, and b) the little sentiment to be found in it is not strong and profound enough.

Indeed, Lu Yun made an effort to bring sentiment to the fore in the “Jiumin” and “weeded out” the irrelevant elements. As Jiang Fang 蔣方 and Liao Dongliang 廖棟樑 have both observed, in the “Jiumin,” the imagery of aromatic/smelly plants as a metaphor for virtue/vice is diminished to a minimum; the historical catalogues about sage kings and worthy officials, a powerful tool for persuasion, are gone.25 In other words, Lu Yun’s primary interest in writing the “Jiumin” lay neither in elaborating Qu Yuan’s efforts of virtue cultivation nor in suasion through didactic lessons illustrated by history (the two aspects emphasized by Wang Yi), because these were irrelevant to the expression of sentiment, the function of the “Nines” poems in his mind.

23 Liu Yunhao, Lu Shilong wenji jiaozhu, 1086.
24 “Generic sayings” in the context probably refers to previous writers’ tendency to write the “Nines” poems in general terms without giving expression to Qu Yuan’s mind and fitting his experiences.
Reading the “Jiumin,” one can hardly miss the predominant use of emotion words. The frequency of major emotion words is listed in the table.

- **bei** 悲 (to grieve): 29 times
- **tan** 悼 (to sigh): 9 times (its synonyms jie 嘆 appear 3 times and kui 唁 2 times)
- **ai** 哀 (to be sad): 5 times
- **yuan** 怨 (to resent): 4 times
- **shang** 傷 (to be hurt): 4 times
- **chou** 悴 (to worry): 4 times (you 憤 also appear 3 times)
- **gan** 感 (to be touched): 4 times
- **tong** 痛 (to be painful): 3 times
- **dao** 悼 (to lament): 3 times
- **ti** 涕 (to shed tears): twice (lei 涕 and qi 泣 each appear once)

Among all, **bei**, the most frequently used word, particularly stresses the intensity of one’s emotion, when one is deeply stirred inside. In a word, the “Jiumin” was written in a gesture to rectify the “Jiuzhang” and to reclaim the significance of sentiment in the “Nines” poems. An implicit claim in this gesture is that, the “Jiumin” should be transmitted side by side with the “Jiuge,” representative of the best one in the category.

Lu Yun would consider his “Jiumin,” to which he devoted much effort, a success in its aim. In one of four letters to his brother where he discussed the “Jiumin” (the only work that received such close attention in the letters), Lu Yun proudly told Lu Ji that, although his brother might have a different thought, he “would undoubtedly consider it one of the best among the recent works” 然雲意自謂故當是近所作上. Lu Yun’s confidence in the “Jiumin,” aside from it being a “writing about sentiment” 情文, also came from his belief that the “Jiumin” gave the most

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26 Bei appears in the “Jiuzhang” for 11 times altogether, a number incomparable with that of “Jiumin.” The other emotion words listed above appear, more or less, in equal numbers in the two suites.
27 Lu Yun said in one letter to Lu Ji that the “Jiumin” was no doubt satisfying. See Liu Yunhao, *Lu Shilong wenji jiaozhu*, 1066.
accurate expression to Qu Yuan’s mindset, the mindset undoubtedly produced by the then circumstance. Lu Yun highlighted such a belief twice, once in the preface to “Jiumin” and once in a letter to Lu Ji (the same one where he brought up the notion of “writing about sentiment”).

In the past, Qu Yuan’s exile gave rise to the “Lisao.” From antiquity to the present, none of the learned and elegant men would not savor his refined works on the basis of [understanding] his situation, and then gave expression to his mind. Thereupon I lined myself up at the end of these writers and composed the “Jiumin.”

I also found that those writers of the “Nines” poems would usually create their own discourse instead of conforming to Qu Yuan’s mind. Although you said that the section about Qu Yuan’s encounter with the fisherman did not subtly convey and fully match his meaning, I would think that it is a rather good scenario, because Qu Yuan ought to send his [respectful] regards to the fisherman, the only person he saw in his exile. I hope that you could try to take another look at the words I wrote for Qu Yuan’s encounter with the fisherman. I do not have any other opinions different from yours. I just think that in terms of the sentiment attached [to the text], the section could be even better than [the lines ending with the rhyme words] yuan and xuan [i.e. the lines that Lu Ji liked according to Lu Yun in the first half of the letter].

In the preface, Lu Yun modestly identified himself as an heir of his predecessors, a respectful follower among the “Nines” writers. The personal letter to his brother, however, revealed that the praise for his predecessors in the preface was indeed for himself. To Lu Yun, those “learned and elegant men” actually failed to “savor Qu Yuan’s refined works on the basis of [understanding] his situation” and the meaning as manifested in their works belonged to themselves rather than of Qu Yuan. Lu Yun, by contrast, believed in his fidelity in presenting Qu Yuan’s mind and actions, speaking in Qu Yuan’s voice, and expressing Qu Yuan’s feelings. His confidence in fidelity came from the confidence in his

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29 Ibid, 955.
evaluation of Qu Yuan’s situation. The fisherman section that Lu Yun defended himself against Lu Ji was in the “Xingyin” 行吟 (Chanting while meandering), where he devoted one third of the poem to Qu Yuan’s admiration and praise of the fisherman’s carefree and perspicacious heart 辦心. The praise, however, is completely unseen in the “Yufu,” not to mention that such an admiring speech would come from Qu Yuan’s mouth. In his defense of the section, however, Lu Yun insisted that Qu Yuan “ought to send his [respectful] regards to the fisherman” 當為其致意 (here zhiyi 致意 has an implication of “to pay respect to”). As the word dang 當 shows, Lu Yun believed that his treatment of Qu Yuan’s response to the fisherman was required by the context—trapped in his own adversity, when seeing such a carefree and unworldly figure sympathetic with his misfortune, Qu Yuan must have been attracted to the figure and felt an urge to write about their encounter in a respectful manner.

In the letter, Lu Yun claimed for himself the role of a transmitter and spokesperson, instead of an appropriator or a creator. Nevertheless, Qu Yuan’s mind, action, voice, and feelings were all mediated by Lu Yun’s interpretation of Qu Yuan’s persona and evaluation of the context. In other words, Lu Yun speculated about Qu Yuan’s reaction in this scenario based on his own understanding of the situation. He had no proof of “Qu Yuan’s meaning” 原意, but he also needed no proof, because to him, his understanding of the situation and his judgment of what best suited the situation would already give him access to “Qu Yuan’s meaning.” By putting himself, purportedly a sensible human with keen perception of and ample knowledge about both life and history, in Qu Yuan’s situation, Lu Yun would be able to read “Qu Yuan’s mind.” To Lu

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32. Both in the “Yufu” in the Chuci and in the fisherman passage in the *Shiji*, the character Qu Yuan was presenting the principles he abided by and his resolution to die. No trace shows Qu Yuan’s respect for the fisherman in the two sources.
Yun, there could be no gap between his voice and Qu Yuan’s voice.

If we take a second look at Lu Yun’s claim that “none would not savor his refined works on the basis of [understanding] his situation, and then give expression to his mind” 莫不以其情而覯其辞, 而表意焉, we find that it reveals a three-step process in Lu Yun’s composition: a) to understand Qu Yuan’s sentiment, b) to savor Qu Yuan’s works, and c) to put Qu Yuan’s sentiment into words. The composition starts with a comprehension of Qu Yuan’s sentiment, which is not (at least not all) gained from a close reading of his works. Just to the opposite, comprehension of Qu Yuan’s sentiment is the foundation (as suggested by the preposition yi 以, by means of) to understand his works. Thus, Lu Yun (or any other reader) must comprehend Qu Yuan’s sentiment elsewhere—from the situation Qu Yuan was in, which has to be further inferred from the Qu Yuan biography.

In the “Jiumin,” both the image of Chu and “Qu Yuan’s meaning” that Lu Yun claimed to have faithfully conveyed are tinted by his own perception and experience. To begin with, Qu Yuan’s home state presented in the “Jiumin” is reminiscent of not the historical Chu but Wu. A major divergence of the image of Chu in the “Jiumin” from that in the “Jiuzhang” is that, the “Jiumin” presents it as a perished state witnessed by Qu Yuan while the “Jiuzhang” does not. Such a representation of Chu also saw no clue in earlier sources about Qu Yuan. In the Qu Yuan biography, the poet foresaw the threat of Qin but he could not prophesy the destruction of his country. Within Qu Yuan’s oeuvre, the “Aiying” has two lines closest to a description of the destroyed and deserted city of Ying 鄕 (modern Yicheng 宜城, in northwestern Hubei33), the capital of Chu, but no clear clue is provided to extend the destruction to all of Chu—the Chu

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33 For a discussion of the location of Ying, see Shi Quan 石泉, “Chu Yingdu, Qin Han zhi Qi Liang Jialingcheng guzhi xintan” 楚郢都、秦漢至齊梁江陵城故址新探, in his Gudai Jing-Chu dili xintan 古代荊楚地理新探 (Hubei: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2013), 417-504.
survived for another half century after moving its capital from Ying to the east.

No one knew ahead of time that its mansions should turn into mounds of scorched earth. Who would expect its two East Gates to be overgrown with weeds?

“No one knew ahead of time” and “who [would expect]” can be understood as the poet’s anxiety and warning about the possible (and not yet happened) destruction of Ying. In Lu Yun’s “Jiumin,” however, the protagonist Qu Yuan was mourning for the collapse of Chu, the entire state.

I pour out my heart to the south wind, which my eyes keenly follow; I grieve for my old country that has collapsed and turned into ruins. Yearning for southern clouds, my grief wells up; Soaked in the eastern rain, I can no longer withhold my tears.

The “old country” is Chu, which has fallen and become ruins, and the protagonist resorts to south wind, southern clouds, and eastern rain to seek solace. The four lines are reminiscent of a famous couplet from the “Nineteen Old Poems.”

The nomad horse leans to the north wind, The Yue bird nests on the southward branch.

The nomad horse afar from its home clings to wind from the north, where it comes from, and the Yue bird likely builds its nest at a place closer to its origin. The “Jiumin” depicts a similar mindset that the protagonist longs for his “old country” located to his south and east. The

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34 Chuci buzhu, 135.
35 Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤 held this opinion in his Chuci dili kao 楚辭地理考, 183-84. see Jao Tsung-i, Jao Tsung-i ershi shiji xueshu wenji 饒宗頤二十世紀學術文集 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 2003), vol. 16.
36 The title of the poem is lost. See Liu Yunhao, Lu Shilong wenji jiaozhu, 1086-87.
37 Lu Ji’s imitation of the poem, “Ni Xingxing chong xingxing” 擬行行重行行, has two lines corresponding to the image here: “The royal paddlefish longs for the grotto by the river; the dawn wind falcon thinks of the northern forests.” 王鯽懷河岫，晨風思北林. See Wenxuan, 1426.
direction words “south” and “east,” however, fit not Qu Yuan’s situation but Lu Yun’s. Qu Yuan’s place of exile was in Jiangnan 江南38 and the place of his suicide Miluo River. Jiangnan, according to Jao Tsung-i, is the name of a specific region, the Qianzhong 辰中 Commandery (around the border of modern Sichuan and Hunan) on the southwest frontier of Chu.39 Miluo River is south of the Yangzi, in the east of modern Hunan. Both places are south of the capital Ying, Qu Yuan’s hometown and emblem of his motherland Chu. If Qu Yuan were to yearn for home as the horse and bird do, he should have gazed at the north.

It may well be argued that actuality may not be a concern of Lu Yun, as he was imagining Qu Yuan’s reasonable reactions that the situation called for. Neither was Lu Yun likely to have intentionally “distorted” the spatial details in Qu Yuan’s exile. Be that as it may, the depiction of Chu as a perished state and that of Qu Yuan’s longing for the south and the east reflect Lu Yun’s own perspective, who gazed at the direction of his homeland from the northwest. The “Jiumin” was composed roughly between 300-302,40 when the Wu had already been destroyed by the Western Jin. Lu Yun, together with his brother, had left their hometown in Wu Commandery 吳郡 (modern Suzhou in Jiangsu) in the southeast to serve in Luoyang in the northwest. Qu Yuan’s voice in the text gave expression to Lu Yun’s yearning.

In the “Jiumin,” in line with the image of Chu is a perished state, the protagonist witnesses its destruction in the “Bei Ying,” a lament of the state’s downfall and the protagonist’s own fate that is part and parcel of the national misfortune. “Bei Ying” corresponds to “Ai Ying” in the “Jiuzhang.” A comparison of the two shows that although the “Bei Ying” borrows many motifs

38 Wang Yi’s preface, see Chuci buzhu, 2.
39 Chuci dili kao, 148-150.
40 Liu Yunhao reaches the conclusion on dates based on the references of “Jiumin” in relation to other events in Lu Yun’s letters to Lu Ji. See Liu Yunhao, Lu Shilong wenji jaozhu, 958.
from and alludes to the “Ai Ying”—for example, passage of time, departure from home, resentment for petty men, and plaint for the “Numinous One” 靈修, etc., Lu Yun’s poem considerably diverts from its model in theme. The “Bei Ying” focuses primarily on lamenting the destruction of the city and the state constitutes, while the theme of “Ai Ying,” as David Hawkes observed, is Qu Yuan’s journey in exile and his resentment of being forsaken by the king.\textsuperscript{41}

The opening lines of “Ai Ying” appear to refer to a national disaster of some kind. More specifically, ll. 39-40 implies that the city of Ying has been destroyed. Yet the main body of the poem reads not like an account of the panic-stricken exodus of refugees from a city about to fall into enemy hands, but of the poet’s own rather leisurely journey into exile—an exile which, suggested by ll. 49-60, was occasioned by his having forfeited the favor of his king.\textsuperscript{42} The opening lines and ll. 39-40, as Hawkes pointed out, are the only places seemingly relevant to the title, “Lament for Ying.”

The mandate of August Heaven is adulterated
How the hundred clans of noble officials have fallen into chaos and been faulted at every turn!\textsuperscript{43}
The people are scattered and cut off from their fellows.
In the middle of spring the migration to the east begins.
I depart from my hometown for places far away.
Following the waters of the Jiang and Xia, I travel into exile.

Who would ever know that its mansions should turn into mounds of scorched earth?
Who would ever expect its two East Gates to be overgrown with weeds?

Much ink has been spent on deciphering what the “national disaster” was and where it was to be

\textsuperscript{41} Hawkes, \textit{The Songs of the South}, 161-62.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Baixing} 百姓 in ancient texts do not refer to “common people” as in its modern sense, but to the clans of the noble officials that had been bestowed a noble surname on account of their ancestors’ merits. For a gloss of \textit{baixing}, see Sun Xingyan 孫星衍, \textit{Shangshu jinguwen zhushu} 尚書今文註疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 8.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Chuci buzhu}, 132-33.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Chuci buzhu}, 135.
posed in the trajectory of Qu Yuan’s life, based on the interpretation of Qu Yuan’s works and his biography. Discussions like this are considered the key to dating Qu Yuan’s exile(s), his composition of the poem, and his death, yet the analyses are often circular in that the decision about Qu Yuan’s dates has to rely on the decision about the “national disaster” and vice versa due to the lack of further materials, not to mention the question of Qu Yuan’s authorship. Hawkes suspected that, because ll. 51-60 of “Ai Ying” are shared by the “Jiubian,” the “Ai Ying” may well be a patchwork or have gone through major revisions, which further challenges the fruitfulness of these discussions. Be that as it may, right after line 6, the “Ai Ying” immediately turns to an account of what Hawkes called a “rather leisurely journey into exile” caused by the poet’s falling from the king’s favor. We see the poet “traveling to the east, free and unfettered” 遙遙而來東，and then he resents his own misfortunes, a self-lament only interrupted by the brief mourning for the ruins of Ying.

Lu Yun’s “Bei Ying” is a significant revision of Qu Yuan’s “Ai Ying.” In Lu Yun’s poem, we see no leisurely traveling but the protagonist’s grief over a twofold misfortune—that of the country and of himself. His own misfortune is framed as a factor entailing the country’s misfortune, while his country’s misfortune in turn adds to and intensifies that of his own. The double misfortune is told in a carefully designed structure, with intensive use of emotion verbs emphasizing loss and sorrow (underlined below).

I have been cultivating my virtue by means of

46 Hawkes has a convenient overview of the debates on the issue. A major opinion is that the disaster refers to the Qin general Bai Qi’s 白起 (d. 257) conquest of Chu’s capital Ying in 278 BCE, but this date is incompatible with the Qu Yuan biography, where he was said to have already been exiled some twenty years ago. As we see in the opening lines, the protagonist seems to be one of the migrants who depart from the capital for the east. Moreover, the Chu capital in 278 BCE was not the old Ying in King Huai’s day, but a new one to the north of it on the Han River. Yet the “Aiying” suggests that the path of the protagonist’s travel is along the Yangzi River. Another opinion identifies the Chu general Zhuang Qiao’s 庄蹻 (d. 256) rebellion that took over its capital in 301-300 BCE as the disaster, but no source indicates any migration resulted from the rebellion. See David Hawkes, The Songs of the South, 162-63.
47 David Hawkes, The Songs of the South, 164.
[solidifying] my long-cherished intent.
Yet worries and pain built up inside my bitter heart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My soul floats and flutters relying the void.</th>
<th>积沉愁苦之心[*-em]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My form loses its shadow under layers of shade.</td>
<td>魂恶露以飘荡</td>
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<tr>
<td>When the tiger roars, wind swirls in the valley.</td>
<td>形息景于重阴[*-em]</td>
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<tr>
<td>When the wyverne wheels around, clouds intertwine the</td>
<td>虎鸣秽以拂谷</td>
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<td>groves together.</td>
<td>蜇回云而结林[*-em]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking its local dialect, I long for Ying.</td>
<td>操土音以唤郴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My tears steam down incessantly, my lapels are soaked.</td>
<td>泄频代而盈襟[*-em]</td>
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I bid farewell to the ruins of the age-old city.       | 辞终古之旧墟   |
After a long trip, I stopped and committed myself to this remote country.  | 託兹邦而遙集[*-ep]|
So many times, I looked back to gaze toward the Dragon Gate.  | 望龙门而屡顾  |
Grasping the mulberry, I wept bitterly.  | 攀桑梓而扼泣[*-ep]|
I grieve that my sorrowing heart is difficult to report. | 悲愁心之难状  |
I bestir my haggard body and stand lonely.  | 振枯形而独立[*-ep]|
Stroking my face, I feel my complexion is fading and withering day by day. | 撫凋容之日陨  |
Feeling distressed and distraught, [my home] is out of my reach. | 招炯思而弗及[*-ep]|

I heard the perspicacious teaching from the previous men:

| [If you] accumulate goodness, [you will have]          | 端积善于遗慶[*-eing]|
| superabundant fortune.                                  |                      |
| I hoped that [the king] would nurture his brightness and goodness to accept [my] words. | 睹明休而受言   |
| I looked forward to great blessings that would protect [our country’s] security. | 想介福之保定[*-eing]|
| Harboring an upright heart, I submitted myself [to the king]. | 墨心貞以祗服|
| Following the Great Harmony, I entrusted [the king] with my life. | 沈大顺而委命[*-eing]|

48 Cf. “Miujian” of “Qijian”: “When the tiger roars, east wind comes. When the dragon soars up, radiant clouds follow. 虎嘯而谷風至兮，龍舉而景雲往. Chuci buzhu, 255.
49 The couplet is an appropriation of l. 27-28 in the “Aiyng,” “I departed my home where I dwelt so long; Now free and unfettered, I travel to the east.” 去终古之所居兮，今逍遥而来矣. Chuci buzhu, 134.
50 “Dragon Gate” (longmen 龙门), according to Wang Yi, was the east gate of Ying. Chuci buzhu, 133. The line is an allusion to the “Aiyng,” “Looking back toward the Dragon Gate, yet I could not see it.” 過龍門而不见.
51 Mulberry and catalpa (sangzi 桑梓) is a symbol of one’s home, as in ancient times people usually plant mulberry trees to raise silkworms and catalpa trees to make utensils. Here weisang 惟桑 is an allusion to Mao 197, “The mulberries and the catalpas must be regarded with reverence.” 维桑与梓，必恭敬止.
52 Cf. Book of Changes 2.10: “The family that accumulate goodness will sure have abundant luckiness.” 積善之家，必有馀慶.
53 Cf. Liji: “The son of Heaven uses virtue as his chariot and music as his driver, all the princes associate with each
In the beginning, my lord bestowed his kind patronage;  
Our every meeting lasting an entire day, we always reached consensus.  
I resented that the Valley Winds expressed grief.\(^5^4\)  
Which, after so many years, still not came to an end.  
I wished to find a chance to present my words,  
I grieved that the petty men encircled [my lord’s] knees.  
I released my deep feelings, but whom should I tell?  
I concealed my eternal cares and went into my everlasting exile.\(^5^5\)

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<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Characters</th>
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<tr>
<td>In the beginning, my lord bestowed his kind patronage;</td>
<td>君在初之嘉惠</td>
<td>每成言而永日 [*-et]</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our every meeting lasting an entire day, we always reached consensus.</td>
<td>每成言而永日 [*-et]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I resented that the Valley Winds expressed grief.(^5^4)</td>
<td>怨谷風之伎歉</td>
<td>彌九齡而未徹 [*-at]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Which, after so many years, still not came to an end.</td>
<td>彌九齡而未徹 [*-at]</td>
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<tr>
<td>I wished to find a chance to present my words,</td>
<td>願白獻于承聞</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I grieved that the petty men encircled [my lord’s] knees.</td>
<td>悲黨人之造謗 [*-et]</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I released my deep feelings, but whom should I tell?</td>
<td>舒幽情其曷訴</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I concealed my eternal cares and went into my everlasting exile.(^5^5)</td>
<td>卷永懷而淹恤 [*-et]</td>
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<td>I sigh that the wise men’s [experiences] are always regrettable,</td>
<td>嗟哲士之足歎</td>
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<tr>
<td>I lament that my country and family are both destructed.(^5^6)</td>
<td>傷邦家之殄瘁 [*-i]</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am pained that the Numinous One would not hold dear [his country],</td>
<td>痛靈修之匪懷</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>And he destroyed the nine-story [terrace] into one basket of earth.(^5^7)</td>
<td>顛九成于一匱 [*-i]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>He forgot that the great treasure could not be lent [to anyone else],</td>
<td>忘大寶之勿假</td>
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<tr>
<td>He belittled the water bottle, which, though a small vessel, still needed to be guarded.(^5^8)</td>
<td>輕挈瓶之守器 [*-i]</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking up, I saw the birds’ pinions being cut off in the air,</td>
<td>仰鸛翩于凌霄</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking down, I saw the returning birds being caught the by arrows and nets.</td>
<td>俯歸飛于矰罴 [*-i]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

other according to the ritual propriety, the Grandees maintain the order between them according to the laws, inferior officers complete each another by their faith, and the commoners guard each another with a spirit of harmony—all under the heaven is in prosperity. This is the state that we call Great Harmony.” 天子以德為車，以樂為御，諸侯以禮相與，大夫以法相序，士以信相考，百姓以睦相守，天下之肥也。是謂大順。See Kong Yingda 孔穎達, Liji zhengyi 禮記正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 711.

\(^5^4\) The “East Wind” 谷風 is an allusion to Mao 35 (Gufeng 谷風). The Mao commentary considers it a remonstration to King You of Zhou, under whose rule “the conventions were violated and the ties of friendship were cut off under the heaven.” 天下俗薄，朋友道絕.

\(^5^5\) Yanxu 夷軒 (yan, to be stuck for long; xu, to worry) is particularly to be used for suffering from being stuck at a remote place from home for long.

\(^5^6\) This line is an allusion of Mao 264, “[Good] men are running away, And the country is about to fall into ruins.” 人之云亡，邦國殄瘁. The poem, according to the Mao preface, is an admonition of King You. See Wang Xianqian 王先謙, Shi sanjia yi jishu 詩三家義集疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 990.

\(^5^7\) Jiucheng 九成 is seen in the Lüshi Chunqiu呂氏春秋, “The Yousong clan had two fine ladies, and a nine-story terrace was built for them.” 有娀氏有二佚女，為之九成之臺. Gao You 高誘 glossed cheng 成 as chong 增, story. Here jiucheng is a symbol for the entire state of Chu. See Chen Qiqiu 陳奇猷, Lüshi Chunqiu xin jiaoshi 呂氏春秋新校釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 338.

\(^5^8\) The line is an allusion to the Zuozhuan Zhao 7.5, “Even if a man’s wisdom is as little as one holding a bottle [to draw water and fill it], he would still guard it and not lend it to others. It conforms to propriety.” 雖有挈甌之知，守不假器，禮也.
Mount Fangcheng was toppled down and incorporated into the Qin plains.\textsuperscript{59} 毁方城于秦川
The waters of Yangzi and Han were forced into the muddy Wei. 投江漢于泥渭[\*,-i] 40
I grieve at the millet growing at Ying.\textsuperscript{50} 悲彼黍之在酆
I mourn that my natives in Chu feel no rage. 屑宗楚之莫瘳[\*,-i]
Stroking my hurting heart, I wish to express my sadness, 撫傷心以告哀
But who would give solace to this sentiment? 將斯情之孰慰[\*,-i]\textsuperscript{61} 44

The poem can be divided into five parts (as marked by the horizontal line above) according to its rhyme scheme. Change of rhyme, aside from indicating a shift of topic, also signals the change in time. The first part is set in the current moment (presumably the moment of composition), when the protagonist is yearning for the capital Ying in a foreign land. The second part starts by a flashback to the past, when the protagonist departed from Ying after its fall and arrived at this foreign land. The third and fourth parts flash back to an even earlier moment, when the protagonist still enjoyed the king’s favor and the capital has not fallen into the hands of Qin. The third part is the protagonist’s expectation for his lord and state, and the fourth tells us how he forfeited the king’s favor. Finally, the last part is the protagonist’s present reflection on the defeat of Chu and his deep lament.

The present-flashback-present structure highlights the protagonist’s sentiment, as the poem now begins with the protagonist’s agony for the fall of Ying and his own exile, and ends again with his sorrowful crying that no one would understand his agony. This agony is expressed in Lu Yun’s frequent use of emotion words underlined above. In particular, the emotional words are repeatedly used as strong verbs in the beginning of a line followed by objects (v. + NP structure;

\textsuperscript{59} Fangcheng 方城 was the name of a mountain in the Chu. According to Du Yu 杜預, it was located south of the Ye county in Nanyang (at modern Pingdingshan, Henan). Yang Bojun, \textit{Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu}, 292-293.
\textsuperscript{60} “The millet there” 彼黍 is an allusion to Mao 65, “There was the millet with its drooping heads” 彼黍離離. According to the Mao commentary, the poem is a Zhou official’s lament for the downfall of Western Zhou when passing by the ruins of its temples and palaces in the old capital, where millets now overgrew.
italicized in the text). This use of emotion words articulates various kinds of sentiment aroused by different groups of people—a) the protagonist’s grief for his suffering and his indignation for the unjust treatment, b) his mourning for the destruction of his country, c) his resentment towards the king’s injudiciousness, d) his grudge against the petty men at court, e) his sympathy for his native people’s misfortune (ll. 37-38) and disappointment at their indifference towards the atrocities of Qin (line 42), and e) his rage against Qin (his claim that “my natives of Chu feel no rage” against Qin 宗楚之莫餥 means he is the only person feeling the rage).

Compared with the “Ai Ying,” the “Bei Ying” protagonist spends more time mourning for his country and people. In the meantime, the Chu is presented as a state that has already perished. A disastrous picture of the fall of Chu is depicted in ll. 37-40: People have no place to turn, and no matter where they go, disasters are waiting for them just as arrows and nets are waiting for the birds; mountains and rivers of Chu are now all incorporated into the Qin territory—an image implying the forfeited sovereignty of Chu royal family. Moreover, the image of a mountain torn down and a local river muddied by a foreign one is also the symbol of the fall of a state, as “rivers and mountains” 江山 is a metonymy for the entire country. Moreover, the protagonist frequently invokes the Shijing poems widely recognized as criticizing King You 幽 (r. 782-771 BCE; last emperor of Western Zhou) (Mao 35, 264, 65) comparing the disaster of Chu to the destruction of Western Zhou.

With the destruction of Chu, the protagonist of “Bei Ying” presents himself as—at least temporarily—settled in a foreign country. By contrast, the protagonist of “Ai Ying” is constantly traveling, in a leisurely manner.

Bei Ying:

I bid farewell to the ruins of the age-old city,

辭終古之舊墟
After a long trip, I stopped and committed myself to this remote country.

Ai Ying:

I departed my home where I dwelt for so long; Now free and unfettered, I travel to the east.

In the “Bei Ying,” “this country” 莒邦 (the country in which the protagonist resides now) is to contrast the “ruins of the age-old city” 舊墟 ("old" also has the implication of "familiar"). It is suggested that “this country” is a foreign—and not devastated—land remote from the protagonist’s hometown, the ruined city. The “Bei Ying” couplet shows no leisure or easiness as in the “Ai Ying,” but merely the protagonist’s agony for the downfall of the country—as he says in line 32, “I grieve for the destruction of my country and family” 傷邦家之殄瘁. The presentation of Chu in the “Beiying” is the place where Lu Yun’s personal experience as a witness of his motherland’s fall and as a survivor serving in the conqueror’s state comes into play. It was Lu Yun who witnessed the dynastic changes and the calamity of his people; it was also he who submitted himself to a foreign state yet still yearned for his own home.

In accordance with the image of Chu, the protagonist Qu Yuan is presented as a prophet who foresaw Chu’s downfall when he was still in power. In an invocation of the “Valley Winds” 谷風 (Mao 35) in ll. 25-27 of “Bei Ying,” the protagonist discerned the fatal danger with his state, which was comparable to the great error in King You’s time that finally led to the fall of Western Zhou—an implicit claim is that if the king would not listen to him, the Chu would likely meet its doom. The king, however, was misled by petty men and missed the opportunity to rectify himself, finally handing his state over to the Qin. Similar to the Qu Yuan biography, the

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62 Lu Shilong wenji jiaozhu, 975.
63 Chuci buzhu, 134.
poet’s personal fate and the fate of his state are intertwined. In the Qu Yuan biography and the *Chuci*, however, Qu Yuan never prophesied the fall of Chu in his own words. Instead, the claim that Chu’s downfall was a consequence of Qu Yuan’s unheeded advice is a historical hindsight.

In my opinion, the self-portrait of Qu Yuan as a prophet for the fall of Chu in the “Bei Ying” is shaped by not only the hindsight in the Qu Yuan biography but also the image of the Wu general Lu Kang 陸抗 (226-274), Lu Yun’s father. Lu Kang had long been in charge of the defense against the Western Jin invasion. The *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 records that Lu Kang submitted to Sun Hao 孫皓 (r. 264-280), the last king of Wu, various admonishing memorials on the imminent jeopardy and prospective devastation of Wu should his rectifying measures not to be taken. Sun Hao, as all last kings would, paid no attention and pushed Wu into its doom.

Your humble subject is often reflecting on the signs of life and death in the Warring States period that are far back in time. I have also pondered the omens about the devastation of the Liu family that is more recent. I have examined the omens in books and records and verified them in actual events. At midnight, I often stroke my pillow (and cannot sleep); with my meals in my front I forget to eat…. Not to mention that I am a descendant of the royal family, and my family has enjoyed great honor and imperial favor for generations. The good and bad of both my life and reputation is in line with the weal and woe of our country. For life or for death, however separated [Your Majesty], I will not seek to preserve my life at the cost of my principles. I have been anxious and restless day and night. When thinking about [the imminent jeopardy], I cannot help grieving. [In my opinion,] the principle to serve a ruler is to admonish and not to deceive him; the virtue of a subject is martyrdom without being obsequious. Respectfully I present the urgent needs [of rectification] in seventeen items to the left. 64

Lu Kang expressed his deep concern about the future of Wu because he discerned signs of decline and destruction similar to those he saw in history. In another memorial to request an

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64 *Sanguo zhi* 58.1355.
increase in troops at the frontier and a change in conscription regulations, he stated the seriousness of emergency again:

This is the moment of life and death for our country, and not merely some small harm caused by minor offenses on the border.

For Lu Kang, the harm facing Wu, besides the invasion of Jin, were primarily caused by the king’s reliance on petty men at court—the executive assistant He Ding 何定 (d. 272) and the eunuchs who “manipulated power” and “interfered in government affairs.” As Lu Kang warned the king in the memorial:

From the Spring and Autumn to the Qin and Han, there has not yet been any appearance of an omen of downfall that is not caused by these people.

In the end, Lu Kang died at the frontier, with none of his advice taken. Six years later, the Jin army smashed Wu, and the historian Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297) commented that, the fall of Wu “finally happened as anticipated in Lu Kang’s concern” 终如所虑.

Lu Kang’s image as a perspicacious remonstrator and oracle of the fall of Wu was first fashioned by himself in the memorials, and then by Chen Shou, a contemporary historian. Such an image would be well received by Lu Yun, from the perspective of a son and out of his great admiration of his family’s sacrifice for and contribution to Wu. When Lu Yun looked at the tragedy of Qu Yuan in retrospect, he saw not only the historical figure but also his father, a “descendant of the royal family” 王室之出 who had been in charge of military affairs in the old

65 Ibid 58. 1359.
66 “He Ding manipulated power, and eunuchs interfered in government affairs” 何定弄權，闇官顛政. Ibid 58.1355.
67 Ibid 58.1355.
68 Ibid 58.1360.
69 Lu Yun had written the “Eulogy for My Grandfather and Late Father” 祖考頌 for Lu Xun 陸遜 (183-245) and Lu Kang.
Chu area for a long time. With these similarities, Qu Yuan must have, like his father did, perceived the peril and admonished the king. Paying tribute to Qu Yuan in this regard is a gesture to implicitly pay tribute to Lu Kang, whom Lu Yun likely saw as a contemporary Qu Yuan. For Lu Yun, history repeated itself. The same tragedy first happened to Qu Yuan and Chu, then to Lu family and Wu.

To sum up, the composition of a “Ninth” poem places Lu Yun within the lineage of Chuci authors in a manner of speaking in Qu Yuan’s voice and articulating his intention. The figure of Qu Yuan in his “Jiumin,” however, is a composite one that weaves together the experiences of Qu Yuan, Lu Kang, and Lu Yun. Celebration of Qu Yuan in the “Bei Ying” is in the meantime a commemoration of Lu family’s merit. Lu Yun’s nostalgia for Wu is conveyed through Qu Yuan’s longing for Chu, which is at once Qu Yuan’s home and place of exile. In the “Bei Ying,” Qu Yuan is presented as displaced from Chu to a foreign land, just as Lu Yun would spend the rest of his years serving in the north. The lament for the devastation of Chu, in this context, emphasizes Lu Yun’s identity as a southerner. Lu Yun was a sojourner from Chu deeply attached to his homeland. Next, we will examine the reverse case: a sojourner stuck in the Chu land seeking to escape.

**Displaced from the Court to the South**

In Chinese literary history, it is a pattern that generations of exiled men vent their bitterness in writings by invoking Qu Yuan in the Chuci style. To name a few renowned writers from the

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70 Lu Kang’s mother was daughter of Sun Ce 孫策 (175-200). He guarded Shouchun 壽春 (modern Shou county in Anhui), the last capital of Chu, Xiling 西陵 (in modern Hubei), and Jingzhou 荊州 (modern Hubei), all on the old Chu territory. *Sanguo zhi* 58.1354-55.
long list: Jia Yi, Yan Yanzhi 顔延之 (384-456), Jiang Yan 江淹 (444-505), Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842), Xin Qiji 辛棄疾, and others. For these exiled officials, Qu Yuan was a precursor who, in spite of his lofty intent, was wronged by the ruler. Their self-identification with Qu Yuan, except for their exile, was also built on another shared experience between Qu Yuan and themselves—that they were all exiled to the old Chu territory. For a long period in history, the Chu area, or the south in general that Chu once took up its most part, has represented the underdeveloped, fearsome, and even uncivilized place shrouded in miasma 瘴氣, a purported cause for malaria (zhanglei 瘴癞 or zhangbing 瘴病) and even early death. As such, the old Chu territory has famously served as the place of exile for centuries before the Song expansion to the south. As Sun Wanshou 孫萬壽 (d. ca. 608) commented in his own exile in the south, that “South of Yangzi River is a land of miasma, where most banished officials are sent since the very beginning.” 江南瘴癘地, 從來多逐臣. Ironically, Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 (678-740), who was recorded to once suggest to the throne that “it is improper to

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71 When passing by the Miluo River on his way of demotion to Shiping 始平, Yan Yanzhi composed a “Dirge for Qu Yuan” 祭屈原文. See Wenxuan 60.2606.
72 When serving in Wuxing 吳興 (modern Fujian), south of the Warring States Chu, Jiang Yan composed his “Daizui Jiannan ni beigui fu” 待罪江南思北歸賦 (Fu on Awaiting Punishment, Yearning for Return to the North), “Shanzhong Chuci” 山中楚辭, and many other fu by extensively adopting the Chuci 语言. See Hu Zhijii 胡之驄, Jiang Wentong ji huizhu 江文通集箋注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 31-34. For a discussion of his “Daizui” fu, see Paul Kroll, “Farther South: Jiang Yan in Darkest Fujian,” in Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry, 109-136. See also, Nicholas Williams, Imitations of the Self: Jiang Yan and Chinese Poetics (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 147-175. Note, Fujian did not belong to the old Chu territory, but south of it. Jiang Yan’s invocation of Chuci in his Fujian poems shows that Chu not only represents the south in general, but also serves as a symbol for the place of exile.
73 Liu Yuxi had “Chu wang fu” 楚望賦 (Fu on Gazing from Chu) and “Zhe jiumian fu” 著九年賦 (Fu on the Ninth Year of Demotion) written in Langzhou 朗州 (modern Hunan). Qu Tuiyuan 矾賢園, Liu Yuxi jji jianzheng 劉禹錫集箋證 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), 11-17, 26-27.
74 Cf. Xin Qiji’s “Shangui yao” 山鬼説. Deng Guangming 鄧廣銘, Jiaxuan ci biannian jianzhu 稹軒詞編年箋注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), 176.
76 “Yuanshu Jiangnan ji jingshi qinyou” 遠戍江南寄京師親友, see Lu Qini 魯欽立, Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 2638.
banish officials to a pleasant place” 放臣不宜與善地, was himself later exiled first to Shi’an 始安 (in modern Guangxi) and then to Jingzhou 荊州 (in modern Hubei), both known as the land of miasma. Except for a demotion from the central court to local areas of marginalization of power, being sent to the reputed unlivable land itself was a punishment. Therefore, in exile writings, officials often expressed their resentment of the landscape.

In this section, I will examine the representation of Chu and Qu Yuan in this regard in the fu of Liu Zongyuan. On the one hand, his experience was particularly tragic. On the other hand, his compositions of fu in the Chuci style presenting his life to be tragic was rich in number. Through a close reading of the “Minshegn fu” and “Qiushan fu,” I suggest that Liu Zongyuan saw plaint to be the defining sentiment in the Qu Yuan persona and his works, a view that was shaped by Liu Zongyuan’s own image and experience. To better dramatize his own plaint, Liu Zongyuan depicted the Chu landscape in an intimidating fashion. A comparison between the “Qiushan fu” and “Yongzhou baji” 永州八记, however, shows that the similar mountainous landscape was depicted drastically different in the prose as a land of pleasure. The discrepancy reveals Liu Zongyuan’s perception of the function of Chuci style, a style that goes together with hyperbolic and legendary imagery, motifs of conflict and darkness, and vehement feelings of rancor and frustration.

For his involvement in the Yongzhen 永貞 Reform against the eunuchs and regional military forces, Liu Zongyuan was exiled after the failure of the reform in 805. Although the Reform was widely criticized as a factional scheme in contemporary and later times, Liu Zongyuan persisted in maintaining its uprightness in correcting the wrongs at court. He was

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77 Xin Tang shu 新唐書, 168.5129.
78 For a discussion of Liu Zongyuan’s role in the reform, see Jo-shui Chen, Liu Tsung-yüan and Intellectual Change in Tang China, 773-819 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 61-80. Specifically, Liu Zongyuan was a
first exiled to Shaozhou 邵州 (in the southwest of modern Hunan) and before he was even able to arrive he was again demoted to Yongzhou 永州 (in the south of modern Hunan), where he spent ten years. After being called back to the court shortly in 815, he was again banished to Liuzhou 柳州 (in modern north-central Guangxi). He never managed to return to the court from his second exile and eventually died in Liuzhou, before the arrival of the emperor’s edict of amnesty. For Liu Zongyuan, Qu Yuan would be his predecessor, who harbored the utmost integrity yet was wronged, who resented his unjust fate yet had no way out. Among his Chuci style verses that were all composed in Yongzhou, the “Diao Qu Yuan wen” 弔屈原文 (Lamenting Qu Yuan) opens with an identification between the experience of Qu Yuan and that of his own.

About a thousand years after you, my master, 
I am banished again to drift on the Xiang River.

Between Qu Yuan and Liu Zongyuan, no other exiled officials were mentioned, implying that Liu Zongyuan identified himself as the second Qu Yuan. In the “Minsheng fu,” a fu in the meter of “Lisao” lamenting his own miserable life, the sense of his self-identification with Qu Yuan is even clearer as the fu unfolds.

I mourn for the dangers and adversities in my life, 
I have been charged many crimes and lost my sense of purpose.81 
My spirit is depressed, my breath is feeble, 

member of Wang Shuwen’s 王叔文 (753-806) clique that was criticized at the time as a group of adventurers for “irregular promotions” and “monopolizing power.” Chen, Liu Tsung-yüan and Intellectual Change in T’ang China, 74.

80 Liu Zongyuan ji 柳宗元集, annotated by Wu Wenzhi 吳文治 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 516.

81 Cf. “Xisong” of “Jiuzhang”: “I was charged with many crimes; I met with many a slander.” 紛喪志以逢尤 [*-ou] 氣沈鬱以杳渺兮

Unless otherwise noted, translation of Chuci poems is adapted from David Hawkes’s The Songs of the South.
My tears stream down incessantly.⁸²
My flesh and blood have dried up, my body is withering,
My soul falls apart and roams afar.
My words were not trusted, and none spoke up for me,⁸³
Disturbed and anxious—what was I going after?

The fu opens with a brief summary of the poet’s life—a life of adversity caused by unfounded accusations. Suffering from adversity, the poet was all skin and bones. Line 8 is a rhetorical question reminiscent of Tao Yuanming’s 陶淵明 (d. 427) famous line in “Guiquai ci”歸去來辞 (On Return), “disturbed and anxious, what for and where I want to go? 胡為乎惶惶欲何之. The line seems to suggest Liu Zongyuan’s self-doubt and a change in his mind as in Tao’s case, where the poet regretted having served in office and decided to leave officialdom. Yet unlike Tao Yuanming, reclusion was not Liu Zongyuan’s goal. Neither was Liu Zongyuan regretting nor about to change his stance before 815. The last line indeed leads to a statement of his firmness and faith in fighting with the corrupted world.

If I had shut up my mouth and hid my intent, In deep silence, I would have been able to await my natural end.
But I chose to enter the world and condemn errors, As expected, I was smashed with fatal strikes.
The thoroughbreds are abandoned and disgraced,
The inferior horses are offered for riding,⁸⁴
When a black spirax stumbles in the mud,
It has to recoil from the toad.

Conduct too outstanding is not acceptable to the world,
Qualities too extraordinary have nowhere to hide.

Sea creatures scatter on the land and dried out,

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⁸³ The line recalls the “Xisong” of “Jiuzhang”: “My feelings were stifled and could not find expression, for they screened me from my lord, that I might not explain myself.” 情沈抑而不達兮，又蔽而莫之白。Chuci buzhu, 123.
⁸⁴ Cf. “Jubian”: “Fine steeds they reject when they would go out driving; They prefer to take the road whipping a broken nap.” 卻騖騮而不乗兮，策騖騮而取路。Chuci buzhu, 189.
Owls cry out in a group and sharpen their beaks.
My heart is gloomy and not at ease,
My form is emaciated and ruined, I mourn for myself.
I free my eyes on the waters of Xiang,
And gaze at Mount Jiuyi, whose stretch is boundless.
Rolling and surging, the torrents of Xiang never come back,
Clouds at Cangwu are densely clustered.
Chonghua died remotely in the wilds,
None in the world can tell whether it is true or not.

Liu Zongyuan was well aware that if he could just remain silent and refrain from fighting back, he would have been able to protect himself from harms. But he chose to enter the world to take actions, although he knew the consequence for such decisions in a topsy-turvy world—a very self-righteous pose. In ll. 13-16 and 19-20, the animal imagery are all conventional images of the topsy-turvy world—the capable and virtuous were oppressed while the ignorant held important posts—in previous frustration _fu_ and laments for Qu Yuan. By invoking these images, Liu Zongyuan staged himself as a member of those virtuous and talented men who unfortunately did not meet their time 不遇時. Though the poet’s capability and virtue were now guaranteed to be a given, his own integrity was also proved by these predecessors.

After the statement of his resolution, the poet came to Mount Jiuyi and thought of the legendary sage emperor Shun (line 24), a gesture to invoke “Lisao” scenario where the

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85 The line is an allusion to the “Xisong” of “Jiuzhang”: “My feelings were stifled and could not find expression, for they screened me from my lord, that I might not explain myself. Heavy with sorrow, I waited irresolutely; But none cared to examine what lay within my heart.” 情沈抑而不達兮，又蔽而莫之白。心鬱邑余侘傺兮，又莫察余之中情. Chuci buzhu, 123.
86 Jiuyi 九嶷 and Cangwu 蒼梧 in line 26 are both related with Shun 舜. According to the Shi ji, Shun “died in the wilds of Cangwu and was buried at Jiuyi, south of Yangzi” 廿於蒼梧之野，葬於江南九嶷. Jiuyi is a mountain in modern Ningyuan 宁遠 at Yongzhou, Hunan. Cangwu, according to the Shanhaijing 山海經, is a mountainous area, where Mount Jiuyi is located. The Qin started to found a prefecture of Cangwu in the area. Line 187 in the “Lisao” mentions Cangwu: “At dawn I loosed the wheel-block at Cangwu” 朝發於蒼梧兮. Chuci buzhu, 26.
87 Chonghua is Shun’s purported name, and also mentioned in the “Lisao” (ll. 145-46): “I crossed Xiang and Yuan to march southward; reaching Chonghua, I then presented my case.” 濟沅湘以南征兮，重華而歎訢. Chuci buzhu, 20.
protagonist Qu Yuan visited the sage emperor Sun at Mount Jiuyi to present a case and seek justice. This reference to the “Lisao” was Liu Zongyuan’s implicit self-identification with Qu Yuan. Immediately after the reference, however, Jiuyi as a burial site for Shun was questioned, meaning that Shun’s body and spirit might not be here. As a consequence, no one would listen to the poet’s rancor, not to mention doing him justice. Note also, unlike the Qu Yuan persona who, in the *Chuci*, sought advice from shamans, listened to the persuasion of a purported “sister,” and asserted his integrity and resolution to die to a fisherman, the poetic persona here was all alone, with no one to talk to and no one sympathizing with him. The sense of loneliness and singularity in Qu Yuan’s works was brought to its extreme in this *fu*. In both cases, Liu Zongyuan was presented as a figure even more pathetic than Qu Yuan.

Master Qu was irascible at even trivial [errors],
With his vehement speech of objection, he jumped into the abyss.
One’s indignation so extreme certainly existed in antiquity [and in my case],
Not to mention how unsettled and difficult my life is.
I array the past principles to examine myself,
I point to the Northern Dipper to present my case.
I mount a peak up high, there I stand,
And gaze toward my hometown that is affluent and thriving.
Mountains and rivers are vast, my hometown only looms through them,
The road blanketed by lush groves, miasma rises up.
My empty hut is close to fall apart, yet I care not,
Luxuriant trees on a hill envelopes it in shadow.
Lonely, destitute, and old, I have fallen into exile,
If not the mountain goblins, who else would be my neighbor?

屈子之狷微兮
抗危辭以赴淵 [*-an]
古固有此極憤兮
矧吾生之藐藐 [*-an] 32
列往則以考已兮
指斗極以自陳 [*-en]
登高阪而企踵兮
瞻故邦之殷膦 [*-en] 36
山水浩以蔽虧兮
路蓊勃以揚氛 [*-en]
空廬顚而不理兮
翳邱木之榛榛 [*-en] 40
塊窮老以淪放兮
匪魑魅吾誰鄰 [*-en]

88 Wang Yi identified *nüxu* 女媭, who sympathizes with the protagonist yet persuades him to follow the tide, as Qu Yuan’s sister. *Chuci buzhu*, 18-19.
Qu Yuan’s suicide was characterized as an indicator and consequence of his “extreme indignation” 極憤 of the unjust treatment. Specifically, his suicide was not because “he cannot bear to live in the muddy world any longer as a person of purity” 不忍以清白久居濁世 as Sima Qian and Wang Yi claimed. Qu Yuan’s defining character is identified as juanwei 悫微 (lit. “having a tendency to be easily angered at trivial things”; here means “to be fastidious about even a trivial error and indignant about unfair treatment”), which conforms to Ban Gu’s comment that Qu Yuan was “arrogant and narrow-minded” 狂狷 and his suicide was a result of his “wrath and rancor” 怨懟. Moreover, Qu Yuan’s works written before his death were his “vehement speech” (weici 危辭). In his presentation of Qu Yuan, Liu Zongyuan attempted to make a case for himself—in antiquity, Qu Yuan tried to rectify the world but was wronged, then he composed poems out of his indignation; now experiencing exactly the same fate, Liu Zongyuan himself was also legitimized to vent his rancor in writing (though without taking Qu Yuan’s path of ending his life). His invocation of Qu Yuan allowed him to justify his bitter tone. As I will show later, such an image of Qu Yuan as a poet of plaint is indeed tinted by Liu Zongyuan’s own image. Vehement speech and extreme indignation out of injustice best describe Liu Zongyuan’s tone and voice in the “Minsheng fu.”

After the self-identification, the poet yearned to return, a wish impossible to realize because the road was far and blocked. A more vehement expression of the yearning was seen in his “Menggui fu” 夢歸賦 (Fu on returning in dream), where he lengthily elaborated the theme of blocked road. In the “Minsheng fu,” the poet elaborated on his resentment of his life in a little hut, a place that was not home and as such neglected by him. Then, again, the poet reiterated his

90 Chuci buzhu, 49.
intention and told us that he had no regret.

Zhongni was free from doubts, 仲尼之不惑兮 有垂訓之謬言  [*-an]  44
He left behind teachings amounting to guiding principles. 孟軒四十乃始持心兮
Meng Ke did not start to restrain his heart until his forties, 猶希勇乎鸑貳  [*-en]
Yet he still treasured the valor of [Beigong] You and [Meng] Ben. 顧余質愚而齒減兮
Looking at myself—my intelligence is poor and my teeth falling, 宜觸禍以阽身  [*-en]  48
It is proper that I encountered misfortune, and disaster was imposed on me. 知徙善而革非兮
Since I am aware that I must follow the right and rectify the wrong, 又何懼乎今之人  [*-en]
What do I have to be terrified about from any contemporary man?

The justification for his misfortune in line 48 is indeed a justification for his own conduct. Also in his forties, Liu Zongyuan here compared himself to Kongzi and Mengzi—he was likely “free from doubts” 不惑 and “cherish his valor” 希勇 to rectify the wrong, even that would bring about misfortune on him. The “valor of [Beigong] You and [Meng] Ben” is an allusion to the Mengzi, referring to a kind of valor that is not merely a fearless spirit, but specifically points to the fearlessness that rises from one’s uprightness.

Do you cherish valor? I have heard an account of great valor from the Master, who said, “If, under self-examination, I find that I am not upright, how can I not be fearful even in front of a poor man wearing coarse and loose clothes? If, under self-examination, I find that I am upright, even when I am obstructed by tens of thousands of men, I will go forward.

子好勇乎？吾聞大勇於夫子矣：自反而不縮，雖褐寬博，吾不惴焉？自反而縮，雖千萬人，吾往矣。  [*-en]

91 This line is an allusion to Mengzi 2A.2. Beigong You and Meng Ben are representatives of ancient brave men.
92 Cf. “Lisao”: “Though I stand at the pit’s mouth and death yawns before me, I still feel no regret at the course I have chosen.” 顧余質愚而齒減兮，願余初尤猶未悔。Chuci buzhu, 24.
93 Cf. Liji: “In antiquity, the seams of (mourning) caps were vertical; now they are horizontal” 古者冠緯縫，今也衛縫. The character suo 縫, according to Kong Yingda, means “vertical” 直, as opposed to heng 衡 (horizontal). Kong Yingda, Liji Zhengyi, 200.
94 Mengzi 2A.2.
As the poet exclaimed in the last couplet, he would fear nobody in the world, because he was urged by his uprightness to do what was right, and he felt no qualms upon self-examination.

Toward the end of “Minsheng fu,” however, the poet tells us that he did have fears, not for men but for this intimidating foreign land. In the meantime, he could not refrain from being concerned about his lifespan on such a land:

Alas!  唉
Yu was assiduous and his accomplishments comprehensive,  禹績之勤備兮
Yet he never attended to this land.  曾莫理夫茲川 [*-an]
Yin and Zhou both had a vast territory,  殷周之廓大兮
Yet their south boundary never go beyond Mount Heng.  南不盡夫衡山 [*-an]
I am imprisoned at the juncture where Chu and Yue met,  余囚楚越之交極兮
Remote and isolated, I am cut off from the Central Plains.  遠離絕乎中原 [*-an] 56
The soil is soaked in dirty rainwaters, the riverbank flooded,  壤汴潦以塗洳兮
I steam and boil in the heat; it is always dusky.  蒸沸熱而恒昏 [*-en]
Wild-ducks and white storks play in my courtyard,  戲鳧鶻乎中庭兮
Reeds and rushes grow on the mats in my hall.  兼葭生於堂筵 [*-an] 60
Male bamboo-vipers are nurturing their bodies on the treetop,  雄虺蕃形於木杪兮
Sand-spitters are waiting for men’s reflections in the waters of deep abyss.  短狐伺景於深淵 [*-an]
Raising my head I feel the danger I am in; lowering my head I cannot help trembling.  仰矜危而俯憤兮
Day and night my thoughts are knotted.  弭日夜之拳摳 [*-an] 64
My worry is that no one would protect me,  懼吾生之莫保兮

95 Cf. “Zhaohun”: “The great nine-headed serpent, who darts swiftly this way and that, and swallows men as a sweet relish.” 雄虺九首，往來倏忽，吞人以益其心些; “Dazhao”: “In the south are a hundred leagues of flaming fire and coiling cobras” 南有炎火千里，蝮蠍蜿蜒. Both are descriptions of the south. See Chuci buzhu, 199, 217.
96 Cf. the description of the south in the “Dazhao”: “The cow-fish is there, and the sand-spitter, and the rearing python. Oh soul, go not to the south! There are monsters there that will harm you.” 鱼鱉短狐，王虺奮只。魂乎無南！蜮傷躬只。See Chuci buzhu, 217. Duanhu 短狐 (lit. short-bodies fox) is a legendary creature living in the southern rivers such as Yangzi and Huai. It was said to be able to detect human being on riverbanks through their reflections in water. As soon as it detects them, it spits sand at them, and the person gets sick or even will die. 97 Jin 猥 is a synonym of wei 危 (danger). Cf. Mao 224: “I should find myself living in danger” 居以凶矜. The Mao gloss for jin is wei.
Which would disgrace the supreme and pure Power of Supersession.98
How can it be that I dare to cherish this trivial body?
I only venture to maintain my heritage from antiquity.
Local deities will not deceive me,
If only my vehement speech could be heard.
I wish that no future troubles ever disgrace me,
It is not merely to cover up my previous transgressions.

Yongzhou, right at the juncture of Chu and Yue, was located beyond the limit of civilization represented by the central plains 中原 and had never received the sage king’s blessings. It was a wild land, where lives were exposed to the risks of miasma, ferocious beasts, and poisonous creatures every day and night. The poet was fearful of them, because they could harm his body or even cost his life, so that he would never be able to go back to the court to continue his incomplete cause. As the poet asserted (in a self-serving rhetoric that is disingenuous), his concern for lifespan was not even for his own sake, but for the Tang 唐 (618-907), a great dynasty believed to be founded on the royal house’s possession of the Power of Supersession 代德—in particular the contemporary reign of Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820). Liu Zongyuan’s claim was that, if a person like him, an heir of the sages, should die due to persecution, his death would signify the contamination of that power in the contemporary Tang, and hence the legitimacy of the empire’s sovereignty would be questionable and threatened. As such, the ending of the fu is not so much a humble wish as the poet claimed, but a rancorous exclamation and even a warning to the court.

98 Daide 代德, or Power of Supersession, is often used to legitimate the sovereignty of a new dynasty. Possession of daide is believed to be an auspicious sign to overthrow the old regime. For a reference of daide, see Yang Bojun 杨伯峻, Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 423.
99 Liu Zongyuan ji, 57-59. I reparsed the text according to its rhyme scheme.
In a word, the “Minsheng fu” is a multilayered statement of Liu Zongyuan’s resentment of exile. The poet asserted his integrity and virtue, yet the assertion was only for the sake of condemning the unjust treatment and not for setting up a role model to inspire the readers to cultivate their virtue; the poet asserted his perception of the world’s error, but it was not so much for the sake of suasion as an evidence of his rightness. In both cases, Liu Zongyuan’s statement of virtue and perspicacity was in service of releasing his grief over being wronged. If the tone of the “Airs” is “sorrowful without causing hurt” 哀而不傷, the tone of this fu is much more vehement and plaintive and would indeed be overwhelmingly hurting. As the Jiu Tangshu 《舊唐書》 (Old Tang history) comments, “Liu Zongyuan composed over ten writings in the sao meters; reading them, one cannot help sympathizing with and mourning for him” 為騷文十篇, 觀之為之淒側. For such an effect, the depiction of the intimidating landscape in exile is indispensable. Rooted in the tradition of the “Zhaohun,” “Dazhao,” and “Zhao yinshi” poems, where lands in all four directions 四方 are described in a frightening and horrifying way for the sake of calling back the wandering soul, the similar depiction of the Chu landscape serves to intensify the sense of misery and frustration of the exiled poet. Such a landscape itself is a punishment, which now adds to that of demotion. Living on such a land, one is legitimated to voice one’s plaint and resentment. This function of landscape description is clearer in Liu Zongyuan’s “Qiushan fu.”

The juncture of Chu and Yue is surrounded by thousands of crags, 楚越之郊環萬山兮
Rolling and surging, the torrents are fully charged with impetus. 势騰踽夫波濤 [*-au]

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100 Analects 3.20.
101 Jiu Tangshu 160. 4214. A similar comment is to be found in the Xin Tangshu 168.5132.
102 Cf. “Zhao yinshi”: “The mountain mists are high, the rock are deep. In the sheer ravines, the waters’ waves run deep.” 山氣龍嶧兮石嵯峨，谿谷巒巋兮水曾波. Chuci buzhu, 233.
Some [crag]s stand in opposition, some encircle others, some extend upward and some downward—all are leaning at a crazy angle.

Like layers of city walls, they are encompassing one another.¹⁰³

Competing and rivaling, some expose themselves up high and some sideways,

But down to their foot, their cracks are developing into ravines.

At a moment, they are willing to fall down and be compliant,

Not yet as flat as a cultivated land, they rise up again.

Flooding rain washes fertile earth away,

Vapors pervade the air, sending forth the smell of stink and stench.

The yang energy is blocked and cannot flow smoothly,

The yin energy overflow and condense to be its own pair.¹⁰⁴

Local people live on the scant food gained from tilling the mountain slope,

I grieve for their extra labor.

Groves at mountain’s foot are like the thorny bushes used for detention,¹⁰⁵

The roar and glimpse of tigers and leopards are in place of the beasts’ howl in jail.¹⁰⁶

Why would I gaze at the sky from the bottom of a dried well?

The pit is deep and steep—how can I escape?

Punishment from this secluded and dark land was imposed on me,

Even a sage would suffer and cry in melancholy.¹⁰⁷

Not a rhinoceros, yet I am locked in this cage,

Not a hog, yet I am kept in this hogpen.

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¹⁰³ Cf. “Zhao yinshi”: “Crooked and interlocked, the woods’ gnarled trees.” 總对回合仰伏以離逝兮

¹⁰⁴ Cao 曹 means “pair.” I take the couplet to mean that, as the yang energy at the place is blocked and the yin energy is overwhelmingly strong, the balance between yin and yang as a pair is now replaced by a new pair—yin and yin, i.e., the yin energy is its own pair.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. “Zhao yinshi”: “Towering and rugged, the craggy rocks, frowning.” 虎豹咆嘯代紛牢之吠嘯

¹⁰⁶ Cf. description of the south in the “Dazhao”: “The mountains rise sheer and steep; tigers and leopards slink” 山林險隘，虎豹讜只；“Zhao yinshi”: “Tigers and leopards fight, and the bears growl.” 虎豹鬥兮熊罸咆

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Mao 181: “The wild geese are flying about; And their cry is melancholy. There were they, wise men; Who recognized our pain and toil.” 淚雁乃飛，哀鳴嘯嘯。維此哲人，謂我劬勞。
Now it adds up to ten years, yet still no one calls me back.\(^{108}\) They only cover me up more with tumbleweed and wormwood. The sage [Xianzong] is better perceiving the patterns each day and the worthy is recommended, Who is commanding the mountains to imprison me forever and ever?

The \textit{fu} is an epideictic display and bold description of the mountainous terrain in the south—epideictic in a metaphorical way. The vivid depiction in \textit{ll.} 1-8 is not so much a description of the real mountains as a personified and figurative representation of social climbers competing for imperial favor by hook or by crook. These people are pretentious in front of the emperor, but under their disguise, they are disqualified and even harbor an evil heart to lay a trap for others.\(^{109}\) The mountainous image can be read allegorically, but probably also descriptively. In reality, the poet saw himself as being framed up by those petty men, who sent him out of the court and cut down his returning road; in the \textit{fu}, the poet was imprisoned in the mountains. For the poet, the Chu mountains formed a jail, in which he was being punished everyday by damp weather, stinking air, and the threat of ferocious beasts. What was worse, the land was believed to be dominated by \textit{yin} energy, which was associated with darkness, weakness, cold, stagnancy, etc., and which, without being balanced by \textit{yang} energy, would harm one’s body and shorten one’s lifespan. In a sense, the Chu landscape itself was blamed for the poet’s misfortune. It was the landscape that the poet resented, as both the “Minsheng \textit{fu}” and “Qiushan \textit{fu}” repeatedly stressed the poet’s life of imprisonment (“to imprison” or \textit{qiu} 囚, “cage” or \textit{xia} 笼, and “hogpen” or \textit{lao} 牢).

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\(^{108}\) According to the Song commentator Sun Ruting 孫汝聽, the \textit{fu} was written in the ninth year of Yuanhe 元和 reign (814), the year before he was recalled to the capital. See Wu Wenzhi, \textit{Liu Zongyuan ji}, 63.

\(^{109}\) The ravine in line 8 may be understood as an image of a pitfall.
The picture here, as in many other depictions of Chu landscape, is by and large mediated by previous sources. The description of mountains, rivers, and creatures in these writings conforms to a long tradition of regarding the Chu as an uncivilized, unpacified, and hence unpleasant land. The *Shiji* already remarked that, “The Jiangnan [here, south of the Huai River] was a low and damp land, where the males die young” 賴南卑濕，丈夫早夭; when Jia Yi was exiled to Changsha, a state in Jiangnan and the once heartland of Chu, he was said to fear that he “would not be able to live a long life” 壽不得長; when Zuo Si 左思 (d, 305) was to praise the northern state Wei 魏 (220-266) in his “Fu on the Three Capitals” 三都賦, he despised the southern Shu 蜀 (221-263) and Wu 吳 (222-280) since “Torrid heat envelops their entire territories; miasma screens the frontiers of their domain” 吳土熇暑，封疆障疠; and the list can go on.

The stereotypical image of Chu or the area south of the Yangzi in general as a land of miasma/malaria, fearsome creatures, and early death is, first of all, deeply rooted in the literary tradition of summoning the soul, as represented by the “Zhaohun,” “Dazhao,” and “Zhao yunshi” (these texts can be seen as literary representations of the religious practice of soul summoning, and not so much as shamanic incantations themselves). In the first two, in order to summon the soul back to its home (presumably in the center), an extremely exaggerated tone is adopted to articulate the inhabitability of the spheres in the four directions and the heaven and underground. In the “Zhao yinshi,” to summon the recluses, the mountain that they dwell in is likely presented as a horrifying and dark region, a proper residence for beasts but not for human. The three texts’

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110 *Shiji* 129.3268.
111 *Shiji* 84.3268.
112 *Wenxuan*, 294.
depiction of the landscape in the four directions is to be contextualized in the ancient lore and wuxing knowledge about those spheres (for example, the south as a place of fire and heat).

Attributed to Qu Yuan and/or other Chu writers, these texts further consolidate this knowledge. Their depiction of the south comes to be the stock imagery for the continuous production of later imaginations of the south. As we see from the allusions in the “Minsheng fu” and “Qiushan fu,” the Chu landscape depicted there closely matches the language of the soul summoning texts. As such, Liu Zongyuan’s fu on exile and many others that invoke such an image of the Chu landscape in turn strengthen the stereotype.114

By the time of Tang, the stereotypical image of Chu has become a solid knowledge in literary representations. In the meantime, the bookish nature of the portrait of the south was actually recognized by the medieval officials themselves. When Zhang Wei 張謂 (b. 719115) was exiled to Tanzhou 潭州 (previously called Changsha Prefecture; in modern northeastern Hunan) to serve as a prefect 刺史, he wrote a “Stele Inscription on the Local Conditions of Changsha” 長沙土風碑銘, where he identified the false representations of the Changsha area in previous writings.

In the eighth generation of the great Tang,116 the sixth year in the reign of the principal

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114 The fearsome and uncivilized picture of the south may have been formed out of the political purpose of alienating the south in the Qin and Han times at Chang’an 長安, the central court in the north. After the fall of Chu, the south (areas south of Yangzi) was in chaos for a long time. Uprisings against the court emerged in an endless manner. The Dongting 洞庭 (modern northeast of Hunan) and Cangwu 蒼梧 (south of Hunan and northwest of Guangxi) areas witnessed many rebellions against the rule of Qin, and later the state of Changsha became the base of Prince Huainan’s (purported) conspiracy. Starting from Xiang Yu, the forces of rebellion in the south constantly resorted to Chu for legitimacy and adopted Chu as the name of their own regimes. (An incomplete list would include Chen Min 陳敏 [d. 317; rebelled against the Western Jin], Hu Kang 胡亢 [d. 313; Western Jin], Huan Xuan 桓玄 [369-404; Eastern Jin], Liu Hun 劉藩 [439-455; Liu Song], Li Zitong 李子通 [d. 622; Sui and Tang], Zhu Can 朱粲 [d. 621; Sui and Tang], and Lin Shihong 林士弘 [d. 622; Sui and Tang].) The Chu territory, in the perspective of the Qin and Han courts in the north, was an unpacified land of threat and trouble. The image of Chu as a violent and uncivilized other, on the one hand, reflected the Qin and Han courts’ deep concern towards its threat, and on the other hand betrayed their desire to pacify and domesticate its vast territory.

115 No biography of Zhang Wei is to be found in the XTS or JTS. For a discussion of Zhang Wei’s dates and an overview of his life and works, see Fu Sinian 傅斯年, Tangdai shiren congkao 唐代詩人叢考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 192-208.

116 The eighth generation in the Tang was Daizong’s 代宗 (762-779; the eighth emperor, excluding Empress Wu)
Zhengyan [style name of Zhang Wei] is in the east of Xiang area waiting for punishment. The prefecture is surrounded by the [Xiang] River and Lake [Dongting]. In general, it is a low and damp land, and the day is short. As such, the existence of infectious diseases does not go against the norms of nature. But it is too exaggerating to say that leg swelling is to be found in every family, or that not even one hoary head lives in the village. The area borders on the Lingnan, a place of miasma. Overall, the summer is hot and winter cold, and the pattern of its day and night does not violate the order of seasonal changes. But it is an untrue hearsay that its autumn sun is scorching and winter air not freezing. The phenomenon of a Pakistan snake swallowing an elephant is only seen in charts and books; the peng bird like an owl can only be heard in the ci and fu. Thus, I learn that, as for the claims about good and bad in antiquity and the praise and blame at present, how can they be trustworthy?

巨唐八葉，元聖六載，正言待罪湘東。郡臨江湖，大抵卑濕修短， Área未達天常。而云家有重腿之人，類無顱白之老，談者之過也。地邊嶺瘴，大抵炎熱寒暑，晦明未息時序。而雲秋有紀曆之日，冬無凜冽之氣，傳者之差也。巴蛇食象，空見於圖書。鵬鳥似鳧，但聞於詞賦。則知前古之善惡，凡今之毀譽，焉可為信哉。118

With an attempt to question the trustworthiness of men’s words about evaluation (here pointing to others’ assessment of him that resulted in his exile), Zhang Wei pointed out that the rumors about early death, all-year-around heat, and legendary ferocious animals in the region were either over-exaggerated or purely fictional. In his account that was claimed to be objective, the existence of miasma and malaria, an image particularly characteristic of the south, was the only element among all negative ones that was not rejected. Recent research, however, shows that such an image was primarily a product of northerners’ failure in acclimatization when translocated to the south.119 The humid climate was easily to be blamed and demonized when they got sick from their inability to acclimatize themselves to the local weather and food after a long and difficult trip. Moreover, the identification of miasma regions was strongly influenced by the level of economic development of the regions. Along with the economic growth, the concept of “south” as a land of miasma gradually moved southward. The Changsha area, a miasma region

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117 The sixth year of Daizong’s reign, i.e. 767 CE.
118 Quan Tang wen 375.3809.
in the Tang, was no longer recognized as one in the Song; and the Lingnan area, the Song miasma region, was no longer one in the Ming. 120

If Liu Zongyuan’s presentation of the Yongzhou landscape is a drawn from the previous cliched descriptions in order to better express his frustration, fear, and anger in exile, we do find a drastic different account of the same landscape elsewhere in his famous “Yongzhou bajī” 永州八记 (Eight Notes in Yongzhou), where the mountains and rivers are amicable and enjoyable. In particular, a depiction of the Yongzhou mountains parallel to that in his “Qiushan fù” is to be find in the “A Note on the Small Hill West of the Iron-Shaped Pond” 鉴銅潭西小丘記.

The rocks broke the ground and rose up high, towering and soaring, as if they rose with a sudden rage. Those that compete with each other to assume wondrous forms were innumerable. Among them, the ones that were erect, with one layer laying under another all the way down to the earth, resembled the oxen and horses drinking water by the brook; the ones that were upthrusting, with their peaks lined up and soaring, resembled the bears climbing up a mountain.

The rocks in this note, as those in the “Qiushan fù,” are likely competing with each other to assume wondrous shapes by rising upward or sinking downward. Despite the semblance of vocabulary, the image of the hill here is no longer horrifying, the tone no longer ironic, and the sentiment no longer rancorous and disdaining. As in other ji within the suite, the Yongzhou located at the juncture of Chu and Yue is no longer an uncivilized, undesirable, and infertile land. Instead, the land conceals within it exquisite beauty that even the renowned resorts in the civilized north cannot match. 122 Rather than a desperate prisoner jailed in the mountains, Liu

121 Liu Zongyuan ji, 765.
122 Cf. “A Note on the Small Hill West of the Iron-Shaped Pond”: “The hill is one with superb beauty. If it were to be translocated to [flourishing] places like Feng, Hao, Hu, and Du, the elites would compete to buy it, to an extent that even they should add a thousand cash to the price each day, they still could not get it. Yet it is now deserted in this prefecture, such that the farmers and fishermen passing by would disdain it; at a price as low as four hundred, it would not be sold for years. Only Shenyuan, Keji, and I, nevertheless, are delighted for our discovery.”
Zongyuan staged himself as a connoisseur with keen perception of beauty, who was able to
detect the land’s potential and tame it into a privately-owned estate. \footnote{After purchasing the hill at a low price, Liu Zongyuan and his associates “immediately fetched tools to remove the weeds and cut down the malformed trees, and we burnt them with blazing fire. Then fine trees stood out, pretty bamboos showed themselves, and wondrous rocks became clearly visible.”} \footnote{Liu Zongyuan ji, 766.} Aside from the visual
brightness, the hill also provides its owner Liu Zongyuan a feast to the ear and a channel to
experience the void and tranquil, a necessary step to approach the Dao. \footnote{Cf. “A Note on the Small Hill West of the Iron-Shaped Pond”: “When gazing around from such a spot, the tall mountains, floating clouds, streaming brooks, hovering birds, and running beasts all came merrily to present their exquisite skills down the hill, as if they were entertaining us with their services. When I lay on a pillow and a mat, the clear and limpid scenery communicated with my eyes, the eddying sound communicated with my ears, the void and idle communicated with my spirit, and the profound and tranquil communicated with my heart.”} \footnote{Liu Zongyuan ji, 766.} In a sense, the ability
to recognize the hill’s beauty and the opportunity to own it claimed for Liu Zongyuan’s
superiority to those at court, who would never have access to its beauty. As such, Liu Zongyuan
realized hill’s value as much as he realized his own.

The Yongzhou landscape in general and the competing rocks specifically were depicted in
contrastive ways. Both pictures, in the end, served to stage the persona of Liu Zongyuan. The
horrifying landscape depiction in his fu staged him as an upright official unjustly punished and
exaggerated his plaint. The delightful tone in his ji presented him as an “observant naturalist and
introspective philosopher.” \footnote{Madeline Spring, “T’ang Landscapes of Exile,” Journal of the American Oriental Society, 117.2 (1997): 312.} The Yongzhou landscape in the mid-Tang, however, was neither
statically “barbarian” nor a hidden jewel in wilderness waiting to be discovered “only” by Liu
Zongyuan. Instead, as Wang Ao shows, the southern landscape was already inhabited by
generations of northern migrants since the An Lushan Rebellion. Beyond a sense of console and
 glorification, Liu Zongyuan’s and other exiles’ landscape writings also had a more practical
function to help build new homes and transform the unfamiliar land into an inhabitable place. \footnote{Ao Wang, Spatial Imaginaries in Mid-Tang China: Geography, Cartography, and Literature (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2018), 195-254.}
For our purposes here, it does not matter which picture of Yongzhou is verifiable, whether or not the two similar mountain accounts point to the same one, or whether or not there is an actual depiction of any landscape at all. Rather, the opposite pictures betray Liu Zongyuan’s perception of the function of different forms of writings. The hyperbolic and legendary imagery as a means to express vehement feelings of rancor and frustration, and the motifs of conflict and darkness were reserved for the *fu* in the “Lisao” meter; the more quotidian language, the presentation of the nature and the self in harmony, the self-satisfaction and self-enjoyment, and the philosophical reflections were reserved for the *ji* prose, with an implicit claim for its factuality (although not necessarily factual). The contrast may even imply that, as a result of the equation of the author with his works, Qu Yuan’s authorial persona was registered in the meter of the “Lisao.” Adoption of the meter itself was a gesture to subscribe to the persona’s tone and intent as the author understands them. In Liu Zongyuan’s interpretation, the tone (again, tinted by his own experience) was highly self-asserting, plaintive, and indignant; the intent was an upright and unyielding stance against the petty men at court.

**Conclusion**

With their experiences in the old Chu area, the language and style of *Chuci* came to be a readily available medium for the speeches of Lu Yun and Liu Zongyuan. In so doing, on the one hand, they shaped the persona of Qu Yuan with their own images, and brought the sentiment of plaint to the fore as the defining element in both the assessment of Qu Yuan’s character and the interpretation of *Chuci*. On the other hand, their self-identification with Qu Yuan was also a means of self-fashioning and self-celebration. In both cases, plaint was bound to displacement—from one’s perished home state and from the court—and Chu, the state in the south, served as a
symbol of home and place of exile respectively, both derived from the Qu Yuan biography. Chu was presented in contrasting pictures (familiarity vs. foreignness) and attached to opposite feelings (yearning vs. resenting), but both pictures were to give rise to the poet’s plaint of traveling to a foreign land. Northern exiles’ resentment (as in the case of Liu) was a strong voice in Chuci imitations, but melancholy and longing for the south as expressed in Lu Yun’s writings also saw considerable echoes in the generations to come. For example, at the moments of destruction in the Southern Dynasties and Ming, remnant subjects resorted to the language of Chuci to speak of their traumatic experiences in chaos and their lament for the southland (“ai Jiangnan” 哀江南).127

The two kinds of exiles represented by Lu Yun and Liu Zongyuan sedimented into one word, Chuke—“a sojourner from Chu” or “a sojourner traveling to Chu”—a word that carried with itself the sense of hardship and plaint. Lu Yun belonged to the former group, and the Chuci language stressed his identity as a nostalgic southerner longing for his home. Liu Zongyuan belonged to the latter group, and his Chu experiences, when accounted in the Chuci style, were predetermined to be stark and miserable. As such, the Chu sojourners’ compositional practices consolidate the conception of Chuci as a voice of plaint, and the conception in turn shapes the experiences of the sojourners on the Chu land.

127 For a discussion, see Qi Lifeng 祁立峰, “Hun xi guilai ai Jiangnan: Lun Shen Jiong, Yu Xin, Yan Zhitui de shanghen shuxie yu xushi meixue” 魂兮歸來哀江南：論沈炯、庾信、顏之推的傷痕書寫與敘事美學, Qinghua xuebao 42.4 (2012): 625-56; Cheng Yu-yu 鄭毓瑜, “Ming Qing zhijii cifu zuopin de ‘Ai Jiangnan’ lunshu—Yi Xia Wanchun ‘Daai fu’ wei duanxu de taolun” 明清之間辭賦作品的“哀江南”論述—以夏完淳《大哀賦》為端緒的討論, 31.1-2 (2001): 1-36. In particular, Cheng considers the fu that “lamented the Jiangnan” can be seen as a revival of Chuci at the end of Ming.
Chapter Three. Elixir and Lust: Chuci as A Language of Desire

A stereotypical image of Chu since the Han time is that people of Chu “believed in shamans and spirits and heavily used lewd rites” 信巫鬼，重淫祀.¹ Originating in Chu, the Chuci in modern scholarship is often recognized as a literary tradition that grow out of Chu religions, whether shamanism or mediumism.² In premodern commentaries such as that of Wang Yi and Zhu Xi, however, the entire Qu Yuan corpus, including the “Jiuge” that closely resemble sacrificial songs, invariably tells a political allegory where the poet and adviser conveyed his frustration and remonstration in disguised languages.³ In particular, in his composition of “Jiuge,” Qu Yuan purportedly transformed the vulgar language of “lewd rites” into a sincere voice, and reoriented the sensual desire in these rites to symbolize his pursuit of virtue and political ambition. This reading advanced by Wang Yi contextualizes the “Jiuge” in Chu religion and decontextualizes the suite from it at once, in that the “Jiuge” served ritual purposes

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¹ Hanshu 28B. 1666.
² Scholars East and West have proposed different levels of the connection between Chuci and shamanism/mediumism. For example, Fujino Iwatomo 藤野巖友 sees Chuci as Qu Yuan’s literary rendering of the religious language used by shamans. See his Fukei bungakuron (Tōkyō: Daigaku Shobō, 1969). Arthur Waley argues that the “Jiuge” are liturgies used in rituals. See his The Nine Songs: Study of Shamanism in Ancient China (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1973). David Hawkes has similar arguments, see his “Quest of Goddess,” 42-68. See also, David Hawkes, Songs of the South, 95-101. In the dissertation, I follow John Major’s selection of working definition of shamanism and mediumism, which he argues that both existed in the Chu culture toward the end of the Warring States. A shaman is “a socially functionary who, with the help of guardian spirits, attains ecstasy to create a rapport with the supernatural world on behalf of his group members.” (Ake Hultkrantz, “A Definition of Shamanism,” Temenos 9 [1973]: 25-37.) A medium “in religious rituals go into trances” and is “possessed by spirits, speak[s] in tongues, prophesy on behalf of the community, dance[s] with wild, unbound hair, and otherwise engage[s] in ‘lewd’ conduct.” (Jordan Paper, The Spirits Are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993]). The differences between the two are that, a) a medium, unlike a shaman, does not necessarily belong to a sanctioned lineage or have formal training, and b) possession of the medium is not necessarily by a known and named spirit. See John Major, “Characteristics of Late Chu Religion,” in Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China, eds. Constance Cook and John Major (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 135-138.
³ Wang Yi and Zhu Xi differed in their commentaries on the nature of “Jiuge.” According to Wang Yi, the “Jiuge” were composed to serve as sacrificial songs to replace the vulgar music used in local popular rites of Yuan and Xiang areas. Zhu Xi considered the “Jiuge” as Qu Yuan’s appropriation and rectification of the old sacrificial songs. Additionally, Wang Yi identified the intention of composition to be plaint and remonstration, while Zhu Xi saw the expression of loyalty and patriotism as Qu Yuan’s purpose. See Chuci buzhu, 55; Chuci jizhu, 31.
(purportedly in Qu Yuan’s time) on surface, with an actual intention to express Qu Yuan’s plaint and attachment to the king.

This political allegory is facilitated by a figurative reading of imagery in *Chuci*. In modern scholarship, the centrality of imagery in *Chuci* marks an inception of a tradition called “aromatic plants and fair ladies” 香草美人, a tradition of both composition (originating with Qu Yuan) and exegesis (established by Wang Yi). In the view of this tradition, poets compose by substituting an object/action with a relevant image in poetry, and as such the image must be understood figuratively as pointing to some deeper and more significant meaning. Closely tied to the Qu Yuan story, imagery in this tradition is loaded with strong moral-political implications—aromatic plants are images for one’s virtue and the fair lady is a figure for a gentleman; or more specifically, ingestion/decoration of plants is an image for cultivation of virtue and the quest of fair ladies a figure for pursuing political ambition.

This chapter revisits the readings of imagery in *Chuci* from Han to Tang, focusing on the two major categories of aromatic plants and fair ladies. I show that, from the Han on, the figurative reading of these images that gave rise to moral-political significance was paralleled by many alternative interpretations pointing to desire—specifically the desire for longevity through the use of elixirs and desire for beautiful females. Though both were tied to the Qu Yuan story, the figurative reading gave rise to a Qu Yuan persona of highest integrity, while more straightforward readings subjected Qu Yuan and *Chuci* to many moral accusations for his pursuit of personal desire. In light of the potential and actual accusations, Wang Yi established an imagery reading schema for the “Lisao” (and the entire *Chuci*), a standardized interpretative strategy where almost every image is moralized. The sensual reading of imagery, however,

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4 Wu Minmin 吴旻旻, *Xiangcao meiren wenxue chuantong* 香草美人文学传统 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2006).
managed to accompany Wang Yi’s moral-political commentary as an alternative. As a result, the lexicon of the *Chuci* was not used only to express political frustration and admonition. *Chuci* also provided a language to articulate female beauty and sensual desire.

The chapter begins by an analysis of Wang Yi’s moral-political hermeneutic built on the pattern of correlative thinking. I then examine respectively the alternative readings of aromatic plants and fair ladies, the two representative imagery categories coining the title of the compositional and exegetical tradition in modern scholarship. The alternative readings, I suggest, may reflect the influence of Chu shamanism/mediumism in the formation stage of *Chuci* (the *Chuci* poems, however, are not incantations but at best literary representations). The moral-political reading, though admitting the religious influence in *Chuci*, rescues the text from potential accusations entailed by its religious background, the negative image of Chu in the Han time. The chapter ends with a *chuanqi* 傳奇 story in the ninth century where aromatic plants and fair ladies in the *Chuci* are invoked to articulate sensuous desire and an exotic portrait of the south.

**A System of Imagery Reading**

The exegetical tradition of *Chuci* has been, by and large, a tradition of reading its rich and complex images. The animals and plants came to the Han readers already as a myth awaiting

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5 Modern scholars identified a “tradition of aromatic plants and the fairest” 香草美人傳統, a tradition of both exegesis and composition that started from (and not limited to) Qu Yuan’s poems, in Chinese literature. For an overview of scholarship, see Wu Minmin, *Xiangcao meiren wenxue chuantong*, 1-12. The “aromatic plants and the fairest” 香草美人 as a literary device to figuratively represent virtue and sage ruler was already recognized in Wang Yi’s commentary (see discussions below). The combination of “aromatic plants” and “the fairest” is seen in Lu Guimeng’s 陸龜蒙 (d. 881) “Caiyao fu” 探藥賦, with a strong implication of one’s virtue: “Aromatic plants and fair ladies are used to analogize with gentlemen” 香草美人，得以比之君子. *Fuli xiansheng wenji* 俯里先生文集, annotated by Song Jingchang 宋景昌 and Wang Liqun 王立群 (Henan: Henan daxue chubanshe, 1996), 223. In the Qing, “aromatic plants and the fairest” became a fixed term indicating Qu Yuan’s figurative use of imagery. See Wu Minmin, *Xiangcao meiren wenxue chuantong*, 16.
decoding. The key for decoding these images in premodern commentaries was rooted in the Mao exegesis of *Shijing* that treated them as analogizing or evoking a human situation, from which a moral lesson could be induced. Pauline Yu considers the basic method of this reading strategy as substitution. In Pauline Yu’s definition, imagery is:

the verbal depiction of sensuously apprehensible objects (also important for their evocative powers, emotional or intellectual associations);
the figurative language which usually involves some process of comparison and/or substitution. 

By substitution, imagery interconnects the poet’s life with his poetry, i.e. an object in life (tenor) is substituted by a relevant image in poetry (vehicle) through their categorical correspondence.

In this tradition, interpretation is always a process of contextualization, and a reader’s task is to decode the deeper and larger meaning behind an image.

In the case of Qu Yuan’s works, the texts are almost incomprehensible without the Qu Yuan legend, and interpretation of specific images largely relies on the presumption on their moral-political significance. This interpretive principle, as already argued in the *Shiji*, is in accordance with and required by Qu Yuan’s own method of composition.

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7 Pauline Yu, *Reading of Imagery in Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 11. Yu’s book presents a dichotomy between Chinese and Western poetic traditions. According to Yu, the Chinese monistic view of the universe—nature and culture in continuum—has given rise to a poetic tradition that is metonymic, immanentist, and self-expressive, with poetic images referring back to concrete objects in the poet’s life. By contrast, the Western dualistic thinking gives rise to a poetic tradition that is metaphorical, allegorical, and concerned with the abstract and transcendental realm beyond the poet’s immanent life. Yet as many reviewers have pointed out such a dichotomy is overemphasized. The reviews by Wilt Idema, Michele Yeh, and Gu Mingdong, for example, have provided many evidences of metaphor and allegory in Chinese literature. Also, the conception that traditional Chinese world view lacks a God-like creator is challenged by the findings in Chu silk manuscripts where the gods are depicted as cosmic creators. See *Defining Chu*, 129.
8 Yu argues that imagery in Chinese poetry operates along lines of categorical correspondence 類 and in the single level of physical beings (no supersensory realm is involved). As such, Yu argues that this sort of imagery is metonymy rather than metaphor which involves a “fictive edifice of words.” Yu, *Reading of Imagery in Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 3-43. In his study of the use and practice of *piyu* 譯喻 in traditional poems and commentaries, however, Stephen Bokenkamp argues that the term metaphor proves useful and applicable in the Chinese context, because *piyu* indicates verification of the abstract with the concrete. Stephen Bokenkamp, “Chinese Metaphor again: Reading-And Understanding-Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109.2 (1989): 211-221.
The “Airs of the States” show fondness of beauty without becoming licentious; the “Minor Elegentiae” expresses plaint and remonstration without being unruly. As for the “Lisao,” it can be said a combination of the two…He [i.e. Qu Yuan] clarified the breadth and solemnity of the Way and its virtue, and shed light on the principles of good government and chaos, all of which are manifested in the “Lisao.” His style is concise and his words subtle; his intent is pure and his conduct is upright. He appears to write on small matters but indeed points to big issues; he uses analogies close at hand but the principle manifested is far-reaching. His intention is pure, therefore he praises fragrant things; his conduct upright, therefore he chose to die, with no place to stand in this world.

The source of this passage was Liu An’s 劉安 (179-122 BCE; Prince of Huainan) “Tradition of ‘Encountering Sorrow’” 離騷傳 composed on imperial command. This remark on Qu Yuan’s writing style amounts to a commentary and reading guide of the “Lisao,” and further of the entire Qu Yuan corpus. After elevating the “Lisao” to the status of the Shijing, Liu An implied that the two should be read in the same manner, based on several assumptions under the principle of “poetry articulates one’s intention” 詩言志. First, Qu Yuan’s poems guarantee a reliable channel to understand his intent and his intent a channel to decode his poems. In the meantime, Qu Yuan’s pure intention and upright act guarantee the equal loftiness of his poetry. Not only is there “no perverted thoughts” 思無邪, but the matters concerned in the “Lisao” have to be the fundamental truth about the prosperity of state and people, because the Way and its virtue 道德 and good government and chaos 治亂 are all that concerned Qu Yuan. As such, no matter how trivial the matters referred to in the poem appear to be, there is indeed nothing trivial. Just as the Spring and Autumn Annals, the “Lisao” also conveys “profound meanings in subtle words” 微言大義. As suggested in the paragraph, with the two reading principles of Odes and Annals

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9 Shiji 84.2482.
combined in the case of “Lisao,” the surface images beauty 色 and fragrant 芳 things that Qu Yuan speaks of are to be read as tools fulfilling the author’s didactic purpose and his intention of self-expression. The pattern for associating poetic images and objects in life is dictated by categorical correspondence—i.e. fragrant things are used to illustrate Qu Yuan’s pure intention, as both fragrance and purity are desirable values.

The entire strategy of such an approach to imagery only works on the premise of Qu Yuan as a moral paragon and the “Lisao” a work sagacious as Shijing and Annals—both of which were already being challenged in the Han, as we saw in chapter one. The strategy, nonetheless, was received and further developed into a systematic reading scheme in Wang Yi’s commentary, where each image in text (vehicle) correspond to a person/quality (tenor) in Qu Yuan’s life.

The “Lisao,” following the Odes, took from it the use of evocative imagery. It draws on categorical comparisons to make analogies. Therefore, fine birds and fragrant plants are matched to the loyal and faithful; evil birds and smelly creatures are comparisons for slanderers and flatterers; the “Numinous Excellence” and the “Fair One” are matched to the king; Consort Fu and the fair ladies are compared to worthy officials; the dragons and phoenixes are entrusted with the meaning of “gentlemen”; floating winds, clouds, and rainbow are used to refer to petty men.

With an implicit intention to constrain the reading of “Lisao” and control the understanding of its images, Wang Yi’s catalogue was to serve as a road map and reading guide. According to Wang Yi, his reading is supported by the Shijing exegesis, because Qu Yuan actively “followed” 依

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10 The character se 色, in its general sense, means “exterior appearance,” and often specifically “look of the face.” The character does not necessarily point to female beauty 女色 when used alone. Used in the phrase haose 好色 as in the passage above, however, se does imply a strong sense of female beauty. For example, in Mengzi 1B.12, when King Xuan of Qi says, “I am fond of beauty” 寡人好色, Mencius’s reply immediately takes over King Xuan’s speech and used the example of King Tai of Zhou, who loved his wife and in the meantime cared about the marriage of his people, as a didactic lesson. Haose 好色 here points to the sensual desire towards women.

11 Chuci buzhu, 2-3.
and “took” 取 from the Shijing its categorical use of imagery 引類譬喻. The term presumes the existence of different pre-established categories 類 of inherent imagery in the “Lisao,” each representing a certain fixed type of figure in Qu Yuan’s political life. Wang Yi’s claim on the conventionality of the use of imagery in the “Lisao,” as Stephen Bokenkamp argues, however, does not always match that in the Shijing or later poems, where the images may point to a variety of meanings. In other words, the correspondences “depend not on internal resonances between the things compared, but on a simple correspondence of properties between one class and another.” Moreover, in the commentarial tradition of Chuci, different commentators often arrive at different interpretations toward the same poetic image. In this sense no system of imagery reading could actually be constructed in the Chuci poems.

Wang Yi’s very attempt, however, was to build a systematic reading into the “Lisao” imagery and extend it to the entire anthology. His schema of imagery is systematic in that it attempts to group imagery in dichotomies—fine vs. bad birds, fragrant vs. smelly plants, loyalty vs. evilness, ruler vs. official, and gentleman vs. petty man. The dichotomous scheme is rooted in the traditional perception of the world influenced by correlative thinking, that the human world mirrors the natural world, both belonging to a greater, universal patterned order regulated by the contrastive and complementary forces of yin and yang (duality). Under such a perception, for example, there are fragrant and smelly plants; the fragrant ones would correspond to virtue, while the smelly ones to evil. As such, the imagery schema in the “Lisao” would serve to present

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13 Ibid, 216.  
14 According to the tradition, the sages understands the hidden correlations through observing the resonances between things in the same inherent category. Knowledge of the principle of correlations help the sages decide how they would act. For a discussion, see A.C. Graham, Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986).
and encapsulate the fundamental patterns of the world. This is the philosophical significance of
the imagery schema at Wang Yi’s time, and it illustrates the mechanism at work for the “Lisao”
to convey “profound meanings in subtle words.”

Besides the categorical use of analogy, another value in the “Lisao” imagery that Wang Yi’s
scheme assuming is the illustration of contrastive morals. Every image is paired with a moral
judgment. For example, in the ruler-official duality, the consort imagery is to be specified as
representing wise officials 賢臣. As such, the analogies in the end all serve to reveal the moral
quality of the tenors. All the images in the “Lisao” convey a certain moral judgment of the figure
being represented. Thus, the very act of decoding the imagery is embedded with a goal of moral
judgment. In Wang Yi’s scheme, there is no such neutral imagery as representing an amoral
figure but merely the two poles contrasting each other. For example, there are images for
gentleman 君子 and petty man 小人 within the category of officials, but not even one image is
reserved for a person with a neutral stance. It is suggested that the world of “Lisao” is one of
black-and-white, where no gray area is allowed—just like Qu Yuan’s persona, one that rejects
any compromise or any stain on his pure self. The scheme, thus, helps construct Qu Yuan’s
purported character.

The two central elements of the scheme under scrutiny—categorical analogy and moral
judgement—however, are not intrinsic to the imagery in “Lisao” as Wang Yi claimed. They are,
instead, arguments about the use of imagery in “Lisao.” To begin with, the fundamental premise
in support of Wang Yi’s schema—“Lisao” as an allegorical account of Qu Yuan’s
autobiography—has to rely on the tenuous claim about Qu Yuan’s authorship to stand.
Moreover, rather than actively “presenting” and “encapsulating” the fundamental patterns of the
world, the “Lisao” had the patterns retrospectively projected onto its text. In other words, the
correspondences in the imagery schema are products of Wang Yi’s interpretation based on the belief in duality and correlative thinking. The scheme itself, though neatly structured, fails to cope with the much more complex textual situations when it comes down to the interpretation of specific images. For example, some fragrant plants such as orchid 蘭 in the “Lisao” fail to preserve their good nature,\(^\text{15}\) complicating their categorization as either “gentleman” or “petty man.”\(^\text{16}\) The tenors behind these sets of images also underwent heated debates in, for example, Zhu Xi’s commentary, where Wang Yi’s schema was refuted as arbitrary and rigidly morality centered.\(^\text{17}\) In any event, Wang Yi’s imagery schema reflects one interpretation among many, an interpretation that cannot be traced back to the author’s intention as claimed.

Be that as it may, in premodern times, it has been beyond debate that the “Lisao” (and Qu Yuan’s other poems) is a coded text encapsulating Qu Yuan’s life and intention, and the key of decoding lies in the “discovery” of the tenor behind imagery by making the “correct” connection between text and real life. Wang Yi’s reading remained influential—his commentary was incorporated into the Wenxuan and served as the base for Hong Xingzu’s “complementary commentary.” The modern literary critical term of “the tradition of aromatic plants and the fairest” (hereafter “the tradition”) was also drawn from Wang Yi’s account above, characterizing a tradition of composition and interpretation where imagery is a central technique in the making and reading of a political allegory about the poet and his career (aromatic plant is to represent

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\(^{15}\) Lan 蘭 in the Chuci should be thoroughworts 蘭草, instead of orchid 蘭花. Orchid in English has the symbolic meaning as it is in Chinese, hence the translation.

\(^{16}\) “Orchid and angelica change, they are no longer fragrant; Iris and sweet clover transform, they turn into straw.” 蘭芷變而不芳兮，荃蕙化而為茅. Chuci jizhu, 40.

\(^{17}\) For example, in his commentary, Zhu Xi refuted Wang Yi’s reading of Consort Fu, the dragons and clouds. Chuci jizhu, 169. For a discussion of Zhu Xi’s disagreeing readings, see Gopal Sukhu, The Shaman and the Heresiarch, 14-16.
one’s moral stance while one’s successful marriage with a beautiful lady represents one’s appointment by a ruler).

As my previous chapter shows, there certainly never lack men of letters who self-identify with Qu Yuan and write through coded images. Yet the readings underlining “the tradition” often overlook alternative interpretations of imagery that are more straightforward and counteractive to the celebration of Qu Yuan. In the following sections, I examine two sets of most representative images in the *Chuci*, “aromatic plants” and “the fairest” as singled out by “the tradition,” and show scholars’ alternative interpretations from Han to Tang. In those readings, the two sets of images were both understood as marks of desire—desire for longevity and sensual pleasure. In so doing, I open up the possibilities to read these the two sets of images beyond the scope of virtue and political ambition/frustration as Wang Yi’s scheme claims, and present a picture of “Lisao” and *Chuci* that has been concealed by “the tradition.” This alternative picture of imagery is neither to propose any “correct” reading, if any, nor to “prove” Wang Yi to be incorrect. Neither am I claiming that these readings would situate the *Chuci* in “folk literature,”18 or reflect a transformation in literature from the Han classical didacticism to the Six Dynasties and on liberation from its moral and social functions. As discussed in chapter one, the extant *Chuci* is Wang Yi’s text, a text embedding and reflecting Wang Yi’s interpretation in itself and the text we have to rely on. In the meantime, however, the alternative readings unveil the influence of Chu religions in the *Chuci* imagery, an influence politicized by Wang Yi’s schema.

**Aromatic Plants: Virtue, Falsehood, and Elixir of Life**

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There are two kinds of aromatic plants in the *Chuci*, those for decoration and those for ingestion, both signifying the cultivation of virtue in Wang Yi’s commentary. In particular, for the former, the association is made by physiognomy—a person’s outer appearance is determined by, and thus a manifestation of, his/her inner character. Under this theory, one’s inner and outer states are consistent, and appearance can seamlessly translate into one’s character and vice versa. As such, appearance is a reliable indicator of one’s character. In the case of *Chuci*, Qu Yuan’s selection of garments and accessories may serve as a clue for character assessment, as he would select objects that match his inner state. As Liu An and Sima Qian already noted, “It was because Qu Yuan’s intentions were pure that he spoke of fragrant things” 趙志潔，故其稱物芳. Wang Yi further applied the physiognomic knowledge to interpret specific images. One example is his commentary on orchid as pendant in the beginning of “Lisao,” after the protagonist declares his noble family origin.

In great profusion, I have this inner beauty, 紛吾既有此內美兮
And I add to it by refining my capabilities.又重之以脩能
I wear lovage and secluded angelica, 庖江離與辟芷兮
And string autumn orchids to make a pendant. 紹秋蘭以為佩

As this is the first occurrence of aromatic plants as decorative accessories in the “Lisao,” Wang Yi spent much ink explaining their symbolic value.

The pendant is a kind of ornament, and it is the means by which virtue is imaged. Therefore, those with pure conducts wear fragrant plants as a pendant, those with benevolent and illustrious virtue wear jade, those who are able to untie knots wear ivory bodkin, and those who can resolve uncertainties wear a ring of jade as necklace.

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19 Chinese physiognomy is mainly a divinatory practice that tells the fortune and character of a person through his/her appearance. Physiognomic diagnosis played important roles in talent appreciation, relieving intellectual anxiety generated by social mobility, solving succession problems, and affirming political legitimacy, etc. The first extant manual on the subject is found in the Tang, but traces of earlier practice and theory can be found in the Warring States period, while the Han witnessed fully development of physiognomy. For a study of Han physiognomy and its earlier traces, see Zhu Pingyi 祝平一, *Handai de xiangren shu* 漢代的相人術 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1990).

20 This translation is Wang Yi’s reading.
Pendants are purposely selected to conspicuously manifest one’s inner virtue that is invisible. In this sense, the garments and accessories one wears is one’s inner state on display, just as the aromatic plants are symbols for Qu Yuan’s capacities.

Wang Yi’s reading is supported by his exegesis of *xiuneng* 脩能 (to refine one’s capabilities). If we read *neng* as *tai* 應 (bearing), a common use in premodern texts, *xiutai* 脩態 (to adorn the appearance) would form a better contrast with *neimei* 內美 (inner beauty) in the upper line, one exterior and one interior. Besides, *xiutai* also connects more smoothly with the following couplet, where the protagonist was adorning himself with plants. In that case, there is no need to introduce the metaphoric reading to make sense of the seemingly abrupt reference to plant decorations. However, Wang Yi provided a text and an exegesis in support of each other, and they together are in service to his imagery scheme, in which all images are fundamentally to illustrate the virtue of Qu Yuan.

To those who would question Qu Yuan as a moral paragon, however, exterior beauty may not be readily translatable to inner virtue as Qu Yuan’s admirers took for granted. Between Sima Qian and Wang Yi, Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53-18 BCE), an advocate of retreating from the topsy-turvy world, cut off the connection between exterior beauty and inner virtue in his “Fan ‘Lisao’” 反離騷 (Countering the “Lisao”), without seeing the former as a sure indicator of the latter.

Since the “Fan ‘Lisao’” was to argue against Qu Yuan by exploiting Qu Yuan’s own words in the “Lisao” as the title suggests, the piece may serve as Yang Xiong’s rhymed commentary of

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21 *Chuci buzhu*, 5.
“Lisao,” including Yang’s reading of imagery. In this reading, plants as garments and ornaments are not symbols of virtue. Yang Xiong’s reading is consistent with his overall stance against Qu Yuan—in his eyes an advisor lacking political insight, failing to adjust himself in accordance with the political milieu, and vacillating between life and death. In particular, for Yang Xiong, Qu Yuan’s final resolution of suicide represents a counter example to Confucius, who traveled in search for a wise ruler, a fatal challenge to Qu Yuan as a moral paragon. In the “Fan ‘Lisao’,” right after the note on his legitimacy to appraise Qu Yuan’s conducts, Yang Xiong set up the critical tone of the entire piece.

Carrying a compass and a square and bringing scales,  
He followed traces of the comet and left his footprints.  
In the beginning he accumulated resplendent clothes,  
But why were their ornaments so lavish while the quality so limited?

The first two lines depicts Qu Yuan as a person led astray by the ominous comet, which meant that Qu Yuan held up to the false principle of exerting himself in a world that would not recognize his talent. The accumulation of resplendent clothes in the following couplet refers to such forced and false efforts. In other words, beauty here represents falsehood. A few lines later, Yang Xiong elaborated on his comment about Qu Yuan’s clothes with “lavish ornaments yet limited quality” 文肆而質騐.

He wore a green garment of water chestnuts and lotuses,  
And was wrapped in a red gown of water lilies.  
Their fragrance was extremely strong, yet no one smelled it,

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23 David Knechtges, “Two Han Dynasty Fu on Ch’ü Yüan: Ch’ia I’s Tiao Ch’ü Yüan and Yang Hsiung’s Fan-sao,” Parerga 1 (Seattle: Far Eastern and Russian Institute, University of Washington, 1968), 5-30. The translation was revised in Knechtges, trans., The Han shu Biography of Yang Xiong (53 B.C-A.D. 18) (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1982), 13-16.

24 Cf. “Lisao”: “I made water chestnuts and lotuses into a coat, And I collected lotuses to serve as a skirt.” 備芰荷以為衣兮,集芙蓉以為裳.
Indeed, it would have been better to fold his clothes and store them in a separate room.\textsuperscript{25} 
Those in the boudoir strove for excellence in their appearance and manner, 
Aiming to look gorgeous and charming. 
Knowing that these girls would be jealous, 
Why did the “Entangled One” insist on exhibiting his moth-eyebrows?\textsuperscript{26}

In Yang Xiong’s view, the garments made by aromatic plants were best to be stored away. Just like showing his moth-eyebrows (i.e. beautiful appearance), wearing these resplendent clothes would merely invite jealousy. Thus, “Limited quality” refers to Qu Yuan’s failure in taking a realistic action to withdraw from the chaotic world. To him, self-preservation was a virtue while martyrdom was not. The external beauty in both cases—garments and eyebrows—are not translatable into inner virtues. The “resplendent clothes” with “lavish patterns yet limited quality” show that the external and internal qualities are imbalanced, meaning Qu Yuan’s moral standard does not match his gorgeous looks.

Unlike Wang Yi’s reading based on the consonance of external and internal qualities, Yang Xiong saw a reversed relationship: external ornamentation indicates the lack of inner virtue. This physiognomic judgment enabled Yang Xiong to reject the moral implication of imagery and Qu Yuan as a moral paragon. It is in this sense that centuries later Zhu Xi furiously referred to Yang Xiong as a “slanderer of Qu Yuan” 屈原之罪人.\textsuperscript{27} Yet similar to the Qu Yuan admirers, Yang Xiong’s reading of imagery was also by and large a figurative and moral reading. Dressing himself up with fragrant garments and painting his eyebrows were both interpreted as display of talents, a way to compete for imperial favor. In this regard, Qu Yuan was no different than those

\textsuperscript{25} Lifang 離房 is the rooms other than the principle room 正室.
\textsuperscript{26} “Entangled One” is an epithet for Qu Yuan in the “Fan ‘Lisao’.”
\textsuperscript{27} Chuci jizhu, 234.
jealous courtiers who were likewise adorning themselves to look gorgeous and charming. Thus, in Yang Xiong’s reading, a beautiful appearance was not exclusive to Qu Yuan, nor could it distinguish Qu Yuan from the other courtiers. As such, Yang’s reading conflicts Wang Yi’s later imagery schema where Qu Yuan monopolized all that were fine while the petty men were left with things smelly and ugly. In Wang Yi’s reading, Qu Yuan’s world is as neat and clear as black and white—inner qualities necessarily were manifested by external beauty, and Qu Yuan, with his absolute uprightness, stood alone against the entire world. By contrast, in Yang Xiong’s reading, the Qu Yuan persona is more sophisticated. Both strength and weakness can be found in his character. In line with this reading, Yang Xiong did not develop a binary framework for in imagery reading as Wang Yi did. Ornamentation may point to both talent and falsehood.

The internal-external dialectic in the imagery of aromatic plants, aside from in the form of garments, is also manifested in the “Lisao” where aromatic plants are ingested by the protagonist. Indebted to its importance in alchemy, the very act of plant ingestion has a strong implication of pursuing immortality in Chinese literature. The “Lisao” mentions the protagonist’s ingestion in two places, once when he famously consumes petals of chrysanthemums and once when eating twigs of the jade tree, a legendary plant.

At dawn, I drink the dew that dropped from the magnolia,
At dusk, I ate the fallen petals of autumn chrysanthemums.
I break twigs of a jade tree to serve as food,
I grind jade into fine powder to serve as grains.

Yang Xiong combined the two couplets in his “Fan ‘Lisao’” and treated both plants as elixirs of life:

He extracted jade powder and autumn chrysanthemums.
In order to prolong his life.
Interestingly, however, Wang Yi differentiated the two by taking ingestion of chrysanthemums as a metaphor for cultivation of virtue while that of jade tree powder as a gesture of pursuing longevity:

When he says [this, what he means is], at dawn he drinks dew that drops from fragrant trees, absorbing the liquid of absolute yang; at dusk he eats the falling petals of aromatic chrysanthemums, swallowing the fine petals of absolute yin. He uses fragrance and purity to nourish himself....[These lines mean that] all the rest merely sought to eating their fill in terms of property and profits, while he alone sought to eating his fill in benevolence and rightness.

When he says [this, what he means is], when he is about to depart, he breaks some twigs from the jade tree to serve as cured meat, and refine jade powder to be his stored grain. By consuming food that is fragrant and pure, he hopes to prolong his life.

The chrysanthemum and the jade tree share two features. The first, as Wang Yi pointed out, is that they are both “fragrant and pure” 香清/香潔, and the second, not pointed out by Wang Yi, is that they both have the alleged value of extending one’s lifespan in the Han context. Wang Yi, however, differentiated the two by only granting medicinal value to the jade tree. In my discussions below, I examine the two images in the “Lisao” and other Han and early Six Dynasties writings respectively. I show that Wang Yi’s reading on jade tree is in consensus with

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28 Chuci buzhu, 12. Zhengyang 正陽 and zhengyin 正陰 are both written as yinyang 陰陽 on the Wenxuan jizhu manuscript, the correct variant as Chan believes, because in that case, both magnolia and chrysanthemums would maintain a self-contained balance between yin and yang within themselves. Considering the End, 15. I would opt for the text in received version. Yang and yin are complimentary pairs just as morning magnolia (growing in the spring, the season for life) and evening chrysanthemum (growing in the autumn, the season when plants wither) are. Magnolia being yang and chrysanthemum being yin, the upper and lower line form a better contrast—the upper line is a yang line, while the lower a yin line. The balance between yin and yang is achieved by combining the two lines together/ingesting both plants within a day. Besides, according to the Shiji, the ninth month of the year when chrysanthemums bloom is the time when the ying 東氣 is in prominence 盛 while yangqi 陽氣 leaves no traces 無餘. Chrysanthemums as containing purely yin energy would be consistent with this belief.

29 Chuci buzhu, 12.

30 As Hong Xingzu pointed out, Wang Yi mistook xīu 襲 as xiū 偕 (cured meat). The variant Hong Xingzu proposed was xiū 偕 (food). Chuci buzhu, 12.

31 Chuci buzhu, 42.
the conventional reading of jade tree (i.e. ingesting jade twigs/flowers in pursuit of longevity) in contemporary texts. By contrast, his reading on chrysanthemum as a symbol of virtue contradicts its reading in other texts, yet conforms to his interpretive rule for aromatic plants in his imagery scheme proposed in the preface of “Lisao.” Imposing a moral reading to the image of chrysanthemum is Wang Yi’s efforts to standardize the reading of imagery in the “Lisao” and to maintain consistency within his schema.

Unlike the real chrysanthemum plant, the jade tree 瑚樹 is a mythical plant that, according to Zhang Yi 張揖 (227-232), “grows in the west of Kunlun and at the margin of quicksand” 昆侖西流沙濱, and was giant in size. The jade-made plant is an important image in the motif of cosmic flight as an aid to eternal life in Daoist scriptures in the Han and after. In line with the Daoist connotation, the jade-made plant was widely accepted as an elixir of life. As Zhang Yi noted, “consuming flowers [of the jade tree] allows one to live forever” 其華食之長生. Though not a real plant, jade-made plant as an image in the “Lisao” and other early texts are similar in their function and connotation, in that they can be used both externally as pendants or internally as food. In these texts, there is an interesting pattern that the function of jade tree predetermines its symbolic meaning—jade twigs 瑚枝/jade flowers 瑚華 signify one’s virtue when worn as a pendant; when consumed, they become an elixir of life.

In the “Lisao,” jade twigs appear twice, both in the protagonist’s cosmic flight.

At once I go roaming to the Palace of Spring, 滷吾遊此春宮兮
I break jade twigs to add to my pendants. 折瓊枝以繼佩

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32 Quoted by Yan Shigu 顏師古 in his commentary of Sima Xiangru’s fu in the Hanshu and by Hong Xingzu in his complementary commentary separately. Chuci buzhu, 30.
33 According to Timothy Chan, Jade Flower 玉華 in Daoist scriptures may refer to attendant fairies, hair and forehead of deities, and an ingredient to be consumed for gaining longevity. Timothy Chan, “‘Jade Flower’ and the motif of Mystic Excursion,” in Interpretation and Literature in Early Medieval China, Alan Chan and Yuet-Keung Lo eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 165-188.
34 Chuci buzhu, 30.
I break branches of a jade tree to serve as food,
I grind jade into fine powder to serve as grains.

Wang Yi’s commentary on jade twigs operates on the two levels identified above.

In other words, traveling and roaming, I suddenly find myself arrived at the house of Cerulean Emperor. I observe that myriad things are all born out of benevolence and rightness. Thereby, I break jade twigs to add to my pendants, [in order to show that] I abide by and practice benevolence and rightness, and that my intention is even firmer.

In other words: I am about to depart. Thereupon I break some twigs from the jade tree to serve as cured meat, and refine jade powder to be my stored grain. By consuming food fragrant and pure, I hope to prolong my life.

The divergence in interpretation of the same motif was indebted to the differentiation of jade’s symbolic meaning as a decoration and food prominent in the late Western Han ritual texts *Liji* and *Zhouli*.

*Liji*: In antiquity, gentlemen invariably wore jade as pendants.

古之君子必佩玉。

Zheng Xuan’s 郑玄 (127-200) commentary: [This is] to illustrate their virtue.

比德焉。  

*Zhouli*: [The Jade Storehouse] makes provisions of jade for the king to consume during his fast [before sacrifice].

王齊，則共食玉。  

Zheng Xuan’s commentary: Jade purely consists of the essence of *yang* energy. Eating jade is to resist vapor.

玉是陽精之純者，食之以御水汽。

The interpretation of jade as a pendant is embedded in the physiognomic tradition used in the context of character assessment where external beauty symbolizes inner beauty, whereas the

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35 Chuci buzhu, 30.
36 Chuci buzhu, 42.
37 Kong Yingda 孔颖達, *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 913.
interpretation of jade for consumption is embedded in early gastronomic cultivation and alchemical tradition where the act of ingestion is intended to empower one’s physical body and to gain longevity. In the case of the jade tree, aside from “Lisao,” the divergence in reading is also reflected in many Han and early Six Dynasties writings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jade twigs/flowers as accessories</th>
<th>Jade twigs/flowers ingested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179-111)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Far-off Roaming” 遠遊 in “Nine Laments” 九嘆</td>
<td>“Fu on the Great One” 大人賦</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make a knot with jade twigs and mingle it with my other pendants. 結瓊枝以雜佩兮</td>
<td>He breathes in primal liquids and consumes morning clouds; 呼吸沆瀣兮餐朝霞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I set up the Changgeng star after sunset. 立長庚以繼日</td>
<td>He chews caps of asphodel and nibbles jade flowers. 咀嘔芝英兮啜瓊華</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Thought on the Opaque” 思玄賦</td>
<td>“Singing My Cares” 詠懷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I declare my nature and conduct, with which I make pendants, 旌性行以制佩兮</td>
<td>Long ago there was an immortal, 昔有神仙士</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear as pendants night-luminescent pearl and jade twigs. 佩夜光與瓊枝</td>
<td>Who lived in the nook of Mount Guye. 乃處射山阿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He rode clouds and drove flying dragons; 乘雲御飛龍</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He breathed in and out, and nibbled jade flowers. 呼噓嘔瓊華</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the left column, flowers and twigs from the jade tree when used as decorations are invoked as a symbol for virtue. In particular, in the “Sixuan fu,” the pendant made by jade twigs is produced after a self-declaration of the speaker’s “nature and conduct” 性行. In other words,

39 Gastronomy and alchemy overlap in the belief in elixir. Gastronomy was one important facet in the early “nurturing life” philosophy, which can be seen in a wide range of texts such as Mozi and Lüshi chunqiu. For a discussion, see Donald Harper, “Gastronomy in Ancient China—Cooking for the sage king,” Parabola 9.4 (1984): 38-47. The earliest reference to alchemy is in accounts of fangshi 方士 (masters of [esoteric] methods), a group of specialists employed by rulers from the fourth century BCE. Fabrizio Pregadio, “Elixirs and Alchemy,” in Daoism Handbook, Livia Kohn ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 166.
40 Mount Guye 姑射 in the Zhuangzi 莊子 is a divine mountain where immortals live. Zhuangzi 1.5.
one’s virtue provides the moral ground for wearing a pendant, and thereby the pendant also demonstrates one’s virtue. In the right column, the ingested jade flowers/twigs are both invoked in the protagonist’s cosmic flight, the same with in their two occurrences in the “Lisao” quoted above. In other words, the jade tree as a stock image in the theme of cosmic journey has a strong implication of empowering the protagonist to travel across the universe as a commander. Therefore, although in their two occurrences in the “Lisao,” jade twigs appear both in the context of a cosmic flight, Wang Yi treated them differently in accordance with the conventional use of the jade tree imagery in the Han writings.

This reading pattern—pendant as virtue and food as elixir of life—as manifested in the imagery of jade tree in early texts, however, was not applied to Wang Yi’s exegesis of the chrysanthemum in “Lisao,” although chrysanthemum was likewise recognized as a pure and fragrant plant ingested during protagonist’s cosmic flight. One factor for the inconsistency in Wang Yi’s reading of jade tree and chrysanthemum is the lack of chrysanthemum’s use as a pendant in the Chuci (and in other extant Han and earlier writings). Yet more significantly, even when consumed, chrysanthemum was not treated as an elixir as the jade tree was. Such a reading contrasts with all other interpretations of chrysanthemum as an ingested plant in the extant Han and earlier writings, where the ingested chrysanthemum is invariably read as a plant with the purported effects of extending one’s lifespan. Indeed, Wang Yi’s Chuci commentary is the only case where ingested chrysanthemum is read with moral implications in Han and earlier texts.41 In

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41 My textual search is based on the Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi, Quan shanggu sandai wen, Quan Qin wen, and Quan Han wen. The image of chrysanthemum in the “Autumn Wind” attributed to Emperor Wu of Han is the closest for a morality reading. Its second couplet reads, “The orchid is in blossom and the chrysanthemum is aromatic; The good one I long for and cannot forget.” Orchid and chrysanthemum are evocative images for the “good one” in the purported occasion of a royal feast joined by his courtiers, the “good one” can be read as a metaphor for gentleman. The attribution of the poem, however, is highly problematic in that neither Shiji nor Hanshu records the poem. The earliest source of the poem is in Precedent of Emperor Wu of Han, a text most likely written in the Six Dynasties. Thus, chrysanthemum as a symbol for virtue in this case should be traced as early as the Six Dynasties, instead of the Western Han. For the
materia medica, the chrysanthemum that blooms in the season of withering is believed to be a medicinal herb. For example, the *Emperor Shennong’s Classic of Materia Medica* compiled in the first century credits the chrysanthemum as an herb that “benefits the blood and vigor, lightens the body, resists aging and extends life, if taken in the long run” 久服利血氣，輕身，耐老延年. Drinking wine soaked with chrysanthemum petals was also said to be a custom started from the Western Han, as a means to ward off the inauspicious and to live a long life. The earliest available source for a moral reading of chrysanthemum outside Wang Yi’s commentary is Zhong Hui’s 鐘會 (225-264) “Fu on Chrysanthemum Blossoms” 菊花賦, where chrysanthemum is praised for its five excellences 五美. Two of these five excellences praises the chrysanthemum for harboring the virtue of a gentleman.

It stands erect early and reaches its prime late, 早植晚登
This is the virtue of a gentleman. 君子德也
It buds while braving frost, 冒霜吐穎
This is an image for true quality. 象真質也

Chrysanthemum starts to grow early and blossoms late in the year when other plants all wither. In Zhong Hui’s reading, the chrysanthemum’s long life and its blossom in cold weather mirror the gentleman’s perseverance and enduring qualities. Yet these moral values would not replace the chrysanthemum’s medicinal value, as Zhong Hui immediately noted,

Light [and floating] in the cup, 杯中體輕
It is the food of immortals. 神仙食也

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44 *Quan Sanguo wen* 25.1188.
Thus, the reading of chrysanthemum is similar to that of the jade tree in that chrysanthemum is read as an elixir for life when ingested and as a symbol for virtue when not.

Indeed, chrysanthemum in the “Lisao” and in Wang Yi’s commentary both have a strong tendency to be read as an elixir in the alchemical tradition, yet the reading was reoriented by Wang Yi to be a symbol of virtue.

My old age will come gradually,
I am terrified that my fine reputation would not be established.
At dawn, I drink the dew that dropped from the magnolia,
At dusk, I ate the fallen petals of autumn chrysanthemums.

Wang Yi’s commentary:
In other words: In the morning I myself drink dewdrops from fragrant trees—absorbing the nectar of absolute Yang; in the evening I eat falling petals of fragrant chrysanthemums—swallowing the pistil essence of the center to Yin. He always uses fragrance and purity to nourish himself…. [These lines mean that] all the rest merely desired to eat their fill in terms of property and profits, while I alone desired benevolence and rightness.

Wang Yi’s exegesis, as Timothy Chan points out, was influenced by the Han Heaven/Earth correlative cosmology that encompasses the natural and political worlds in one interconnected system regulated by the forces of yin and yang. According to Wang Yi, the significance of aromatic plants in ll. 67-68 of the “Lisao” was the yang and yin energy contained within.

Ingestion of dew on magnolias and petals of chrysanthemums enabled Qu Yuan to achieve a balance between yin and yang, the key for harmony and prosperity in the correlative thinking—and in the case of Qu Yuan, the balance signified his morality. As such, the self-nourishment through plants was interpreted as a metaphor for self-cultivation, consistent with Wang Yi’s imagery scheme where aromatic plants were metaphors for virtue.

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45 Chuci buzhu, 12.
46 Timothy Chan, Considering the End: Mortality in Early Medieval Chinese Poetic Representation, 12, 15-16.
Wang Yi’s reading of chrysanthemum, however, considerably underrepresented the protagonist’s concern for aging and the alchemical tradition as embedded in the “Lisao” couplet. To begin with, the couplet appears immediately after the motif of passage of time, which is a recurrent pattern in the “Lisao.” Growing and withering in the vicissitudes of seasons, plants give a strong impression of passage of time and lend themselves to express anxiety of growing old. The plant motifs in lines 67-68 are particularly embedded with the sense of elapse of time. The temporal words morning and evening denote the cycle of a day. On top of that, magnolias grow in spring and chrysanthemums in autumn, and thus, the two seasons represent the cycle of a year, or the concept of time in general. Specified as morning magnolias and evening chrysanthemums, these plants present the change in a lifetime from exuberance to withering within a single day. The protagonist’s drinking and eating is his response to the swift passage of time. As in Cao Pi’s 曹丕 (187-226) reading, chrysanthemum was an elixir to resist aging:

How time flies! It is ninth day of the ninth month again. As a yang number, nine corresponds to both the sun and the moon, and as such the day is revered in customs as beneficial for long life. Therefore, people hold grand feasts on this day. The ninth month corresponds to the wuyi pitch in the musical scale; wuyi means that there is even not a space within the range of shooting an arrow left for all the trees and grasses to grow. Yet for the fragrant chrysanthemums, they alone grow exuberantly among all. If not because they contain the pure harmony of qian and kun, and embody the fine and aromatic energy, how can they be like this? Therefore, when Qu Yuan grieved for the gradual coming of his old age, he thought of consuming the fallen petals of autumn chrysanthemums. Nothing may compare with this plant for purposes of supporting body and extending life. I respectfully hold one bundle in hand, in order to complement the method of Ancestor Peng.48

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47 For example, “Lisao” ll. 13-16: “They rush away from me, and I fear of not being able to catch up with it; I dread that the years won’t stay with me. In the morning I gathered magnolia in the mountain; in the evening I plucked the sedges on the islet.” 汝若將不及兮，恐年歲之不吾與。朝搴阰之木蘭兮，夕揽洲之宿莽。ll. 19-20: “Indeed plants will wither and leaves fall, I am terrified that the fair one will pass her prime.” 惟草木之零落兮，恐美人之遲暮。Also ll. 299-302: “Act now before the year grows too late, now while the season has not yet passed. I fear that the nightjar will cry early, making all plants lose their fragrance.” 及年歲之未晏兮，時亦猶其未央。恐鵩鴨之先鳴兮，使夫百草為之不芳。

48 Ancestor Peng 彭祖 is a legendary man who allegedly lived more than eight hundred years in the Shang dynasty, and in the meantime a saint revered in Daoism for his pursuit of elixir of life.
Invoking the first two hexagrams *qian* and *kun* in the *Changes*, Cao Pi similarly resorted to the *yin-yang* cosmology as an exegetical methodology yet arrived at a different reading from Wang Yi’s. Cao Pi introduced alchemical knowledge to interpret the ideal *yin-yang* balance contained in plants: the balance qualified chrysanthemums to be alchemical medicines that were fragrant and pure, and their consumption was intended to purify and perfume one’s body and spirit, with the ultimate hope of gaining immortality. As such, to Cao Pi, consuming chrysanthemums was a method of “supporting body and extending life” 輔體延年, which complemented Ancestor Peng’s practice in pursuit of longevity. Similar to Wang Yi, Cao Pi understood the physical body as a microcosm and its cultivation was to align the body with the greater cosmological principle of Dao. Yet to Cao Pi, the meaning of this alignment and its benefit were preservation of life, while to Wang Yi, moral accomplishment was the ultimate goal in life.

Wang Yi downplayed the alchemical implications of the chrysanthemum in “Lisao” and reoriented it as a symbol of virtue, which contradicted the conventional reading of the image. This reoriented reading reveals his efforts to maintain the interpretive rule in his virtue-centered and metaphoric imagery scheme, where aromatic plants were invariably treated as symbols for virtue. Under this rule, the jade tree, a mythical plant, is excluded from the category of aromatic plant for its reading as an elixir to be preserved. By contrast, although apparently an aromatic plant, the chrysanthemum has to be an image illustrating Qu Yuan’s morality.

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50 In Wang Yi’s reading, the chrysanthemum contained *yin* energy alone, while Cao Pi believed that chrysanthemums alone contained the *yin-yang* balance.
To conform to the interpretive rule, all occurrences of chrysanthemum in the *Chuci* was invariably read with moral implications in Wang Yi’s commentary. Aside from the “Lisao” couplet, chrysanthemum appears twice in the *Chuci*:

“Xisong” 惜訣 of “Jiuzhang”:

I have sown gracillary and planted chrysanthemums,  
Hoping to serve as savory food in the spring days.  
播江離與滋菊兮  
願春日以為糗芳  
Wang Yi’s commentary:  
[In other words,] I eat and drink with restraints, in order to cultivate the goodness with tireless energy.  
食飲有節，修善不倦也。

“Lihun” 禮魂 of “Jiuge”:

The rites are accomplished in the beating of drums,  
The flower-wand is passed on to succeeding dancers.  
Lovely maidens sing their song, slow and solemnly.  
Orchids in the spring and chrysanthemums in the autumn:  
They will go on until the end of time.  
成禮兮會皜  
傳芭兮代舞  
誇女倡兮容與  
春蘭兮秋菊  
長無絕兮終古  
Wang Yi’s commentary:  
In other words, sacrifices use orchids in the spring and chrysanthemums in the autumn, in order to let their fragrance to be transmitted to all future time, so that the timeless Way is not cut off.  
言春祠以蘭，秋祠以菊，為芬芳長相繼承，無絕於終古之道也。

According to Wang Yi, similar to how it is depicted in the “Lisao,” the ingestion of chrysanthemums in the “Jiuzhang” is a metaphor of self-cultivation—more specifically, a cultivation of self-control because the protagonist merely feed on pure and fragrant plants.

Chrysanthemum in the “Jiuge” is set in a ritual context. The entire “Jiuge” suite ends with the picture of chrysanthemum and orchid being passed on among the lovely dancers, signifying the end and, more importantly, the future continuation of the ritual. Orchid and chrysanthemum never die 無絕 in the sense that they come back to life every spring/autumn, meaning that the ritual will be carried on every year. Besides, chrysanthemum and orchid each has their season to

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51 *Chuci buzhu*, 127.
52 Ibid, 84.
blossom. Used as ritual provisions in their blossom season is to sacrifice with the correct plant, meaning that the ritual is practiced in the correct way. In other words, the two plants in the coda of “Jiuge” are metonyms of ritual order. Their correct and continual use signify the perpetuation of the ritual order, which never dies out 無絕. By contrast, the key feature for the plants in Wang Yi’s reading is not their seasonality but their fragrance 芬芳, a feature loaded with strong moral implications in his imagery reading scheme. In Wang Yi’s interpretation, the coda becomes a statement that people who have access to the fragrant plants—i.e. the virtuous ones—are aligned with the operation of the timeless Way. Ritual’s function is to provide an occasion for people to achieve the alignment with the Way. The ritual provisions, chrysanthemums and orchids, as demonstrations of the practitioner’s virtue, provide a channel for the alignment.

In sum, a comparison between Wang Yi’s reading of aromatic plants and their representation in the Han and Six Dynasties texts shows that Wang Yi’s imagery reading scheme is highly standardized and morality-centered. Images in the category of aromatic plants are treated as homogeneous in nature (pure and fragrant) and meaning (aromatic plants as symbols of virtue), which in many cases contradict the contemporary/conventional interpretations. The homogeneous category of aromatic plants is Wang Yi’s construction, and it is the same with the category of fair lady.

**The Quest of the Fairest: Licentious or Virtuous?**

In early Chinese thought, the image of women and sensuous desire plays an important role in illustrating political ideals, so much so that almost “every sexual act” is “in some sense a political act.”53 In traditional *Chuci* exegesis, the protagonist’s quest of fair lady was invariably

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understood as a political pursuit, be it a task of seeking a wise ruler or adviser, while modern scholars often emphasize the religious connotation of the scenario. In this section, I examine the political reading of the quest in the Han and its reception in the Six Dynasties. I argue that Wang Yi’s figurative reading of the fair lady as a vehicle of the junzi reflects an Eastern Han intellectual perspective that sees sensuous desire as incompatible with self-cultivation. This reading strategy further rescued Chuci from its unfavorable cultural background of Chu, a state of “lewd rites.”

The interpretation of Chuci imagery in the Western Han was framed in the exegetical tradition of Shijing. In Liu An’s comment quoted by the Shiji, sensuous desire was recognized as a motif shared by the Shijing and Chuci.

The “Airs of the States” show fondness of beauty without becoming licentious; the “Minor Elegantiae” expresses plaint and remonstration without being unruly. As for the “Lisao,” it can be said a combination of the two.

《國風》好色而不淫，《小雅》怨誹而不亂，若《離騷》者，可謂兼之。55

The “Lisao” here is juxtaposed to the canonical Shijing, and raised to a position equivalent to, if not above, the Confucian classic—considering that the “Lisao” in one piece encapsulates both the proper desire for beauty from the “Airs” and the proper plaint from the “Minor Elegantiae.” Among the two, plaint is discussed in the previous chapter, where I showed, through Liu Zongyuan’s bitter tone, a portrait of Qu Yuan as an unruly figure and a seditious potential of the Chuci language. In other words, Qu Yuan’s plaint is not presented as being properly regulated and restrained as Liu An suggested. Here I will focus on Liu An’s first evaluation about the propriety of sensual desire in “Lisao” and examine disparate views on the issue.

54 The ruler interpretation is represented by Wang Yi, and the adviser interpretation is proposed by Zhu Xi.
55 Shiji 84.2482.
Liu An’s evaluation is modeled upon Kongzi’s comment on the first poem in the *Shijing*—
the “Guanju” “expresses joy without being excessively joyful, and sorrow without being hurtful”樂而不淫，哀而不傷. On the one hand, this is a comment on the effect of reading—just like reading the “Airs” does not instruct one to indulge in sensual desire, neither does the “Lisao.” On the other hand, this comment also affirms that description of sensual desire has a conspicuous presence in the “Lisao”—“fondness of beauty” 好色 is a feature as characteristic of the “Airs” as of the “Lisao.” The question is, how does “Lisao” manage not to transgress the proper limits of “fondness of beauty”? Wang Yi split the 好色 term into two parts—sex and physical beauty. The physical beauty in the “Lisao” belongs to a larger political allegory and symbolizes interior beauty, especially one’s moral quality, while the protagonist’s pursuit of fair ladies is a metaphor for his eagerness to gain the king’s favor and to recruit the worthy for his state. In other words, sensual desire, since ultimately it is an image for a much more glorious and righteous cause, is justified by being claimed to be something other than what it appears to be. In this sense, to Wang Yi, there is no sensual desire in the “Lisao,” but only the desire for a virtuous mind and a prosperous state. The “Lisao” is fundamentally not an account about sensual desire, but a statement of political ambition and frustration. Indeed, Wang Yi never talks about sensual desire in his commentary but only their symbolic value, leaving an impression that the protagonist is a virtuous person transcending all sensual desire. Thereby the incompatibility between virtue and sensual desire is implied, as one’s ability to resist sensual pleasure is a way to attest to one’s moral standard. As such, to accept the presence of sensual desire (the superficial poetic image) in “Lisao” only arrives at its rejection (the fundamental meaning behind the image).

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56 *Analects* 3.20.
Unlike Wang Yi’s interpretation, I suggest that Liu An’s comment can be read alternatively, where desire for female beauty is not an image to be substituted by one’s political ambition, but a moral lesson conveyed by the image itself, i.e. by a gesture of fulfilling sensual desire within certain proper boundaries. In such a reading, sensual desire and morality can coexist without conflict. The reading might have been circulated earlier in the Han, but was later overshadowed by the figurative reading based on the principle of substitution and represented by Wang Yi’s schema. This process was mirrored by the Shijing exegesis—the Mao exegesis that substituted morality for beauty overshadowed the earlier interpretation in manuscripts that illustrated morality through images of beauty.

In the extant sources, Liu An did not elaborate or enunciate on the mechanism of “fondness of beauty without indulging in it” (he specifies the use of plant imagery but not that of fair ladies in the paragraph). It is suggested, however, that “Lisao” shares the same way mechanism with “Airs,” where desire for female beauty is described in many poems including the first poem “Guanju.” If we follow Zheng Xuan’s exegesis that desire for female beauty is to illustrate one’s admiration for virtue (as the very is to illustrate “the virtue of the Queen Consort” 后妃之德也, where the consort took pleasure in the king’s virtue without debauching him with beauty), then we have to adopt the Wang Yi’s allegorical schema to substitute the female images with various figures such as the numinous king or wise ministers. “Fondness for beauty” in the “Airs,” however, has a different explanation in the Xunzi.

As for the fondness of beauty in the “Airs of the States,” a tradition says, “[The Airs] satisfies the desire without transgressing the proper line. Its sincerity is as steadfast as [the firmness] of metals and stones, and its music is appropriate to be played at the ancestral temple.”

57 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, Shi sanjia yijishu 詩三家義集疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 5. See also van Zoeren, Poetry and Personality, 87.
The “tradition” quoted by *Xunzi* may serve as a gloss for Liu An’s comment of “without indulging in [beauty]” 不淫. Unlike the Mao exegesis, here beauty is treated not as a stand-in image for inner virtue. Instead, pursuit of beauty is valued in the very act of knowing when to stop. This sense of propriety is worth praising and guarantees a place for the “Airs” to be played in the ancestral temple, i.e. to be learned for didactic purposes. In other words, for the “Airs,” the significance of pursuing sensual desire resides within the very act itself, and the image of female beauty needs not be justified by a substitutive moral figure.

Far from an isolated tradition, the *Xunzi* exegesis is supported by the *Shijing* commentary in the Mangwangdui “Wuxing” 五行 manuscript (the tomb was sealed in 168 BCE and was excavated in 1973). As Jeffrey Riegel argues, the “Wuxing” commentary of various poems in the “Airs” understands desire for sex, since presented as something manageable within the limits of ritual propriety, as illustrating one’s desire to abide by ritual propriety. Specifically, the “Wuxing” commentary states that “Guanju” is “about longing for sex,” which, according to Riegel, defines the poem as “an account of sexual desire.” Yet in the meantime, the “Guanju” also conveys a moral lesson about the significance of propriety, because the protagonist, as the “Wuxing” commentary suggests, “would rather die than copulate in the presence of his parents” 交諸父母之側…則有死弗為之矣.

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60 Ibid, 151.
61 Zhou Fengwu 周鳳五, “*Kongzi shilun* xin shiwen ji zhushi” 《孔子詩論》新釋文及注釋, in *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu (yi)* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書（一）, edited by Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 153.
As Riegel points out, the tension between the reading of four exegetical schools of *Shijing* and that of the *Xunzi*/*Wuxing* is that, the former sees desire as beyond human control and will invariably lead to indulgence in lust, while the other sees it as manageable with human efforts.\(^6^2\) This tension is also present in the “Lisao” exegesis that is, by and large, built on the model of *Shijing* exegesis. Wang Yi’s scheme that rejects the presence of sensual desire is in line with the stance of the four schools of *Shijing* exegesis, and I propose to understand Liu An’s comment on “Lisao” regarding its “fondness of beauty” in light of *Xunzi* and “Wuxing.” In this reading, the “Lisao” is not a licentious text, not because female beauty is to be substituted by some morally glorious figures, but because the protagonist’s desire for female beauty can be limited by the boundaries of propriety. Just as the protagonist of “Guanju” who would reject copulation in the presence of his parents, the “Lisao” protagonist, when seeking a mate, rejects the morally defective Consort Fu and refrains from forcing a relationship with other ladies without the support of a go-between. As such, the “quest of ladies” 求女 scenario is as moralized as in Wang Yi’s reading, but in a different way. For Wang Yi, the failure of “seeking ladies” is Qu Yuan’s unsuccessful recruitment of wise ministers for the Chu court. In the reading in line with “Wuxing,” the failure illustrates the protagonist’s sense of propriety, and hence his virtue. Consequently, unlike Wang Yi’s treatment of “Lisao” as an account not about sensual desire but morality, the “Lisao” in the early Western Han could be an account concerning both sensual desire and morality, while the didactic purpose has to be realized through descriptions of desire for beauty.

The Mao exegesis of *Shijing* that gained significance in the Eastern Han recognized sensual desire as a force beyond human control and impeding one’s moral accomplishment.⁶³ Around the same time, Ban Gu criticized the text as diverging from the classical principles.

“Lisao” tends to speak of the insubstantial and void matters such as Mount Kunlun and a posthumous marriage with Consort Fu, all of which are beyond the social norms and records of classics.

The entire scenario of seeking Consort Fu, a drowned young lady, in Ban Gu’s eyes means no more than the protagonist’s efforts to marry one already dead, a practice that cannot be substantiated by the knowledge of social norms and classics in Ban Gu’s opinion. Commented to be “insubstantial and void” 虚無, the protagonist’s seeking marriage with Consort Fu—and likely other ladies in the scenario of seeking fair ladies 求女 in the “Lisao”—is maintained to have neither moral implications nor symbolic significance.⁶⁵

It is to be noted that here Ban Gu resorted to the custom of posthumous marriage 冥婚 to understand the scenario of seeking Consort Fu. Ban Gu’s interpretation is reminiscent of his famous account of the Chu custom that people there “believed in shamans and spirits and were fond of improper rites.”⁶⁶ Posthumous marriage may not be an exclusive practice to the Chu area,⁶⁷ but Ban Gu’s association of the practice with the scenario of seeking Consort Fu reveals Ban Gu’s view of both Chu culture and *Chuci*—Chu culture was characterized by its overwhelming belief in spirits and improper rites, and that was reflected in the *Chuci*, and the

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⁶⁴ *Chuci buzhu*, 49-50.
⁶⁵ *Xiwù* 虛無 here is not the positive value in the *Zhuangzi* as the formless feature of Dao that embodies great potential. Nor is the phrase to be understood as the modern sense of “lacking of physical presence in the world.”
⁶⁶ *Hanshu* 28B.1666.
⁶⁷ For a discussion of the characteristics of Chu religious customs, see John Major, “Characteristics of Late Chu Religion,” in *Defining Chu*, 121-143. Posthumous marriage is not listed as a Chu regional practice in the author’s list.
presence of such beliefs in the *Chuci* is a detriment to its value. Viewing the Chu rites as eclectic towards the end of Western Han, as scholars point out, is a result of the reform of state rites by Han classicists.\(^68\) In such a context, Emperor Wu’s ritual practices, in which many hymns are very similar to poems in the “Jiuge,” are attacked. For the *Chuci* advocates in this new intellectual environment, accusations like Ban Gu’s require a redefinition of sensual desire in the text. Wang Yi’s imagery schema where the scenario of seeking fair ladies serves as a coded image for Qu Yuan laboring to recruit wise men well satisfied the need.

Although Wang Yi’s redefinition remained influential, the two dimensions of sensual desire in the *Chuci*—as a literary device for self-cultivation and as having sexual connotations in the negative sense—both were transmitted in the Six Dynasties. The first dimension is represented by Lu Yun’s 陸雲 (262-303) “Jiu Min” 九愍, an imitation of “Jiuzhang” that also functions as an exegesis. The “Jiumin” treats the company of fair ladies as a necessary part of a transcendental experience.\(^69\)

Accompanied by Xiang Ladies in the carved cart, 陪湘妃於雕轎
Goddesses of Han River are lined up at the back seat. 列漢女以後乘
Jade maidens rise and sing forth clear whistles, 瓊娥起而清嘯
The numinous winds, in its solemnity, come to respond. 神風穆其來應\(^70\)

The “Jiumin” presents the cosmic journey as a pleasant picture where the protagonist is a powerful figure in the spotlight. Unlike the protagonist’s lonely and unsuccessful quest in the “Lisao” and other *Chuci* poems, the “Jiumin” protagonist is accompanied by two groups of goddesses, the Xiang Ladies 湘妃 and the Goddesses of Han River 漢女, who travel together

\(^{68}\) Gopal Sukhu, “Monkeys, Shamans, Emperors, and Poets,” in Defining Chu, especially 157-164.

\(^{69}\) Xiang Ladies and Goddesses of the Han River were all legendary female figures. Xiang Ladies, the two consorts of Shun who drowned themselves in the Xiang River after the death of their husband and became river goddesses. The “Jiuge” has two poems devoted to Xiang River gods/goddesses.

\(^{70}\) Liu Yunhao 劉運好, *Lu Shilong wenji jiaozhu* 陸士龍文集校注 (Shanghai: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2010), 1014.
with him in one cart. With no quest even necessary, the journey here is an enjoyable experience, where the goddesses are all at the protagonist’s service, taking orders from him. Furthermore, the journey is joined by “jade maidens” 瑛娥, the whistling performers, and blessed by numinous winds, adding an entertaining and transcendent flavor to the journey. In particular, whistling in the Six Dynasties is a reverential performance that, through skillful control of breath, shows one’s harmonization with the natural world and comprehension of the ineffable Way. The solemn response from the numinous winds is a sign for the protagonist’s alignment with the Way. In this stanza, the significance of these female figures is that they are indispensable in assisting the protagonist to obtain transcendence. Satisfaction of the protagonist’s desire to travel with goddesses and their pleasure together—both regulated within proper limits—become an indispensable part in the process of enlightenment.

In contrast to Lu Yun’s positive presentation of fair ladies and sensual pleasure, Liu Xie 刘勰 (d. 520) condemned these descriptions in the Chuci as perverted. For him, what mattered the most was whether or not Chuci conformed to the principles of Shijing, since classics were orthodox source of all literature. In his Wenxin diaolong, the “Bian sao” 辯騷 takes the fifth chapter, a position only second to that of the classics illustrating moral values and excellent writing skills. Yet after reviewing the debate between Ban Gu and Wang Yi, Liu Xie accepted a part of each scholar’s view, and reached a conclusion that Chuci is a text both “conforming to” and “deviating from classics” 合乎/異乎經典 in four aspects respectively. Among the four “deviations,” half concern female imagery.

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71 As Ronald Egan observes, long whistle is “a well-known method, associated with Taoist practices, by which the devotee prepares his own mind for the experience of nature and, simultaneously, attempts to elicit a sympathetic reaction” from nature. Ronald C. Egan, Word, image, and deed in the life of Su Shi (Harvard University Asia Center, 1994), 248.

72 The scope of the chapter is not limited to the “Lisao,” but the entire Chuci anthology.
As for the protagonist’s rides on clouds and dragons, his references to the fantasies and the strange, his command for Fenglong the thunder god to seek Consort Fu, or the commissioning of the serpent-eagle to act as a go-between to marry the daughters of Yousong—all of these are statements perverse and strange…

He regards as pleasure “men and women sitting together all mixed up without any sense of gender distinction,” and he refers to as glee the “day-and-night indulgence in entertainment and drinking”—both point to the sentiment of dissoluteness and licentiousness.

“士女雜坐，亂而不分”，指以為樂，“娛酒不廢，沉湎日夜”，舉以為歡，荒淫之意也。73

Echoing Ban Gu’s judgment of seeking Consort Fu, Liu Xie regarded the scenario as “perverse and strange” 詭異, i.e. accounts unsubstantiated by the classics. Noticeably, not taking the females, together with the clouds and dragons in the “Lisao,” as evocative images with moral implications, Liu Xie implicitly challenged Wang Yi’s imagery reading schema as a system.

Moreover, Liu Xie seriously condemned desire for female beauty. Singling out two couples from the “Zhaohun,” Liu Xie concluded that “dissoluteness and licentiousness” 荒淫 was present in the Chuci. Such a statement—much harsher than Ban Gu’s—would drastically challenge not only Liu An’s description of “with no indulgence/licentiousness” for the “Lisao” but also Wang Yi’s commentary. The two quoted couplets are excerpts from the “Zhaohun,” a description of a grand banquet where “beautiful ladies” 美人 with “voluptuous and stunning” 飽陸離 appearances and “clothes of filigree silk” 被文服纓 are joined by “seductively adorable girls from Zheng and Wei” 鄭衛妖玩, dancing along high-pitched music.74 In contrast to Lu Yun who celebrated the protagonist’s pleasure of traveling together with multiple goddesses in one wagon, Liu Xie viewed the joy of different genders sitting together as a practice violating moral norms.

73 Fan Wenlan 范文瀾, Wenxin diaolong zhu 文心雕龍注 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1962), 47. There has been no conclusion on the authorship of “Zhaohun” since the Han, as Sima Qian attributed the piece to Qu Yuan while Wang Yi to Song Yu. Liu Xie’s decision on the issue is unclear here.
74 Chuci buzu, 210-211. In his reading, Lin Geng 林庚 pointed out that the tone of “Zhaohun” was joyful. Lin Geng, Lin Geng Chuci yanjiu liangzhong 林庚《楚辭》研究兩種 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 2006), 90.
Like Wang Yi, Liu Xie seemed to consider sensual pleasure an evil force. Yet unlike Wang, Liu Xie refused to justify sensual pleasure in the *Chuci* with a political allegory about Qu Yuan. In Wang Yi’s commentary, however, sensual desire is fundamentally irrelevant, because all these luscious images are merely expedient means to attract the wandering soul of Qu Yuan to return to his home. This is where the reading of imagery is critical to the text’s value. The figurative reading enables Wang Yi to defend the classical status of “Lisao” and even the entire *Chuci*, while the straightforward reading marks the *Chuci* as a deviant.

In sum, the “aromatic plants and fair lady” as a writing technique and reading mode are hardly a tradition in any strict sense. Wang Yi’s imagery schema, a guideline to read moral-political connotations into all *Chuci* images, is an attempt to construct a generalized and standardized system where aromatic plants and female beauty are invariably read as allegorical representations of virtue. As such, at the cost of downplaying the images’ alchemical and sensual aspects, Wang Yi’s system celebrates *Chuci* as a classic. Yet the alchemical and sensual aspects found their way to the Six Dynasties and onwards. The alternative readings, in a circular process, are both based on and leading to different (even opposite) evaluations of *Chuci*, and as such subsuming its canonical status under constant debate. In the next part, we will see a purported *Chuci* imitation attributed to a voluptuous girl. The fairest and aromatic plants in the imitation are all depicted with strong sexual implications.

**A Play of “Aromatic Plants and the Fairest”**

In the ninth century, the *Chuci* was not merely conceived as a language of sensuous desire. Rather, the conception was put into practice—Shen Yazhi 沈亞之 (passed the jinshi exam in
invoked several titles of *Chuci* in his short romance, “Plaint on River Xiang” 湘中怨，
where the motif of aromatic plants and female beauty articulated the male affection of a female water spirit. Plaint as vented in the romance rises out of the couple’s failed love affair and acquires an aesthetic value (thus, the plaint here is very different from the political frustration of the junzi as examined in the previous chapter). In this context, invocation of aromatic plants and female beauty only adds to the ornateness of the language and charm of the female protagonist, effectively forestalling allegorical readings. Employment of *Chuci* imagery in this manner was not common. “Plaint on River Xiang” belonged to the “culture of romance” that rose in the mid-Tang, characterized by “the representation of individually chosen and socially unauthorized relationships between men and women.” In the meantime, however, it shows the cultural availability of *Chuci* to articulate laments in the boudoir and the exoticism of southern culture—after all, Shen Yazhi would not possibly invoke the “Guanju” for love affairs.

“Plaint in the Xiang River” is not accounted by learned men due to its strangeness and flirtatiousness. Those who indulge in lust to excess, however, in many cases won’t realize [the nature of such anecdotes]. Now I plan to summarize its words in order to illustrate the

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75 The *chuanqi* story has two major versions and is titled in various ways. The text translated here is based on the *Shen Xiaxian ji* 沈下賢集 version in *SKQS*, where the text is titled “Explanation on ‘Plaint in the Xiang River’” 湘中怨解. The *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 version, compared with the *SKQS* one, is considerably abbreviated in the story’s beginning and ending, and the piece is titled “Student Zheng in Imperial Academy” 太學鄭生. In the *History of Affection* 情史, the *Guangji* version is titled “The Lady by Riverside” 河之女. The *SKQS* version in a copy of *Xiaocaozhai ji* 小草齋集 as Lu Xun 魯迅 saw has a title of “Verses of ‘Plaint in the Xiang River’” 湘中怨誦. The same version in the Qing *Collection of Tang Anecdotes* 唐人説舊 is titled “Verses of ‘Plaint in the Xiang River’” 湘中怨詞. Among all, I opt for the title as recorded in the text itself, i.e. “Plaint in the Xiang River” 湘中怨. In so doing, I would not take “Plaint in the Xiang River” as the *yuefu* title for the poems in the anecdote as many scholars proposed. To begin with, such a title is not to be found in Wu Jing’s *Yuefu guti yaojie* or Guo Maoqian’s *Yuefu shiji*. Besides, the *Yueyang fengtu ji* 岳陽風土記 by Fan Zhiming 范致明 (passed the jinshi examination in 1100) in the Song refers to the entire anecdote as “Plaint in the Xiang River.” Lastly, Shen Yazhi declared the “Plaint in the Xiang River” a parallel to Nan Zhaosi’s “[Plaint] in Haze,” a *chuanqi* story instead of a poem. Thus, the title should also refer to the entire anecdote. I would surmise that the character *jie* 解 in the received title was added afterwards, sometime during the transmission and/or compilation of Shen’s works. Aside from these versions of “Plaint on River Xiadsng,” the story was also adapted into a drama in the Song called “Student Zheng Meets Bomei the Dragon Daughter” 鄭生遇龍女漁媚, for the title (the drama itself is not extant), see Zhou Mi 周密, *Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事 (Hangzhou: Xihu shushe, 1981), 154. The story should be fairly popular in the Song.

precepts. My student Wei Ao was good at yuefu. My elaboration on the poems [in “Plaint in the Xiang River”] is to respond to his yuefu compositions.

During the reign of Chuigong [685-688], the emperor was in the Shangyang Palace. A student surnamed Zheng, holder of jinshi degree in the imperial academy, departed from the Tongchi street early in the morning, and passed Luo Bridge in the moonlight at daybreak. Hearing someone sobbing under the bridge in deep grief, he dismounted from his horse and tried to locate the person following the sob. Then he saw a voluptuous girl hidden behind her sleeves who said to him, “I am an orphan raised by my brother. My sister-in-law hates me and often abuses me. Now I have decided to throw myself in the river, so I lingered here for a moment to vent my grief.” The student said, “Would you follow and marry me?” The girl responded, “I shall humbly serve you with no regret.” Thereupon he took her home and lived together. He called her “Siren” [lit. person by the riverside]. Siren could recite Chu writings such as “Nine Songs,” “Summoning the Soul,” and “Nine Declarations.” She also used to model upon their tone and composed songs of plaint, the lyrics of which were ornate to the utmost with no parallels in the world. At the time she composed “Splendid Scenery”:

Spectacular is her beauty in bloom, luminous in her prime time.
Sending forth fresh aroma, she gets married with grace and elegance.
Caring her corolla and calyx in deep boudoir,
She conceals herself in inner chamber to adorn her resplendent mien.

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77 Wenyuan yinghua has the name as Chang Ao, but neither can be located in available records.
78 “Chuigong” is the reign title of Emperor Rui 睿 (r. 684-690; 710-712) of Tang from 685 to 688. The emperor, however, was a puppet under the control of his mother, Empress Wu (r. 690-705).
79 Shangyang Palace was an imperial villa located outside of Luoyang, the east capital of Tang. The palace was built by Gaozong of Tang in 667, severely damaged in the Anlushan Rebellion, and abandoned in Dezong’s reign (779-805).
80 “Tongchi” is also called “Tongtuo,” a prosperous street in the capital Luoyang famous for the two bronze camels cast in the Han.
81 Luo Bridge was above the Luo River, in modern Luoyang.
82 Biyu 婢御 or yubi 御婢 is a female servant who has a sexual relationship with the male master. Her social status is higher than normal female servants but lower than concubines. See Zhang Xiaofeng 張小鋒, “Shi Zhangjiashan Han jian zhong de yubi” 釋張家山漢簡中的御婢, in Chutu wenxian yanjiu 出土文獻研究, vol. 6 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 125-29. Here biyu is a humble self-reference.
83 Wenyuan yinghua 文苑英華 and Taiping guangji 太平廣記 both have the title as “Fengguang ci” 風光詞.
84 Cf. “Lady Xiang” 湘夫人: “Fragrance of pepper permeates in the hall” 播芳椒兮成堂.
Showing her elegant look, gorgeous yet bashful.85
She wraps herself in the gown made by cloud-wisps.86
Reveling in her luminous glow; one’s enchantment
floods afar, boundlessly,
And expands a thousand miles, soaking the riverbank.
Delight in the morning and bliss in the evening.
Voluptuous and statuesque, she dances suppely.
Her steps are lithe; she slowly unveils herself.
Her face flushes with wine; she sings wearing creeper-
made crepe.88
Her glance resembles a flash; her lichen-like hair
drifts tenderly.89

The student led a poor life. Siren used to open her bamboo box and took out a bolt
of tabby silk, which she gave to him for sale. A Turk paid him a thousand cash. Several
years later, the student visited Chang’an. That night, [Siren] said to the student, “I am a
girl at the dragon palace in River Xiang. I was banished to marry you, my lord. Now time
is up, and there is no reason to stay at your place any longer, so I would like a farewell.”
Thereupon she held his arms and wept, yet the student could not persuade her to stay. She
was gone in the end.

生居貧，犯人嘗解寢，出輕繡一端，與賈，胡人酬之千金。居數歲，生遊長安。是夕，謂生曰：“我湘中蛟宮之婢也，謫而從君。今歲滿，無以久留君所，欲為訣耳。”即相持啼泣，生留之不能，竟去。

Over ten years later, the student’s elder brother served as prefect at Yuezhou. On the
third day of the third month, he ascended the Yueyang Tower with family and gazed at
the islets at E. They set up a feast, and the music reached its climax. With grief, the
student chanted:

My affection is boundless; it is pure and flooding.
I cherish those good days at Three Xiangs.90
Before he even finished chanting, a painted boat drifted down. In the middle of the
boat was a dyed shed more than a hundred feet tall. Draw-curtains were set up in the shed,

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85 I opt for the Wenyuan yinghua variant ya 雅 (elegant) instead of zhi 稚 (naive) in SKQS.
86 Cf. “Lisao”: “I made water chestnuts and lotuses into a coat, I collected lotuses to serve as a skirt.” 製芰荷以為衣兮，集芙蓉以為裳。
87 Cf. Song Yu’s “Shennü fu” 神女赋: “She dressed in an embroidered gown, wore coat and skirt. The thick cloth
was not too short, the fine cloth was not too long. She paced with grace, lighting up the palace hall.” 振繡衣，被掛裳，穎不短，織不長，步裔裔兮曜殿堂。
88 Cf. “Zhaojun”: “The lovely girls are drunk with wine, their faces are flushed.” 美人既醉，朱顏酡些。
89 I suspect that sui ni 蜜麗 should be a variant for yinī 蜜麗. Shīfā 石發 is blue-green lichen growing on rocks by
the water. The last two lines are extremely convoluted and incomprehensible, probably due to scribal errors in
transmission.
90 Three Xiangs 三湘 refers to the three names of the Xiang River at different places, Yuanxiang 湘湘, Xiaoxiang 潇湘, and Zixiang 资湘.
and the railings were all decorated with paintings. The curtains were opened, there were many playing stringed instruments, drums, and pipes. All of them were lovely immortals with moth-eyebrows wearing clothes made by haze-rainbows, and their skirts and sleeves were all wide and long. One of them rose to dance, with a frown of grief and plaint on her face, much resembling Siren. She danced while singing a song:

I go upstream to the green hills at the river bight,

My delicate green robe made by lotus trails on the waves of Xiang.

Earnest and ardent, yet my affection is not expressed.

Not returning together—where shall I go?

After the dance, she pulled in her sleeves and gazed at him. [The student was] just looking into the shed pleasantly, yet a moment later with a blowing gale and surging waves, he no longer knew where she went.

In the thirteenth year of the Yuanhe reign [818], I heard the anecdote from my friends. Thereupon I complement it with poems and entitle the story as “Plaint in the Xiang River,” in order to pair with Nan Zhaosi’s intention in “[Plaint] in Haze.”

元和十三年，余聞之於朋中。因悉補其詞，題之曰《湘中怨》，蓋欲使南昭嗣《煙中》之志為倡也。

This short anecdote tells a clichéd story. Similar to many other chuanqi stories, the “Plaint on River Xiang” is an account of a romance between an impoverished student and a beautiful lady well trained in poetry, a prominent theme since the Tang and especially in the Ming and Qing. Specifically, according to Shen Yazhi, “Plaint on River Xiang” is a story he wrote down and expanded on after hearing it from friends. Judging from the available sources, the version he heard is most likely one among many versions of the story about Siren 汰人 (lit.

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91 Shen Xiaxian ji 沈下賢集, vol. 2 (rpt. in Siku quanshu; original page and number cited), 1-4.
92 Daniel Hsieh identifies a “poetic” approach as represented by “Plaint on River Xiang,” that is, the romantic relationship is transitory and described in “a certain sentimental, lyrical, nostalgic light,” “a mode often seen in poetry.” Daniel Hsieh, Love and Women in Early Chinese Fiction (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 172-74.
93 In the ninth century, the mode of presentation in the chuanqi collections and individual pieces was to claim for a “documentary quality” rather than admitting authorial inventiveness. See Sarah Allen, Shifting Stories: History, Gossip, and Love in Narratives from Tang Dynasty China (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014), 166-67.
riverside lady) circulated at the time. These versions share the basic storyline yet differ in details. A similar story “[Plaint in Haze” 煙中怨 was written by Nan Zhuo 南卓 (style name Zhaosi 昭嗣; ca. 791-854) before Shen. In Nan Zhuo’s story the female protagonist is likewise a water spirit 水仙 banished to the human world, marries a young student, yet has to leave when her exile is over. She is distinguished by her talent of composing perfect couplets. As Shen Yazhi acknowledged, “[Plaint in Haze” was a model for his “Plaint on River Xiang,” and he added poems to the narrative of the latter so that the entire story could pair with “[Plaint in Haze.” The two stories, I believe, can be seen as different realizations of the same plot, i.e. the legendary marriage between a water spirit and a student.

Though it has clichéd plot, “Plaint on River Xiang” wins more fame than its model, which has to do with Shen Yazhi’s (or an anonymous storyteller’s) careful play of Chu as an exotic culture and the Chuci as a literary tradition with a flavor of sensual desire. To begin with, the entire story of “Plaint on River Xiang” is told with a focus on the capital literati (the targeted

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94 For example, in one version summarized by Zhang Du 張讀 (passed the jinshi exam between 847 and 860), the silk product Siren gives the student and sold for one thousand cash is red silk 绣緞 while in Shen’s version it is tabby silk 軽絞. Zhang Du 張讀, Xuansi zhì 宣室志. Quoted in Bai Kong liutie 白樸流則, 8.26.

95 Bian Xiaoxuan 卞孝宣, “Nan Zhuo yu ‘Yanzhong yuan’ jieter xu 南卓與煙中怨解題敘, in his Dongqing shuwu wencun 冬青書屋文存 (Xi’an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2008).

96 Nan Zhuo’s work is not extant now, but an adapted version is collected in the Lüchuang Xinhua 綠窗新話 in the Southern Song. See Lüchuang Xinhua, annotated by Zhou Yi 周夷 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 12-13. The title of Nan Zhuo’s work is most commonly taken as “Intention in a Haze” 煙中之志. See, for example, Cheng Boquan 成柏泉, Gudai wenyan duanpian xiaoshuo xuanzhu 古代文言短篇小說選注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1983), 262-62; Chen Wenxin 陳文新, Zhongguo chuanqi xiaoshuo shihua 中國傳奇小說史話 (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1995), 132-134. Yet as Cheng points out, Nan Zhaosi’s work referred to here is the “Plaint in a Haze” 煙中怨. Qin Guan’s “Tiaoxiao ling” also composed one poem titled “Plaint in a Haze” to account for the same story as collected in Lüchuang Xinhua. Therefore, instead of taking “Intention in a Haze” as a variant title for “Plaint in a Haze,” I suggest that the character “plaint” 怨 might have been dropped in the transmission of the anecdote.

97 Lüchuang Xinhua, 12-13.

98 Due to a lack of further sources, it is difficult to pin down the changes Shen Yazhi made to the narrative of the story, but Shen should have enriched the story by adding vivid details. It is likewise unclear whether Shen Yazhi merely polished and complemented Siren’s poems as he heard from his friends, or he composed all the poems and added them to the narrative. Either way, Shen’s role for the story, to be sure, is far beyond a circulator. He should be qualified to be an editor and writer.
audience of the story) imagination of Chu, an exotic place. The representative architectures of both Luoyang (Shangyang Palace and Tongchi street) and Chu are carefully woven into the narrative to assist the readers to better visualize the scene and “participate” in the story.99 In particular, Shen’s version identifies the male protagonist as a student in the Imperial Academy and arranges him to meet Siren at Luoyang, while in an alternative account of the Siren story, he was merely the son of Zheng family 鄭氏子 from Xingyang 榆陽 (in modern He’nan).100 The emphasis on identity and place is to invite the readers—the capital literati who also studied at the Imperial Academy—to project the story on themselves and “experience” the wonder together with the male protagonist close at Luoyang and afar at Chu.

More importantly, Chuci is central in the character building of Siren. As Liu Xie already remarked, seductive beauty and bizarre creatures were accounted within the Chuci. These elements, in Shen’s words, add a sense of wonder to the story by making it “bizarre and flirtatious” 怪媚. Siren’s character is defined by Chuci and Chu—she is a Chu goddess distinguished by her mastery of “Jiuge,” “Zhaohun,” and “Jiubian,” which she is able to not only memorize but also imitate. Compared with her peer in “[Plaint] in Haze,” where the female protagonist never finishes a poem but merely composes one couplet each time,101 Siren’s Chuci imitations are much more delicately written. Far from decorative verses in a narrative, Siren’s

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99 Every time when the location changes, the story moves forward. The student Zheng first met Siren at Luoyang, and he lost her after knowing that she was a goddess in River Xiang. The couple had their last reunion when the student visited the Yueyang Tower near River Xiang.

100 The story appears in Kong Chuan’s 孔傳 (fl.1120-1130) quote of Zhang Du’s 張説 (passed the jinshi exam between 847 and 860) Xuanshi zhi 宣室志. See Bai Juyi and Kong Chuan, Bai Kong liutie 白孔六帖, vol. 8 (Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1969), 35. The Xuanshi zhi in its transmitted form, however, does not include the quote.

101 In the “[Plaint] in a Haze,” the female protagonist merely composes one couplet each time, in order to find a person—a future husband—who can finish her poem by composing another couplet. Thus, the scenario of couplet writing is to move the plot forward.
poems not only are closely tied to the storyline, but also engage the readers by providing them great pleasure in reading.  

Compared with the “Meeting the Holy One” 會真詩 in the “Story of Yingying” 鳳鸞傳 that is similarly erotic in nature,  poems in the “Plaint on River Xiang” articulate sexual pleasure by employing the Chuci syntax and imagery. Siren’s “Splendid Scenery” and the untitled song (together with her husband’s couplet) are all written in the syntaxes of “Jiuge” (the caesura xi is mostly used in the middle of a line) and “Jiubian” (xi appears mostly at the end). Like the Chuci poems, Siren’s poetry uses ample images of plants and females. Yet aromatic plants are to describe her beauty and not her virtue; and marriage is not a metaphor for ruler-subject relationship. In particular, in her long poem “Splendid Scenery,” her body is compared to a lush plant. Descriptions of plants are used to praise her stunning beauty at the time she gets married, echoing the student’s previous question, “Would you follow and marry me?” 能遂我歸之乎. In the poem, she is said to resemble a flower blossoms 秀 in its prime time and sends forth fresh aroma 播薰綠. After marriage, she hides her corolla 英 and calyx 萼 in the deep boudoir so that her beauty is only to be seen 見 by one audience, i.e. her husband whom she adorns herself in order to please. From line five on, the plant imagery gives way to the fair lady imagery. Siren’s gown made by cloud-wisps and the following ecstatic scene of the couple’s indulgence in great joy are particularly reminiscent of the “Fu on the Gaotang Shrine” 高唐賦 and the “Fu on the Goddess” 神女賦 (both attributed to Song Yu), where King Xiang of Chu dreamed of a

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102 This is similar to the “Meeting the Holy One” 會真詩 in the “Story of Yingying” 鳳鸞傳. Wang Ao argues that the poem should be read as the “working center” of the story, in that its “lyricism gives artistic structure to human experience and informs how readers experience the rest of the narrative.” Wang Ao, “Poetry Matters: Interpretative Community, ‘pailü’, and ‘Yingying zhuan’,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 71. 1 (2011): 15.
103 For a translation of the story, see Owen, The End of the Chinese Middle Ages, 192-204.
104 See footnotes 71, 73, 75.
105 Song Yu’s authorship of these two fu are particularly challenged by modern scholars. It has been widely
goddess who offered to serve the king on his bed. As the goddess in “Fu on the Gaotang Shrine” incarnated herself as clouds at dawn and rain at dusk, the imagery of clouds and rain is loaded with strong sexual implications ever since. In the “Splendid Scenery,” clouds are Siren’s gown, and flooding water is an illustration of the couple’s boundless pleasure. Moreover, just like the king’s mysteriously fascinating association with the goddess in the two fu, the Siren couple’s rejoice (lit. they get drunk 醉 and lost 迷 in their boudoir entertainments) and her voluptuous dance are depicted in a similar mood. As such, evocation of Song Yu’s “Jiubian” as a model of “Splendid Scenery” also encourages the reader to make a connection between the latter poem and Song Yu’s two goddess fu. In a word, the entire “Splendid Scenery” is enveloped in an erotic atmosphere, which is articulated primarily by comparing Siren’s beauty to that of adorable flora.

Aside from the identification of Siren’s poetry as imitation, the title “Plaint on River Xiang” may also connect her poems back to the Chuci. The story title is reminiscent of Qu Yuan’s suicide by drowning himself in a tributary of River Xiang and Sima Qian’s synopsis of Qu Yuan’s authorial intention to write the “Lisao,” i.e. to vent his plaint. Shen Yazhi also characterized Siren’s imitations as “songs of plaint” 怨句. As such, the title and story may invite one to infer that the piece is another self-lament for unrecognized talent and unjust exiles as we saw in the previous chapter. Yet Shen Yazhi embedded no political allegory in Siren’s plaintive poetry. In her short song, her plaint is for not being able to remain happily married, instead of not being able to gain imperial favor or remain in office. Neither does Siren’s plaint give rise to any moral lessons as in Qu Yuan’s poems. As many other chuanqi stories, “Plaint on River Xiang” does tells an instructive moral. The narrative starts with an authorial claim that he intends to

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recognized that Song Yu was a character in these fu, which were written by someone else. Yet the two fu were attributed to Song Yu on account of his appearance in them.
admonish 謄 “those who indulge (in sexual desires) to excess” 淫溺之人 by writing down the account. This is a common practice in erotic stories where eroticism is claimed to be a device to illustrate the impropriety of lust, because it is believed that men will restrain from pursuing improper sexual desires after they have learnt the entailed doom. Be that as it may, the moral message is not so much a take-away for the audience as merely a gesture to edify, with which the author is justified to write down a story as “bizarre and flirtatious” as this one is. Besides, the brief didactic lesson in the beginning will soon be overwhelmed by the reader’s pleasure gained from savoring the erotic scene in the boudoir and the exquisiteness of Siren’s boat and dance. The delicate descriptions of these pleasant scenes constitute so much space of the story that Siren’s abrupt disappearance in the end is not as touching. This is similar to Yang Xiong’s famous critique of rhapsodies that “their encouragement is a hundred times of their admonishment” 勸百諷一, so that their suasive effect is very limited. In any event, “Plaint on River Xiang” and its poems are to provide pleasure to the reader through accounting wonder and beauty, instead of a moral lesson.

In addition to the exotic and sensual dimensions, Shen Yazhi also observed another characteristic of the Chuci, i.e. its ornate language. According to him, Siren’s poems are “ornate to the utmost” 嶄絶. It is suggested that their models, i.e. the Chuci poems, are even more ornate. Such an appraisal may go back to Ban Gu, who acknowledged that the “Lisao” was “majestic, comprehensive, ornate, and elegant” 弘博麗雅. At two places in his Wenxin diaolong, Liu Xie also remarked the Chuci as “ornate” 嶄, a positive value in the Six Dynasties. Be that as it may, in “Plaint on River Xiang,” the ornateness of Siren’s poems is one element among many to

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106 Shi ji 117.3073.
107 Chuci buzhu, 50.
108 Fan Wenlan, Wenxin diaolong zhu, 48.
hint at her stunning beauty (li 靈 applies to both female appearances and writings) and unusual identity. After all, the ornate language in “Splendid Scenery” is to describe her sensuous appearance. Other elements include the intricate depiction of Siren’s delicate properties, all of which (her silk, boat, and instruments, etc.) are valuables. In this sense, Siren’s mastery of *Chuci* is likewise a property of hers, exhibiting an attractive image of a water goddess.

Because Siren’s poems are identified as imitations, the *Chuci* is implicitly claimed to be a source of inspiration to write about ecstatic pleasure and boudoir plaint of a young women thwarted in love. Although the anthology title of *Chuci* is never mentioned in “Plaint on River Xiang,” the three titles “Jiuge,” “Zhaohun,” and “Jiubian” together may roughly represent the entire range of themes in the *Chuci*. Thus, by referring to these titles as models of Siren’s poetry, Shen Yazhi implicitly claimed for them a potential to be understood in the context of sensual desire, including the “Jiubain” protagonist’s “longing for my lord” 思君.

Be that as it may, the similarity of her poems with these titles is rather limited. The “Jiuge” prays for the gods’/goddess’ descending, the “Zhaohun” summons the wandering soul to return, and the “Jiubian” vents wise men’s bitterness. Siren’s poems, especially the longest “Splendid Scenery” 光風詞, are none of the above, but describe endless pleasure within the boudoir. Siren’s identity may invite the reader to compare her with the goddess Lady Xiang 湘夫人 in “Jiuge,” yet her poems seldom draw on the “Lady Xiang,” although the “Jiuge” poem is attached at the end of “Plaint on River Xiang” in a Qing printed edition. In my opinion, in addition to demonstrating her poetic talents, the identification of Siren’s poems as imitations of “Jiuge” et al is to take advantage of the sense of exoticism and sexual implication that are believed to be

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109 Chen Shixi 陳世熙, *Tangren shuo hui 唐人說蕃*, vol. 7 (Shanghai: Saoye shanfang, 1930), 36-37. “Xiangjun” 湘君 in the “Jiuge” is also attached.
properties of *Chuci*. It is also to be noticed that, in “Plaint on River Xiang,” “Jiuge,” “Zhaohun,” and “Jiubian” are decontextualized from their moral-political reading elaborated in traditional commentaries. Shen Yazhi never mentioned these poems’ (purported) authors or the anthology title of *Chuci*. After all, should Qu Yuan’s name (or the title of his most renowned “Lisao”) appear in the narrative, a moral-political reading of the story would seem unavoidable. In this sense, the omission of authorship highlights the sensual dimension in these poems as previously pointed out by Liu Xie.

In sum, the reference of *Chuci* titles in “Plaint on River Xiang” conceives the *Chuci* as a group of exotic and ornate poems, a source of inspiration for erotic poetry. Whoever decided to portray Siren as a *Chuci* imitator had taken advantage of this conception of *Chuci* to dramatize both the mythical atmosphere within the narrative and the charm of Siren. In this context, aromatic plants and fair ladies are erotic imagery to the pleasure-loving readers.

**Conclusion**

“Aromatic plants and the fairest” and their moral-political connotation are characteristic of the *Chuci* imagery in both premodern and modern commentaries. The term is developed from Wang Yi’s imagery reading schema, with its attempt to control the text’s meaning by politicizing the sensual dimension of imagery. Aromatic plants and fair ladies, nonetheless, scattered in Chinese literature as sensual emblems of elixir and eroticism. In “Plaint on River Xiang,” images of plants and ladies are particularly erotic emblems of the south. As we will see in the next chapter, Shen Yazhi’s view by no means existed in isolation at the time, but reflected a mid-Tang conception of *Chuci* in the broader intellectual trend of “restoring antiquity” 復古, where *Chuci* marked the beginning of the corruption of literature. As such, reading of imagery determines the position of *Chuci* in Chinese literary history.
Chapter Four. A Perished State and A “Southern” Literary Style

Without belittling the moderns, I love the ancients, clear phrases and gorgeous lines one must take as one’s neighbor. I secretly would reach to Qu Yuan and Song Yu as fitting to ride at their side, otherwise I fear that with the Qi and Liang I will be the dust behind them.

—Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), “Six Quatrains Done playfully” 戲為六絕句, No. 5. ¹

In the standard view of Chinese literature, association of Chuci and the Qi-Liang Palace Style poetry may appear unusual—one represents the most upright and grieving voice while the other devoted to the description of court pleasures and palace ladies; one attempts to rescue the Chu state from falling while the other causes the southern dynasties to fall. Yet as Du Fu’s famous quatrain on poetics shows, the two are indeed connected in the Tang for their deployment of “clear phrases and gorgeous lines” 清詞麗句, although the Chuci is viewed as a positive exemplar and the Qi-Liang poetry a failure. According to Du Fu, Qu Yuan and Song Yu are appropriate models for one to aim at, but failing to reach them would cause one to slide into the group of Qi and Liang poets. Du Fu’s criticism has been judged by history to be a fair one—his contempt for Qi-Liang poets is not a result of a bias towards the more recent age or a rejection of “clear and gorgeous” style, which is actually one poetic ideal in his mind. Though not articulated explicitly, his criticism lies elsewhere in the widely shared Tang contemporary conception of Qi-Liang poetry, their excessive gorgeousness and lack of depth.² In any event, Du Fu still sees Chuci and Qi-Liang style as different as day and night, unlike a very different view in the Tang that regards one as the predecessor of the other.

This chapter examines the Tang criticisms of *Chuci*, in which *Chuci* is removed from the *Shijing* tradition, Qu Yuan becomes a epideictic poet, and his works come to mark the starting point of the corruption of *wenzhang* (refined writings) that culminates with the Qi-Liang style. Such a conception of literary history drastically differs from accounts composed in the Han and Six Dynasties, when the *Chuci* was considered to at least partly conform to the principle of the Classics, in particular that of the *Shijing*. In my opinion, the more extreme critique participates in the Tang literati pursuit of a moral culture through the reform of *wenzhang* and in the political and cultural tension between South and North extended into the Tang from the previous period of division. On the one hand, it is widely believed in the Tang that the ideal of *wenzhang* is limited to the Classics in antiquity—textual representation of the unified moral order. Accordingly, the *Chuci* as an emotional response to the chaotic state of Chu is contrary to this ideal and marks the beginning of decline. On the other hand, Tang literati who appealed for a revival of the Classics adopted the northerners’ critique against ornateness and decadence, features identified as defects of the literature from the Southern Dynasties. The Qi-Liang style is often further traced back to *Chuci*, poems from an ancient perished state in the south in their projection of the development of literature as a decline. Although the list of authors in the decline narratives varies from case to case, Qu Yuan, his legendary disciple Song Yu, and Qi-Liang authors remain unchanged in the list, exhibiting a Southern literary style that is gorgeous and lustful, in contrast to a “Northern style” that is plain and substantial.

In the meantime, however, the *Chuci* never loses its vigor in the period. Literati—even those who criticized Qu Yuan—continued to identify with Qu Yuan the talented writer and upright

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3 For example, Liu Xie has famously identified four aspects that the *Chuci* conforms to the classics and four aspects that it diverges from the classical model. See Fan Wenlan, *Wenxin diaolong zhu*, 46.
advisor. In a sense, the Tang critique of *Chuci* and Qu Yuan is not for the sake of the poet’s writing style *per se*, but part and parcel of a larger developing discourse on textual and political ideals. The reconfiguration of Qu Yuan’s writings plays an indispensable role in the Tang reassessments and attempts to restore *wenzhang*.

In this chapter, I begin by reviewing of attacks on Qu Yuan in the Southern and Northern Dynasties’ discourses on *wenzhang*, a prelude to the early Tang decline narrative where Qu Yuan demarcates the beginning of the gorgeous and decadent style while Qi-Liang poets marks its culmination. I then reflect on the use of this representation of *Chuci* in the regional literati identity tensions of early Tang court. Lastly, discussing the mid-Tang scholars’ appeal for a literature reform, I examine how the critique shifted from style to Qu Yuan’s uncontrolled emotional response to the decline of Chu in his poetry. Qu Yuan’s works disappear as figurative texts and become implicated in new larger debates about correct *wenzhang*.

**Prelude: Pei Ziye’s and Yan Zhitui’s Critique on *Wenzhang* and Fate**

The critique of the decadence of *Chuci* and Qu Yuan starts not in the Tang but as early as in the Han. Unlike the Han critique that focuses primarily on Qu Yuan’s final resolution of suicide and personal character, many Tang literati turns to his writing style and their critique is directed, in most cases, less to Qu Yuan the specific author and more to the declined *wenzhang* in general. Standing in between Han and Tang, two eminent scholars Pei Ziye 裴子野 (469-530) and Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531-591) each advanced a critical view on the function of *wenzhang* and Qu Yuan’s role in literary history. Pei’s literary criticism, later titled “On Carving Insects” 雕蟲論, is preserved in *A Comprehensive Canon for Administration* 通典. ⁴ Yan Zhitui’s perspective of

⁴ The piece preserved in the *Tongdian* and later in *Wenyuan yinghua* is probably only a part of Pei Ziye’s literary
wenzhang declared in the “Precept for the Yan Clan” 顏氏家訓, already in print in the Tang, should have been widely circulated. The two pieces came to be monumental works of literary criticism that served as a prelude to the Tang criticism.

The extant “On Carving Insect” reviews the history of poetry from the Shiijing, its beginning, to the Liu-Song, as the piece was written in late fifth century. In general, Pei Ziye portrays history as a “moral abdication of poetry,” with the expansion of ornate and intricate style in the Liu-Song marking its climax. As Jack Chen observes, the style itself is indicative of the poets’ desire for self-expression and self-promotion at the cost of illuminating moral principles. In this history, Chuci is presented as a turning point akin not to the Shiijing, but to the Liu-Song.

In antiquity, the “Four Beginnings” and “Six Arts” together formed the Book of Odes, which was used not only to describe the customs of the world, but also to illustrate the intention of a gentleman. It encouraged virtue and warned against evil. The kin’s transforming influence was rooted in it. Writers of later times lodged their thoughts in branches and leaves and made their words ornate and flowery. Poetry was used for self-expression. For poetry laden with sentimentality and aromatic [plants], the sao verse of Chu is their ancestor. For the sumptuous and extensive presentation, Sima Xiangru is the percussionist for their tunes. Ever since then, people who follow their sounds and chase their shadows have abandoned guiding principles and had nothing to which to hold. The fu, the lyric poetry, the songs, and the eulogies, hundreds of cartloads of them, were regarded by Cai Yong as works of jesters and performers. Yang Xiong regretted his own juvenile writings. sages no longer appear, and who is there to distinguish the Elegantiae and Odes from Zheng?

criticism originally written in his Song lue 宋略, which is lost. The Tongdian version differs from that in the Wenyuan yinghua in various places. For a critical text, see Liang Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao wenxue piping ziliao bubian 兩漢魏晉南北朝文學批評資料補編, eds. Zeng Yongyi 曾永義 and Ko Ching-ming 柯慶明, vol.1 (Taipei: Chengwen shuju, 1978), 276-77. The title “On Carving Insect” is reminiscent of Yang Xiong’s appraisal that rhapsody composition was as insignificant as “carving insect-characters in seal-script” 蚊蟲篆刻. Wang Rongbao, Fayan yishu, 45. The title was not given by Pei Ziye, but came from Du You’s 杜佑 comment accompanying Pei Ziye’s work. It was identified as the title in the Wenyuan yinghua, where Du You’s comment was taken as Pei’s text. According to Wang Liqi’s 王利器 preface, the Yanshi jiaxun was likely composed in the early years of Sui. Wang Liqi, Yanshi jiaxun jijie 顏氏家訓集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 11-12.

6 Tian Xiaofei, Beacon Fire and Shooting Star, 139.

7 Jack Chen, The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), 120.
The paragraph recalls the decline narrative in the "Treatise on Arts and Writings" of Hanshu. Yet to Ban Gu, Qu Yuan’s “fu about a worthy man unable to realize his aim” is “composed to indirectly admonish” and hence still preserving the “principles of ancient Odes.” Pei Ziye ignores these qualities entirely, and instead identifies Chu verses as laden with “sentimentality and fragrant [plants],” a hint at sensuous desire and ornate diction. Although he does not directly criticized Chuci, as is the case with many Tang criticisms, he makes a connection with the degenerated poems in the Southern Dynasties is made. According to Pei Ziye, after the Southeast poets (represented by Yan Yanzhi and Xie Lingyun) whose embellished works “have no use for the court,” writers in the Liu-Song invariably “cast aside the Six Arts and devoted themselves to singing and chanting their innermost cares.” As a result, their “deepest thinking focuses on flowers and trees” and “their analogies are superficial, their intention is feeble, their writings are crafted yet not concise, subtle but not profound.” All these weaknesses, though identified as “lingering manners of the Song,” find echoes in Pei’s remark on Chuci that it is laden with “sentimentality and fragrant

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8 Du You 杜佑, Tongdian 通典 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1935), 16.91b. The translation is adapted from Ping Wang, The Age of Courtly Writing: Wen Xuan Compiler Xiao Tong (501-531) and His Circle (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 67. For other translations and discussions, see Tian, Beacon Fire and Shooting Star, 139-141; Jack Chen, The Poetics of Sovereignty, 119-24.

9 Tongdian 16.91b.
[plants].” In Pei Ziye’s view, the *Chuci* may not be as degenerate as poetry in the Liu-Song, but it is still a remote ancestor of the “feeble” and “crafted” style.

To be clear, Pei Ziye’s fundamental concern lies not in history of poetry but in the political order for which poetry is supposed to serve as a mirror. Invoking the anecdote of Ji Zha’s remarks on music from various states and Xunzi’s musical theory, Pei Ziye sees the ornate poetic style of Liu-Song as a sign of chaos.

If Ji Zha were to listen to this sound [of Liu-Song], then it would not be [the sound of] a prosperous state. …Xunzi once said that the sign of a chaotic age is that its writings are elusive and ornate. Is this [i.e. poetry of Liu-Song] not close to [Xunzi’s comment]? 季子聆音，則非興國……荀卿有言，亂代之徵，文章繆綺。而斯豈近之乎？

Considering its date, Pei Ziye’s critique cannot be directed at Qi and Liang. But his critical attitude towards the ornate and feeble style and his conception of the style as a sign of chaos find extensive echoes in the Tang criticism of the *wenzhang* in Southern Dynasties in general. Adopting a very similar tone, Tang literati would extend the decline of *wenzhang* as a whole to the Qi-Liang periods, a culmination of decline in their view. Qu Yuan, in some accounts, initiated the decline.

In his essay on *wenzhang* in the *Precepts for the Yan Clan* 颜氏家訓, Yan Zhitui held a utilitarian view of *wenzhang* and posited its lyrical aspect in a position in conflict with the Classics due to its risk of hindering one’s self-cultivation.

Refined writings all originated from the Five Classics. Edicts, mandates, decrees, and proclamations originated from the *Documents*; prefaces, narrations, disquisitions, and critiques in the *Changes*; songs, chants, poetic expositions, and hymns from the *Odes*; laments and dirges used in sacrifices from the *Rites*; letters, memorials, admonitions, and inscriptions from the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The regulation articles issued by court and oaths and declarations in the army all have many uses. They elaborate on and make manifest benevolence and righteousness, encourage and illuminate deeds and virtues. They are also used to govern the people and establish the state. Besides, it is also pleasant to cultivate one’s nature and spirit, present moderate remonstrations, and savor the flavor

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10 Ibid.
through [refined writings]. These are something to be practiced when one has extra energy left over from other enterprises. Most men of letters since antiquity, however, fell into the trap of the contemptible and despicable [side of refined writings]. Qu Yuan showed off his talents and exalted himself, while he exposed the faults of his ruler;11 glamorous in his appearance, Song Yu was treated as an entertainer. … 12 The form of refined writings valorizes evocation and intuition. It evokes and brings forth one’s nature and spirit to make one conceited and boastful so that one is negligent in the preservation of principles and aggressive in advancing [toward their goals].

夫文章者，原出五經：詔命策檄，生於書者也；序述論議，生於易者也；歌詠賦頌，生於詩者也；祭祀哀誄，生於禮者也；書奏箴銘，生於春秋者也。朝廷憲章，軍旅誓誥，敷顯仁義，發明功德，牧民建國，施用多途。至於陶冶性靈，從容詼諧，入其滋味，亦樂事也。行有餘力，則可為之。然而自古文人，多陷輕薄；屈原露才揚己，顯暴君過；宋玉體貌容冶，見遇俳優……文章之體，標舉興會，發引性靈，使人矜伐，故忽於持操，果於進取。13

Yan Zhitui invokes the Han perspective that the entire range of genres within wenzhang all stem from and are inferior to the Classics. With an assumption that the value of wenzhang lies in its utility, Yan identifies two levels—that used by the state (i.e. court and army) and that by an individual—where wenzhang exerts a function and claims the former to be fundamental and critical. Wenzhang at the state level, where no personal voice or intention is involved, brings multiple benefits in moral edification, eulogization, and administration. Reluctantly admitting wenzhang’s function in self-cultivation, remonstration, and aesthetic appreciation, Yan believes that wenzhang used by individuals is not to be advocated. With the assumptions that one’s nature must be properly guided and that wenzhang cannot serve as the guide because they are not Classics, the individual level of wenzhang that relies on “evocation and intuition” 興會 tends to bring more danger than benefits. Absorption in wenzhang—here primarily pointing to its

11 The comment copies Ban Gu’s criticism in verbatim. See Chuci buzhu, 49.
12 In the original paragraph, Qu Yuan and Song Yu are followed by a long list of thirty-four writers with moral defects, five emperors with literary talents yet lack of virtue, and a list of nine writers with high reputation that managed to “escape calamities” 免患 in the Han and Wei, and Six Dynasties.
individual level—entails indulgence in oneself, i.e. one’s emotions, aspirations, etc. instead of being exposed to the proper principles illustrated by Classics. In other words, the stimulation-expression style of writing presented in the “Great Preface” is considered the very root for the defect and danger of wenzhang. This is probably also the reason that the stimulation-expression style is downplayed. Accordingly, genres associated with this style—those regarded as belles-lettres texts or “literature” in modern times—only occupy two-fifths of Yan’s list. Later in the section, Yan shows his appreciation for both values. In a sense, a warning of the defect and danger of wenzhang is a function of the genre “precept of the clan” 家訓.

Yan Zhitui’s perspective on the individual level of wenzhang is drawn from his observation of past authors’ fates—starting from Qu Yuan, almost all men of letters in the past “fell into the trap of wenzhang” to encounter difficulties in their lives, while only a few manage to escape. Qu Yuan tops the long list of “trapped” writers. Wenzhang, in his case, encouraged him to indulge in his own talent and finding faults with the ruler, which resulted in his exile. As such, Yan Zhitui reverses the Han model that sees “literary work as a response to catastrophe” by arguing that “disaster was brought on by writing.” Yet in Yan’s own case, he reacts to misfortunes in life exactly by writing, with the most famous example of his “Fu on Viewing My Life” 観我生賦. Yan, however, offers no reflection on his own categorization between those who were “trapped” and those who managed to escape. Perhaps he would see himself as one of those exceptionals “who have extra energy” 有餘力 and are able to hold up to their morals—those who are allowed

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14 The inclination to view wenzhang almost exclusively as a tool of administration is echoed in Li E’s 李谔 (fl. 560-585) memorial to Emperor Wen of Sui in 585 for a reform in wenzhang that almost aim at removing its lyrical and aesthetic value. Yet it would also be misleading to equate Yan Zhitui with Li E. For Li E’s memorial, see Suishu 66. 1543-46. For a discussion of his memorial, see Jack Chen, The Poetics of Sovereignty, 124-31.


16 For the text of “Guan wo sheng fu,” see Bei Qi shu 45.621. For a translation, see Albert Dien, Pei Ch’i shu 45: Biography of Yen Chih-t’ui (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976).
by practice writing—because he later proudly declares that the \textit{wenzhang} of his family conforms to the Classics. Be that as it may, Yan’s dichotomous presentation of \textit{wenzhang} in individual practice and in the Classics finds echoes in various Tang literati critiques that regard \textit{wenzhang} as deviant from Classics and the degeneration of \textit{wenzhang}, a process began with Qu Yuan’s poems, as the source of disaster.

Both identifying \textit{wenzhang} as a source of disaster, a major difference between the \textit{Yanshi jiaxun} and Tang literati’s critique is that, the former focuses on the individual level while the latter on the state level. In the \textit{Yanshi jiaxun}, the cases of Qu Yuan and Song Yu (and all others listed) are concerned with their personal fate instead of their state future. In particular, Yan takes as a moral defect Qu Yuan’s bold remonstration with the ruler, because remonstration costs him his political career. The humanistic perspective centering on personal fate is shared by many elites in the Six Dynasties who tend to call more attention to Qu Yuan as a talented and frustrated poet who was ill-fated and less to Qu Yuan as a loyal martyr trying to save the state.\footnote{Liao Dongliang, “Tong yinjiu, shudu ‘Lisao’—luelun Liuchao shiren dui Qu Yuan de dujie” 痛饮酒、熟读《离骚》—略論六朝士人對屈原的譴解, in his \textit{Lingjun yuying: Gudai Chuci xue lunji} 聊均余影: 古代楚辭學論集 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2010), 45-61.} As Liao Dongliang argues, the focus on personal fate reflects that, in the vicissitudes of transient dynasties and short-lived rulers, elites tend to seek preservation of their own clan and not their state/ruler, because transition of power is out of their control but big clans often manage to survive the transitions and sustain the title of their members in the new regime.\footnote{Ibid, 62-63.} Besides, the principle to preserve the self and the family would also fit the theme and purpose of a “precept of the clan.”

Yan Zhitui’s moralizing attitude toward Qu Yuan the specific poet and \textit{wenzhang} in general in the \textit{Yanshi jiaxun}, however, is complicated by his own poem, “Spirit of Antiquity” 古意,
where he hints at wenzhang’s evil potential to ruin a state while identifying himself with Qu Yuan, a talented poet and minister encountering the doom of his state and himself at once. “Spirit of Antiquity,” another poem reviewing Yan’s life in retrospect, is composed after the fall of Liang, the first state he served.

At fifteen I was fond of the Odes and the Documents,
At twenty I flicked dust off my cap and served at court.
The king of Chu bestowed his good graces,
Allowing me to enter the Zhanghua Terrace.\(^\text{19}\)
I composed fu that surpassed Qu Yuan’s,
I read as many books as the historian-of-the-left.
I participated in banquets in Mingyue Tower multiple times,\(^\text{20}\)
I also served at the sacrifice to Goddess Zhaoyun.\(^\text{21}\)
I climbed the mountain to pick purple mushrooms,\(^\text{22}\)
I boated on the river to pluck green angelica.\(^\text{23}\)
Melodies of songs and dance were hardly finished,
When gusts and dusts arose, shading the sky.
The army of Wu broke the nine-dragon bell,\(^\text{24}\)
Troops of Qin seized territory of thousands of miles,\(^\text{25}\)
Wolves and rabbits took ancestral temples as their caves,
Frost and dew dampened the court hall.

\(^{19}\) Construction of the Zhanghua Terrace was commanded by King Ling of Chu (r. 540-529 BCE) in 535 BCE. The Terrace is mentioned in Zuozhuan. According to Du Yu’s (222-285) commentary, the Zhanghua Terrace was still extant in his time at Huarong (modern Hunan). The Terrace (at least) from the Han on becomes a symbol of ruler’s luxurious and lavish life, which is often treated as a harbinger of decline or destruction of the state. In history, King Ling was known as an ambitious and violent ruler fond of luxurious life. He committed suicide after a failed attempt to invade the state of Xu. See Yang Bojun, Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 1283. Also Xu Yiangao, Guoyu jijie (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 493.

\(^{20}\) Mingyue (bright moon) Tower was one building among many in Xiao Yi’s Xiangdong Park at Jiangling (modern Hubei) when he was Prince of Xiangdong. See Taiping yulan 196.946B.

\(^{21}\) Zhaoyun (morning clouds), in Song Yu’s “Gaotang fu” 高唐賦, is a goddess who self-recommended to serve King Xiang of Chu in the bedroom.

\(^{22}\) Cf. “Jiuhua”: 南采兮芝英. Purple mushroom is often regarded as a symbol of auspicious omen or an elixir of life.

\(^{23}\) Angelica is a common fragrant plant in Chuci.

\(^{24}\) Cf. Huainanzi: “Helü attacked Chu. After five battles the army [of Wu] entered Ying. They burned the millet within the grand granary and broke the nine-dragon bell” 閩闕伐楚，五戰入郢，燒高府之粟，破九龍之鐘. The pillars of the bell stand in Chu were carved with nine dragons, the symbol of auspiciousness. Wu’s invasion of Chu was in 506 BCE. Chu was almost devastated and the body of King Ping of Chu was dug out and whipped by Wu Zixu 伍子胥.

\(^{25}\) In 280 and 279 BCE, Qin attacked Chu twice. In 280 BCE, Chu ceded Shangyong 上庸 (in modern Hubei) and its territory north of Han River to Qin. In 279 BCE the capital Ying was sacked.
Bian He’s Jade was sent to the palace at Handan,²⁶ 璧入邯鄲宮
The swords fell into the river at Xiangcheng.²⁷ 劍去襄城水
I could not attain a tomb to die [with my lord],²⁸ 未獲殉陵墓
To survive alone is indeed sufficient to make me ashamed. 獨生良足恥
With heartache, I long for my old capital, 憂思故都
With grief, I yearn for the gentleman. 傷愴懷君子
My hair all white, I peek into the bright mirror, 白髮覗明鏡
Agony and grief will accompany me for the rest of my life. 憂傷沒余齒

Yan Zhitui narrates his life in the setting of Chu,²⁹ a former southern state destroyed also by a military power at northwest—Liang was destroyed by Western Wei 西魏 (535-557), with all its capital residents seized to the north. This similar fate invites Yan to harbor an empathetic yet critical view towards Chu (the substitute for Liang) and its grandees Qu Yuan and Song Yu. In the case of Chu (Liang), Yan grieves at its destruction, with which all the past glory is gone. In the meantime, Yan implies that Chu is also responsible for its fall by invoking the Zhanghua Terrace and Goddess Zhaoyun, signifiers of the king’s indulgence in sensual pleasures and a luxurious life—a standard explanation of decline. As the last emperor, Xiao Yi 蕭繹 is criticized for this very reason by Tang historians as we shall see later.

In the case of Qu Yuan and Song Yu, Yan Zhitui projects both personae onto himself. On the positive side, he portrays Qu Yuan as an admirable predecessor with outstanding literary talent, and he embeds the poem with multiple references to him. The self-glorifying tone and the

²⁶ The jade refers to He’s Jade 韬氏璧 presented to the king of Chu by Bian He. It was later stolen and sold to Zhao.
²⁷ Xiangcheng (in modern He’nan) is a prefecture of Western Jin. In a Jinshu anecdote, Zhang Hua 張華 (232-300) noticed the purple color at sky and inquired Lei Huan 雷煥. Lei managed to decode the omen and found two swords made by the legendary Chu swordssmith Gan Jiang 干將 and Mo Ye 莫邪. One sword was presented to Zhang and the other reserved for Lei’s own use. Lei also prophesied that the Jin would be thrown into chaos and at the time Zhang Hua would be doomed, losing his sword. Later Zhang died and his sword was lost. After Lei Huan died, his son passed Yanping Ford 延平津 (in modern Fujian) wearing his father’s sword. The sword suddenly flew into the river and, together with Zhang’s lost one, transformed into two dragons. See Jinshu 36.1075-76.
²⁸ Yan Zhitui’s grandfather starved himself to death after Xiao Yan usurped the throne of Qi, but Yan Zhitui served in the Liang court. After the fall of Liang, Yan was seized to Western Wei and refused to serve. He escaped to Northern Qi, which had also attacked Liang, and served there for nearly twenty years.
²⁹ All the proper nouns in the poem, except the Mingyue Tower built by Xiao Yi, are Chu specific.
stress on the king’s favor in the beginning of the poem are reminiscent of the “Lisao” and the Qu Yuan biography, where Qu Yuan is described as a man of “wide learning and with a good memory” 博聞強志 and “skilled at the use of language” 嫣於辭令. The plant-picking imagery in lines nine and ten invokes the “Lisao,” though without moral implications—instead, the imagery articulates a leisurely and pleasant lifestyle. In the scenario of the fall of Chu/Liang, Yan regrets his ignoble existence that contrasts Qu Yuan’s resolution of suicide (ll.19-20).

“Longing for the old capital” 思薀都 from afar as Qu Yuan once did, Yan probably has Qu Yuan in mind when he “yearns for the gentleman” 懷君子. On the negative side, however, Qu Yuan and especially Song Yu are implicitly criticized for inviting the king to indulge in the pleasure provided by their writing. In Yan’s reflection, like Qu Yuan’s fu, his wenzhang is written to “show off” his talents to gain the king’s favor. Like Song Yu, Yan is favored by the king for his learning, but is treated as an entertainer only to satisfy the king’s desires (ll. 7-8, with a reference to Song Yu’s “Gaotang fu”). As such, Yan’s wenzhang in a sense indirectly accelerates the decline of his state. Meanwhile, just like King Xiang of Chu, Xiao Yi puts wenzhang before his administrative responsibilities instead of engaging in wenzhang only after finishing his more important enterprise. Yan’s critique is primarily directed to Song Yu, but he does claims for the enticing pleasure of wenzhang a role in the destruction of Chu/Liang. Tang literati (such as Wang Bo and Liu Mian) echoed this reflection on the fall of Liang in their search for a moral lesson from the recent past (more discussions in the next section).

Writing is always associated with a response to fate in Chinese culture. Authors burst into verses when facing state catastrophe or personal demise; writing can also bring disasters on an

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30 Shiji 84.2481.
31 Cf. “Lisao”: “Why should I yearn for the old capital?” 又何懷乎故都?
individual or a state. Taking pride in his own literary talents, Yan warns his descendants of the danger of writing and is reluctant to encourage them to practice writing (but he also does not forbid them to). In a similarly complicated attitude, Yan both admires and criticizes Qu Yuan as a writer. Though not credited, Yan’s utilitarian perspective of wenzhang is shared by a number of Tang literati, who would make more radical claims on wenzhang’s deviation from the Classics and its evil potential to destroy a state. Their critique is presented in a decline narrative and Qu Yuan, in many cases, tops the list.

**A Decline Narrative in Early Tang**

Early Tang literary criticism was permeated by an air of anxiety over the past decline of wen, which went together with the decline of political order especially in the Southern Dynasties. It was widely believed that that “political order and textual order were one and the same.”³² The integration of administration, moral conduct, and literary practice “testify to a harmoniously governed society.”³³ In their reflection on the centuries long disunion—a political decline—the Tang ruling class believes that, in order to prevent the empire from falling apart again, it is necessary to discard the literary style of the short-lived Southern Dynasties—a literary decline. In such a context, certain Tang literati made the gorgeous Palace Style poetry a scapegoat of the most recent dynasties’ political failure.³⁴ As such, literary criticism in some scholars’ eyes was not so much an innocent evaluation of style or aesthetics as a discourse to search for moral

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³² See “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 (Treatise on Classics and Documents) of *Suishu* 隋書 (Sui History). For a discussion, see Peter Bol, “This Culture of Ours”: *Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 82.


lessons from the past and provide prospects for the future. The claim for a literary style different from the perished unvirtuous dynasties is a gesture to support the “new” political order established by Tang.35

In the meantime, the early Tang literary historical view that manifests a deep concern with the power of *wenzhang* to destroy a state also reserves for *wenzhang* a regenerating power. In such a view, literature is no longer merely a passive indicator and informer of social customs but plays an active role in the political order. It is in the intellectual trend granting literature an active role that literati seek to reverse the “decadent” political trend through reversing the trend in *wenzhang*. In the meantime, the era of ancient sage kings with its unification of both political and textual orders and the Spring and Autumn period with Confucius’s efforts to restore the kingly way serve as the model, while the Warring States period with its corruption in Confucius’ classical teachings starts the decline of *wen*.36 It is believed that, in order to reverse the decline, one must learn from the Classics that still preserve the Way of ancient sage kings.37

All these discussions of *wenzhang*—its decline and relation to the future of the state, the model to reverse decline—are central issues in scholars’ redefinition of *Chuci*’s position in literary history. To be sure, in many literary historical accounts in the Tang, *Chuci* was still the second best to the *Shijing*, and Qu Yuan the exemplary poet.38 But to those scholars who limited the model of *wenzhang* to the sagely teachings and insist on a rigid division between *wen* and *ru*, the *Chuci* that only emerged after the demise of sages discarded the principle of *Shijing* and initiated a decline of a thousand years.

35 Yet as Chen Yinke pointed out, Tang inherited and developed many economic, political, and cultural institutions of the Southern Dynasties. See Chen, *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan lue lungao* 陳寅恪文集, vol. 4 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1982), 141-46.
36 Bol, “This Culture of Ours”, 82-84.
37 *Suishu* 32.948. Bol, “This Culture of Ours”, 84.
38 For example, *Suishu* 35.1055-56, 1090 (“Treatise on Bibliography” 經籍志).
In their effort to fight against the sensuously intricate style of the Six Dynasties, the early Tang writers Wang Bo 王勃 (650-76?) and Lu Zhaolin 盧照鄰 (ca. 634-84), later known as two of the “Four Elites of Early Tang” 初唐四傑, both valorized the Classics as the model of wenzhang while tracing the origin of its corruption back to Qu Yuan and Song Yu, who now became in their narratives predecessors of the ornate Qi-Liang style. As a result, compared to the narrative of Suishu, the decline of wenzhang is pushed further back to the Warring States, with Qu Yuan marking the beginning.

Since antiquity, the way of wenzhang has been said to be difficult. The sages use it to deal with the way things start up and how matters reach completion;\(^\text{39}\) the gentlemen use it to establish their words and make manifest their intention. Leaving elegance behind and deviating from the [sages’] teachings—Mengzi would not do it; offering a hundred encouragements while only one admonition is What Yang Xiong feels shameful for. If not the kind [of wenzhang] that elucidates great principles and rectifies deviating trends, those that the social custom takes as resource to flourish and that the state counts on to prosper,\(^\text{40}\) the ancients would not take notice of them. Wen has lacked vitality since the subtle words [of Kongzi] were cut off. First came Qu Yuan and Song Yu who led and originated the trend of degeneration, then came Mei Sheng and Sima Xiangru who brought the excessively embellished trend into profusion. Those remarking on rulers took as representative of imperial might the palaces and gardens;\(^\text{41}\) those describing the prominent took as perspicacity their indulgence in drinking, arrogance, and lavishness.\(^\text{42}\) Therefore, Emperor Wen of Wei managed [state affairs with the degenerated wen] and the Middle Kingdom declined; Emperor Wu of Song treasured it and East of the River was thrown into chaos. Shen Yue and Xie Tiao competed [for excellence in wen], yet it only sufficed to foreshadow the crisis of Qi and Liang; Xu Ling and Yu Xin galloped side by side [in the world of declined wen], yet the disasters of Zhou and Chen still could not be prevented. By this period, ... the teachings of Duke of Zhou and Kongzi are preserved but have not been practiced for ages. The wen all under heaven have all become corrupted.


\(^{40}\) Xingshuai 興衰 and qingzhong 輕重 are both treated as “compound word with a slanted meaning” 偏義複詞 (also translated as “derogatory compound terms”) because only the positive aspect of the two characters are emphasized in each compound here.

\(^{41}\) This line refers to the grand fu in the Han, especially those by Sima Xiangru, that eulogize the imperial palaces and royal hunts.

\(^{42}\) This line refers to the elites in the Six Dynasties who value a carefree and unrestrained life.
Unsurprisingly, *wenzhang* or *wen* is presented as originating with the Classics. That by which the sages “deal with the way things start up and how matters reach completion” 開物成務 alludes to the *Classic of Changes*, and that by which the gentlemen “give expression to their intention” 言志 to the *Classic of Odes*. The function of expressing intention, however, does not refer to venting one’s emotions but to illustration of the sages’ teachings which guarantee a state to prosper. Similar to Yan Zhitui’s view, Wang Bo sees the significance of *wenzhang* as deriving from its assistance in governance. As such, *wenzhang* is a tool to make manifest the sages’ teachings and further the Way that is nonetheless readily available. According to Wang Bo, the death of Kongzi marks the decline of *wenzhang* due to the writers’ desertion of sagely teachings such that the Classics need to be retrieved. As Wang Bo suggests in the following paragraph, it is urgent for the Tang, which stands a thousand years after Kongzi’s period—at a point when the corrupted trend has developed into its extreme—to restore the correct Way and abandon books that deviate from those by the sages.\(^4\)

In Wang Bo’s delineation of literature, Qu Yuan is removed from the *Shijing* tradition as a forebear of Qi-Liang style. Similarly, in his exclamation about the corruption of *wen*, Lu Zhaolin

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\(^4\) Wang Bo 王勃, “Shang libu Pei shilang qi” 上吏部裴侍郎啟, in *Quan Tang wen* 180.1829. Pei Xingjian 裴行儉 (619–682) served as Attendant Gentleman in the Ministry of Personnel 吏部侍郎 between early 670s to 676. Wang Bo’s piece should be dated to this period. Wang Bo’s critique towards literary embellishment could possibly be deployed as a self-justification in reply to the intended reader Pei Xingjian’s previous criticism of his frivolous character. According to the *Xin Tang shu*, Pei Xingjian once prophesized that the Four Elites, though talented, would not be able to receive high ranks and stipends because of their flaunt acts. Even worse, except for Yang Jiong, all the other three would not die a natural death. See *Xin Tang shu* 108. 4088-89. The *Jiu Tangshu* has a similar but less detailed record of Pei’s speech.

\(^4\) Wang Bo, “Shang libu Pei shilang qi,” in *Quan Tang wen* 180.1829.
comments that “Qu Yuan and Song Yu toyed with the supple brush of epideictic poets” 屈原宋玉，弄词人之柔翰. As the opposite of “Odes poets” 詩人，“epideictic poets” (ci 詞 is often interchangeable with ci 詞) are supposed to write works “gorgeous but excessively lavish” 麗以淫. In both cases, Qu Yuan and Chuci are now placed in tension with the Shijing. Qu Yuan marks the beginning of a long period of literary corruption, while Xu Ling and Yu Xin mark the culmination.

Noticeably, Wang Bo’s decline narrative deliberately reverses the literary historical account in the Six Dynasties represented by Shen Yue’s 沈約 (441-513) appraisal in the Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433) biography, a major critical overview of literary history. Shen Yue’s sentence structure is employed yet his words of praise are replaced with those of critique by Wang Bo.

After the decline of Zhou royal house, [literary] flair grew rather exuberantly. First came Qu Ping and Song Yu who led and originated the trend of purity, and then came Jia Yi and Sima Xiangru who raised fragrant dust. Their flowery words were as embellished as music played by metal and stones, and their lofty integrity soared in the sky. From then on, sentiments and aims [in writings were found in] increasingly broader range [of writers.]

The “origin of purity” 清源 in Shen Yue’s comment becomes “origin of degeneration” 洩源 in Wang Bo’s account, Jia Yi is replaced by the epideictic fu writer Mei Sheng, and “fragrant dust” 芳塵 are often used in the Six Dynasties to refer to the respectful quality of a person.

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45 Lu Zhaolin 羅照麟, “Fuma Duwei Qiao jun ji xu” 傅馬都尉喬君集序, in Quan Tang wen 166.1691.
46 Yang Xiong argued in his Fayan that there were two kinds of fu: “The fu of the Odes poets are gorgeous and lead to [behaviors guided by] moral principles, while the fu of the epideictic poets are gorgeous and lead to [behaviors of] excessive frivolousness.” 詩人之賦麗以則，辭人之賦麗以淫. See Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶, Fayan yishu 法言義疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 49.
48 The terms pure dust 清塵 or fragrant dust 芳塵 are often used in the Six Dynasties to refer to the respectful quality of a person.
49 Songshu 67.1778.
芳塵 (the term often used in the Six Dynasties for respectful qualities) becomes “excessively embellished trend” 淫風. The similar sentence structure shows that Wang Bo is consciously refuting Shen Yue’s view of which he is aware. Wang Bo fundamentally disagrees with Shen Yue’s progressive view of literary history supported by Shen’s endorsement of craft and ornateness.\(^{50}\) Instead, Wang Bo’s standard of evaluation echoes that of Pei Ziye and the early Tang historians’ reflection on the Qi-Liang style, where embellished wenzhang is regarded as both a sign and a cause of the political disorder.

In the History of Chen 陳書 (compiled on imperial command of Taizong in 630; finished and presented to the emperor in 636\(^{51}\)), the chancellor and historian Wei Zheng famously identified the preference of last emperors for gorgeous writings as the reason for their dynasties to collapse.

The ancients have said that rulers of perished states often have artistic skills. This is indeed not groundless if we examine [the last emperors of] Liang, Chen, and Sui. That being the case, [these rulers] failed to revere the fundamental principles of [classical] teachings. Instead, they harbored a partiality for literary writings that are licentious and gorgeous. As a result, they merely encouraged the ambience of degeneracy and hypocrisy, without saving the state from chaos and destruction.

古人有言，亡國之主，多有才藝，考之梁、陳及隋，信非虛論。然則不崇教義之本，偏尚淫麗之文，徒長澆偽之風，無救亂亡之禍矣。\(^{52}\)

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\(^{50}\) Immediately after the paragraph quoted here, Shen Yue invokes a series of Han writers—Wang Bao, Liu Xiang, Yang Xiong, Ban Gu, Cui Yin 崔骃, and Cai Yong—and commented that their writings are mixed with clear and gorgeous pieces and verbose ones. Zhang Heng 張衡, whose works are glamorous 艳, is the only one free from the defect of verbosity. The Cao family of Jian’an, with their magnificent and embellished words 盛藻, are believed to have achieved balance between wen and zhi, the highest standard for literary writings. Overall, Shen Yue’s literary historical view is a progressive one.

\(^{51}\) Yao Silian 姚思廉 was in charge of the compilation of Chenshu under the supervision of Wei Zheng. Wei Zheng also personally wrote several passages, marked as his appraisal. David McMullen points out that Yao Silian’s (and his father Yao Cha’s) narrative in the Chenshu retains the pre-Tang “southern perspective,” while Wei Zheng’s prefaces and appraisals express the early Tang “abhorrence” toward the southern perspective. See David McMullen, State and Scholars in T’ang China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 166-67.

\(^{52}\) Chenshu 6.119.
According to Wei Zheng, although not all perished states have a last ruler fond of art and literature, a ruler’s *caiyi* (艺术 [artistic] skills) is a sufficient condition leading to dynastic destruction. Here *caiyi* especially points to the ability to read and write *wen* 文 that are lewd 淫 and gorgeous 麗. In a sense, acquisition of multi-talents, the quality that makes a literatus stands out, only comes to hinder administrative efficacy of the ruler and officials because fondness of gorgeous writings also implies indulgence in a lavish life and negligence of their duties.

Wang Bo’s characterization of *Chuci* as an “origin of degeneration” invokes the same vocabulary used by Wei Zheng that Liang and Chen poems give rise to “degeneration and hypocrisy” 濡雰. In my opinion, Wang Bo’s identification of Qu Yuan as a forebear of the Qi-Liang style is driven by a need to search for origin, an approach almost inevitable in writing histories as Foucault argues. In the case of Qi-Liang style that is so central to the decline of *wenzhang*, the search for its origin is an attempt to capture its essence and truth, with which the decline can be comprehended and grasped. As such the search promises the potential for the decline to be controlled. With an origin the narrative is now complete such that a moral lesson can be drawn from it. An origin also implies the existence of an end, leaving room for the decline to be reversed. But as Foucault points out, the origin is inaccessible as there is no essence. The identified origin reflects a preconceived idea and provides a biased truth. As for the Qi-Liang style, the identification of *Chuci* as origin has to rely on the presumption that *Chuci* is ornate and degenerate, an essentialized conception already.

Wang Bo’s and Lu Zhaolin’s radical rejection of Qu Yuan and the ornate style he is believed to have initiated, however, should not be taken too literally. Both poets extensively

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invoked Qu Yuan’s works in their own writings. Lu Zhaolin, in a gesture of identifying with Qu Yuan, composed sao-style pieces when he was in prison and in sickness.\textsuperscript{54} Wang Bo who admired Qu Yuan’s writing style elsewhere\textsuperscript{55} also composed an extremely embellished and sensuous fu—the very style denounced in his qi 敗—entitled “Fu on Lotus Plucking” (Cailian fu 菜蓮賦), the topic of next section. The fu that gives expression to utmost joy and sorrow through its depiction of lotus picking, in Ding Xiang Warner’s words, is an “apology for poetry,” i.e., poetry may not necessarily function as a moral edification, but may be valued for the enriched life experience that it brings to the world.\textsuperscript{56} In the next section, I discuss the ways in which Chuci imagery are invoked to depict the lotus, a southern topos. Through allusions to an array of lotus fu writing in the Southern Dynasties, the Chuci implicitly joins these fu to represent a southern literary style. In a sense, the Chuci was both denounced and cherished as an anthology of literary embellishment, a style identified to be “Southern.” This “Southern” style has no fixed value in itself, but acquires value in its use in specific situations.

A “Southern” literary style

Certain Tang scholars’ retrospective identification of Chuci as the origin of the Qi-Liang poetry constructs a kinship between the two, which now belonged to the same category in their eyes. In the early Tang scholars’ differentiation between Southern and Northern literary styles,

\textsuperscript{54} “Yuzhong xue saoti” 猶中學騷體, “Wubei” 五悲, and “Shiji wen” 釋疾文. See Zhu Shangshu 祝尚書, Lu Zhaolin ji jianzhu 劉照鄰集箋注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 203-311. It is important to note that Lu Zhaolin did not compose in the sao-style until he was in prison and sickness.

\textsuperscript{55} Cf. “Yuezhou qiuri yan shanting xu” 越州秋日宴山亭序: “The East Mountain is in sight, its grove and spring gave rise to Guest Xie’s writing; the Southland has many talents, its rivers and mountains assisted the vital force of Qu Ping.” 東山可望，林泉生謝客之文；南國多才，江山助屈平之氣. Jiang Qingyi 蒋清漪, Wang Zian jizhu 王子安集註 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 198.

Southern literature is ornate (negative) and Northern literature plain (positive). The Tang condemnation of “Southern” literary style supports the Tang royal house’s claim for sovereignty. As the royal house declares, the correct line of succession 正統 is with the Northern Dynasties.\(^{57}\) As a result, the Southern Dynasties all become unnecessary extras removed from the lineage of dynasties ruled by the Mandate of Heaven. In accordance, Taizong would be very cautious to distinguish himself from his predecessors from the Southern Dynasties who enjoyed superfluous and embellished writings.\(^{58}\)

In this section, I demonstrate that Chuci joins the “Southern” literary style in this context. To be sure, although Chuci was known as an anthology from the southern state of Chu, it was not explicitly or exclusively designated as “Southern” during the Tang, neither was it before (the clear and exclusive designation of Chuci as such happens in the Song, as I will show in the next chapter). The “Southern” style of literature in Tang scholars’ depictions indicates the ornate and intricately sensuous style associated with the South in certain Tang literati’s perspective. That said, the association was not so much a reality as a cliché. Works in this style were not necessarily written in the South or about the South. The ornate/plain distinction between the “Southern” and “Northern” literary styles was also somewhat vague.

The geographical differentiation of literary styles, though a construction of imagined cultural identities of South and North in a period of political division, has prevailed for generations before the early Tang.\(^{59}\) In the disunion period, it did not take long for the political division to be

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\(^{57}\) For a discussion, see Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, “Nanbei chao de lishi yichan yu Sui Tan shidai de zhengtonglun” 南北朝的歷史遺產與隋唐時代的正統論, in Liu Pujiang, Zhengtong yu huayi: Zhongguo chuantong zhengzhi wenhua yanjiu 正統與華夷：中國傳統政治文化研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2017), 1-34.

\(^{58}\) Wu Jing 吳兢, Zhenguan zhengyao 賢覲政要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 345. The emperor is recorded to refuse to anthologize his own literary collection 文集 in 637 by invoking the last emperors of Liang and Chen who compiled literary writings.

\(^{59}\) Tian Xiaofei, Beacon Fire and Shooting Star, 310-366.
expanded into a cultural division, generating many anecdotes about literary competition and contempt between Northern and Southern writers. The first recorded remark on geographical division of literary styles is made by Xing Shao 邢劭 (496-561) from the Northern Qi 北齊 (550-577).

From Han to Jin, feeling and appreciation could not be brought into harmony; for areas north of the River and those south of the Yangzi, intention and design ought to differ. 自漢逮晉，情賞猶自不諧；河北江南，意製本應相詭。61

The “ought-to-be” difference in literature points to the Northern and Southern elites’ political identity that is conceived as incompatible. The conceived inherent incompatibility actually never stops literary interaction between South and North. For example, Lu Ji has written works deeply rooted in the Northern culture,62 and Xing Shao is renowned in his own time for his admiration and imitation of Shen Yue (though he has to deny it to protect his Northern identity).63

By the Tang unification, the geographical difference of literature between North and South has been transformed into a cliché. In general, the Northern style is rated above the Southern, although the Tang literati appear to advocate a unification of the two from a cosmopolitan perspective that views cultural unification as a symbol of political unification. In the Suishu, the differentiation is further elaborated to portray Southern and Northern literature in a dichotomy, one feminine and one masculine, followed by an appeal for fusion. Literature in Jiangzuo 江左 (lit. left of Yangzi River, i.e. the south), with its gorgeous phrases, “treasures purity and

60 For example, David Knechtges has discussed the anecdotes and compositions of Lu Ji that shows the tension. See Knechtges, “Southern Metal and Feather Fan—The ‘Southern Consciousness of Luji’,” in Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement, 19-42.
61 Quan Bei Qi wen 全北齊文, 3.3842.
62 Tian Xiaofei, “Fan Writing: Lu Ji, Lu Yun and the Cultural Transactions between North and South,” in Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement, 43-78.
63 In an anecdote in the Bei Qi shu 北齊書, Wei Shou and Xing Shao, accuse each other for “steading” from southern writings (Wei Shou imitates Ren Fang and Xing Shao imitates Shen Yue) while denying their own imitation, which turns out to be in service of the accusation from the other party. Bei Qi shu 37.491-92.
sumptuousness” 贵於清綺 and is suitable to be chanted with high-pitched tunes. Whereas that of the Heshuo 河朔 (lit. north of the Yellow River), with its “upright and unyielding” 貞剛 principles, “values vital force and substance” 重乎氣質 and is fitting for managing state affairs. Perfection can only be achieved through removing the shortcomings of each and combining the strength of the two. Yet immediately after the statement of a balanced presentation of the two styles, the South is condemned for leading wen into decline.

Since the Datong reign [535-545] of Liang, the way of elegance has fallen into defection. [Men of literature] gradually perverted the canonical rules to compete for ingenuity and craft. Emperor Jianwen and the Prince of Xiangdong opened up the way to unrestrained licentiousness, while Xu Ling and Yu Xin parted their ways and urged their horses on. Their meanings were frivolous and verbose; their phrases were elusive and embellished. They valued the diction that were shallow and difficult; they [expressed] as much feelings of sorrow and yearning. Even if one were to assess their writings with Yanling’s ears,\(^6^4\) this would indeed also be [considered] the melody of a perished state!

Liang literature after 535 developed its southernness to an extreme, to become “frivolous and verbose” 淺而繁 and “elusive and embellished” 匿而彩, features of “melody of a perished state” 亡國之音. This embellished wen “without a single redeeming feature” 無所取裁 is then inherited by the Northern Zhou 北周 (557-581). As such, the Suishu presents the decline of wen as a consequence of the uncritical acceptance of the Southern style and its development into an extreme. The Northern Zhou writings become culturally southern though located in the North. It awaits the next dynasty in the North—the Sui—to “cut off the ornamental to [return to] simplicity” 斷彿為樸, i.e. to rectify the southern transgression by restoring the Northern style.\(^6^6\)

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\(^6^4\) Yanling 延陵 was the capital of Wu in the Spring and Autumn period, and here is used to refer to the South in general.
\(^6^5\) Suishu 76.1730.
\(^6^6\) Ibid. For a discussion of the “Wenxue liezhuan” 文學列傳, see Jack Chen, The Poetics of Sovereignty, 135-144.
For the *Suishu* compilers, the corrupted literature is a sensuously intricate and ornate style that is purportedly originated in the South in the disunion period. Yet from the beginning, the Tang identification of Southern and Northern styles is already an imaginary and stereotypical image inherited from the disunion period. As scholars have pointed out, not all writings in the Northern dynasties fit into the style of “upright and unyielding,” and the Frontier Poetry 通常 associated with the unyielding and crude North is largely written by the poets in the Southern Dynasties.\(^\text{67}\)

The *Suishu*’s hostility toward the South and its Southern literary style is shared by other official histories and many Tang literati.\(^\text{68}\) Notably, a large number of them—including the royal family, the early Tang historians, and advocates of a “restoration of wenzhang,” discussed in the next section—are northerners. Various scholars have pointed out the Tang literary thought is, to a large extent, shaped by the values of elite families in the Northern Dynasties. Specifically, Chen Jo-shui observes that the northern literary thought comes from the general “cultural character” of the gentry class in the Northern Dynasties that values moral edification, classical learning, plainness and simplicity, and practicality.\(^\text{69}\) Although the imperial perspective calls for a comprehensive and balanced view towards the North and South, it turns out that in most decline narratives of literature, those identified by Tang scholars as writers of declined wenzhang

\(^{67}\) Wang Wenjin 王文進, *Nanchao bianzaishi xinlun* 南朝邊塞詩新論 (Taipei: Liren, 2000), 144-205.

\(^{68}\) The early Tang official histories manifest a general hostile attitude towards Southern Dynasties. For a discussion, see David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T’ang China*, 165-68; Mou Runsun 牟潤孫, “Tang chu nanbei xueren luxue zhi yiqu ji yinxian” 唐初南北學人論學之興趣及其影響, in his *Zhushizhai congcao* 注史齋叢稿 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu, 1990), 363-414. Notably, the *Jinshu* 晉書 compiled in Taizong’s reign, probably under the emperor’s instruction, highly evaluated both the dynasty and its literature. Taizong himself also composed four appraisals for the *Jinshu* biographies, including Lu Ji 陸機, the poet known for his literary craft and embellishment in later ages. For a translation and discussion of Taizong’s essay on Lu Ji and the compilation of *Jinshu*, see Jack Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty*, 149-160.

\(^{69}\) Chen Jo-shui, “Lun Zhong-Tang guwen yundong de yige shehui wenhua beijing” 論中唐古文運動的一個社會文化背景, in his *Tangdai wenshi yu Zhongguo sixiang de zhuanyxing* 唐代文士與中國思想的轉型 (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2016), 235-272.
are by and large represented by those from the South—Qu Yuan from Chu, Mei Sheng from Huaiyin (modern Jiangsu), Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong from Shu (modern Sichuan), followed by Southern Dynasties writers.\textsuperscript{70}

In this context of the tension between the “Southern” and “Northern” literary styles, \textit{Chuci} joins the “Southern” style upon Wang Bo’s identification of Qu Yuan as an ancestor of Qi-Liang poetry. Wang Bo, however, also composed in the ornate style of Qu Yuan and Qi-Liang poets. For example, his “Cailian fu,” with its extensive allusions to the \textit{Chuci} and previous lotus \textit{fu} by poets from the Southern Dynasties, exemplifies the “Southern” literary style and exhibits its function for entertainment.

Lotus is one of the major images in \textit{Chuci} and Han \textit{fu}.\textsuperscript{71} The Wei, Jin, and Six Dynasties particularly witness a trend of eulogizing lotus in \textit{fu} and articulating lotus-picking girls in songs, so much so that lotus comes to be a central image of the Southland 江南 by the sixth century. As Tian Xiaofei points out, lotus imagery and lotus-picking girls are employed by both southerners and northerners in the disunion period for cultural construction of the Southland that is “warm, soft, sensuous,” in contrast to the North that is “tough, harsh, austere”—an imagined cultural and geographical division playing out the political division.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70} The “Southern” style, though cannot be championed, was still enjoyed, savored, and practiced. Taizong and his courtiers did not restrain from composing gorgeous banquet poems highly resembling the Palace Style. For a discussion, see Jack Chen, \textit{The Poetics of Sovereignty}, 146-47. Luo Genze 羅根澤, \textit{Sui Tang wenshu piping shi} 隋唐文學批評史 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1996), 108. An anecdote also records that Taizong once solicited poems responding to his own Palace Style poem among his courtiers but was discouraged by Yu Shinan 虞世南 for its possible detriment to the cultural atmosphere. Yu Shinan also composed Palace Style poems.

\textsuperscript{71} Lotus appears five times in “Jiuge,” and once in “Lisao,” “Jiuzhang,” “Jiubian,” “Zhaohun,” “Jiuhuai,” and “Jiutan.” For a list, see Pan Fujun, \textit{Chuci zhifu tujuan}, 50. For a list of appearance of lotus in the Han \textit{fu}, see \textit{Xian Qin liang Han Sanguo cifu suoyin} 先秦兩漢三國辭賦索引. The earliest available \textit{fu} devoted to description of lotus is Zhang Huan’s 張彥 (104-181) “Fuqu fu” 芙蕖賦. Only part of the piece is preserved in \textit{Chuxue ji}.

\textsuperscript{72} Tian, \textit{Beacon Fire and Shooting Star}, 310-11.
Before Wang Bo, poets such as Cao Zhi, Pan Yue, Bao Zhao, Jiang Yan, Xiao Gang, and Xiao Yi have all composed their lotus *fu* to depict the sensuous and gorgeously dressed lotus-picking girls and to eulogize the delicate Southland.\(^{73}\) The lotus *fu* by these authors, referenced in Wang Bo’s preface as “devoted to displaying the stunning beauty [of lotus]” 權陳麗美 with ornate language, could not “have exhausted every possible way to depict its resplendent look” 究厥骹態 in Wang Bo’s mind. In an even more embellished manner and with extensive allusions to these previous lotus *fu* and *Chuci* (unmentioned in the preface), Wang Bo claims to write a best “Cailian fu” ever. By adopting the ornate and sensuous language, Wang Bo is composing in the “Southern” literary style. Through allusions, Wang Bo builds a relation among the *Chuci*, the previous and his own lotus *fu*, which now belong to the same group.

The “Cailian fu” has a preface and eight vignettes, each articulating one situation and one state of mind through which the character’s association with lotus in a specific manner. The exquisite beauty and sensuous desire depicted in first seven vignettes are associated with either joy or sorrow—both are delicately depicted as an aesthetic experience to entertain the audience. In particular, the fifth vignette arranges allusions to previous lotus *fu* and *Chuci* in a succession to depict a typical scene of lotus-picking girls.

*Again, imagine*\(^{74}\)

Female singers and performers, and alluring ladies’ maids,
Each calling to her companions and beckoning to her cohort,\(^{75}\)
On the waters of the Qi and the Luo.\(^{76}\)

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\(^{73}\) These authors’ lotus *fu* can be found in *Wang Zi’an jizhu* under the note to Wang Bo’s preface to “Cailian fu,” where these authors are referenced.

\(^{74}\) Translation by Ding Xiang Warner, with a few variations.

\(^{75}\) Cf. Cao Zhi, “Luoshen fu” 洛神賦: “A crowd of spirits in disorderly throngs call to their cohorts and shout at their companions.” 憤靈難邇，命債嘯侶.

\(^{76}\) Qi 淇 River and Luo 洛 River are two tributaries of the Yellow River that course through modern northern Hebei province.
And from the heights of the Xiang and the Ru.\textsuperscript{77} 
Seeing the islands covered by halcyon-blue grass, 
Their oars ruffle the water, leaving a wake scaly like Black Dragons.\textsuperscript{78} 
They wish to untie their pendants to win the heart of their lovers;\textsuperscript{79} 
They think of girding their skirts to follow their lords.\textsuperscript{80} 
They fear that the season is soon getting late; 
They worry that the day is soon turning dusk. 
Their jingling bracelets tinkle softly,\textsuperscript{81} Their glittering pearls and jewels glint brilliantly.\textsuperscript{82} 
Enamored of the roseate vapor above the dawning meadow, 
Infatuated with the azure clouds in a clear blue sky, 
They paddle around the sandbank, brushing aside willow branches; 
They row toward the islet, pushing apart water-caltrops. 
They hold lotus leaves by their green petioles to make sunshade; 
They string together vermillion lotus sepals to make skirts.\textsuperscript{83} 
Their paddles bob in a dizzying confusion, 
Like rain blown in a windstorm or downpour,\textsuperscript{84} 
Their poles whoosh, on and on, unceasing.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{77} The Xiang 湘 River is a large tributary of the Yangzi that courses through modern Guangxi and Hunan provinces before flowing into Lake Dongting. The Ru 汝 River courses southeastward through the central region of modern Henan province and flows into the Huai River. 
\textsuperscript{78} Lilong 龜龍, according to an anecdote in Zhuangzi, is a legendary black dragon owning a precious pearl. 
\textsuperscript{79} Cf. Cao Zhi, “Luoshen fu”: “Hoping my sincere feelings be communicated first, I untie my jade pendant to invite her.” 顧誠素之先達兮, 解玉佩以要之, Also Qu Yuan’s “Lisao”: “I untie pendant-sash to retie it with a message, I command Jianxiu to be my envoy.” 解佩繚以結言兮, 吾令蹇修以為理。 
\textsuperscript{80} Cf. “Qian chang” 潘裳 (Mao #87): “If you tenderly love me, gird your loins and wade across the Zhen; But if you don’t love me—there are plenty of other men.” 子怨我, 潘裳涉溱。子不我思, 豈無他人。Arthur Waley trans., The Book of Songs (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 72. 
\textsuperscript{81} Huanchuan 龜釵, finger-rings and armlets, adornments for females. 
\textsuperscript{82} Cf. Fu Xuan 傅玄, “Wu fu” 舞賦: “Pearl and jadeite sparkle and glitter, their gorgeous garments made of fine silk are stitched with hanging feathers.” 珠翠之鏤而耀燦兮, 華桂飛簪而錦織羅。 
\textsuperscript{83} Cf. Xiao Gang 蕭箑, “Cailian fu”: “I once heard that lotuses are things to cherish, I picked and collected them to make a skirt.” 聴聞衆愛, 採茲欲為裙。Also “Lisao”: “I made water-caltrop and lotuses into a coat, I collected lotuses to make a gown.” 裏芰荷以為衣兮, 集芙蓉以為裳。 
\textsuperscript{84} Cf. Zuo Si 左思, “Shudu fu” 庠都賦: “After drinking and eating their fill, the guests return. Their chariots and horses make noises like thunder, rolling and clattering. Like rain blown in a windstorm or downpour, scatters for hundreds of miles.” 尊御酣, 賓旅旋。馬駿騁, 轟轟闘競。若風流雨散, 漫乎數百里之間。Likewise, “like rain blown in a windstorm or downpour” 風流雨散 here signifies the end of the party. 
\textsuperscript{85} Cf. Pan Yue 潘越, “Xizheng fu” 西征賦: “Thin webbing is interwoven with white feathers, whistling poles sound forcefully.” 纖絞連白, 暴根厲響。 Minglang in Pan Yue’s fu is an act of startling the fish for purposes of netting them. Here in Wang Bo’s fu it is an act to show the reluctance to leave.
As the fog lifts and the mist dissipates.
Their boats fly like young dragons, curving and swerving;
Their poles whoosh like startled geese, swarming in confusion;
Their rafts recoil from the crashing tide;
Their bamboo poles resent rocks in the shallows.
Silky lotus fibers cling to their hands and wrap around their wrists;
Prickly lotus peduncles snag their garments and rip their skirts.

This vignette is a party scene by the river where a large group of young “female singers, performers, and alluring ladies’ maids” are exchanging tokens of affection with their potentially beloved partners. In this scene, the lotuses are picked to further adorn the girls’ already beautiful looks—the leaves are used as sunshade and the sepals are made into skirts (ll.191-92). The couplet is reminiscent of the similar motif in “Lisao” (footnote 53) but no moral message can be retrieved. A similar sense of anxiety about the passage of time is evoked (ll.183-84) but it does not lead to the eagerness to establish one’s reputation as in the “Lisao.” Rather, the anxiety only urges the girls to exhibit their stunning beauty in a more intensive manner before the sunset, probably through a dance (ll.185-86, movements in dancing make their bracelets jingle and their jewels glitter, and better display their curvaceous figure). The party then approaches to an end (ll.193-202), when the girls have to pick up their disorderly placed paddles—a sign of their indulgence in joy—and leave. Yet they are reluctant to leave, as waves and rocks are creating barriers to “detain” their boats, with the lotuses clinging to their body and attire to drag them back. In particular, the verbs of emotion applied to boats and punt-poles, to recoil from (qie 怯)

86 Cf. Zhang Heng 張衡, “Xijing fu” 西京賦: “A great fish in the sea transformed itself into a dragon, twisting and twining.” 鱗鱗變而成龍，狀飛竄以婉婉。
87 Cf. Xiao Gang, “Cailian qu” 采蓮曲: “Lotus fiber winds around her wrist, water chestnuts snag her garment.” 荷絲傍繞腕，菱角繚衣。
88 Cf. Xiao Gang, “Cailian fu”: “Lotuses are dense and their thorns close-packed, snagging her coat and knotting her skirt again and again.” 荷稠刺密，亻牽衣而縈裳。
and to resent (zeng 憎), describe the sudden change of the girls’ mental state from extreme joy in a gathering to extreme sorrow in separation. The nouns describing the specific parts of lotus, silky lotus fibers (si 絲) and prickly lotus peduncles (ci 刺), are also to be read as verbs punning with “to long for” (si 思) and “to prick” (ci 刺)—the girls long for their beloved one, and their hearts being pricked by longing.

The depiction of joy and desire in this vignette is largely availed by allusions to the lotus and female imagery in the “Lisao,” Xiao Gang’s lotus fu and song, and Cao Zhi’s “Luoshen fu.” Alluding to the Chuci (the mostly evoked poems are the “Lisao,” “Jiuge” and “Zhaohun”) and previous lotus fu (as referenced in Wang Bo’s preface) is a shared practice among all eight vignettes, in order to exhaust the beauty of lotus, and more importantly, to display the evocative power of lotus in a wide range of situations. For such purposes, the texts to which Wang Bo alludes are not selected randomly but have to all contribute to bringing forth the lotus’s beauty. As such, Wang Bo’s use of allusion not only establishes a connection between the alluded texts and the newly composed text, but also implies a certain degree of similarity among the original texts themselves. Allusion allows the text to stretch back in time and horizontally in the contemporary period to create a relation among a group of texts. In this sense, allusion is an act of categorization and interpretation. In the case of Wang Bo’s “Cailian fu,” the quoted Chuci poems and the previous lotus fu are equally treated as sources of inspiration to paint female beauty, sensuous desire, and a gorgeous scene imbued with joy or sorrow.

The natural scenery in the “Cailian fu” depicted by alluding to Chuci and previous lotus fu is typical of the southland. The way it is conventionally depicted in poems falls into the category of Palace Style. The joyful party is set into a splendid scenery full of vitality in the Southland. The island grass is in its most exuberant color (l.183), the land is enveloped in a roseate vapor,
the sky is blue and clouds azure (ll.187-88). The girls leave exquisite ruffles on the river when they row (l.184), brushing aside willow-branches and pushing apart water-caltrops (ll.189-90). The plants growing on the riverbank are soft in shape, and willow is particularly associated with female curvaceous body. The already gorgeous natural scenery is even further embellished with water patterns by the girls’ rowing—nature is decorated by culture. In addition, Wang Bo’s selection of *Chuci* as a source of allusion takes advantage of its Chu origin. Before the Song, the Southland or Jiangnan that is associated with lotus *fu* and songs refers not only to the Taihu region (the “Jiangnan” in the modern sense, mainly Jiangsu and Zhejiang) but also (if not more so) Hunan and Hubei, heartland of old Chu. In accordance, a series of Chu place names and landmarks are referenced throughout the entire “Cailian fu.”

Through allusions, Wang Bo exhibits a “Southern” style of poetry (that is ornate and feminine) here represented by the *Chuci*, the lotus *fu* and songs. To be sure, Wang Bo does not restrain lotus-picking to the geographic South as in previous lotus *fu* and songs. Instead, the southern place names are, in most of the cases, juxtaposed with the northern ones (for example, the Qi, Luo, and Ru Rivers in the fifth vignettes are all in the north). The juxtaposition is not merely a result of the function of parallelism, but a hint of a different perspective. Written in the disunion period, the previous lotus *fu* and songs concentrate on depiction of the southland in order to construct a Southern identity. Written in a unified empire and a cosmopolitan perspective, Wang Bo encompasses the North into the picture of lotus-picking. Originally a Southern topos, lotus-picking can now be appreciated in the elite families at capital Chang’an (vignette three)—implying the availability of the Southern topos to serve Wang Bo’s intended reader, Prince of Pei. As Wang Bo writes in the “Cailian fu,” “[Though lotus-picking is] a custom first begin in regions of lakes and rivers, it is now popular throughout the land.”
The “Southern” literary style can be enjoyed throughout the empire.

Entertainment, however, does not exhaust the utility of the Chuci language. The very last vignette, with the description of a sojourner (an image of Wang Bo) enjoying the sight and songs of lotus on his way, presents Wang Bo’s political ambition through Chuci allusions. The beauty of lotus reminds the sojourner of passage of time, and further of the urgency to establish a reputation.

Though thankful that these fragrant plants have come to bloom in good time, He is fearful that his enduring name will soon be lost to eternity.

In the “Lisao,” the anxiety of plant’s withering often signifies fear for aging, which further leads to the protagonist’s eagerness to establish a good reputation in time. The same chain of plant-time-reputation is invoked in the above couplet. The sojourner then declares his admiration of Lü Shang 呂尚, a commoner rose to great fame because his talent was recognized by King Wen. He aspires to become Lü Shang through ingestion of lotus petals and wearing lotus attires, a gesture of self-purification and virtue cultivation in the “Lisao.”

He subsists on the pure white lotus seeds and inhales fragrance from their crimson blooms; He sews lotus leaves to make a coat and fashions water-caltrop leaves into a skirt; He tends to his everlasting purity in the crevasse of the mountain; He gives pledge from his heart, forever, to his prince.

Dressing in lotus and longing for the prince, the sojourner now joins those lotus-picking girls in previous vignettes to please their lord. Specifically, as Ding Xiang Warner argues, the fu is likely
a self-recommendation to be sent to the Prince of Pei 沛王 (Li Xian 李賢 [651 or 653-684]), Wang Bo’s former patron, and hence the display of his literary talent by the most crafted style.89

Chuci, just like the fu in the Wei, Jin and Southern Dynasties, is a source of inspiration for an alluring depiction of lotus, the representative topos for a sensuous portrait of the Southland. Identifying Qu Yuan as a remote ancestor of the Southern Dynasties poetry, Wang Bo includes the Chuci into the gorgeous “Southern” literary style. But when drafting a self-recommendation, he feels the urge to speak in Qu Yuan’s language and voice. Wang Bo’s and Lu Zhaolin’s critique of Qu Yuan focuses on his embellished language and not his self-expressive mode of writing, a mode they engage themselves with. Qu Yuan’s poetry as a channel venting sorrow and plaint becomes a target of critique in the mid-Tang.

“Melodies of a Perished State” vs. “Melodies that Cause a State to Perish”

Among the literati who appealed for a “restoration of literary writings” 文章中興,90 especially after the An Lushan Rebellion, that the crisis of wenzhang became a central issue.91 In this context, the role of Qu Yuan is stressed as a progenitor of decline in a wider circle for his unrestrained expression of plaint. The plaintive voice that previously often associates with Qu Yuan’s personal political frustration is now contextualized in the turmoil of Chu. In an extreme case, the early Tang historians’ caution for “melodies of perished states” that are improper for the ear now come to include Qu Yuan’s poems.

90 Dugu Ji 独孤及 (725-777), “Jianjiao shangshu libu yuanwailang Zhaojun Ligong Zhong ji xu 檢校尚書吏部員外郎趙郡李公中集序” in Quan Tang wen 388.3945. Dugu Ji traces the rise of “restoration of literary writings” to the Tianbao 天寶 reign (742-755).
91 McMullen, State and Scholars in T’ang China, 234-249; Bol, “This Culture of Ours”, 111.
The appeal for a literature reform participates in a series of reformative efforts at the court, such as civil service exam, tax and finance, etc. Major figures in “restoration of wenzhang,” Xiao Yingshi 蕭穎士 (707-758), Li Hua 李華 (715-778), and Jia Zhi 賈至 (718-772)—they passed the jinshi examination together in 735 and knew each other—share their attitude on the authority and orthodoxy of Classics, the only model to be restored in order to retrieve the transformative power of wenzhang.

Accordingly, the three all locate Qu Yuan as the starting point of corruption of wenzhang in their account of literary history. Xiao Yingshi’s tone is the mildest among the three to comment that “after the Six Classics emerged Qu Yuan and Song Yu whose writings were full of grandeur, yet they failed to compose in the style of Classics” 六經之後有屈原、宋玉，文雖雄壯而不能經. The critical tone becomes harsher with Li Hua, who characterizes Qu Yuan’s and Song Yu’s works as “sorrowful and hurting, extremely sumptuous without returning (to principle)” 哀以傷，靡而不返, such that “the way of Six Classics disappeared” 六經之道遁矣. As Wang Bo previously did, Jia Zhi traces the corruption of wenzhang in the Southern Dynasties Liu-Song, Qi, and Liang through the Han grand fu writers and finally to the sao poets’ unrestrained plaint 騷人怨靡.

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93 Xiao Yingshi’s speech is quoted by Li Hua in his preface to Xiao’s anthology. Li Hua, “Yangzhou Gongceao Xiao Yingshi wenji xu” 揚州功曹蕭穎士文集序, in Quan Tang wen 315.3198. According to Li Hua, Xiao Yingshi has spoken highly of a series of Han, Wei, Jin, and Tang writers, with an exception of Mei Sheng and Sima Xiangru, whose writings are gorgeous yet diverge from the Odes. Writers of the Southern Dynasties are left out.
94 Li Hua, “Zeng Libu shangshu Qinghe Xiaogong Cui Mian ji xu” 贈禮部尚書清河孝公崔沔集序, in Quan Tang wen 315. 3196.
95 Jia Zhi, “Gongbu shilang Li gong ji xu” 工部侍郎李公集序, in Quan Tang wen 368.3736; Liu Mian, “Xie Du xianggong lun Fang Du erxiang shu” 謝杜相公論房杜二相書, in Quan Tang wen 527.5354.
Taking into consideration Confucius’s remark that the “Guanju” (Mao #1) is “sorrowful but would not lead to hurt” and Yang Xiong’s perception that “the fu of shi poets is gorgeous and guided by principles,” Li Hua and Jia Zhi contrast Chuci with Shijing in both style and moral principles. This may reflect, as Peter Bol observes, Li Hua’s “desire to ground wen-chang in textual traditions other than belles-lettres” and his insistence on the strict distinction between the “normative wen of antiquity collected in the Classics” and the “self-expressive literary composition of later ages stemming from Ch’ü Yuan and Sung Yü.” Since they were not a part of Classics, the Chuci was unable to serve as the proper model to transform men’s acts. Compared with the early Tang critique that primarily focused on the sumptuous style of Chuci, mid-Tang literati now added to it the self-expressive mode of writing—a mode, if not properly guided by the Classics, easily slides into a venting of unrestrained emotion as in Qu Yuan’s case. On this point, these three literati views echo that of Yan Zhitui.

It should be noted that, the characteristic styles of Qu Yuan identified by Xiao Yingshi, Li Hua, and Jia Zhi overlap with one another yet are distinct. The three literati appear to summarize the overall features of Qu Yuan’s corpus yet in fact each of them only focuses on one portion of it. Xiao’s comment of “grandeur” better fits, for instance, the description of cosmic travel and the hymn to deceased soldiers in the war (Guoshang); Li Hua’s “sorrowful and hurting” better describes the protagonist’s failure in courting ladies and lament of his ill fate; and Jia Zhi’s “unrestrained plaint” the “Lisao” and “Jiuzhang” protagonist’s

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96 Analects 3.20.
97 Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶, Fa yan yishu 法言義疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 49.
98 Bol, “This Culture of Ours”, 112.
accusation of his lord Lingxiu. A comprehensive survey, however, is not their goal. The identified style singles out only certain elements in *Chuci* that are reminiscent of the Han grand *fu* and the Qi-Liang poetry, in order to implicitly make manifest the kinship of *Chuci* with these already denounced styles—the Han *fu* that is grand and gorgeous, the Palace Style that is intricately sensuous 细靡. In other words, the very act of characterization serves to locate an origin for the decline of literature in retrospect.

The underlying reason for the *Chuci* to mark the beginning of decline is similar to the early Tang assumption in the unity of textual order and political order, i.e. *Chuci* as produced in a political corrupted age after the demise of sages lacks the necessary foundation to transform the people with moral values. As Li Hua believes, “sorrow or joy [expressed in a writing] is attached to [the situation of] the age” 哀乐系乎时, meaning that “[writings composed] in the reign of Wen and Wu of Zhou are joyful in tone while those composed in the age of You and Li of Zhou are sorrowful” 樂文武而哀幽厉. 99 Therefore, the political situation in the age of Huai and Xiang of Chu already predetermines Qu Yuan’s tone to be “sorrowful and hurting.” From Li Hua’s perspective, Qu Yuan the writer has no other choice but to compose in such a style and his home state Chu is to blame for “forcing” his poetry into such a direction.

On the other hand, according to Li Hua, Qu Yuan is to blame because he is responsible for the resolve that gives rise to writing. As Li Hua states, “*wenzhang* stems from its creator” 文章本乎作者, who is supposed to ground his resolve in the Six Classics. 100 Qu Yuan’s “sorrowful and hurting” style is a result from his failure to align his intention with that in the Classics. Such a view manages to balance the role of external political environment and the author’s agency in

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99 Li Hua, “Zeng Libu shangshu Qinghe Xiaogong Cui Mian ji xu,” in *Quan Tang wen* 315. 3196.
100 Ibid.
composition. It also allows for possibility of composing morally upright wenzhang in the dark age and rescuing a decline political order through a reform in wenzhang, which is an essential goal in the post-An Lushan Rebellion period.\textsuperscript{101} Since the principles within the Classics are believed to be readily available and one can actively shape one’s resolve,\textsuperscript{102} the task of reform would depend on the writer’s choice to conform to those principles by learning the Classics.

A more radical critique of Chuci is proposed by Liu Mian 柳冕 (d. 805), an official and writer outside of Li Hua’s circle holding a more rigid and narrower definition of wen (one that excludes and despises belles-lettres\textsuperscript{103}). He condemns works by Qu Yuan and Song Yu as “melodies of a perished state” (i.e. Chu) in a letter to the Grand Counselor.\textsuperscript{104} Liu Mian’s critique could be the harshest ever because he deprives the Chuci of any moral value and accuses them of causing the Chu to perish, a critique that is one of a kind. The reception of Liu Mian’s condemnation is difficult to estimate as the reply of his letter, if any, is not extant. In the meantime, Liu Mian’s intellectual influence at his own time is unclear due to the limited preservation of sources about him and his own writings.\textsuperscript{105} Yet the association of Qu Yuan’s verses with the destruction of Chu is not the only case in the Tang, as Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824)

\textsuperscript{101} For a discussion, see David McMullen, State and Scholars in T’ang China, 94-105.
\textsuperscript{102} According to Chen Jo-shui, the difference between members of “restoration of wenzhang” and Han Yu is that, the former believes in the readily availability of principles in the Classics, while Han Yu argues for the necessity for the individual to pursue them. Chen Jo-shui, “Zhongguo chuantong de bianyi yu liejie—Lun Zhong Tang sixiang bianhua de liangtiao xiansuo” 中古傳統的變異與裂解—論中唐思想變化的兩條線索, in his Tangdai wenshi yu Zhongguo sixiang de zhuanshi 唐代文士與中國思想的轉型 (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2016), 56.
\textsuperscript{103} As Chen Jo-shui observes, Liu Mian holds a radical view towards belles-lettres and restrains from a self-identification as a man of belles-lettres, but such an attitude is not the only case in the Sui-Tang period, since it echoes the opinions of scholars such as Sun Chuo, Li E, Wang Tong, and Liu Zhiji. See Chen, “Lun Zhong-Tang guwen yundong de yige shehui wenhua beijing” 論中唐文運動的一個社會文化背景, in his Tangdai wenshi yu Zhongguo sixiang de zhuanshi, 248, 257.
\textsuperscript{104} Liu Mian, “Xie Du xianggong lun Fang Du erxiang shu” 謝杜相公論房杜二相書, in Quan Tang wen 527.5354. The Du xianggong (the Grand Counselor is commonly referred to as xianggong in the Tang) is most likely Du Hongjian 杜鴻漸 (709-769) who served as Grand Counselor in Daizong’s reign.
\textsuperscript{105} I thank Anna Shields for the suggestion of a cautious stance towards Liu Mian. In the meantime, as she points out, Liu Mian is worth noting as he rose to significance in the Song and thus likely affected Song scholars’ views of the Chuci.
similarly contextualizes Qu Yuan’s composition at the moment when Chu perishes, though Han arrives at a different assessment to celebrate Qu Yuan’s literary talent. A comparison of Liu Mian’s and Han Yu’s views reveals two contradictory attitudes at the time towards the role of spontaneity and the literary aspect in *wenzhang*. Han Yu would tolerate spontaneous response to external situations, though he sees a necessity to transform it with classical learning; and he also valued the literary aspect of writing. Liu Mian, however, denounced both aspects once and for all.

In his “Preface Sending Off Meng Dongye” (Meng Jiao) 送孟東野序, 106 Han Yu delineates a literary tradition of those “good at sounding forth” 善鳴者 in music and writing. Under the presumption that “things sound forth when losing their balance” 物不得其平則鳴 (“losing the balance” here points to both the state of being joyful and that of being depressed/agitated, though more weight is given to the latter 107), Han Yu affirms the role of spontaneity in composition and restates the inevitability to compose as proposed in the “Great Preface.” It is Heaven that uses individual authors as musical instruments to “sound forth.” It is also Heaven that “causes authors to lodge their emotions in their work.” 108 In particular, the ancient period from Shang to Qin is presented as a succession of political stages from prosperity to decline 衰, last phase 末, and further to destruction 亡, with each stage represented by one or several “good at sounding forth”—the moral advisors such as Yiyin 伊尹 and Duke of Zhou sound forth in the prosperous

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106 The preface was written in 803 to send off Meng Jiao (751-814; courtesy name Dongye) to is post as the District Defender 補尉 in Liyang 淮陽 (in modern Jiangsu). The post was much lower than his expectation, and Han Yu wrote to give solace to him. For a translation and discussion of the preface, see Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 230-33.
108 Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity*, 232. According to Hartman, Han Yu argues that “[b]oth public success and private failure are emotions lodged by the poet and determined by Heaven,” and as such there is no difference between sounding forth the joy out of success and the sorrow out of failure.
periods of Shang and Zhou; Kongzi sounds forth at the time of Zhou’s decline and Zhuangzi in its last phase; and Qu Yuan sounds forth at the point of destruction of Chu:

Chu was a big state. At the moment of its destruction, Qu Yuan sounded forth for Chu. 楚，大國也，其亡也，以屈原鳴。109

To be sure, Han Yu never attributes the term “melodies of a perished state” to Qu Yuan’s verses. Yet it is also significant that his introduction of Qu Yuan solely treats the poet as the medium through whom the fall of Chu is painted. The “imbalance” that motivates Qu Yuan to sound forth is not his personal fate, and what he sounds forth is not his own plaint. Instead, the value of Qu Yuan’s verses lies in his presentation of the tragic moment of his state in a most sincere voice out of spontaneity. Qu Yuan’s verses are no longer a self-lament but have to be understood in the context of the socio-political situation of Chu. For Han Yu, Qu Yuan as a writer “good at sounding forth” is to be valorized, an attitude in contrast to that of the Li Hua circle and Liu Mian, but he shares these latter scholars’ stance in evaluating Qu Yuan’s verses vis-à-vis its socio-political background.

Notably, Han Yu valorizes Qu Yuan’s literary talent and is sympathetic to Qu Yuan’s fate, yet it does not guarantee Qu Yuan’s verses a place in “antiquity” as exemplary wenzhang. Judging from Han Yu’s view of wenzhang, Qu Yuan’s rank is ambivalent. Admittedly, Han Yu’s notion of “good at sounding forth” implies a sense of refinedness in diction, as he believes that “language is the essence of human voice and refined words are further the essence of language” 人聲之精者為言，文辭之於言，又其精也。110 Qu Yuan’s misfortune further adds to the aesthetic value of his verses, since Han Yu believes that “the voice of the calm and peaceful is plain and thin, while that of the sorrowful is subtly refined; language of happiness can hardly be

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109 Ma Qichang 馬其昶, Han Changli wenji jiaozhu 韓昌黎文集校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986) 233.
110 Ibid, 233.
exquisite, while that of frustration and suffering can easily be excellent.”

Han Yu has also expressed deep regret and grief for Qu Yuan’s suicide in various poems. Yet good writing is not equal to correct writing, as others “good at sounding forth” such as Yang Zhu and Mo Di mentioned in the preface are criticized for confusing the Way in their writings. As Bol observes, one’s “natural internal equilibrium” needs to be transformed by a personal understanding of the Way of sages, which, as a “sociohistorical version of the balanced whole,” serves as “the mirror reflecting the imperfect world and the filter defining one’s response.”

In his “Letter in Reply to Li Yi” 答李翊書, Han Yu emphasizes the importance of “examining [one’s writing] with a calm mind” 平心而察之 and assessing the writing vis-à-vis the ancient writings that contain the “intention of the sages” 聖人之志—especially the Shijing and Shangshu 尚書 (Book of Documents), the source of moral principles. In a word, Han Yu accepts the “sounding forth” value of Qu Yuan’s emotional responses, but he suggests that these require transformation to be morally correct through classical learning. One may compare Qu Yuan’s works to the “mutated Airs” 变風 and “mutated Elegantiae” 变雅, but these poems are classical because they are written by state historians 国史 who understand the patterns of gain and loss and whose affections “go no further than rites and moral principles” 止乎禮義. As a spontaneous and emotional response to an imbalanced situation, Qu Yuan’s works have to be guided by the sagely teachings in order not to go to extremes.

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111 Han Yu, “Jingtan changheshi xu” 荆潭唱和诗序, in Han Changli wenji jiaozhu, 262-63.
112 Bol, “This Culture of Ours”, 132.
113 Han Changli wenji jiaozhu, 170. For a translation and discussion of the letter, see Charles Hartman, Han Yü and the T’ang Search for Unity, 241-47.
114 See the “Great Preface,” in Kong Yingda, Maoshi zhengyi, 14-15.
Similarly associating Qu Yuan’s composition with the destruction of Chu, Liu Mian refuses to accept any unfiltered emotional response and arrives at a different evaluation than Han Yu’s. In Liu Mian’s decline narrative, Qu Yuan’s verses represent “melodies of a perished state” and “melodies that cause a state to perish” simultaneously.

Writers in antiquity were emotionally moved to feel joyful or grieved upon encountering order or chaos; they composed chantings and songs upon joy and grief; and they established analogy and evocation in their chantings and songs. Therefore, when the “Great Elegantiae” was composed, the kingly way thrived; when the “Minor Elegantiae” was composed, the kingly way was defected; when the “Elegantiae” changed into the “Airs,” the kingly way decayed; when the Odes could not be composed, the kingly beneficence was already exhausted. When it came to Qu Yuan and Song Yu, their writings—sorrowful and brooding, drifting away without returning—were all melodies of a perished state. In the Western Han, beginning with Yang Xiong and Sima Xiangru, writers learn melodies of the perished state in a prosperous age—isn’t it a severe mistake? …

古之作者，因治亂而感哀樂，因哀樂而為詠歌，因詠歌而成比興。故《大雅》作，則王道盛矣；《小雅》作，則王道衰矣；《雅》變《風》，則王道哀矣；《詩》不作，則王澤竭矣。至於屈宋，哀而以思，流而不反，皆亡國之音也。至於西漢，揚、馬以降，置其盛明之代，而習亡國之音，所失豈不大哉？…

[The only way to restore wenzhang is to] valorize the Classics and disdain men of belles-lettres. When Classics are valorized, the teachings are praiseworthy; when the teachings are praiseworthy, wenzhang will thrive; when wenzhang thrives, the kingly way will prosper. These two tasks depend just on the sage ruler to be carried out.

This letter advances a state-centered view of wenzhang. It is, on the one hand, an indicator of the political situation, and on the other hand, a transformative power as “the kingly way will prosper if the wenzhang thrives,” 文章盛則王道興。The Odes is used as an example for the first function of wenzhang. The hierarchy within the Odes is explained as a result of the decay of the kingly Way. In this account, Liu Mian overlooks a possible interpretation in the case of the Odes, that the composition of the “Elegantiae” and “Airs” actually failed to reverse the decline of the

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115 Liu Mian, “Xie Du xianggong lun Fang Du erxiang shu.” Liu Xian has expressed similar ideas about Qu Yuan as the progenitor of a deviant and decadent tradition from the Classics in multiple letters. See his “Da Jingnan Pei shangshu lunwen shu” 答荆南裴尚書論文書, “Yu Xujishi lunwen shu” 與徐給事論文書, and “Yu Huazhou Lufu lunwen shu” 與滑州盧大夫論文書, in Quan Tang wen 527.5356-57.
Way, because even in their presence the political situation still collapsed into a moribund age when the kingly Way was exhausted and no Odes were composed. Liu Mian did not acknowledge the Odes’s insufficiency, or he could blame the rulers for the Odes’s failure because the they never held the canon in serious reverence. But like other late eighth century literati, Liu Mian still shows strong faith in the transformative power of wenzhang and believes that the key for the wenzhang to thrive lies in valorizing classical learning.

The transformative power of wenzhang in Liu Mian’s account is a double-edged sword in that deviant writings composed in a corrupted age will only undermine the kingly way. Thus, Liu Mian regards it a severe mistake for writers in the Western Han, a united empire and “prosperous age,” to learn Qu Yuan’s and Song Yu’s poems, “melodies of a perished state.” Given the Han-Tang substitution, a common technique to address contemporary affairs in the Tang, the warning is targeted at writers in the Tang for them to remove Chuci from their learning. Or otherwise, these “melodies of a perished state” will cause the Tang empire to perish.

“Melody of a perished state” is the lowest evaluation a poem (or music) can get, as the term could claim for the poem an evil nature and deprive the poem of any possible value. These poems cannot even be used as a mirror for the ruler to reflect on his way of governance because, according to various textual traditions, such melodies should be forbidden, otherwise disaster will follow. The character wang in the term serves as an adjective and a verb at the same time. This reading is grounded in the “Yueji” chapter of Liji. In the text’s conception of the correlation between music and government, disorder of musical notes can cause chaos among the ruler-subject relationship and state affairs so that “the state will fall in no time” 国之滅亡無日

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116 Chen Qiyou 陈奇猷, Hanfeizi xin jiaozhu 韓非子新校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), 205-06; Suishu 76.1730.
An example in the *Liji* is those of Wey 衛, melodies of Sangjian 桑間 and Pushang 濮上. As such, for Liu Mian, the *Chuci* joins “melodies of Zheng and Wey” 鄭衛之音 and the court music at Chen and Sui as the morally corrupted poems leading the state and its people astray.

Different from Han Yu’s relatively tolerant attitude, Liu Mian completely rejects the unfiltered spontaneous responses to catastrophe, as he regards Qu Yuan and Song Yu who are “moved by sorrow and joy exhaust the elegant and correct” 感哀樂而亡雅正. Liu also holds a more rigid view that only the Classics, with their illustration of a set of readily knowable rules, are worth reading, learning, and writing in its style. Besides, Liu Mian has no intent to take into consideration the literary and aesthetic, hence his complete rejection of Qu Yuan. Yet in the meantime, similar to the case of Han Yu, the literary thought invoked to legitimize Liu Mian’s evaluation of Qu Yuan is the “Great Preface.” Liu Mian characterizes Qu Yuan’s verses as “sorrowful and brooding” 哀以思, a feature reminiscent of the statement in the “Great Preface”—“Melodies of a perished state are sorrowful and brooding” 亡國之音哀以思. Liu Mian’s characterization is made to prepare and direct the reader to make the connection before he introduces the term. Moreover, by invoking the term, Liu Mian also claims for Qu Yuan’s and Song Yu’s verses features other than “sorrowful and brooding,” including the sensual and superficial content and ornate language, features commonly attributed to “melodies of a perished state” before the Tang in various accounts. These features are indeed imputed to Qu Yuan’s

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117 Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji jijie* 禮記集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 980.
118 Ibid, 981. The melodies of Sangjian and Pushang then come to represent “melodies of a perished state,” as opposed to the correct sound represented by “Guanju.” See, for example, preface to the *Wenxuan*. The “Treatise of Ritual and Music” 禮樂志 in the *Hanshu* also expresses a similar idea about the destructing power of music.
119 Liu Mian, “Yu Huazhou Lu dafu lunwen shu,” in *Quan Tang wen* 527.5356.
120 Bol, “*This Culture of Ours*”, 144-46.
121 Xu Baoyu 徐寶余, “Yinyue guannian de zhengjiao chengzai yu wenxue chengji—Yi ‘wangguo zhiyi’ de
poems in Liu Mian’s other letters to a range of officials to “discourse on wen” 論文, where he comments that the sao poets give rise to the “degenerate and gorgeous” 淫麗 style and that those following Qu Yuan and Song Yu all engage with writings “sorrowful and glamorous” 哀艷.122

The association of Qu Yuan’s verses with the fall of Chu is not an invention by Liu Mian or Han Yu. Yet previous associations often portray Qu Yuan as an advisor attempting to save the Chu from falling through his remonstrative verses. His vain efforts then entail the fall of Chu. For example, Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215-282) argued that “Chu fell after the exile of Master Qu” 屈子疏而楚傾.123 Han Yu’s affective theory of poetry, by contrast, locates Qu Yuan’s composition after the fall of Chu and not before. Liu Mian even reverses Huangfu Mi’s observation by accusing Qu Yuan for writing poetry that could potentially destruct a state, be it Chu or any other regimes that valorize Chuci.

Liu Mian’s hostile voice towards Chuci did not die out with him. A century later, Niu Xiji 牛希濟 (b. ca. 872), the Five Dynasties poet and official, would advise the court to “abandon the studies of Qu [Yuan], Song [Yu], Xu [Ling], and Yu [Xin]” 退屈宋徐庚之學 in order to establish “the writings of Yao and Shun with administrative and transformative function” 堯舜治化之文.124 Yet like many of his contemporaries who advocate wen’s function of moral edification, Niu Xiji’s poetry does not reject the influence of those he fights against. His ci poems, most of which are collected in the Huajian ji 花間集, have participated in the “culture of

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122 Liu Mian, “Da Jingnan Pei shangshu lunwen shu” and “Yu Xu jishi lunwen shu,” in Quan Tangwen 527.5356-57.
123 Huangfu Mi, “Shi quan lun” 詩訓論, in Quan Jin wen 71.1870.
124 Niu Xiji 牛希濟, “Wenzhang lun” 文章論 in Quan Tang wen 845.8877. The essay cannot be dated precisely.
romance” that took shape in late eighth century and can be traced back to the Palace Style associated with Xu Ling and Yu Xin,¹²⁵ poets in the same group with Qu Yuan in Niu Xiji’s (and many other Tang literati’s) own perception. As such, the proposals in the Tang to erase Chuci from literati’s learning and erode its traces in their writings are, by and large, merely a declaration of one’s stance to change the “degenerate and gorgeous style.” Except for Liu Mian, few could truly erode the traces of Chuci from their writings,¹²⁶ let alone removing it from their learnings.

**Conclusion**

Within the intellectual trend of “restoration of antiquity” in the Tang that began in the late ninth century, Chuci was portrayed as a predecessor of the Palace Style, a deviant from the Shijing, and the beginning of corruption of wenzhang. The unprecedented harsh critique is better to be understood together with the Chu origin of Chuci. Along with the antipathetic conception of Chu as a perished state—now stressed as a negative model of government—and the literati pursuit of moral-political order, Chuci as a product of the chaotic government ceases to be an appropriate model for literature. As a perished state in the South, Chu was invoked to substitute Liang in Yan Zhitui’s poem. In the Tang, Chuci was identified—largely by northerners—as the origin of Liang poetry, a Southern style accused of leading men astray from the Classics by developing an unrestrained self. To be sure, although a strong voice at the time, this specific critique does not constitute the entire picture of the reception of Chuci in the ninth century. Ban


¹²⁶ In Liu Mian’s case, the limited scale of his preserved works must be taken into consideration.
Gu’s remark on Qu Yuan as the single poet in the Warring States who composed in the principles of the *Shijing* remained influential. For example, Li Deyu 李德裕 (787-849) argued that the poems of the Chu poets were “indeed the mutated Airs of poetry of Zhou” 誌周詩之變風. Decades later, in 904, the last emperor Li Zhu 李柷 (r. 904-907) conferred the title of “Marquis of Luminous Numen” 昭靈侯 on Qu Yuan to celebrate his loyalty and to set him up as a modeling minister for contemporary officials. That said, the *Chuci* was still not a Classic.

In the Tang discourses on rescuing the decline of political and cultural order we have seen, it appears that Qu Yuan—just like Xu Ling and Yu Xin—has become a stereotype and “straw man” for “degenerate and gorgeous writings” and for starting a deviant tradition from the Classics. No one, however, when criticizing Qu Yuan as such, bothers to justify their critique by analyzing (or even merely quoting) his poems as Wang Yi once did for the poet’s defense or as Liu Xie did when pointing out *Chuci*’s conformation to/divergence from the Classics. The value judgments discussed in this chapter are assertions taken for granted. To some extent, it is no longer important what the *Chuci* say, it only matters what the anthology represents. It is in this sense that the *Chuci* in these discourses disappear as figurative texts and becomes an emblem of the “decadent style” that especially associates with the South. In the next chapter, we will see *Chuci* for the first time explicitly regionalized as a southern literature in the Song, when southernness marks its accomplishments.

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127 Li Deyu, “Banzhu biguan fu” 班竹管賦, in *Quan Tang wen*, 696.7171. Li Deyu did not elaborate on “mutated Airs” 變風, which became an issue of scholarly discussion in the Song. For a discussion of Song scholars’ views on “mutated Airs,” see Chapter Five.

128 For the imperial edict conferring Qu Yuan, see *Quan Tang wen*, 93.972. It was most likely Zhu Wen’s 朱溫 (852-912) decision to confer the title because he was the minister in control of all governmental affairs, while Li Zhu was his puppet. It was an ironic move since Zhu Wen was not a loyalist to the Tang empire himself—after he accepted amnesty to serve at court as a participant in the Huang Chao Rebellion (875-884), he plotted a coup d’état to dethrone and execute Zhaozong 昭宗 (888-904), enthroned his son Li Zhu as a puppet emperor, and finally replaced Li Zhu to establish a new regime, the Latter Liang in 907. See *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史, chapters 1-2.
Chapter Five. The Song Reappraisal and Regionalization: Chuci as a Heritage of the South

The Song 宋 (960-1279) is a major period to reconceptualize the past in Chinese history, so much so that the future generations have to access the past in the way informed by Song scholars. In the case of Chuci, the Song gives rise to the compilation of Hong Xingzu’s 洪興祖 (1090-1155) Complementary Annotation of Chuci (Chuci buzhu 楚辭補註) and Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130-1200) Collective Annotations of Chuci (Chuci jizhu 楚辭集註), two monumental commentary since Wang Yi’s Zhangju.¹ The Buzhu that preserves and complements Wang Yi’s Zhangju commentary becomes the standard text of Chuci in modern times, while the Zhangju no longer exists on its own. The nuanced exegesis in the Jizhu provides novel interpretations to the allegories in the Chuci and is well received in later ages.² Moreover, the Song sees efforts of reorganizing and redefining the literary lineage of Chuci represented by Chao Buzhi’s 晁補之 (1053-1110) Continuation of Chuci (Xu Chuci 續楚辭) and Mutant Lisao (Bian Lisao 變離騷) and Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130-1200; jinshi in 1148) Later Works in the Tradition of Chuci (Chuci houyu 楚辭後語). The Chuci lineage becomes a rival of and compliment to the literary tradition led by the Odes. In the meantime, sao 騷, a poetic style named after the masterpiece “Lisao,” is recognized as an independent genre distinguished from fu and shi in the Song anthology making. Overall, the commentarial, anthologizing, canonizing, and genre-making efforts all revolve

¹ Other major Chuci commentaries in the Song include Wu Renjie’s 吳仁傑 Lisao caomu shu 離騷草木疏, Yang Wanli’s 楊万里 Tianwen Tiandui jie 天問天對解, and Qian Gaozhi’s 錢杲之 Lisao jizhuan 離騷集傳. The first focuses on glossing the plants in Qu Yuan’s oeuvre with references to the Shanhai jing. The second offers a commentary on the “Tianwen” and Liu Zongyuan’s response to it, the “Tiandui,” respectively. Yang Wanli treated the “Tiandui” is also treated as a commentary of the “Tianwen” to gloss the latter text. The third is a commentary on the “Lisao.” Qian follows Wang Yi’s glosses in general, with some variations. Qian also parsed the “Lisao” into fourteen stanzas.
around contemplation of the essence of *Chuci*, which is identified as its geographical origin, Chu or the South in general.

This chapter investigates the Song reconfiguration of *Chuci* as an anthology, a literary lineage, and a genre. As an anthology, the Song exegesis of its nomenclature regionalizes the *Chuci* to the South. As a literary lineage, the poets selected as a member of the *Chuci* family are believed to bear within them a “Chu spirit” characterized by loyalty and patriotism 忠君愛國, a spirit that carries the lineage forward. As a genre, *sao* is not geographically bounded but is still Qu Yuan-centered in that the form and content of *sao* verses are supposed to derive from Qu Yuan’s works. Among all, the regionalization of *Chuci* distinguishes the Song conception from that of previous ages. Though a collection of poems (purportedly) originating from Chu and associating with the South in various ways as discussed in previous chapters, *Chuci* was never explicitly declared as exclusive to the South as it was in the Song, when Chu acquired unprecedented attention and became a function of discourse. By further contextualizing the Song reconfiguration of *Chuci* in its political and cultural background, I argue that the Song regionalization of *Chuci* plays a role to construct its cultural identity and authority. Regionalization enables the Song court, the then owner of the old Chu land in the South, to claim its exclusive ownership over the cultural heritage of *Chuci*, a storehouse of admirable literary and moral values.

**Continuation of previous debates**

The debates on whether the *Chuci* could serve as a model of writing and Qu Yuan as a moral exemplar were carried into the Song. Till the mid-eleventh century, Qu Yuan was both lamented
as a loyal martyr and criticized for his rancor (the debate already started in the Han). His works saw both celebrations as an heir of the *Odes* and denunciations as a progenitor of the fanciful and ornamental style (views widely held in the Tang). Notably, the influential literati at the time held complex views on Qu Yuan and *Chuci*. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) would both show compassion towards Qu Yuan’s misfortune as an advisor. Yet different from Su Shi’s tolerant attitude, Ouyang Xiu viewed Qu Yuan’s plaint and indignation as a negative model to handle deprivation and political disfavor. Celebrating the *Chuci* as testimony to Qu Yuan’s integrity, Sima Guang 資治通鑑 excluded Qu Yuan from his *Zizhi Tongjian* 資治通鑑, provoking generations of speculation on his reasoning. The disagreeing evaluations, however, gradually sedimented into an overall admiration of Qu Yuan and *Chuci*—though in slightly different aspects—since the end of Northern Song and especially in the Southern Song. The shift in scholarly attitude, as I show, was accompanied by—if not informed by—the recognition of *Chuci* as an exclusive Southern property. In other words, the *Chuci* was celebrated as a regional anthology and literary tradition in reaction to the increasingly serious threat from the North. The *Chuci* has lent itself to the Song construction of its own literary and cultural authority. The call for cultural capital in the Song in turn secures the position of *Chuci* in Chinese literary history.

**Problem of Nomenclature: When Chu Matters**

3 For the former, see, for example, Mei Yaochen’s 梅堯臣 “Wuyue wuri” 五月五日, Sima Guang’s 司馬光 “Lan” 蘭 and “Qu Ping” 屈平, Liu Chang’s 劉敞 “Qu Yuan guci” 屈原故辭 and “Du Lisao” 鄧陵骚, Su Shi’s 蘇軾 “Qu Yuan miao fu” 屈原廟賦 and “Qu Yuan ta” 屈原祠. For the latter, see, for example, Ouyang Xiu’s 歐陽修 “Yu Xie Jingshan shu” 與謝景山書.

4 For the former, see Su Shi’s “Yu Xie Minshi Tui guanshu” 與謝民士推官書. For the latter, see Xia Song’s 夏竦 “Li Deyu fei jinshi lun” 李德裕非進士論; Liu Ban’s 劉攽 “Diaochong xiaojin zhuangfu buwei fu” 雕蟲小技壯夫不為賦. It is often explained by the fact that the *Zizhi tongjian* did not write biographies for any men of belles-lettres. For a discussion, see Fu Jinxing 傅金星, “Tongjian buzai Qu Yuan shi” 《通鑑》不載屈原事, *Dushu* 3 (1984): 150-151; Chen Guangchong 陳光崇, “Tongjian wenhuashi shulue” 《通鑑》文化史述, in his *Shixue yanjiu jicun* 史學研究輯存 (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1989), 311-325.
It is widely conceived in the early twentieth century that Chinese literature has two glorious origins, the Northern *Shijing* and the Southern *Chuci*. The conception is charged by an anti-Manchu (viewed as Northern “barbarians”) agenda, an issue treated at length by Lawrence Schneider. The modern contrast between the *Shijing* and *Chuci* has not yet taken shape in the Song, but is largely informed by the Song perspective of *Chuci* as a Southern anthology. Such a view is represented by three scholars, Huang Bosi 黃伯思 (1079-1118; *jinshi* in 1100), Han Yuanji 韓元吉 (1118-1187), and Zhu Xi.

Among all, Huang Bosi’s Chu-centric definition of *Chuci* is the earliest available source and most cited “evidence” for *Chuci* as a Southern literature exclusive to Chu in modern scholarship. Huang was known in his time for his “fondness of rare characters in ancient writings” 好古文奇字. He also once worked as an Assistant Collating Books 校書郎 and later an Assistant in the Palace Library 秘書郎 in Huizong’s 徽宗 reign (1100-1126). It was most likely in this post that Huang compiled the *Collated and Fixed Verses of Chu* 校定楚辭, where he proposed a regionalized perspective to read the *Chuci*, an anthology of Chu, in the preface. To do so, Huang Bosi posed the question of nomenclature—the anthology of *Chuci* consists of both Chu and Han verses yet all of them are designated as “verses of Chu” in the Han.

Nomenclature is not simply an issue of random name selection or meaning clarification, but a
hermeneutic problem about the core of Chuci that holds the anthology together. Previous explanations of nomenclature, represented by Chen Shuizhi 陳說之 (jinshi 1030) and Wang Yi, center on Qu Yuan the prominent author. By contrast, Huang rejected both and shifted the focus of Chuci to its geographic origin of Chu.

In the preface, Huang Bosi specifically rejects to divide poems within the Chuci into two broad categories “Lisao” (poems of Qu Yuan) and “Chuci” (poems by other authors), a popular view in the Song.

Yet verses by Qu Yuan, Song Yu, and those modeling upon [Qu Yuan] shared the same title [i.e. “Chuci”]. Chen Shuizhi maintained that only those composed by Qu Yuan could be called “Lisao,” while those modeling upon and continued [Qu Yuan’s verses] were to be called “Chuci.” This is wrong.

Chen Shuizhi proposes that Qu Yuan’s poems are called “Lisao” while all other poems are called “Chuci.” With a little adjustment on Chen’s view, Chao Buzhi 晁補之 (1053-1110) later makes a further division among Qu Yuan’s poems by referring to the first piece as “Lisao jing” (Classic of Encountering Sorrows) and the rest as “Lisao” (the division is later inherited by Zhu Xi, as I show later in the chapter). The bipartite or tripartite classification is a prevailing perspective to explain the inner structure of the Chuci anthology. The classifications may also reflect a long tradition of referring to a variety of Qu Yuan’s poems under the title of “Lisao” in various sources. The hierarchical structure within the classification builds a genealogy among the authors with Qu Yuan figuring the ancestor and a textual lineage with “Lisao” serving as the

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13 Chao Buzhi, “‘Lisao’xinxu” 離騷新序, in his Jilei ji 難離集 (rpt. SKQS), 36.2a-4a. Zhu Xi follows Chao’s standard for Qu Yuan’s poems, while referring to poems by later authors all as “xu Lisao” 續離騷 (sequels to Lisao) in his Chuci jizhu.
14 For example, this is a common phenomenon in the leishu (classified extracts) such as Yiwen leiju and Taiping yulan.
model and progenitor (a “classic”) for all “later” works, both designating Qu Yuan as the essential element in the *Chuci*.

In Huang Bosi’s preface, however, the Qu Yuan centric perspective is replaced by a Chu centric nomenclature.

Verses by Qu Yuan and Song Yu are all written in the Chu language, composed in the Chu tone, recording Chu place names, and noting Chu objects, and as such can be called “verses of Chu.” Words such as *suo* [particle],15 *zhi* [particle],16 *qiang* [particle],17 *sui* [to scold],18 *jian* [particle],19 *fen* [to be profuse],20 and *chachi* [to be frustrated]21 are Chu language; cadence and solemnity, rhyming or not, are [characteristics of] the Chu tone; Yuan,22 Xiang,23 Jiang [Yangzi], Li,24 Xiu Gate [Gate of Ying],25 and mouth of Xia River,26 are proper names of Chu places;

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15 The particle *suo* 些 marks the end of a couplet in the “Zhaohun.”
16 The particle *zhi* 只 marks end of a couplet in the “Dazhao.”
17 *Qiang* 相 is a particle (mostly used at the beginning of a line) widely used in the “Lisao,” “Jiuge,” “Jiuzhang,” “Qijian,” and “Jiutan.” Wang Yi marked it as a Chu dialectical term. *Chuci buzhu*, 11.
18 *Sui* 訥 appears in the “Lisao.” The character is not listed as a Chu dialectical word in Wang Yi’s commentary or Yang Xiong’s *Fangyan*.
19 *Jian* 亻 is repeatedly used as a particle at the beginning of a verse line in the “Yunzhong jun” and “Xiangjun” of “Jiuge,” “Aiyìng” and Chousi” of “Jiuzhang,” “Jiubian,” “Miujian” of “Qijian,” “Yuansì” of “Jiutan.” It is most likely that Huang Bosi referred to this usage of the character, yet it is not recognized as such in Wang Yi’s commentary or Yang Xiong’s *Fangyan*. Wang Yi merely glossed it as “a word” 詞 also. *Chuci buzhu*, 58, 59, 253. Among its other uses in the *Chuci*, jian is an adjective meaning to be lame, to be difficult, to be erect, and to be strained.
20 When used alone, the character *fen* 絃 is often used at the beginning of a line in the “Lisao,” “Jiuge,” “Jiuzhang,” and “Yuanyou.” It is very likely that Huang Bosi treated fen the same as *jian* as an initial particle and as such regarded the character as a Chu dialectical word. Yet Wang Yi simply treated fen as an adjective meaning “to be profuse” 盛貌. *Chuci buzhu*, 4.
21 *Chichi* 侘傺 appears in the “Lisao,” “Xisong,” “Shejiang,” and “Aiyìng” of “Jiuzhang,” and “Minming” of “Jiutan.” Wang Yi identified chichi as a binome in the Chu dialect to describe one’s frustration out of unrealized ambitions—one stands still for a long time, looking depressed. Chuci buzhu 124. In his commentary on the “Lisao,” Wang Yi also noted *chi* 傝 as Chu dialectical word for *zhu* 住 (to stand still). *Chuci buzhu*, 15.
22 Yuan River, a river flowing into Dongting Lake in modern Hunan.
23 Xiang River, a river flowing into Dongting Lake in modern Hunan.
24 Li River, in modern Hunan.
26 Xia River 夏水 is seen in “Aiyìng.” It is the name of an ancient river that no longer exists. According to the *Shuijing zhu*, Xia River was in Huarong 華容 Prefecture, in modern Hubei. Chen Qiaoyi 陳橋驿, *Shuijing zhu jiaoshi* 水經注校釋 (Hangzhou: Hangzhou daxue chubanshe, 1999), 566-67.
In Huang’s opinion, the state of Chu is the core of the anthology that holds it together. The *Chuci* is named after Chu because the anthology is characterized by its display of the natural and cultural products of Chu. In other words, the *Chuci* is defined by the distinctive characteristics of Chu language and the local natural resources, because these features, since regional, are believed to be unique to the *Chuci* and distinguish the anthology from all other literary works. The Chu-centric definition also implicitly celebrates Chu, in the sense that the land has nourished a splendid culture and nature, within which the *Chuci* was produced. This perspective is more explicitly proposed in Han Yuanji’s view as we shall see later.

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27 Lan 蘭 in the *Chuci* is thoroughwort, a symbol for purity and integrity. The translation “orchid” is to match the symbolic meaning of *lan* in Chinese. Thoroughwort grows primarily in mountains and riverbanks in modern Northeast, North, Central, and South China. *Chuci zhiwu tujian*, 21. According to *Tujing bencao* 圖經本草, *lan* originally grew by the lakes in Ru’nan 汝南 (modern Henan). By the Northern Song, it grew widely in Jing 荊 (modern Hubei and Hunan), Xu (modern Xuzhou, Jiangsu), Sui (modern Xiangyang, Hubei), Shou (in modern Anhui; Shouchun 寿春 was the capital of Chu from 241-223 BCE), Shu (modern Chengdu), Wu (in modern Guangxi), and Hezhong (in modern Shaanxi and Gansu). See Su Song 蘇頌 (1020-1101), *Tujing bencao* (printed in 1061).

28 Hai 海 appears in “Lisao” and “Jiuge.” Hong Xingzu identifies it to be white angelica 白芷. It grows primarily in modern Henan, Hebei, Shanxi, and the Northeast China. *Chuci zhiwu tujian*, 19. According to the *Tujing bencao*, it grows primarily in the Wu area (modern Jiangsu).

29 Quan 琦 appears in “Lisao” and “Jiutan.” According to Chuci zhiwu tujian, quan is *changpu* 茹蒲, or acrous calamus, which grows everywhere in China. See *Tujing bencao*.


31 Hui 惠 appears repeatedly in the *Chuci*. Hong Xingzu identifies it to be basil 薑 based on *Bencao*. Hui grows primarily in modern Hunan and Guangxi. See *Tujing bencao*.

32 Ruo 若 is *duruo* 杜若; it appears in the “Jiuge” and “Jiuzhang.” Duruo grows primarily in modern Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Hunan. *Chuci zhiwu tujian*, 77. According to *Tujing bencao*, duruo primarily grows by lakes and rivers.

33 Pin 薤 appears in “Jiuge,” “Jiuzhang,” and “Zhaojun.” It grows primarily in North, Central, and South China. *Chuci zhiwu tujian*, 79.


Huang’s definition also diverges significantly from Wang Yi’s, although Wang’s view is not specifically invoked in the preface. According to Wang Yi, 

*Chuci* is a series of “Nines” poems by a lineage of Qu Yuan’s followers who aimed to express Qu Yuan’s lofty intention.

Qu Yuan harbored the nature of loyalty and steadfastness, yet he was slandered and wronged. Grieving for the ruler’s blindness and the state’s proximity to crisis and perishing, he invoked the number of heaven and earth, arrayed the essence of human figure, and composed the eulogies of “Nine Songs” and “Nine Declarations,” in order to indirectly admonish and remonstrate King Huai. It was to make clear that his own words matched the caliber of heaven and earth, and could be followed and put to practice. Song Yu was Qu Yuan’s disciple. Regretting for his master, loyal but was exiled, he composed the “Nine changes” to recount his master’s intent. When it came to the rise of Han, men such as Liu Xiang and Wang Bao all grieved at Qu Yuan’s words and modeled upon them in their own composition. Therefore, these works are called “verses of Chu.”

As Wang Yi maintains, the “Nines” series by Qu Yuan encapsulated in them his misery, his insight into good governance, and suasion to the king. It was Qu Yuan’s misfortune that has inspired Song Yu and the Han writers to further compose more “Nines” poems to express their grief for Qu Yuan and “give expression to Qu Yuan’s intention.” Moreover, their works were believed to be composed by “modeling upon” Qu Yuan’s verses. In other words, *Chuci* is all about its most glorious author Qu Yuan, a Chu advisor whose writing style and authorial persona describes and prescribes the form and theme of the entire anthology, while all other authors are left with no agency to have their own images represented, let alone to create anything of their own. Additionally, Wang Yi’s Qu Yuan centric definition also explains why the anthology is called “Verses of Chu” in spite of the existence of abundant Han writings, including the “Qijian” composed by Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, a native of the old Qi 齊.

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36 *Chuci buzhu*, 182.
Wang Yi’s definition of *Chuci* that attaches special significance to the “Nines” series reflects the correlative thinking at the time, and more importantly, legitimates his own composition—also a “Nines” poem—as the heir of Qu Yuan’s works. Wang Yi’s claim about the composition mode of “Nines” poems by later authors—i.e. to illustrate Qu Yuan’s intention—also remains influential. When Lu Yun composes his “Jiumin,” he likewise declared that the suite gives expression to situations and feelings experienced by Qu Yuan. Wang Yi’s Qu Yuan centric view has also dictated the way the anthology is catalogued and remembered. The “Treatise of Classics and Documents” 經籍志 in the *Suishu* 隋書 is an example.

*Verses of Chu* was produced by Qu Yuan. Since the decline and chaos of Zhou imperial house, the *Odes* poets lied down and went into sleep [i.e. the Odes were no longer composed]. The way of claptrap and fawning flourished while words of admonishment were abandoned. There was a worthy adviser in Chu called Qu Yuan, who composed eight *pian* of “Sorrow at Parting” after being slandered and exiled. He spoke of his sorrowful yearnings at parting, stated and gave expression to his heart, and self-clarified his innocence in the poems, with which he admonished the king, hoping that the king would realize his error. In the end, the king would not be awakened, and Qu Yuan went to Miluo to commit suicide. His disciple Song Yu grieved and regretted for the master. Hurt by [Qu Yuan’s misfortune], he composed matching poems to respond to Qu Yuan. Thereafter, Jia Yi, Dongfang Shuo, Liu Xiang, and Yang Xiong all admired Qu Yuan’s literary brilliance and modeled upon his poems. Probably because Qu Yuan was a man of Chu, the anthology was called “Verses of Chu.”

《楚辭》者，屈原之所作也。自周室衰亂，詩人寢息，譏佞之道興，諷刺之辭廢。楚有賢臣屈原，被讒放逐，乃著《離騷》八篇，言己離別愁思，申杼其心，自明無罪，因以諷諫，冀君覺悟，卒不省察，遂赴汨羅死焉。弟子宋玉，痛惜其師，傷而和之。其後，賈誼、東方朔、劉向、揚雄，嘉其文彩，撰之而作。蓋以原楚人也，謂之“楚辭”。

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37 *Zuo* 作 in this context has the connotation of both “to compose” and “to initiate a process” (of composing poems of the like).

38 The “Lisao” is used to refer to the Qu Yuan corpus. In the *Chuci buzhu*, there are seven titles attributed to Qu Yuan. It seems that the eight *pian* here includes the “Zhaohun,” which was attributed variously to Song Yu (by Wang Yi) and to Qu Yuan (by Sima Qian). The title “Lisao” is interpreted as “sorrowful yearnings at parting” 離別愁思 in the next line, hence the translation.

39 *Suishu* 35.1055-56.
Adopting the accounts of emergence of “Lisao” in the “Yiwen zhi” of *Hanshu* and Wang Yi’s postface where the “Lisao” was identified as the heir of “principle of *Shijing* poets” 點人之義, the *Suishu* proposes a Qu Yuan-centered definition of *Chuci*. Qu Yuan’s intention, character, and literary brilliance inspired numerous compositions of his disciple and followers. The proliferation of composition gave rise to *Chuci*, an anthology and literary tradition. The character “Chu” in the title “Chuci” does not point to the state *per se*, but to Qu Yuan—it was because Qu Yuan happened to be a native of Chu that the anthology was named “Chuci.” In a sense, “Chu” is a variable, while Qu Yuan is a constant.

In both Wang Yi’s preface and the official bibliography, *Chuci* is a commemoration of Qu Yuan. This well-established definition of *Chuci*, however, was implicitly rejected in in Huang Bosi’s preface. For Huang, the reason that the verses by Han writers were also called “Chuci” was not because Qu Yuan set up a model. As quoted before, “Chu was used to call those Han verses” 以楚名之 was because they “all conform to the criteria” 皆率若此 in “Chu language, Chu tone, Chu place names, and Chu objects.” Qu Yuan is still recognized as the prominent author, but in the issue of nomenclature, his significance gives way to that of the nature and culture of Chu.

Huang’s definition marks a shift of focus from identifying *Chuci* by its glorious progenitor to its geographical origin and regional features. In his definition, Huang was very strict about his four Chu criteria when applying the term “Chuci” to later verses.

Since the Han, poets akin to antiquity still preserved the flairs of ancient worthies. Literati of recent ages, however, merely adopt the form and rhyme [of *Chuci*], yet their language is
mixed with those of Yan and Yue and the precedents referred to include those of both *yi* and *xia*. Calling such works as “verses of Chu” misses the term’s significance.

In Huang Bosi’s account, the *Chuci* as a literary tradition is—like that of the *Odes*—one of decline. In his view, those composed in the periods akin to the time of Qu Yuan and Song Yu (probably those by Han writers that are collected in the anthology) still resemble these Chu poets’ works. Verses by recent literati, however, merely superficially understand *Chuci* as a prosodic pattern (to adopt its form) 賦其體 and a series of rhyme words (to follow its rhyme 韻其語), but ignored the essence illustrated by his four Chu criteria. Huang also singled out two violations of these disqualifying verses—that “their language is mixed with those of Yan and Yue” 言雜燕粵 and “the precedents referred to include those of both *yi* and *xia*” 事兼夷夏. The former violation points to his criteria of “Chu language” and “Chu tone,” while the later to “Chu landscape” and “Chu objects.” Yan 燕 and Yue 粵, one in the north and one farther south, are both beyond the Chu territory such that their dialects represent non-Chu languages and tones. The latter violation is ambiguous in that it is unclear which group Chu falls into, *yi* or *xia*. As a dichotomist pair, both *yi* (the disparaged “other”) or *xia* (the revered “self”) are relative terms and are subject to change in their use of context. From a Song point of view, the old Chu that took up most of the Song territory might fall into the group of *xia*; in the Warring States, Chu was a *xia* state to its own people (*yi* were those enemies farther south, west, and east), but became a *yi* to states in the central plains.43 From the second violation, Huang appears to identify the *Chuci* as a *xia* literature. The selected terms *yi* and *xia* show that his definition is a strongly

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43 For a discussion, see Xu Zhuoyun 許偉云, *Wozhe yu tazhe——Zhongguo lishi shang de neiwai fenji* 我者與他者——中國歷史上的內外分際 (Beijing: Sanlian, 2010), 23-32.
interested one loaded with political implications.

Huang Bosi’s interested definition is one way in reaction to the intellectual challenge at the time to position the Song vis-à-vis its Northern rivals, as we will see later. The definition *per se*, in accordance, is polemical and essentialist, largely narrowing down the term “Chuci.” To begin with, the definition rests on a pure, unique, and “uncontaminated” Chu culture, which has never existed. Chu is a state with a long history and rich culture that rejects any easy essentialization. With endless wars with bordering states, the boundary of Chu is ever-changing, and its language and culture heterogeneous. To take the “Chu language” as an example, after the Chu conquest of Wu 吳 and Yue 越, the languages of these two states also become “Chu languages,” yet the two are different from the language spoken in Qu Yuan’s hometown. Besides, it is difficult to decide on a representative of “Chu language,” as the capital of Chu constantly changed and the dialect spoken in each of them—for example, Ying 鄭都 (in modern Hubei), Shouchun 壽春 (modern Anhui) and Pengcheng 彭城 (modern Jiangsu)—is different. In other words, there is not a homogeneous dialect that could be identified as “Chu language.” As a result, it is unclear which “Chu” and its culture that Huang was referring to. Even if there existed a homogeneous Chu culture, it was not a self-contained one free from any interaction with other cultures. For example, the Han records of contemporary Chu dialect marks many dialect terms as used across the state border—“in areas of Song and Chu” 宋楚之間, “along the border of Chu and Wei” 楚魏之間, “at the juncture of Qi and Chu” 齊楚之郊, and so forth. The shared dialect terms between adjacent areas, although a Han phenomenon, may still to a large extent provide a clue on linguistic interactions in the Warring States and alert us to take precaution against any easy

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44 Hua Xuecheng 華學誠, *Yang Xiong Fangyan jiaoshi huizheng* 揚雄方言校釋匯證 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2006), 10, 67, 36. Scholars have raised doubts about Yang Xiong’s authorship of *Fangyan*, but in general the book’s date to the end of Western Han is accepted.
identification of a word as one dialect or another. The same phenomenon may also apply to
Huang’s other three criteria. Indeed, it could even be that none of the available traces of Chu
guarantees the Song literati (and us) to paint a “real” Chu in retrospect. After all, all the traces
available to Song literati (and us) are mediated through previous resources, primarily the Han
preservation and appropriation.

Secondly, claimed as a definition deduced from the Chuci, Huang’s four criteria are indeed
too narrow such that even the Qu Yuan corpus fails to qualify as “verses of Chu,” let alone the
rest in the anthology. In the case of “Chu language,” poems attributed to Qu Yuan adopt many
terms from dialects other than Chu. For example, Yang Xiong’s 揚雄 Fangyan 方言 lists various
dialectic words to convey the meaning of wang 往 (to go), a common term 凡語 used across
different cultures—shi 逝 (marked as a term used in Qin 秦 and Jin 晉 areas), cu 徹 (a Qi term),
and shi 適 (Song 宋 and Lu 魯), all of which, together with wang, are used in the “Lisao,”
“Jiuzhang,” and “Yuanyou.” Under Huang’s criteria, Qu Yuan would be a violator and these
poems removed from the anthology. Besides, Huang’s source to make the list of “Chu language”
is unclear, if not unreliable. Among the examples Huang gave, only suo 些, qiang 羌, and chachi
佗傑 were underlined as Chu dialect terms in Wang Yi’s (the Han commentator born in the Chu
heartland and renowned for his knowledge of Chu language45) commentary, while none of other
words was recognized as such in Han sources.46 As a native of Shaowu 鄧武 (modern Fujian),

45 Suo, qiang, and chachi appear in the “Lisao,” “Jiuge,” “Tianwen,” and “Jiuzhang” attributed to Qu Yuan, and the
“Jiubian” and “Zhaohun” attributed to Song Yu. (“Zhaohun” is attributed to Qu Yuan by Sima Qian in the Shiji.) Wang
Yi was a local of Yicheng 宜城 (in modern Hubei), which was included into Chu territory in Spring and Autumn
period. Wang Yi’s twenty-two terms are included in the more extensive list made by Sadao Takeji, based on Yang
Xiong’s Fangyan, the Shuowen jiezi, and modern studies on Chu dialect. Takeji identified seventy Chu dialect terms
altogether. See Sadao Takeji, Soji kenkyū, 590-596.
46 See footnotes 9-15. Fangyan and Shuowen jiezi both collected and noted the dialect terms used in the Eastern Han.
Noting Chu language in the Chuci began with Wang Yi’s commentary, where he identified twenty-two Chu dialect
terms. The Han sources of Chu dialect terms, except Wang Yi’s commentary, include Yang Xiong’s 揚雄 Fangyan 方
Huang was unlikely a master of Chu dialect as Wang Yi was. In the case of “Chu tone” that is characterized as melancholic and solemn, many “Jiuge” poems would not fit as their tone is cheerful (“Donghuang taiyi”) and tender (“Xiangjun,” “Xiang furen,” and “Shangui”). For “Chu landscape,” a large portion of place names in the *Chuci*—such as Mount Kunlun, legendarily located at the northwest end of the world—are from myths circulated not only in Chu; instead, they belong to a shared knowledge of all states. For “Chu objects,” thoroughwort, the plant most frequently invoked in the *Chuci* and the first “Chu object” on Huang’s list, was widely accepted as a plant grew in remote valleys and never recognized as a plant exclusive to Chu. The Northern Song *Tujing bencao* even identified Ru’nan (in modern Henan) as thoroughwort’s origin, turning it into a “Northern” plant. Under Huang’s strict rules, almost no past poems deserve a place in the *Chuci*. It is also almost impossible for any future poets to compose a “verse of Chu,” because they are left with too limited materials to work with.

An essentialist definition as it is, Huang Bosi’s conception regionalizes the *Chuci* and the entire literary tradition inspired by the anthology. As he understands it, *Chuci* is a storehouse of Chu landscape, culture, and history, with its concerns never going beyond Chu. For the first time Chu as the geographic origin becomes the central theme of *Chuci* and is emphasized as the defining element. Huang Bosi’s definition is polemical and narrow, yet his view of *Chuci* as a unique Chu literature is widely echoed in the Song. Shortly after him, Han Yuanji ascribed the distinct literary achievement of *Chuci* to the Chu landscape.

After the *Odes* of Zhou died out, Qu Ping began to compose the “Lisao.” Xunzi and Song Yu also composed their own fu. Their works are indeed remnants of *Odes*. Yet there are aspects in them that the “Airs” and “Elegantiae” are not as comprehensive and the *bixing* [analogy and evocation] cannot match—i.e. illustration through analogic projections of

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言，Xu Shen’s 詐説 *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, *Shiming* 釋名, and Zheng Xuan’s commentary of *Rites*. For a study of the dialect terms collected in these sources, see Hua Xuecheng 華學誠, *Zhou Qin Han Jin fangyan yanjiu shi* 周秦漢 晉方言研究史 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2007).
objects and [their tone that is] indignant, regretful, and vehement. These aspects both originated in the verses by people of Chu….It is said that Chu was a land of richness in the southeast. Its mountains and rivers are limpid and pretty, and its plants and trees lush. Men of letters and the talented encounter [the lovely landscape] and are moved, which is sufficient to inspire their mood and to stir their exquisite thought. Therefore, their words are subtly excellent and their verses are chanted, widespread. How can [these verses’ excellence] only be the result of Chu people’s flair? It is perhaps also thanks to the qi [energy] of [local] mountains and rivers.

Han Yuanji started with the famous and familiar narrative about the emergence of Chuci that we first see in the Hanshu 漢書—the glorious age that gave rise to the Odes has gone, and thereupon the second-class Chuci that preserves some traces (and not all) of the Odes becomes our best option at hand. In Han Yuanji’s words, verses of Chu are “remnants of the Odes” 詩餘, just like song lyrics are commonly referred to be remnants of classical poetry. Yet Han immediately credited Chu verses with merits that even the Odes could not match—their intensive employment of the literary device characterized by “illustration through analogic projections of objects” 託物引喻 and their strong tone that is “indignant, regretful, and vehement” 慣惋激烈. The two traits, according to Han Yuanji, are so impressive and intensively used that they must have been “both originating from verses by people of Chu” 皆出於楚人之詞, instead of merely being inherited from the Shijing.

Notably, Han Yuanji’s celebration of the distinctiveness of Chuci and his elevation of Chuci above the Odes marks a shift from previous perspectives that either criticized Chuci for its deviation from the Odes or felt an urge to defend Chuci for its deviation. Ban Gu’s and Liu Xie’s

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47 See Wu Wenzhi 吳文治, Song shihua quanbian 宋詩話全編 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe,1998), 3126.
critiques and the Tang perspectives discussed in the previous chapters are examples of the former situation, while Wang Yi’s defense is an example for the latter. In particular, “illustration through analogic projections of objects” has long been widely accepted as the expertise of Odes, where the literary devices of analogy 比 and evocation 興 are innovatively employed, a legacy for later poets—including Qu Yuan—to inherit. Wang Yi had made such an observation that Qu Yuan was a faithful follower of the Shijing.

The “Lisao” uses evocative imagery in the way the Odes do. Analogies are categorically used for illustration.

《離騷》之文，依《詩》取興，引類譬論。48 On the contrary, Ban Gu and Liu Xie, while accepting Qu Yuan as an heir of the Odes poets, would single out certain aspects—such as his description of dragons and water spirit (Consort Fu)—as unorthodox. Similarly, for Qu Yuan’s vehement tone, the poet has been either faulted for his resentment towards the king, or justified for his earnest remonstrance.49 The debate, however, no longer matters for Han Yuanji, because the value of Chuci no longer requires to be justified by its faithful adherence of the Odes. Instead, the Chuci is valued as it is. The difference of Chuci from the Odes is no longer considered an undesirable divergence from the classic, but a valuable variety that allows the Chuci to complement the insufficiencies of the Odes and to some extent even surpasses the Odes.

Han Yuanji adopted a quasi-geographical-determinist view to explain the literary

48 Chuci buzhu, 2.
49 Ban Gu’s and Liu Xie’s critiques have been introduced in chapters one and three. Specifically, Wang Yi has defended Qu Yuan by quoting Mao #256, insisting that the poet there was far harsher in tone than Qu Yuan was in the “Lisao.” ([The poet in Mao #256] presented a speech to the king, saying, “Alas! Young man: When you could not distinguish right from wrong… Not only did I give face-­to-­face commands in front of you, I also lectured you by holding your ears.” One’s speech of remonstration can be as urgent as such… Compared with this speech, Qu Yuan’s words were cordial and submissive—did he ever try to hold the king by his ears because he was unwise? 上曰：“嗚呼！小子，未知臧否，匪面命之，言提其耳！” 風諫之語，於斯為切。⋯⋯引此比彼，屈原之詞，優游婉順，寧以其君不智之故，欲提擷其耳乎！ See Chuci buzhu, 49.) In its own context, Wang Yi’s comment of Qu Yuan’s speech as “cordial and submissive” 優游婉順 has to be considered as a rhetorical polemic—instead of an objective observation—against Ban Gu’s charge that the poet held a personal resentment against King Huai.
accomplishment of *Chuci*. The credit is given to the Chu landscape as much as to—if not more than—its people, i.e. Qu Yuan, because the utmost flair of the poet is cultivated and shaped by the *qi* of Chu landscape. In this sense, Chu is conceived as the core of *Chuci*, because the unique style and literary achievement of *Chuci* is substantiated by its place of origin. In other words, the celebration of Chu verses’ uniqueness is fundamentally a celebration of the Chu land, source of inspiration for Chu poets. Accordingly, the role of Qu Yuan, the genius progenitor that usually receives all the credit for creating a glorious literary style and tradition, is largely downplayed.

In the perceptions of Huang Bosi and Han Yuanji, “Chu” becomes a function of discourse (just like “author-function” in Foucault’s sense) and is valorized to a status almost as significant as the author. Like the author, “Chu” serves as a means of classification. It connects a series of previously unrelated texts and grants them a meaningful and “shared” quality (e.g. Huang’s four Chu criteria and Han’s identification of vehement tone). The “Chu” quality, thus, distinguishes these poems from others and guarantees the uniqueness of these poems. In addition, “Chu” serves as interpretation principle that intervenes one’s reading experience. With the values it is endowed, “Chu” acts like a roadmap to instruct the reader to look for corresponding qualities in specific poems. As such, “Chu” functions as “the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning.” The same function of Chu is manifest in Zhu Xi’s *Chuci* studies, but as we shall see, Zhu Xi endowed new meanings to Chu and *Chuci*—a romanticized “Chu spirit” bequeathed to the South.

**Zhu Xi’s *Chuci* and Romanticized “Chu Spirit”**

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50 A similar opinion is expressed in Gao Sisun’s 高似孫 *Sao lue* 頥略, where he praised that “[t]he mountains and rivers of Chu were marvelous, its flora was marvelous, and Qu Yuan was even more marvelous.” 楚山川奇，草木奇，原更奇. Gao Sisun, *Sao lue*, (rpt. *Baichuan xuehai* 百川學海, 1927), 1.1.
Zhu Xi’s interest in a systematic reconfiguration and reinterpretation of both the *Chuci* anthology and the “Chuci” literary tradition was developed in his late years, after he was dismissed from court in the Qingyuan 慶元 (1195-1200) proscription of “false learning” 偽學. Therefore, it is often maintained that Zhu Xi’s commitment to *Chuci* studies was motivated by this political event, when his recommender Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚 (1140-1196) was removed from the post of chancellor and died on his way to Yongzhou, place of his exile. When Zhu Xi composed the commentary, he might have many political concerns in mind—Zhao Ruyu’s ill-fate, the predicament of *daoxue,* the accommodationists at court no longer interested in retaking the North—on which he had his own stance and opinions to put forward in the disguise of *Chuci* appraisal. On top of the past scholarship, I would like to further argue that Zhu Xi’s commentary, through reconfiguring the *Chuci* as cultural capital of the Southland, constructed the moral and literary authority of Song in the face of military threat from its Northern enemies.

*A Southern Anthology*

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51 According to Shu Jingnan 李景南, Zhu Xi started to write the *Chuci buzhu* in 1196, and the commentary was finished in the winter of 1198. He then composed the *Chuci bianzheng*, which was finished in the spring of 1199. The commentary on *Chuci houyu* was left incomplete upon Zhu Xi’s death. Shu Jingnan, *Zhu Xi yanjiu* 朱熹研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008), 307.

52 In Yu Yingshi’s 余英時 opinion, the proscription was the result of an ongoing effort to suppress the political influence of *daoxue*. See Yu Yingshi, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie: Songdai shidafu zhengzhi wenhua de yanjiu* 朱熹的歷史世界：宋代士大夫政治文化的研究 (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua gongsi, 2003). See also, Shu Jingnan, *Zhu Xi yanjiu*, 276-302.

53 Specifically, shortly after Zhu Xi’s death, Wang Yinglin 王應麟, Zhou Mi 周密, and Yang Wanli 楊萬里 held the opinion that Zhu Xi’s *Chuci* commentary was dedicated to Zhao Ruyu, since Zhao was related to the Song royal family, mirroring the experience of Qu Yuan. The opinion was also held by the *Siku* scholars. For a discussion, see Lin Weichun 林維純, “Luelun Zhu Xi zhu Chuci” 略論朱熹《楚辭》, *Wenxue yichan* 3 (1982): 100-109.

54 Shu Jingnan sees a parallel between Qu Yuan and *daoxue*, that both acted for the well-being of the state, yet were expelled from the court. Shu, *Zhu Xi yanjiu*, 307-312.

55 Mo Lifeng 莫礦锋 argues that, on top of an intention to speak for Zhao Ruyu, Zhu Xi also composed the *Chuci* commentary to advocate an anti-accommodationists stance to retake the North. Mo Lifeng, “Zhu Xi Chuci xue lueshuo” 朱熹《楚辭》學略說, *Qiushuo* 6 (1983): 80-81.
As noted in the introduction, the centrality of Chu in *Chuci* was affirmed by Zhu Xi, a friend of Han Yuanchi. Zhu Xi’s *Chuci* studies, however, were far more sophisticated and nuanced, compared with those of his predecessors and contemporaries. His emphasis of the Chu-ness of *Chuci* is not limited to its preservation of cultural memory and natural landscape of Chu. *Chuci* represents the cultural value of the Southland that crystalized into a “Chu” spirit. In his preface to *Chuci zizhu*, Zhu Xi wrote the progenitor role of Qu Yuan into his definition of *Chuci*, but he also stressed the significance of its Southern origin. For him, *Chuci* is a legacy of authors from the Southland. *Chuci* is a Southern literature.

Overall, since Qu Yuan composed “Lisao,” [poets from] the Southland followed him. Masterpieces were continuously composed, and they were named ‘verses of Chu’ altogether. These poems in general have inherited Qu Yuan’s intention. The “Lisao” is the [most] profound one among all.

雖然屈原賦《離騷》而南國宗之，名章繼作，通號《楚辭》，大氏皆祖原意，而《離騷》深遠矣。56

Although Chu is a state in the South, the emphasis on the Southland makes a slight difference than on that on Chu. Viewing *Chuci* as a produce of Chu limits the text within a certain time and space—the Warring States Chu. Once the time and space are no longer accessible, the context for the *Chuci* composition is, by and large, lost. Therefore, Huang Bosi views poems by recent literati as failing to grasp the essence of *Chuci* and accordingly disqualified to be called such. Seeing *Chuci* as a product of the Southland, however, breaks the temporal limit and allows for more room to incorporate more verses under the *Chuci* umbrella.

The emphasis on geographical scope also gives rise to a new selection of poems that better reflect the spatial limit. Compared with Huang Bosi who went with the Han version of *Chuci* preserved in the *Chuci buzhu*, Zhu Xi reselected and reorganized the poems in his *Chuci zizhu* so that all poets in the *Zizhu* now associate with the South in one way or another. In other words, he

56 *Chuci zizhu*, 2.
reconfigured the received *Chuci* to the effect that his version came to illustrate a literature of the
Southland. The table below shows the changes Zhu Xi makes to the *Chuci buzhu* version. (As the
title of each piece shows, Zhu Xi sees a hierarchical structure within the anthology. The “Lisao”
is the classic 經, 57 the rest of Qu Yuan’s poems are elaborations 傳 on the classic, and the two
together are designated by a shared title “Lisao,” meaning the Qu Yuan corpus. All the other
poems—those composed by other poets—are considered continuations 續 to the “Lisao.” I will
return to Zhu Xi’s configuration in more details in the next section.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Chuci buzhu</em></th>
<th><em>Chuci jizhu</em></th>
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<tr>
<td>Classic of Encountering sorrow 離騷經</td>
<td>Classic of Encountering Sorrow (abbr. ES) 離騷經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qu Yuan</td>
<td>Qu yuan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nine Songs 九歌</td>
<td>離騷九歌 Nine Songs in ES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qu Yuan</td>
<td>Qu Yuan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquiries to Heaven 天問</td>
<td>離騷天問 Inquiries to Heaven in ES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qu Yuan</td>
<td>Qu Yuan</td>
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<td>離騷九章 Nine Declarations in ES</td>
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<td>Qu Yuan</td>
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<td>離騷遠遊 Far-off Roaming in ES</td>
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<td>Qu Yuan</td>
<td>Qu Yuan</td>
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<td>Qu Yuan</td>
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<td>離騷漁父 The Fisherman in ES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summoning the Soul 招魂</td>
<td>續離騷招魂 Summoning the Soul, Continuing ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song Yu</td>
<td>Song Yu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Summons 大招</td>
<td>續離騷大招 The Great Summons, Continuing ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qu Yuan or Jing Cuo 景差</td>
<td>Jing Cuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regret for a Broken Pledge 慨誓</td>
<td>續離騷慨誓 Regret for a Broken Pledge, Continuing ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia Yi (?)</td>
<td>Jia Yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summoning the Recluse 招隱士</td>
<td>續離騷弔屈原 Lamenting Qu Yuan, Continuing ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huaiinan Xiaoshan 淮南小山58</td>
<td>Jia Yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Remonstrances 七諫</td>
<td>續離騷服賦 Fu on the Owl, Continuing ES59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongfang Shuo</td>
<td>Jia Yi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57 “Lisao” is referred to as “sao-jing” 騒經 in the *Chuci jizhu*.
58 Huainan Xiaoshan (lit. small mountain) first appears in Wang Yi’s commentary as one or several hanger(s)-on at the Huainan court. *Chuci buzhu*, 232.
59 This *fu* is more commonly titled “Funiao fu” 鴻鳥賦, for example, in the *Wenxuan.*
| Grief for a Birth out of My Time 哀時命 | 續離騷哀時命 Grief for a Birth out of My Time, Continuing ES | Zhuang Ji 莊忌 |
| Nine Yearnings 九懷 | 續離騷招隱士 Summoning the Recluse, Continuing ES | ES |
| Wang Bao 王褒 | Huainan Xiaoshan |
| Nine Laments 九嘆 | |
| Wang Yi 王義 |

Zhu Xi’s version drops the “Qijian,” “Jiuhuai,” “Jiutan,” and “Jiusi” (in italics on the left) and adds two fu by Jia Yi (highlighted in bold on the right). As a result, the *Chuci jizhu* presents an anthology of Chu/Southern writers—Qu Yuan, Song Yu, Jing Cuo all (legendarily) came from Chu, Jia Yi was exiled to Changsha where he composed the “Diao Qu Yuan” and “Fu(niao) fu” (also the “Xishi” according to Hong Xingzu and Zhu Xi61), Yan Ji was from Kuaiji 會稽 the once territory of Chu in the Warring States (and the Chu state in the Han), and the Huainan court was located in Shouchun 壽春 (modern Shouxian in Anhui) the last capital of Chu. Certainly, in Zhu Xi’s justification of his selection, the “Northern” origin of “Qijian” is not declared as a reason for its deletion. Instead, according to Zhu Xi, the “Qijian” and the last three “Ninth” suites are deleted for their plain tone and superficial intention such that no one is willing to read these poems of “a forced moaning and groaning without being ill” 無所疾痛而強為呻吟 (note, these poems do not even make it into the *Chuci houyu*, implying that they do not even deserve a place in the larger “Chuci” tradition).62 Jia Yi’s two fu are added also for their quality and Zhu Xi’s admiration of Jia Yi’s political talent.63 Be that as it may, the Southland enters the spotlight in

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60 Yan Ji’s original name is Zhuang Ji. His surname was changed in the Eastern Han when Zhuang became a taboo word because of Emperor Zhuang.

61 Hong Xingzu and Zhu Xi both admitted that the authorship of “Xishi” was unclear, but both attributed the piece to Jia Yi, based on their evaluation of the writing style and its high quality. *Chuci buzhu*, 227; *Chuci jizhu*, 149.

62 Zhu Xi’s preface to *Chuci bianzheng*, see *Chuci jizhu*, 168.

63 Ibid.
Zhu Xi’s preface. As I will show later, in Zhu Xi’s framework, the *Chuci jizhu* as a Southern anthology serves as the core of an enlarged and elongated literary tradition inspired by Qu Yuan and his “Lisao,” a tradition illustrated in his *Chuci houyu*, where the poets, though not necessarily associate with Chu, all carry with them a Chu spirit as illustrated in their poems.

*A Literary Tradition Built on the Notion of “Mutation”*

The recognition of “Chuci” as a literary tradition springing from the Qu Yuan corpus can be traced as early as in the Han. Chapter one shows that the *Hanshu* listed a series of writers from Chu (Song Yu and Tang Le) and Han (Mei Sheng, Zou Yan, Yan Ji, Yan Zhu, and Zhu Maichen) as Qu Yuan’s followers to compose “verses of Chu,” without explanation. The enterprise of configuring the “Chuci” tradition—including selection of qualifiable authors and works, and more importantly, rationalizing their inclusion by identifying central qualities for the tradition—however, started in the Song. The results of Song configuration are represented by Chao Buzhi’s *Bian Lisao, Xu Chuci*, and Zhu Xi’s *Chuci houyu*. Chao Buzhi’s two compilations are no longer available, because they have been overshadowed and later replaced by the *Chuci houyu* that assumed more “authority” thanks to its renowned compiler. Be that as it may, the *Bian Lisao* (ninety-six titles from thirty-eight authors; the specific titles can only be partly known from Chao Buzhi’s prefaces and various references to his compilation) and *Xu Chuci* have not only inspired Zhu Xi’s selection and compilation, but also provided the intellectual ground—the notion of “mutation”——to conceptualize “Chuci” as a literary tradition.

The notion of “mutation” can be viewed as a response of Song literati to an ongoing issue under debate in the reception history of *Chuci* regarding its position vis-à-vis the *Shijing*. As noted above, in Han Yuanji’s perspective, the peculiar features of *Chuci* that diverged from the *Odes*—now identified as a product of its regional nature—were appraised on its own right, rather
than by its conformity to the *Odes*. Yet in the Song, the *Odes* still in many cases represents a standard of assessment, and “mutation” provides a ground to subsume the *Chuci* under the literary tradition of the *Odes*.

Before Chao Buzhi, his teacher Su Shi has already proposed that the “Lisao” mutated the *Odes*.

Qu Yuan composed the “Classic of Encountering Sorrow,” which in general mutated the *Airs* and *Elegantiae* and could even rival with the sun and the moon in brightness.

在屈原作《離騷經》，蓋《風》《雅》之再變者，雖與日月爭光可也。64

In Su Shi’s comment, the notion of “mutation” (without further elaboration) not only affirms the *Chuci’s* continuity with the *Odes* as proposed in the earlier perspectives (for example, Wang Yi’s preface as discussed in chapter one), but also shows a more tolerant attitude towards the text’s variation from the classic. What has once been a *Shiji* celebration of Qu Yuan’s lofty intention—“a rival of the sun and the moon in brightness” 雖與日月爭光可也65—now becomes a praise for the “Lisao,” including its mutation from the *Shijing*. The affirmation and celebration of *Chuci’s* variation echoes Han Yuanji’s comment, reflecting a widespread view in the Song.

The meaning of mutation is further elaborated in Chao Buzhi’s *Bian Lisao* (ninety-six titles from thirty-eight authors; the specific titles can only be partly known from Chao Buzhi’s prefaces and various references to his compilation) and *Xu Chuci* (sixty titles from twenty-six authors; source is even more scarce).66 It is almost unavoidable that observation and conclusion

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64 Su Shi, “Yu Xie Minshi tuiguan shu” 與謝民師推官書, in *Sushi wenji* 苏轼文集, annotated by Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 1418-19. The letter was written in the winter of 1110, the year before Su Shi’s death. The letter has been regarded as an important piece to learn Su Shi’s view of literature. For a study, see Yi Ruofen, “Su Shi ‘Yu Xie Minshi tuiguan shu’ lunxi” 蘇軾《與謝民師推官書》論析, *Danjiang zhongwen xuebao* 12 (2012): 71-90.

65 *Shiji* 84. 2482.

66 The numbers are recorded in the *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志. Zhu Xi’s *Chuci bianzheng* and *Chuci houyu* mentioned some titles in Chao Buzhi’s two books. See Chao, *Junzhai dushi zhi* 郡齋讀書志 (rpt. SKQS), 5.68a-b. Additionally, Chao Buzhi’s commentary to some titles are inserted into the *Chuci houyu* by Zhu Xi’s son at the point of its publication. For a convenient table of the titles in Chao Buzhi’s two collections, see Mo Lifeng, “Zhu Xi Chuci xue lueshu,” 87-89. The titles are not specified as coming from *Bian Lisao* or *Xu Chuci*. 
of Chao’s notion of mutation—especially its difference from “continuation” 繼—are somewhat speculative, since his compilations are lost. Be that as it may, mutation and continuation designate one literary phenomenon that later works both inherit and diverge from previous ones. Mutation is not a dramatic sense of change but change with continuity; the same is with continuation. In this way, mutation is a positive and productive phenomenon in Chao Buzhi’s perception of literary history. In his view, the “Lisao” that once mutated the “Airs” and “Elegantiae” has itself mutated into fu, and in later ages, through further mutation, gives rise to various forms of writing.67 As such, unlike Wang Yi’s insistence Qu Yuan as a faithful adherent of the Odes and later Chuci poems as faithfully recounting Qu Yuan’s intention, Chao Buzhi allows for more room for variety and change. After all, according to him, poetic changes over time reveals that poets are keeping in step with the vicissitudes of the world. Accordingly, though the accomplishment of “Lisao” is still regarded unmatchable, the entire tradition is not framed into a decline as in the Hanshu and many Tang accounts as we have seen. Poems of recent ages are well represented in his two compilations (and also in Zhu Xi’s Chuci houyu).

In Chao’s configuration, “Chuci” as a literary tradition consists of three sequenced parts, the Chuci anthology, Xu Chuci, and Bian Lisao. The three are not in chronological order but are arranged by the degree of their “mutation” of the “Lisao” (a title referring to the entire Qu Yuan corpus), the core of the entire tradition. In other words, poems in the Xu Chuci are closer to the “Lisao,” while those in the Bian Lisao are further “mutant” (in the positive sense of being original68). The reason for not titling this latter group of poems as “Bian Chuci” is because Chao

67 Chao Buzhi, “‘Lisao’ xinxu” 離騷新序, in his Jilei ji 雞肋集 (rpt. SKQS), 36.2a-4a. The various forms are verses of irregular lines 雜言, long ditties 長詠, inquiry and reply 問對, inscription 銘, eulogy 贊, melody 操, and prelude 引. But as the available sources of his Xu Chuci and Bian “Lisao” show, the major form collected in the two is fu.
68 According to Chao Buzhi, the Bian Lisao was compiled after the Xu Chuci. Compared with the latter, poems in the Bian Lisao often employ “new” vocabulary of their own and unseen in the “Lisao”.

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considers it necessary to rectify their names by making manifest that the “Lisao” is their origin.\(^6^9\)

That said, Chao Buzhi’s notion of “mutation” is somewhat general and ambiguous. Later poems can mutate in terms of language, form, and theme from the “Lisao.” In his own words, his selection was “miscellaneous” 雜, because he cherished men’s literary talent, a rare gift. As a result, it is also hard to subtract a clear “standard” of selection from his prefaces, and he employs different standards in different cases. It seems that at least the literary excellence, correct moral message, and the author’s association with Chu (for example, Song Yu’s “Gaotang fu” and “Dengtuzi haose fu” are considered intricately sensual and his “Dayan fu” and “Xiaoyuan fu” criticized for moral deprivation but all of them are included in the *Bian Lisao* simply due to the author’s Chu identity) are among Chao Buzhi’s criteria.

Viewing the *Chuci* as having mutated the *Shijing* and poems within the “Chuci” tradition as having mutated the “Lisao,” Chao Buzhi endorsed both continuity and change. The divergence of *Chuci* from the *Shijing* was valued. The “Chuci” tradition was perceived as a proliferation of literary writings, and the value of contemporary compositions was affirmed. Continuity with change also speaks of Zhu Xi’s literary historical view and perception of “Chuci” as a literary tradition as reflected in his selection of poems in the *Chuci houyu*, as we shall see in the next sub-section. Probably because the *houyu* was composed on the basis of Chao Buzhi’s *Bian Lisao* and *Xu Chuci*, the poems’ mutation was to some extent taken for granted. Zhu Xi’s priority was to search for their connection to the *Chuci* poems, especially the Qu Yuan corpus. His notion of mutation was proposed, not to understand how the “later works” modified the *Chuci*, but to assess how the *Chuci* mutated the “correct” *Shijing*.

Chao’s notion of mutation focuses primarily on formal changes—later works mutated the

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\(^{69}\) Chao Buzhi, *Bian ‘Lisao’ xu* 讕離騷序, in his *Jilei ji*, 36.12a-17b.
norm of a poetic form. By contrast, Zhu Xi’s notion of mutation is loaded with a strong moral and political implication, the way mutation and its counterpart correctness 正 are used in the Shijing exegesis since the “Great Preface.” In his Shi jizhuan 詩集傳 (Collected Commentaries on the Odes), mutation and correctness are a pair of concepts used to differentiate specific layers within the “Airs” and “Elegantiae.” The “correct Airs” are the “Zhounan” 周南 and “Shaonan” 頎南 poems that Zhu Xi believed to have been composed in the state of Zhou and various states to its south in King Wen’s time. In his perspective, the poems in these two sections were composed by men received the correct teachings of King Wen, such that they were all able to acquire a correct inner nature and disposition, with which they reacted to the world—in words and writings—appropriately. The “mutant Airs,” on the contrary, are poems from the rest of States with uneven political situations. As a result, good and bad people intermingled in these states and their poems cannot serve as teachings but warnings against political errors and inspirations of self-reflection. The “correct Elegantiae” are the ritual music composed by the sages in King Cheng’s time, the ones (including the Hymns 頌) that are non-changeable models for all future generations. The “mutant Elegantiae” are poems of remonstration composed by the gentlemen with “a heart of loyalty, honesty, and compassion” 忠厚憐憫之心 and “an intention to present goodness and contain the evil” 陳善閉邪之意. Therefore, these poems were accepted by the sages. Zhu Xi in general held a cautious attitude towards the mutant Odes. He did not discourage students to read them, but he would not encourage them to spend too much

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70 Stephen Owen observes that zheng and bian in Chinese literature are often loaded with moral judgments and are telling of the political environment. Poetry that are zheng are produced by a politically stable and prosperous society, while poetry of bian—meaning “devolution”—are produced by instability and imbalance. Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 47.

time in these poems.  

Zhu Xi identified the *Chuci* as an heir of the “mutant Airs” 变风 and “mutant Elegantiae” 变雅, the negative model of writing. Following Ban Gu’s and Liu Xie’s critique, he admitted the transgressions of Qu Yuan’s works—the description of the strange and the grudging tone—but he managed to smooth out the critique in an apologetic manner. Zhu Xi argued that, although the *Chuci* could not serve as perfect moral exemplars as the “correct Airs” and “correct Elegantiae” did, Qu Yuan’s intention—his “sincere loyalty and patriotism” 忠君爱国之诚心—and the efficacy of his works in inspiring ruler’s self-reflection could still add a new depth to the Classical tradition.

As for Qu Yuan as a person, some of his intention and action may have transgressed the Centeredness and Constancy so that they cannot serve as a model. But both are grown out of his sincere heart of loyalty and patriotism. As for the writings Qu Yuan composed, their language gist may fall into a bold and unrestrained style, a content devoted to the strange and the gods/goddesses, and an indignant, plaintive, and vehement tone, such that these works cannot serve as teachings. The writings, however, all come from his profound attachment [to his ruler and country] and compassion, the sincerest feelings that he could not contain within. He did not realize the necessity to learn from the North in order to pursue the Way of Duke of Zhou and Zhongni, and he alone galloped at the last of “Mutant Airs” and “Mutant Elegantiae.” Therefore, some of those dignified and with unadulterated knowledge in Classics feel ashamed to praise it. If, however, the deposed officials, exiled men, plaintive wives, and traveling husbands of this generation all sing and chant below [the stairs in the court hall], wiping off their tears, and the ruler [lit. that which these people treat as Heaven] bestows his favor to listen to them, then it suffices to connect the goodness within the ruler’s [lit. Heaven] nature to that within the people’s nature, generating [more goodness] and adding weight to the “Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues.” For this reason, every time I savor Qu Yuan’s words, I do not dare to see them merely as “fu of epideictic poets.”

原之為人，其志行或過於中庸而不可以為法，然皆出於忠君愛國之誠心。原之為書，其辭旨雖或流於跌宕怪神、怨憤激發而不可以為訓，然皆生於纖絃懼恒，不能自己之至意。雖其不知學於北方，以求周公、仲尼之道，而獨馳騁於“變風”、“變雅”之末流，以故賅儒莊士或羞稱之。然使世之放臣、屏子、怨妻、去夫授淚謳吟於

72 Cf. *Zhuzi yishu*: “When reading the Odes, read for the general meaning [dayi]. Take, for instance, the Odes of Wei: of course those among them that discuss the events of the day ought to be studied carefully. [But] what is the point [yisi] of digging into the debauched Odes of Zheng? If one day you read five or six, that will be fine.” *Zhuzi yishu* 1.32. Translation by Steven van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, 229.

73 *Ceda* 側怛 appears verbatim in Zhu Xi’s preface to the *Shi jizhuan*. See footnote 70.
In Zhu Xi’s perspective, Qu Yuan especially resembles the gentleman authors of “mutant Elegantiae” with his quality of “loyalty and patriotism” and “compassion” 臣恵. In this sense, although the Chuci may only be posited in the second tier of “mutant Airs” and “mutant Elegantiae,” the anthology acquires a position within the Shijing and is no longer treated as a deviant, or in some Tang literati’s view, “fu of epideictic poets.” As such, it was implied that the Chuci should be seen as “fu of Odes poets” 詩人之賦 that still preserved the principles of the Classic. Besides, Qu Yuan also resembles authors of the “Airs” in his sincerity and spontaneity. The “deposed officials, exiled men, plaintive wives, and traveling husbands” 放臣、屏子、怨妻、去夫 sang forth their cares and had their pomes collected as “Airs of States” for the king to observe local customs and adjust his governance accordingly. The poems conformed to the Classical principle because of their function of communication and remonstration. Like those authors, Qu Yuan wrote down his struggles, waiting to be presented to the king. In Qu Yuan’s own time, if King Huai had ever acted in the manner of sage kings to pay attention to the voices his subjects, the communication and remonstration must have made its accomplishments. For contemporary emperors, hearing Qu Yuan’s poems could also encourage their self-examination. For the sincerity and (unrealized) function of communication, Qu Yuan’s works “add weight to the ‘Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues’” 增夫三綱五典之重.

In the commentary, Zhu Xi further identified specific passages in the Chuci that fell into the

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74 Chuci jizhu, 2.
75 Qu Yuan’s sincerity and spontaneity to write can spare him any blame, since the “Great Preface”—at the background of this preface—guarantees that “he who speaks of [the “Airs” to remonstrate] is not guilty” 言之者無罪. Kong Yida, Maoshi zhengyi, 6-7. For a discussion, see Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 40-43.
According to the *Rites of Zhou*, the great master oversaw Six Categories of Poetry to teach the noble youths. [The Six Categories] were called “Airs,” “Exposition,” “Analogy,” “Evocation,” “Elegantiae,” and “Hymn.” The “Great Preface” of Mao’s *Odes* called them “Six Principles,” possibly because none of the rules and principles of sung poetry, no matter ancient or present, lay beyond these [categories]. The “Airs” were verses of affections and yearnings between male and female in local alley-ways. The “Elegantiae” were compositions by lords, ministers, and grandees at occasions of court audience and banquets. The “Hymn” were melodies of sacrificial songs and dances dedicated to the deceased and gods/goddesses at ancestral temples. They were distinguished on the basis of the difference among their stanzaic rhythm. “Exposition” was to straightforwardly present the object; “analogy” was to use [another] object as an analogy; “evocation” was to rely on the object to evoke words. They were distinguished on the basis of the difference in the ways word were put together and meanings were given. If those who recite the *Odes* can discern this, then the *Three Hundred Poems* resembles a well-patterned net, displaying neat order and no confusion.76

It is not only the *Odes*—if we probe the verses by people of Chu in this manner, then [the parts where] feelings were lodged in plants and meanings were conveyed in the male-female relationship in order to maximize the gratification of a sweeping and comprehensive view, are offshoots of mutated “Airs.” [The parts that] narrated events and stated feelings and that lamented the present and cherished the past in order to state that one never forgot the subject’s duty to the ruler, fell into the category of mutated “Elegantiae.” As for [the parts that] transgressed the propriety for speaking of marriage with the dead and that forfeited the centeredness for expressing plain and indignation, they mutated the “Airs” and “Elegantiae” twice. [The parts] that spoke of the grandiosity of songs and dances offering sacrifices to gods/goddesses approximated the “Hymn.” Yet in the meantime these parts also mutated [the “Hymn”] to a large extent. The [parts that] used “Exposition” were the first stanza of “Classic of Encountering Sorrow” and the like. For “Analogy,” it was the aromatic plants and evil objects and so forth. For “Evocation,” it relied on an object to evoke words; in the beginning it did not take on any meaning. Examples of this include the use of angelica by the Yuan River and Orchid by the Li River to evoke one’s yearning for the lord that one dared not put into words, and so forth. Yet the *Odes* poets used “Evocation” more and “Analogy” and “Exposition” less, whereas the *sao* used “Evocation” less and “Analogy” and “Exposition” more. It is necessary to discern the

use of [these devises], and thereafter the meaning of the verses can be found. Readers should not fail to realize their significance.

The premise of Zhu Xi’s analysis of Chuci with the Six Principles is that “none of the rules and principles of sung poetry, no matter ancient or present, lay beyond these [Six Principles]” 古今声诗条理無出此者. The claim that various parts of the Chuci fall into the categories of “mutant Airs,” “mutant Elegantiae,” and “Hymn” and that the Chuci also employs the literary devices of Shijing close the gap between the two anthologies. In his own commentary, Zhu Xi also carried out his advocation that understanding the use of “Exposition,” “Analogy,” and “Evocation” was instructive and fundamental for one’s understanding of the meaning of Chuci verses.

Identification of these literary devices always comes before his gloss. In a word, Zhu Xi’s notion of mutation indeed stresses Chuci’s conformation to the Shijing over its diversion.

As such, in the Song, the two positions—Chuci is different from the Odes (such as Han Yuanji’s view) and Chuci is no different (Zhu Xi)—are both a positive assessment. Su Shi and Chao Buzhi also see Chuci as having “mutated” the Shijing in the sense that it carries forward the tradition of the Odes with variations to be valued. Moreover, it is widely held in the Southern Song that Chuci is identical to the Shijing in nature. Ouyang Xiu is recorded to have expressed such an opinion.

Reading Qu Yuan’s “Lisao” makes one dizzy. Picking one or two sentences and savoring them over and again, however, it reads no different from the “Airs.”

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77 Chuci jizhu, 20. My parsing of the text.
The identity only manifests itself upon one’s careful and concentrated reading, after conquering the language barrier. The failure to recognize the identical nature is then a matter of negligence and laziness. The attribution of the speech to Ouyang Xiu cannot be verified as it is only available to us as a quote in a quote. It appears in Zeng Zao’s 詹馮 (fl. 1120-1140) Categorized Anecdotes 類說 (finished in 1136), quoting the Poetic Remarks of Chen Fuzhi 陳輔之詩話 (Chen Fu 陳輔, style name Chen Fuzhi, fl. 1080-1090), but is not collected in the extant version of Chen’s book. The comment may merely borrow Ouyang Xiu’s name for authority, but may still at least reflect a twelfth century opinion. Around the same time, Lin Xiyi 林希逸 (1193-1271) viewed “sao as a variant title of Odes” 騷者詩之異名 and suggested that one’s comprehension of Chuci could only be achieved through the knowledge of Shijing. The Southern Song equation of Chuci with the Odes then gave rise to a perspective that the Chuci was to be viewed as “Airs of Chu” 楚風—a “missing” part in the Shijing that should have been included in the Classic if ever known to Kongzi—in the Ming and afterwards.

A Literary Tradition of Southland Illustrating Chu Spirit

78 Quan Song wen 738.101.
79 The extant version is a collection of scattered parts of the original book compiled by Guo Shaoyu. See Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, Song shihua jiyi 宋詩話輯佚 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 291-297.
80 Lin Xiyi 林希逸, “Lisao,” in his Zhuxi yanzhai shiyi gao xuji 竹溪廬齋十一藁續集 (rpt. SKQS), 8.12b. Similar claims are widely seen in the Song. For example, Gao Sisun comments that Qu Yuan’s works “share the same language and intention with the Three Hundred and Five Poems” 與詩三百五文同志同. Gao Sisun, Sao lue, 1.1.
81 Zhou Bida 蘇世嘉 observed that the “Airs” does not incorporation poems from Chu, but the “Lisao” emerges after the compilation of Shijing, implying the similarity between the “Lisao” and “Airs.” See Zhou Bida, “Gao Duanshu Bian Chuci xu” 廣道巋楚辭序, in Quan Song wen, 5118.153. Later in the Ming, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 would defend Qu Yuan by arguing that the Chuci deserves the status of “Airs of Chu.” The only reason for the exclusion of Chuci in the Odes is because Qu Yuan could not be born into Kongzi’s time. See Wang Fuzhi, Chuci tongshi 楚辭通釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1975), 1-2.
Similar to Chao Buzhi’s literary historical view, Zhu Xi looked for both continuity and change when selecting poems in the *Chuci houyu*. In the meantime, Zhu Xi also expressed his dissatisfaction with Chao Buzhi’s relaxed standard and his primary focus on language, narrowing down his *Chuci houyu* to a far shorter list of fifty-two titles. On the one hand, he insisted that intention was equally, if not more, important with language. On the other hand, he employed a stricter standard on language. In Zhu Xi’s view, for a poem to be qualified as a member in the *Chuci* tradition, its language has to be spoken in a sincere voice of “plaint, yearning, and misery,” in order to conform to Qu Yuan’s tone. Besides, the poems also need to be composed out of a state of anxiety and deprivation as in Qu Yuan’s case. Accordingly, the poems with a happy voice and grandiose style (usually for purposes of eulogy) are not qualified. Additionally, the aesthetic value—i.e. literary excellence and a flavor of antiquity⁸²—of the language is also taken into consideration, but is considered secondary to the criterion of intention. Intention points to the value of profound meaning and didactic function of the poems. Based on this criterion, Zhu Xi failed the “Gaotang fu,” “Shennü fu,” “Li furen fu,” and “Luoshen fu” for their sensual images, although he admitted their aesthetic value.⁸³

The two criteria, language and intention, overlap on a large scale. In the lens of the “Great Preface,” a plaintive voice out of frustration suffices to bespeak the author’s intention. In other words, “language” in Zhu Xi’s perspective is not a pure linguistic value. An heir of *Chuci* does not necessarily mean that the poet has inherited a repertoire of vocabulary or a prosodic pattern

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⁸² For example, the “Changmen fu” attributed to Sima Xiangru is selected for its antique and subtly excellent language. Wang Can’s “Denglou fu” is included for being the best *fu* of Wei. See *Chuci jizhu*, 225, 257.

⁸³ See Zhu Xi’s preface to *Chuci houyu*, in *Chuci jizhu*, 207.
from the anthology, as Zhu Xi indeed denounced the forced similitude and encouraged one’s personal voice and style. Language points not so much to techniques or literary devices. Instead, language and intention both point to the author’s state of mind, a mind of the Chu spirit.

As discussed earlier, Zhu Xi’s version of *Chuci* is a Southern anthology whose authors all have a Chu identity. The anthology in Zhu Xi’s framework of “Chuci” as a literary tradition serves as the model for all later generations to match. The works selected as “later works” are supposed to harbor a Chu spirit in one way or another, though not all poets had personal experiences with Chu. As Zhu Xi declared in the preface to Jing Ke’s 荊軻 (d. 227) “Song at Yi River” 易水歌, the song was incorporated not only as an evidence for the cruelty of Qin and imprudence of Yan, but also for its “solemnity and vehemence” 悲壯激烈, a melody “not originated in Chu but exhibiting Chu features” 非楚而楚.84 “Solemnity and vehemence” may merely be a stereotypical perception of “Chu tone,” as discussed before. Be that as it may, in Zhu Xi’s view, the emotional feature identified as exclusive to Chu suffices to “naturalize” the Yan assassin’s song as a Chu poem. As such, the “later works” may encompass a wide range of poems on various themes and by authors far removed from Qu Yuan’s time and space, but they are still connected to Qu Yuan through their works engraved with a romanticized Chu spirit. The “Chuci” as a lasting literary tradition is carried forward through the cultivation of the Chu spirit by generations of poets.

The Chu spirit as represented by Qu Yuan and “inherited” by later authors is manifold. The Chu spirit is primarily represented by Qu Yuan’s “sincere loyalty and patriotism,” a spirit recognized as the essence of Qu Yuan’s character in Zhu Xi’s perspective.

As for Qu Yuan as a person, some of his intention and action may have transgressed the

84 *Chuci jizhu*, 220.
Mean and cannot serve as a model. But both are grown out of his sincere heart of loyalty and patriotism. As for the writings Qu Yuan composed, their language gist may fall into a bold and unrestrained style, a content devoted to the strange and the gods/goddesses, and an indignant, plaintive, and vehement tone, such that these works cannot serve as teachings. The writings, however, all come from his profound attachment [to his ruler and country] and compassion, the sincerest feelings that he could not contain within.

His words and acts driven by “loyalty and patriotism,” the transgressions in his life (which may include his resentment, harsh remonstration with the ruler, and suicide) and writings (including his vehement tone and description of the strange and gods/goddess, which Kongzi would not speak of86) are all justifiable. In particular, about half of the poems in the Chuci houyu are presented as conveying a remonstrative message to the contemporary or future ruler. Motive and not consequence of action is Zhu Xi’s criterion to judge the morals. Additionally, the identified motive of composition—Qu Yuan’s attachment to his ruler and state—differs from Sima Qian’s version, where Qu Yuan is said to have composed “out of his plaint” 蓋自怨生. The motive is now completely selfless.

“Loyalty and patriotism” 忠君愛國 as Qu Yuan’s defining character, however, is as subjective and selective an interpretation as perceiving Qu Yuan as a dissent filled with resentment. On the one hand, one’s assessment of Qu Yuan is always made contingent on the political and cultural context one is situated in, influenced by one’s perception on the duty of advisor. Valuing self-protection, Ban Gu would see Qu Yuan’s admonishment as showing off his talent and unwise critiques of his ruler. Emphasizing one’s devotion to the country regardless of life, a stance in reaction to the Southern Song political atmosphere (a point I will return to later),

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85 Ibid, 2.
Zhu Xi would see harsh admonishment as an expression of his attachment to the ruler. On the other hand, the text of Qu Yuan is multivalent and sophisticated such that it gives rise to different and even opposite interpretations. Each of them alone, however, hardly suffices to be representative of the entire corpus. Reference to Qu Yuan’s attachment to Chu as a state is scarce in poems attributed to him. The closest to “patriotism” are places where the protagonist longs for his hometown 故鄉 and capital 國 in his (cosmic) travels. “Patriotism” in the sense of a responsibility to merely serve one’s motherland was also a view far from prevalent before the Song. In other words, “loyalty and patriotism” by and large reflects Zhu Xi’s ideal for being a subject in his time. Nevertheless, the view becomes dominant thereafter to the present.

The Chu spirit, as discussed previously, should be expressed in a voice of sorrow and frustration, the voice out of disfavor by the king or not meeting one’s time. What is interesting and unseen in previous remarks is a constructed confrontation between South and North within the Chuci anthology and literary tradition. Loyalty as a spirit of Chu in the Chuci houyu and in many Southern Song remarks on Chuci especially means one’s attachment to the South and resistance to the North. In the preface to Chuci jizhu, Zhu Xi implicitly imbedded within the Qu Yuan biography a sense of dissociation and even confrontation between the South and North.

He did not realize the necessity to learn from the North in order to pursue the Way of Duke of Zhou and Zhongni, and he alone galloped at the last of “Mutant Airs” and “Mutant Elegantiae.”

...其不知學於北方，以求周公、仲尼之道，而獨馳騁於“變風”、“變雅”之末流... 88

As claimed, Qu Yuan “never realized the necessity to learn from the North” 不知學於北方, implying that all of Qu Yuan’s knowledge came from the South, i.e. Chu. The North here,

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87 Wang Yi’s defense of Qu Yuan comes close to Zhu Xi’s view. But Wang Yi’s characterization of “patriotism” is mainly built on Qu Yuan’s royal identity as I discussed in chapter one.
88 Chuci jizhu, 2.
however, does not refer to the geographical North, the vast space that is northern of the Yangzi or of Chu. It is a cultural concept that specifically refers to the sagely teachings that were put into practice at the time of Duke of Zhou and their epitomisation in Classics at the hand of Kongzi. This Classical tradition is “Northern” because it originated in the Zhou heartland and was systemized in Lu 魯. But it was not that the entire North deserved the effort to learn from—for example, the Zheng and Wey located at the east and northeast of the Zhou heartland should not belong to this ideal “North.” Places such as Zheng and Wey, in this sense, were no different from Chu, the South, since they all produced “mutant Airs” and “mutant Elegantiae” (or in Zhu Xi’s words, “debauched” Odes). In a word, the “North” here represented a moral and political ideal, a remote past to be longed for. By “never realizing the necessity to learn from the North,” Zhu Xi meant that Qu Yuan did not pursue the “correct” sagely teachings so that his works could serve as “models” 法 and “teachings” 訓 as the Classics did.

That said, Zhu Xi implicitly set up the Chu/South against the conceptual North of the sages and presented Chu as a somewhat isolated and idiosyncratic culture where sagely teachings were inaccessible, or at least not fully transmitted. The corpus of Qu Yuan, however, does not manifest itself as composed out of a knowledge base completely different from that of the Classics. Instead, the intellectual values, historical references, and mythological knowledge in Qu Yuan’s works point to a largely shared tradition between Chu culture and the Northern heartland. Zhu Xi’s statement shows the baggage of the conventional image of Chu as a “barbarian” culture. Yet in his picture, Chu is also to some extent redeemed—although Chu could not give rise to exemplary and sagely teachings, the land is still part of civilization where

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89 Note, however, Zhu Xi never equated the Classics with the North, or identified the Classics as Northern traditions.
90 That Chu is not an isolated culture is also manifested in art and ritual. See Defining Chu, 33-50, 121-144.
“mutant” traditions of Classics could be born at a time the Odes had died out elsewhere.

As I have argued, the “North” that Qu Yuan should learn from was not the northern states at Qu Yuan’s time. Neither was it the “North” in the twelfth century that awaits retrieval and reincorporation into the “new South,” the Southern Song. Yet the South-North contrast projected onto the Qu Yuan persona had its contemporary relevance at Zhu Xi’s time, in that the contrast reflected the intellectual challenge to position the Southern Song against the Northern Jurchens. On the one hand, the significance of the North is not merely because it is the origin of Chinese Classical teachings, but also for its cosmological role—preservation of the North guarantees that the “Middle Kingdom” occupies the center of the “civilized” world. To retake the North, therefore, was the lifelong enterprise of many Song literati, including Zhu Xi who strongly opposed the accommodationists’ position to sign peace treaties with the Jurchens. In this context, Zhu Xi’s claim that Qu Yuan should learn from the North has an implication that the Southern Song should not satisfy its seclusion in the South but should retake the North and reclaim their control over the land where the sages lived. On the other hand, in the face of the Northern military threat, Southern Song literati felt an urge to defend their legitimacy and the uniqueness of the South that had long been a problem. Qu Yuan, in this context, best served their purpose. Zhu Xi claimed for Qu Yuan a distinct Southern identity, and he managed to rescue him from the negative implications of the South by granting him a lofty moral cause, a “sincere heart of loyalty and patriotism.” The celebration of Qu Yuan was a claim to the effect that when the

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92 Zhu Xi’s goal was that the Southern Song should “recover the Central Plains” and “take revenge against the Jurchens,” for which he submitted multiple memorials to the emperor. But in the meantime, he was a “realist” strategic who favored a more defensive stance rather than “an immediate offensive” and “hawkish” one. For a discussion, see Jope Smorenburg, “Zhu Xi’s Military Thought” (M.A. thesis, Leiden University, 2017), 42-62.
Central Plains was not yet recovered, the South, nonetheless, had its values.

Qu Yuan was selected to speak for the intellectual reaction against the North-South tension in the Southern Song was not incidental. The Song was a dynasty that lived with its military confrontation with the North since its founding. Although the Song court was recorded to have rejected the request of Xingzong 興宗 of Liao (r. 1031-1055) to officially refer to each other as “the Southern Dynasty” 南朝 and “the Northern Dynasty” 北朝, referring to the Liao and later the Jin as “the Northern Dynasty” becomes a convention in Song administrative and diplomatic documents. The Song referred to itself as “the Middle Kingdom,” but in reality, Song admitted to be a “Southern Dynasty” by designating its neighbor as “Northern.” In the meantime, Chu was widely seen as a tragic predecessor that mirrored the destiny of Northern Song. The trauma of “flight to the South” after the Jurchen’s devastation of Northern Song gave rise to a strong sense of compassion towards Chu among Southern Song literati. In their perspective, the history of Chu was a tragic one in which the splendid southern culture was treads by the brutal northern “state of tigers and wolves” 虎狼之國. The connection between Southern Song and Chu was particularly strengthened upon the “Jingkang Incident” 靖康之變 (also known in history as the or “Humiliation of Jingkang” 靖康之恥)—just like King Huai, the last two emperors of Northern Song, Huizong and Qinzong (r. 1126-1127), and the royal family were all seized to the North and never managed to return. In such a context, the Qin-Chu military confrontation also took on a new life in the Southern Song to serve as a euphonious substitute for the Song-Liao 辽 (907-1125) and/or Song-Jin 金 (1115-1234) confrontation. King Huai thus came to serve as a poetic

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93 For example, in Songshi 285.9624, 310.10183.
94 See, for example, Song dazhaoling ji 228.884, 232.901-2, 232.904.
95 Qu Yuan was said to refer to Qin as such in a meeting with King Huai. See chapter one for a discussion.
image of the two emperors who likewise died in the foreign land. When Fang Zhu 方耆 (jinshi 1138) lamented the trauma of Jingkang, he sighed that, “The coffin of King Huai has still not return” 懷王殞未歸. In such a context, the poetic image of Chu as a predecessor of Song was often charged with a deep regret for its fate and a strong will to revenge. As Liu Zihui 劉子翚 (1101-1147) wrote when passing by the temple of King Huai, “The survivors still sympathize with Chu, which, even when left with only three clans, intended to destroy Qin” 遺民猶憐楚，三戶欲亡秦. The “survivors” were those who survived the Jingkang Incident and escaped South. They now had on their shoulders the unfulfilled wish of Chu to recapture the lost territory taken by the North.

With their strong agony for the trauma of “flight to the South,” the Southern Song literati’s account of Qu Yuan’s misfortune is often presented as a catastrophe of Chu. Li Gang’s 李綱 (1083-1140) poem “On Qu Yuan, Grandee of Three Royal Clans” 楚三閭大夫屈原 is an example. Li Gang was a pro-resistance official who was demoted several times for his firm stance against the Jurchens. The poem was composed in the winter of 1127, the year when Southern Song was founded and Li Gang lived in Wuchang 武昌 (in modern Echeng 鄂城 of Hubei) after being removed from his post at court (Grand Counsellor and 觀文殿大學士).

King Huai of Chu listened to the deception of Qin, 楚懷聽秦詐
He became a ghost in Xianyang. 身作咸陽鬼
At the time Qu Yuan contended against it, 當時屈原爭
yet he was accused by the slanderers Zijiao and Zilan. 坐困椒蘭毀
King Xiang, again, would not think sensibly, 襄王復不悟
He sent Qu Yuan afar, south of the Yangzi. 遠作江南徙
Wandering and chanting at Yuan and Xiang Rivers, 行吟沅湘間

96 “Yuanri” 元日, in Quan Song shi 2005.22455.
97 “Guo Chu Huaiwang miao” 過楚懷王廟, in Quan Song shi 1917.21396.
His figure looked haggard and his face sallow. The poem has thirty-six lines in total. The first eight lines translated above is an account of Qu Yuan’s life, which is followed by an allegorical reading of his “Lisao” (ll. 9-18; the reading conforms to Wang Yi’s commentary), a lament for the loyalists’ misfortune (ll. 19-24), and a eulogy of Qu Yuan’s resolution of death (ll. 25-36). Like his predecessors, Li Gang saw himself as a contemporary Qu Yuan, sharing the poet’s character and fate—“Loyal officials tend to face danger, this is the same for all eternity” Unlike the previous poems that often focus on Qu Yuan’s eventful life, Li Gang’s lament strikes the reader by throwing out, in the very beginning, the larger consequence of Qu Yuan’s political setbacks on the fate of his country. The poem starts with the tragedy of King Huai, a tragedy could have been avoided if Qu Yuan’s advice was taken. The tragedy of Chu continued into the next generation because King Xiang, again, would not trust Qu Yuan. Qu Yuan’s trajectory of life is presented to mirror Li Gang’s own experience, as he was exiled by both Qinzong and Gaozong’s 高宗 (r. 1127-1162) for his anti-Jin position.

Born and raised in the Southern Song, Zhu Xi showed a deep concern over the “barbarian” North, a concern not found in the extant parts of Chao Buzhi’s two collections or other Northern Song materials about Chuci. In his delineation of the “Chuci” tradition, Zhu Xi paid special attention to those authors that were seized to the North and yearned for their Southern home. The Chu spirit now stressed one’s attachment to the Southern civilization—the “Central Kingdom” 中國 that was forced to flew to the South—and an unyielding stance towards the Northern

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98 Cf. “Yufu”: “After Qu Yuan was exiled, he was once roaming at the bank of [Miluo] River. He was wandering and chanting by the river. He looked wan and sallow, and his figure was emaciated and haggard.” 屈原既放，游於江潭，行吟澤畔，顏色憔悴，形容枯槁。Also Shiji: “Qu Yuan came to the bank of [Miluo] River. He wandered and chanted with his hair unbound. He looked wan and sallow, and his figure was emaciated and haggard.” 屈原至於江濱，被髮行吟澤畔。顏色憔悴，形容枯槁。
In the *Chuci houyu*, Zhu Xi selected the “Song by Princess of Wusun” 烏孫公主, a poem attributed to the Han princess Liu Xijun 劉細君 (fl. 110-105 BCE) who married the king of Wusun, a semi-nomadic people in the northwest. The princess is said to once send a returning request to King Wu after the death of her husband, when she was about to marry the king’s son according to the local custom, but she was rejected to return. The song is believed to be composed out of the princess’s grief during her stay in the “barbarian” land.\(^9\) The selection of the song, according to Zhu Xi’s preface, is not merely due to its grieving tone, but more importantly, for the purpose of providing “a censure against the middle kingdom that brought shame upon itself by joining in marriage with *yidi*” 為中國結昏夷狄，自取羞辱之戒.\(^10\) The censure was actually directed to the Song court that submitted an annual tribute of thousands bolts of raw silk and taels of silver to the regimes at its northern border, the Liao, Xixia, and Jin according to various treaties to buy peace.

The concern over the “barbarian” North also urged Zhu Xi to reconfigure the significance of poems purportedly composed by Cai Yan 蔡琰 (ca. 178-post 206) to vent her indignation of being taken captive in the North.\(^11\) Chao Buzhi selected Cai Yan’s “Poem of Grief and Indignation” 悲憤詩 and Zhu Xi further added to it the “Tartar Whistle” 胡笳 because of its sincere “grief and plaint” 哀怨.\(^12\) A comparison between the prefaces composed by the two

\(^9\) Chao Buzhi’s remark on the poem is not included in the *Chuci houyu*, and as such remain unknown. For a discussion of the “Wusun gongzhu ge” 烏孫公主歌, see Wang Ping, “Plaint, Lyricism, and the South,” in *Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry*, 81-85.

\(^10\) *Chuci jizhu*, 228.

\(^11\) The authorship of Beifen shi and Hujia shiba pai was already questioned in the Song by Su Shi, and modern scholars in general would no longer accept the attribution.

\(^12\) Chao Buzhi did not select “Hujia” in his collection according to Zhu Xi.
scholars reveal Zhu Xi’s harsher attitude towards the act of submission to the North.  

Chao Buzhi’s preface to “Poem of Grief and Indignation”  
(also included in the Chuci houyu)  
“Poem of Grief and Indignation” was composed by Cai Yan, daughter of Cai Yong, the Inner Gentleman of Han. Cai Yan married Wei Zhongdao and became his wife. In chaos, she was seized by tartar [Xiongnu] soldiers and held captive for twelve years in Southern Xiongnu by the Wise Prince of the Left, for whom she gave birth to two children. Cao Cao had been close to Cai Yong and sympathized for his not having a descendant. He paid a huge sum of cash and jade as ransom to bring Cai Yan back, marrying her once again to Dong Si. Cai Yan lamented herself for losing chastity and she could not forget her two children. Thereupon, she composed this poem.  

《悲憤詩》者，漢中郎蔡邕女琰之所作也。琰嫁為衛仲道妻，遭亂，為胡騎所獲，没於南匈奴左賢王十二年，為生二子。曹操素善邕，痛其無後，以金璧重賜賜之，而重歸於董祀。琰自傷失節，而不能忘其二子，為做此辭。  

Zhu Xi’s preface to “Tartar Whistle”  
“Tartar Whistle” was composed by Cai Yan. Those set up their mind to compose sao verses were many among men of letters in the Eastern Han, yet their verses are not incorporated while this one is. This is because, although the “Tartar Whistle” does not entirely conform to Chu language, its grief and plaint are set forth from the bottom of Cai Yan’s heart so that she could not help but to put those feelings into words. This is much better than moaning and groaning without being ill. … It is not worth noting that Cai Yan lost her chastity to the tartar [Xiongnu] caitiffs and could not die for integrity. Yet she was still aware how shameful it was, which is different than Yang Xiong’s attitude expressed in his “Refuting ‘Encountering Sorrow’.” The inclusion of this poem here is not to forgive Cai Yan, but to make manifest Yang Xiong’s evil.  

Chao Buzhi’s preface is largely a biographical account of Cai Yan, giving Zhu Xi more room for appraisals as he did not need to repeat it. That said, the two accounts still reveal a significant
difference in moral judgment. The two scholars both regarded Cai Yan’s poems as expressing self-regret for her moral defect, but Chao Buzhi took a more empathetic attitude while Zhu Xi’s tone was much harsher and critical. In Chao Buzhi’s view, Cai Yan “lost chastity” 失節 due to her multiple marriages. This judgment emphasizes the moral ideal of female fidelity to her husband,¹⁰⁹ rather than, in Zhu Xi’s case, a Han person’s fidelity to her homeland and people. Chao Buzhi did not specify Cai Yan’s moral defect as losing chastity to the tartars as Zhu Xi did, but presented the fault as remarrying too many times. Besides, in Chao Buzhi’s picture, Cai Yan was in the meantime a caring mother yearning for her children whom she was forced to leave behind, a portrait to solicit readers’ compassion and grief for her. The confrontation between hu and Han remains at the background of the poem and never comes to the front of the stage. By contrast, the hu-Han confrontation was regarded as the primary theme of “Tartar Whistle” in the preface by Zhu Xi, who painted Cai Yan as a “criminal” deserving no forgiveness. Her crime is not her remarriage, but her failure to die on the verge of losing her chastity to a “hu caitiff” 胡賊.

In other words, what is an issue within the household in Chao Buzhi’s perspective is now transformed and elevated to the national level in Zhu Xi’s view.

As in the previous case, Zhu Xi once again stressed the sense of shame in surrendering to the “barbarians,” and requested an absolute fidelity to one’s country. In Zhu Xi’s perspective, being able to fulfil the request is a sign of inheriting Qu Yuan’s “loyalty to the ruler and patriotism.” The request also drives Zhu Xi to condemn Yang Xiong, the traitor in his perspective who served in and eulogized Wang Mang’s government, a stance dramatically different from previous remarks where Yang Xiong was often celebrated as an exemplary writer.

of wenzhang. In particular, Chao Buzhi recognized Yang Xiong’s “Fan ‘Lisao’” (a poem written in the meter of “Lisao” to question Qu Yuan’s resolutions in his political career) as a match of the “Lisao” to make manifest the meaning of the latter. By contrast, Zhu Xi retained the “Fan ‘Lisao’” in his Chuci houyu, but only for the reason of illustrating Yang Xiong’s “crimes against Qu Yuan” and preventing future readers from “misunderstanding” his “Fan ‘Lisao’” as an empathetic piece. Yang Xiong is the only case in the Chuci houyu that acts against the Chu spirit of loyalty. Yet his inclusion, instead of undermining and contaminating the spirit, is to further purify and strengthen it.

Zhu Xi’s grasp on the Chu spirit of loyalty to the South is built on the refashioned Qu Yuan legend widely received in the Southern Song in response to the larger political and cultural atmosphere. The Qu Yuan legend, as discussed in chapter one, was told together with an anti-Qin perspective in the Shiji and Qu Yuan was remembered as a prophet detecting Qin’s evil in advance in scattered cases thereafter. In the Southern Song accounts we have seen above, Qu Yuan’s firm stance against Qin gained much more weight to be staged at the center of the Qu Yuan legend, in order to address the urgency for an uncompromising stance to the Northern regime(s).

Notably, however, the confrontation between “Central Kingdom” and “barbarians”

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110 For a discussion of the “Fan ‘Lisao’,” see David Knechtges, “Two Han Dynasty Fu on Ch’ü Yüan: Chia I’s ‘Tiao Ch’ü Yüan’ and Yang Hsiung’s ‘Fan-sao’.” Parerga 1 (Seattle: Far Eastern and Russian Institute, University of Washington, 1968), 1-37.


112 Qu Yuan’s advice not taken, King Huai was tricked by the marriage alliance offered by Qin and was taken captive in the North, never managed to return to his homeland. The Chu was doomed thereafter and finally conquered by Qin in several generations. In the meantime, Chu remained a major rebelling force that overturned Qin in the end, as Xiang Yu and Liu Bang were both from Chu.

113 Examples are not limited to the above poems. For example, Liu Kezhuang’s “Qu Yuan” 屈原 also contextualized Qu Yuan’s tragedy in the capture of King Huai. “The Mi clan was taken captive; where could the entangled subject escape? No longer able to hold sacrificial vassals, for the moment he retreated to compose the ‘Encountering Sorrow’.” 卜姓且为虏，累臣安所逃。不能抱祭器，聊復著《离骚》. Quan Song shi 3046.36324.
conceived in the Southern Song as an element embedded in the “Chuci” tradition did not exist at the purported moment of the anthology’s inception, as the fall of Chu would not be seen as the “barbarian” conquest of “Central Kingdom” in the Han. In this sense, the alleged Chu spirit reflects, by and large, a contemporary ideology that has no “origin” in the Chu state or Chuci. Be that as it may, the Chu spirit may reflect a “mutated” intention of Qu Yuan that was communicative to the Southern Song literati regarding their concern. The declaration of Chuci as a Southern literature is close to a claim that the Chuci is “our” literature. Chuci is exclusively bounded to the South, so that the uniqueness of Chuci speaks of the unique value of the Southern literary tradition, a tradition only to be inherited by the Song, the then owner of the Southland. Moreover, as the “Middle Kingdom,” the Song also implicitly designates itself as the receiver of Classical teachings. As such, the “correct” and “mutant” traditions from the past are both passed down to the Song. By contrast, its Northern neighbors are left with nothing to inherit and accordingly, deprived of cultural authority.

Chu spirit and Zhu Xi’s Daoxue

From the end of Northern Song to the Southern Song, Huang Bosi, Han Yuanji, and Zhu Xi, all conceived in Chuci a strong sense of geographical bonds. To them, Chuci exclusively belonged to Chu, or to the South in general. In particular, Zhu Xi viewed the literary tradition of Chuci as growing from the romanticized Chu spirit, which especially emphasized one’s loyalty to the “Central Kingdom” against military threat from the “barbarian” North. The regionalization of Chuci in the Song was accompanied by a sweeping acclamation that exceeded the celebration the anthology received in previous ages.

In the meantime, it should be noted that the identification of Chuci as a Southern literature in
the Song did not lead to a contrast of *Chuci* with the *Shijing* in the way they are in the twentieth century. The modern celebration of *Chuci*’s southernness—characterized by imagination and innovation, a force to revolt against the conservation and stagnation of the Northern *Shijing*—is charged with a reform agenda and an anti-Manchu impulse, which are nowhere to be found in the Song. In the Song context, the Classics of the Chinese heartland in the North remain the moral and political ideal that all traditions, including that of the *Chuci*, should aim to match. This is especially true to Zhu Xi, who championed the *Chuci* and affirmed the semi-classical status of the “Lisao,” but never truly invited the “Lisao” into the Confucian Classics. To him, the *Chuci* still belonged to the realm of literary writings, the composition of which was secondary to one’s self-cultivation. To illustrate, Zhu Xi selected two poems by the *Daoxue* (Learning of the Way) scholars Zhang Zai (1020-1077) and Lü Dali (1044-1092) respectively to end the *Chuci houyu*. In particular, the last poem by Lü Dali, according to Zhu Xi, was not composed with any personal purposes, but to make manifest the principle to attain sagehood.

“Imitating the Summons” was composed by Lü Dali from Lantian of Jingzhao [modern Xi’an]. Dalin received his learning from the Cheng brothers and Zhang Zai. His efforts of composition are spent, not to specially writing a poetic exposition, but to illustrate the subtle meaning of seeking for the “lost mind” and restoring the constant Nature. Therefore, I attached the poem to the one by Master Zhang [Zai] to end the book, such that those who wander in arts realize the existence of a final destination.

The final take-away message of *Chuci houyu*, an anthology of poetic exposition 詞賦, is the secondariness of poetic exposition. The ultimate goal of learning is to attain sagehood through recovering the original mind and restoring the human Nature that is attuned to the Heavenly

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114 Cf. *Mengzi* 7A.11: “The Way to accomplish learning is nothing else but to seek for the lost mind.” 習問之道無他，求其放心而已矣。

115 *Chuci jizhu*, 295.
Principle. The two tasks both require the stillness of human desire and passion, implying that Qu Yuan’s mind still need to be “rectified” and transformed to accomplish the Daoxue project. The significance of Qu Yuan and Chuci to the contemporary age still stands, but there is yet another goal transcending the call in any specific age.

Zhu Xi’s requirement on “lost mind” and “constant Nature” is not confined to composition of “verses of Chu.” Instead, it reveals his view on poetry and poetics in general. Michael Fuller argues that Zhu Xi transformed the Song poetics that viewed poetic composition as a spontaneous response to an encounter with patterns of the world unknown to the poet before composition happened. To Zhu Xi, knowledge of the patterns may happen beforehand, if one stills and purified the mind so that the mind can reflect the Principle of the Way and the Nature “become self-aware in the encounter.” Thus, the “final destination” of poetic composition, is inwardly directed to cultivation of the mind.

Recognition of sao as a genre

The Song reconfiguration of Chuci includes the exegesis of its nomenclature and text, the delineation of an enlarged “Chuci” as a literary tradition, and construction of sao as a genre separated from fu and shi. The last aspect, similar to the first two, also reflects the Song effort to elevate the Chuci in the sense that sao is no longer affiliated to other genres. In the meantime, similar to other taxonomic sets, although listed as a distinct category, sao in the Song remains a flexible one that overlaps with other genres, especially the fu. Finally, sao as a genre in the Song overlaps but is not identical with the sao-style (also called Chuci-style), the specific poetic

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form and prosodic pattern characterized by regular use of caesurae (xi 兮, suo 些, and zhi 只, etc.). The prosodic pattern alone cannot define sao in the Song, for the content feature—voice and intention similar to Qu Yuan’s—is another factor in the Song conception.

The distinctiveness of Chuci has been recognized before the Song. The “Yiwenzhi” already showed a sense of awareness of taxonomy by dividing the titles into four groups, topped by Qu Yuan, Lu Jia, Xunzi, and anonymous authors respectively. But Qu Yuan’s works are referred to as fu and the connotation of Ban Gu’s division remains unclear. The use of sao for classification might not have started in the Song, but according to the available materials, the Song marks an important stage in recognizing sao as an independent category and in expanding the scope of sao at once. Before the Song, sao has been used as a category in the Wenxuan, but there the scope of sao does not go beyond the Chuci anthology. Although not explicitly defined in the Song, sao acquires official recognition as a literary category and style. The two literary collections compiled on imperial command, the Finest blossoms in the Garden of Literature 文苑英華 (finished in 986 under the supervision of Li Fang 李昉) and the Mirror of Writing for Our August Dynasty 皇朝文鑑 (compiled in 1177 by Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 [1137-81])
both include a *sao* category that exemplifies the two compilers’ construction of *sao* as a genre.\(^{123}\)

In addition to listing *sao* and *fu* as two categories, the *Wenyuan yinghua* and *Huangchao wenjian* distinguish the two by paying special attention to the title of poems selected in each category. Poems collected in the *sao* category are variously titled *wen, ci, shi,* and *qu,*\(^ {124}\) while all the poems with the character *fu* in the title are placed under the *fu* category. This is a rather different approach than Zhu Xi’s *Chuci houyu,* where he selected ten verses titled as *fu.*\(^ {125}\) Zhu Xi’s enterprise is not one of generic classification, as opposed to the compilations by Li Fang and Lü Zuqian.

To be sure, the kinship of *sao* and *fu* proposed in the Han is still accepted in the Song. Song Qi (998-1061), for example, regarded the “Lisao” as “ancestor of all poetic expositions” 詞賦之祖.\(^ {126}\) The two compilers’ efforts, instead of entirely dissociating *sao* from *fu,* show that *sao* is no longer perceived as a subcategory affiliated to *fu.* *Sao* and *fu* are now believed to be distinct, so that compilers of the two collections see a necessity to separate them. Notably, distinguishing the two genres based on titles is a gesture to justify the separation by resorting to the author’s own generic identification of *fu.* Yet the character *fu* in the title, or even the entire title, could in many cases be no more than later additions. As I show later, the distinction between *sao* and *fu* in the two compilations is still obscured.

The result of the compilers’ separating *sao* and *fu* is that, the *fu* category looks neat and clean,

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\(^{123}\) The *Huangchao wenjian* is commonly referred to as *Song wenjian* in modern times. Additionally, private collections also adopt *sao* as a category. For example, Guo Xiangzheng’s *Qingshan ji* 青山集 begins by the category called “*Chuci* style” 楚辭體.

\(^{124}\) See *Wenyuan yinghua,* juan 355-360; *Huangchao wenjian,* juan 30.

\(^{125}\) These titles are Jia Yi’s “Fu fu” 服賦, Ban Jieyu’s “Zidao fu” 自悼賦, Zhang Heng’s “Sixuan fu” 思玄賦, Wang Can’s “Denglou fu” 登樓賦, Han Yu’s “Fuzhi fu” 復志賦, “Minji fu” 閔己賦, and “Biezhi fu” 別知賦, Liu Zongyuan’s “Chengjiu fu” 慟咎賦, “Minsheng fu” 閔生賦, and “Menggui fu” 夢歸賦.

\(^{126}\) Quoted by Hong Xingzu in *Chuci buzhu,* 3.
while the *sao* miscellaneous. The fact that the compilers have to allow for such miscellany in the *sao* category betrays their efforts of constructing a genre. In other words, the poems titled *wen*, *ci*, *shi*, and *qu* were never recognized as *sao* before; in the perspective of Li Fang and Lü Zuqian, they have to be placed in the “correct” category in order to illuminate their otherwise overlooked *sao* qualities—their affinity to *Chuci* in form and content.

In general, poems recognized as *sao* verses in the two compilations show a considerable degree of affinity to the *Chuci* in their prosodic pattern, indicating an awareness of formal features. Most of the titles selected in the *Wenyuan yinghua* and *Huangchao wenjian* have adopted *xi* as the caesura, though in some cases less regularly than poems in the *Chuci*. Use of caesura in the two compilations was far more valued than in the *Wenxin diaolong*, where Liu Xie viewed *xi* as inessential.

Moreover, poets of the Odes use *xi* within the sentence, while the Chuci uses it outside the sentence. Reflecting on the sentence made by *xi*, it is the lingering sound of a tonal adjunct. It has been used for long since the “Song of South Wind” by Shun. Emperor Wu of Wei was not fond of it—how can this not be due to its uselessness to convey meaning? 又詩人以“兮”字入於句限，《楚辭》用之，字出於句外。尋兮兮字承句，乃語助餘聲。舜詠《南風》，用之久矣，而魏武弗好，豈不以無益文義耶！

In an age when the performative value of *Chuci* was largely undermined, the function of *xi* as an auxiliary word to add rhythm and elongate the feelings expressed in the verse—such that the verse could be more impressively sung or chanted—became obscured. Therefore, meaning

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128 For a discussion of the musicality of *Chuci*, see Li Binghai 李炳海, “Lun Chuci ti de shengcheng jiqi he yinyue de guanxi” (論楚辭體的生成及其和音樂的關係, *Zhongzhou xuekan* 7 (2004): 93-96). Jiang Liangfu 姜良夫 discusses the grammatical functions of *xi* in the “Jiuge,” where *xi* mostly functions as a preposition and conveys a meaning. Jiang Liangfu, *Chuci tonggu* 楚辭通故 (Ji’nan: Qilu shushe, 1985), 324. Lin Geng 林庚 and Ge Xiaoyin 葛曉音 focus on the development of syntax in poetry. Lin Geng suggests that the use of *xi* is the key to transform a prose line into a rhythmic and poetic line with more than four characters. See Lin Geng, *Lin Geng Chuci yanjiu liangzhong* 林庚楚辭研究兩種 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 2006), 107-111. Ge Xiaoyin suggests that *xi* allows a tetrasyllabic line (the *Shijing* syntax) to grow longer and create more sentence structures in poetry. Ge Xiaoyin, *Xian Qin Han Wei Liuchao shige tishi yanjiu* 先秦漢魏六朝詩歌體式研究 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2012), 104-119. For a discussion of the relationship of disappearance of *xi* with the development of pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic poetry in the Han and Six Dynasties, see Wang Dehua 王德華, “Saoti ‘xi’ zi biaozheng zuoyong ji xiandu—Jianlun
would be the most significant aspect for Liu Xie. Besides, Liu Xie recognized \( xi \) as a caesura shared by both the \textit{Chuci} and the \textit{Odes}, without identifying the use of \( xi \) as unique of the former. The only difference, according to Liu Xie, is that one uses \( xi \) in the middle of a sentence and the other uses it outside (here Liu Xie appears to refer to the syntax of “Lisao” but not that of the “Jiuge” and the “Summons,” which also use \( xi \) in the middle). By contrast, though not denying the use of \( xi \) in the \textit{Odes}, Li Fang and Lü Zuqian viewed the caesura as a mark of \textit{sao}.

The significance attached to form in the \textit{Wenyuan yinghua} and \textit{Huangchao wenjian} is also manifested in a comparison with Zhu Xi’s \textit{Chuci houyu}. Zhu Xi’s criteria regarded form as secondary to content—e.g., subject matter and the author’s state of mind as reflected in the poem—and accordingly, seven poems selected in the book (fifty-two titles altogether) are with no/rare use of any caesura,\footnote{These seven titles are Xunzi’s “Chengxiang” 成相, Liu Bang’s “Honghu ge” 洪鴻歌, Tao Yuanming’s “Guiqulai ci” 咏去來辭, Han Yu’s “Biezhi fu” 別知賦 and “Diao Tianheng wen” 弔田横文, Liu Zongyuan’s “Qiqiao wen” 乞巧文, and Wang Anshi’s “Shu shanshi ci” 番山石辭.} as opposed to the two compilations that each selected only one such poem.

That said, form does not suffice to constitute the generic features for poems in the \textit{sao} category in \textit{Wenyuan yinghua} and \textit{Huangchao wenjian}. Content features such as grieving tone and upright intention that Zhu Xi identified as characteristic of Qu Yuan’s poems cannot be overlooked.

In particular, as a friend of Zhu Xi, Lü Zuqian was recorded to have consulted and followed Zhu Xi’s advice in selection. Three chapters out of five in the \textit{sao} category of \textit{Wenyuan yinghua} are devoted to poems lamenting or imitating Qu Yuan. Moreover, \textit{sao} as a genre overlaps but is not identical with the \textit{sao}-style, a prosodic pattern. Many verses in the two compilations, despite

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their use of \textit{xi} as caesura, are still categorized as \textit{fu} because of their eulogistic tone and panegyric nature.\footnote{For example, in the \textit{Huangchao wenjian}, Liu Jun’s \textit{Dapu fu} 大酺賦, Fan Zhongyan’s \textit{Fan Zhongyan’s Mingtang fu} 明堂賦, Zhang Lei’s 張耒 “Dali qingchenge fu” 大禮慶成賦, and many pieces use \textit{xi} considerably in the text but are collected under the \textit{fu} category. The “Taiping” 太平 in the “Huangya” 皇雅 is collected in the \textit{shi} category.} The prosodic pattern can be used in a wide range of situations, but a verse in the \textit{sao} genre has to follow the way Qu Yuan used the pattern for self-expression, remonstration, and lamentation. In this sense, \textit{sao} as a genre, as perceived in the Song, is closely associated with Qu Yuan.

Despite the recognition of \textit{sao} as a distinct genre, neither criteria identified above—form and content—nor the two in combination suffice to draw a clear boundary between the \textit{sao} verses and \textit{fu} (and \textit{shi}) in the two compilations. Instead, \textit{sao} remains a flexible genre in the Song.

To begin with, \textit{sao} as a genre hardly points to a normative style with the regular use of a caesura (usually \textit{xi}) in the Song. The \textit{sao} category in \textit{Wenyuan yinghua} and \textit{Huangchao wenjian} each collects a tetrasyllabic verse that uses no caesura and is otherwise indistinguishable from the form of many \textit{fu} and \textit{shi} poems. The two verses, Pi Rixiu’s 皮日休 (ca. 834-ca. 883) “Incantation to Extinguish Malaria” 祝瘧瘧文 and Liu Chang’s 刘敞 (1019-1068) “Prayer to Qu Yuan” 屈原嘏辞 are more likely collected due to their topic and function\footnote{\textit{Wenyuan yinghua} 355.1822; \textit{Huangchao wenjian} 30.6-7.}—the former is a literary representation of liturgy, similar to the “Summons,” and the latter takes Qu Yuan as its subject. Interestingly, however, in the \textit{Huangchao wenjian}, while the “Prayer to Qu Yuan” is recognized a \textit{sao}, Su Shi’s “Fu on Temple of Qu Yuan” 屈原廟賦, a verse both written in the prosodic pattern of “Lisao” and devoted to lamenting Qu Yuan is classified a \textit{fu}.\footnote{\textit{Huangchao wenjian} 5.13-16.} The decision to classify Su Shi’s work as \textit{fu} rather than \textit{sao} seems to be made, not on the basis of any stylistic or thematic standard, but merely due to the author’s own generic recognition, as the character \textit{fu}
appears in the verse’s title. In any event, sao is not a transparent and discrete category. Instead, it remains a dynamic textual family whose members are under constant adjustment to the present age such that definition and delineation of sao see no consensus.\(^{133}\)

The Song efforts in generic configuration of sao would inform the modern definitions and compilations of sao verses. The modern conception of sao as a highly formalized genre with the regular use of caesura xi in the middle or at the end of a line, however, was not yet stressed as an indispensable element in the Song. After all, not all poems in the Chuci anthology display such a feature. The significance of xi (and other caesurae) was recognized in the Song, yet as a sound-carrier and auxiliary word, xi was not always a requisite even for the Chuci poems. The Imperial Overview from the Taiping Reign 太平御覽 largely followed the Categorized Collection of Arts and Writings 藝文類聚 to omit the caesura in many of its Chuci quotations. As a result, a “Zhaohun” couplet becomes indistinguishable from a heptasyllabic line—

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\begin{align*}
\text{Zhaohun} & \quad \text{Taiping yulan} \\
\text{Deeply placid is the river, above which maple trees grow.} & \quad \text{Deeply placid is the river, above which maple trees grow.} \\
\text{湛湛江水兮，上有楓。} & \quad \text{湛湛江水上有楓，} \\
\text{The eye gazes as far as a thousand li, and the heart is broken in springtime.} & \quad \text{The eye gazes as far as a thousand li, and the heart is broken in springtime.} \\
\text{目極千里兮，傷春心。} & \quad \text{目極千里傷春心。}^{134}
\end{align*}
\]

The “new” heptasyllabic couplet in the prevalent shi form in the Tang may better serve students’ need in providing materials for composition. The caesura is omitted, but the text is still recognized as a “Zhaohun” couplet.

### Conclusion

\(^{133}\) For a list of scholarly definitions of sao as a genre, see Wu Yifeng 吳儀鳳, “Saoti fu, santi fu fenlei gainian Pingxi” 蠻體賦散體賦分類概念評析, Donghua renwen xuebao 7 (2003): 209-234.  
\(^{134}\) Taiping yulan 957.4382.
The boundary of *Chuci* as an anthology and a literary tradition and that of *sao* as a genre are socially determined and historically constructed. The task of delineating the boundary and essence of each has always remained one with which to serve contemporary interests and react to contemporary challenges. The Song recognition of *sao* as a genre marks an elevation of the Chuci, which now is independent from *fu* and *shi*. As a taxonomic set, the scope of *sao* is larger than that of the “Chuci” tradition and the *Chuci* anthology, in that *sao* is less attached to the Qu Yuan persona. Configured and reconfigured in the Song, the three—the anthology, tradition, and genre—form the literary heritage of *Chuci*. Vertically the heritage stretches from the Warring States to the contemporary period, and horizontally it includes various verse forms.

The Song reconfiguration of *Chuci* is marked by its regionalization of the anthology to the South. In the Song context, *Chuci* means not so much a Southern literary form as a Southern state of mind. It is an anxious state of mind alert to the threat from the north and calling for loyalty to the South. In the meantime, it is also a state of mind eager to prove and self-assure the cultural authority of the South. Song scholars’ celebration of *Chuci* and specific emphasis on its geographical affiliation are an intellectual response to the increasingly serious military threat from the North. The regionalization is a claim to the effect that the literary achievements and moral values represented by Chu verses are exclusive to the South. For a southern government, *Chuci* is their best speaker.
Conclusion

Qu Yuan’s tragedy was the tragedy of an individual, but it was also a tragedy of the state of Chu. On the one hand, Qu Yuan’s poems preserved the evils of the Chu kings Huai 懐 (r. 328-299 BCE) and Xiang 襄 (r. 298-263 BCE).¹ Their composition was considered as a sign that Chu was about to perish. On the other hand, it was believed that if Qu Yuan were not exiled and his advice were followed, the Chu would not have gone into decline and finally met its doom.² This hypothetical scenario, however, only remained an unattainable wish—the very composition of “Lisao” and other works was a reminder of Qu Yuan’s irretrievable banishment and the ensuing fall of Chu. Either way, Qu Yuan’s works were not merely a personal enterprise, but constituted the traumatic memories of Chu.

The Chu was a state of diverse cultures and varied topography, a land of richness and inspiration. It was a pitiful victim of the cruel Qin. It was also a doomed government that gave rise to “melodies that cause a state to perish.” It was a barbaric frontier teeming with miasma for the sojourners exiled to the south. It was a land with pretty mountains and rivers for those native to the southland. When talking about the “Nine Songs,” the Chu culture was always stressed for its obsession with “lewd rites,” whereas for those who had in mind Qu Yuan’s moral uprightness, the Chu culture came to be represented by an impassionate spirit of loyalty and patriotism. These disparate images of Chu gave rise to a multitude of Chuci exegesis.

¹ This view was proposed by Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721), who considered that “Kings Huai and Xiang did not conform to the kingly way, and their evils were preserved in the fu of Chu.” 懐襄不道，其惡存於楚賦. See Cheng Qianfan 程千帆, Shi tong jianji 史通箋記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 82.
² This conception is seen in, for example, Bai Juyi 白居易 “Du shi wushou” 鄧史五首 (Quan Tang shi 425.12b), Su Shi’s 蘇軾 “Zhuzhi ge” 竹枝歌 (Feng Yingliu 馮應榴, Su Shi shiji hezhu 蘇軾詩集合注 [Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001], 27-30), and Ye Shi’s 葉適 Xixue jiyan xumu 質學記言序目 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 286.
Notably, beyond the difference among literary representations of Chu, the primary referent of Chu also differs from situation to situation. When Lamenting Qu Yuan, Jia Yi was exiled in the state of Changsha (approximately modern Hunan), south to the Chu heartland. When Lu Yun was longing for Chu in his “Jiumin,” he was thinking about his ancestral home at the Wu Commandery (modern Suzhou in Jiangsu). When praising the glory of Chu and its people, Han Yuanji had in mind the land of richness in the southeast, i.e. the heartland of Southern Song and center of rapid economic growth and a thriving culture. These regions all (at least once) belonged to the territory of Chu, but none pointed to the Chu heartland (the heartland was in modern Hubei and north part of Hunan; after the capital was sacked by Qin in 278 BCE, the heartland moved northeast to modern Anhui). After its fall, Chu ceased to exist as a regime and survived in literary writings for its contemporary relevance.

By the end of Song, scholars perceived the Chuci as a product of local Chu culture and nature, a regional anthology illustrating a “Chu spirit.” When valorizing the Chuci as a legacy of the south, Zhu Xi was writing on the southland lamenting the sacked northern capital now at the hand of “barbarians.” This perspective was carried into the periods after the Song with variations. In the seventeenth century, when the Ming repeatedly retreated in defeat and was finally conquered by Manchus in the north, the loyal subjects of Ming again turned to Qu Yuan and Chuci to give expression to their resentment and frustration. Among these Ming subjects’ Chuci studies, the Chu-centered perspective of Lu Shiyong (ca.1585-ca.1639) was

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3 In his own words, “Chu was a land of richness in the southeast” 楚之地富於東南. See the discussion in Chapter Five. Fang Dongshu 方東樹 (1772-1851) had a very similar comment on the southeast’s relation with Chuci. See Fang Dongshu, Zhaomei zhanyan 昭昧詹言 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1961), 13.345.

4 Major Chuci studies by the Ming subjects in this context were Lu Shiyong’s 陸時雍 (ca.1585-ca.1639) Chuci shu 楚辭疏, Zhou Gongchen’s 周拱辰 (ca.1580-ca.1657) Lisao caomu shi 離騷草木史, Qian Chengzhi’s 錢澄之 (1612-1693) Qu gu 屈詠, and Wang Fuzhi’s 王夫之 (1619-1692) Chuci tongshi 楚辭通釋.
charged with a far more aggressive spirit of revenge than in Zhu Xi’s case.

The “Encountering Sorrow” was composed and loyalty and uprightness were made manifest. After the Chu was in chaos, its subjects and ruler deceived each other. [At the time,] however, petty men felt ashamed, while gentlemen exerted themselves. Those aspiring to benevolence and lofty ideals wrung their wrists out of grief and indignation. [Their efforts and feelings] could persist a thousand years, as if it was a single day. After the Ying clan of Qin took throne and the six states all perished, it was said that “even if there remained only three households in Chu, the one that destroys Qin would definitely be Chu.” The state had its remaining energy and its people had their remaining fieriness. The teachings of loyalty and uprightness had a rather far-reaching significance to encourage and impel generations of people [to strive themselves]. It was for this reason that the “Encountering Sorrow” preserved Chu.

《離騷》作而忠義明，楚國既撓，君臣相蒙，然小人愧，君子奮，仁人志士，感憤而扼腕者，即千載如一日焉。嬴秦剷帝，六國既靡，謂楚雖三戶，亡秦必楚。國有遺勁，人有餘烈，忠義之教，所砥世固甚遠矣。《離騷》存楚，是故也。5

In Lu Shiyong’s opinion, the “Lisao” was far more than a moral teaching. Instead, the text “preserved Chu” in that it preserved a spirit of loyalty and uprightness, with which to revenge the Qin. In this picture, the Chu was a state of one mind— with the retreat of petty men, all that remained active were gentlemen striving to fight against the Qin. Notably, this picture might fit the regime of Xiang Yu, but was wide apart from the image of Chu represented in the “Lisao,” where petty men wielded power in high positions and gentlemen remained in obscurity. In Lu Shiyong’s own time,6 the significance of Chu as a revenging state mattered not so much for the historical state of Chu as for the contemporary Ming. Lu implied that the Ming should follow the exemplary precedent of Chu to rectify court discipline and unite the country as one in the face of the invasion of Manchus. If Zhu Xi’s “Chu spirit” was a tragic and empathetic state of mind, Lu Shiyong’s “Chu spirit” had much higher a morale.

The eighteenth-century scholarship on Chuci was less impassionate about the symbolic

5 Lu Shiyong’s preface in his commentary to Chuci. See Wu Ping 吳平 and Hui Daqiang 回達強, Chuci wenxian jicheng 楚辭文獻集成, vol.6 (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2008), 4081.
6 Lu Shiyong’s Chuci commentary was possibly finished by 1628, judging from the preface by Tang Shiji 唐世濟. See Yang He 楊賀, “Tangshi jing zuozhe Lu Shiyong shengzunian xinkao” 《唐詩鏡》作者陸時雍生卒年新考, Nanyang shifan xueyuan xuebao 1 (2012): 70. The date for Lu Shiyong’s preface, however, is not certain.
meaning of Chu but was no less Chu-centered. The *kaozheng* (evidential research) scholars valorized the “Chu-ness” proposed by Huang Bosi’s four criteria—Chu language, Chu tone, Chu places, and Chu objects—as the guiding exegetical principle. Their research, however, was not conducted in an emotional tone as in the case of Zhou Gongchen’s 周拱辰 (ca.1580-ca.1657) study that treated the Chu plants and animals in *Chuci* as reincarnations of Qu Yuan’s tears and blood. Instead, the *kaozheng* scholars employed an empirical approach that emphasized (sometimes *forced*) the locality of *Chuci* poems. Map-making was an example. Using the anthology and the Qu Yuan biography as sources, this practice aimed at a graphic representation of Qu Yuan’s route of exile and poetry-writing, claiming that poem A was written while Qu Yuan was traveling from point B to C at time D. As a result, the maps anchored Qu Yuan’s poems to a vast range of local places in Chu. These places came to bear the weight of Qu Yuan’s memories, gaining in cultural significance and historical depth. In the meantime, the mapping practice sometimes tended to force the identification of Chu places. For example, in his map for the “Huaisha” 懷沙, Jiang Ji 蔣驤 (fl. 1713-1727) argued against the previous interpretation of the title, “embracing sand” to drown oneself, and proposed to read *sha* 沙 as an abbreviation of Changsha 長沙. Accordingly, Jiang Ji identified Changsha as the place of origin for Qu Yuan’s last travel and last composition. The identification was implicitly driven by the belief that the *Chuci* “recorded Chu place names” 記楚地.

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7 In the preface of his *Lisao caomu shi*, Zhou Gongchen wrote that he turned to study the Chu objects in *Chuci* because he had no other ways to contribute to his country as a man in the wilderness 草莽. In this context, his claim that Chu objects were reincarnations of Qu Yuan’s blood and tears was to give expression to his own lament over the doomed land of Ming.

8 For example, Jiang Ji 蔣驤 (fl. 1713-1727) drew five maps to accompany his commentary of *Shandai ge zhu Chuci* 山帶關注楚辭.

9 Jiang Ji, *Shandai ge zhu Chuci* 山帶關注楚辭 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), 225.

10 “To record Chu place names” was a criterion proposed by Huang Bosi. See Chapter Five.

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Around the same time, another kaozheng scholar Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777) proposed an exegetical principle, “[one is to] speak of Chu when [residing] on the land Chu” 在楚言楚, in his endeavor to identify the places names and objects and to use his knowledge of Chu dialect to gloss Chuci poems.\(^{11}\) The principle was specifically proposed as a solution to the controversies in the past commentaries on a line in the “Lisao”: “In the past, the Three Kings were pure and perfect” 昔三后之純粹兮.\(^{12}\) This line in the “Lisao” may not yield any definite solution to the referents of “Three Kings.”\(^{13}\) Before Dai Zhen, Wang Yi and Zhu Xi each identified the “Three Kings” 三后 as a different set of ancient sage kings—Yu 禹, Tang 汤, and King Wen 文 vs. Shaohao 少昊, Zhuanxu 顓頊, and Gaoxin 高辛—whereas Wang Yuan 汪瑗 (d. ca. 1556) and Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692) both argued for Chu kings.\(^{14}\) Presuming that Qu Yuan must be referring to Chu names as a native of Chu, Dai Zhen decided to side with Wang Yuan and Wang Fuzhi, disregarding Zhu Xi’s reasoning that the “Three Kings” should be of the same group with Yao and Shun who appear immediately in the next stanza.\(^{15}\) According to Dai Zhen, there was no need for Qu Yuan to specify referents of the “Three Kings” because the Chu people would not mis-identify them. As such, Dai Zhen viewed the Chuci as esoteric knowledge circulated among the people of Chu. His exegetical principle betrays his conception that Chuci was fundamentally

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\(^{11}\) For a discussion of Dai Zhen’s Chuci scholarship conducted in the spirit of evidential research, see Liao Dongliang, *Lingjun yuying*, 186-194.

\(^{12}\) Dai Zhen, *Qu Yuan fu zhu* 屈原賦注 (Guangzhou: Guangya shuju, 1891), 1.3.

\(^{13}\) In You Guo’en’s words, “there is not enough evidence” 證據不足 to determine the referents. You, *Lisao zuanyi*, 52.

\(^{14}\) For a critical overview of all glosses of the “Three Kings,” see You Guo’en, *Lisao zuanyi*, 50-52. Wang Yuan was a Chuci commentator in the Ming. His *Chuci jijie* 楚辭集解 proposed many innovative and creative interpretations. For an introduction, see Xiong Liangzhi’s 熊良智 preface in Wang Yuan, *Chuci jijie* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2017). For a modern edition of Wang Fuzhi’s Chuci commentary, see Wang Fuzhi, *Chuci tongshi* 楚辭通釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1975).

\(^{15}\) The lines concerning Yao and Shun certainly do not conform to Dai Zhen’s principle, but he did not comment on the inconsistency.
a regional anthology of Chu lore, a Chu-centered perspective that gained in significance in the Song.

All these Ming and Qing scholars’ efforts to further discover and consolidate the “Chu-ness” of Chuci were at the background of the twentieth-century scholars’ claim for the Chuci as a uniquely southern anthology and source of innovation discussed in the Introduction. The writings of remnant subjects and evidential scholars may point to future research possibilities: Which “southland” did they have in mind and how was it depicted? What was the significance for the Chuci to be a southern literature in that context?

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In the dissertation, I discussed the shifting perspectives regarding the images of Chu and the corresponding hermeneutic perspectives of Chuci. Conception of the southernness of Chuci was never an innocent observation, but was, by and large, a claim for identity and power. Meanwhile, it was in the negotiation of identity and power among literati of different stances that various qualities—with regard to form or content—were recognized as “southern” and projected onto the anthology. The dissertation, therefore, leads to a rethinking of a familiar statement of classical Chinese literature, that the Chuci is the progenitor and representative of southern literature. The statement emerged in specific historical moments and should be historicized to uncover the cultural significance of “south” and “southern literature.” In so doing, this study demonstrates the ways in which different meanings of the southernness of Chuci were actualized in the act of reception to serve a contemporary purpose.

Lastly, the cultural significance of “south” and “southern literature” played a role in classicizing the Chuci in that the images of Chu provided a context for the anthology to be continuously reintroduced to successive generations of readers. The Chuci approximated a
timeless Classic by generating ongoing evaluations from poets and scholars in various “Chu situations” (e.g. in political crisis, in the face of military threat, and in exile and frustration, etc.) over time. Within the anthology, they found ideals for gentlemen, conundrums in the official career, and descriptions of good and bad governments—these were issues that concerned the elites regardless of time and space. In the meantime, the emphasis on Chuci’s southernness also acted against the text’s classicization. The Song conception that the Chuci was a local product of Chu culture and nature constrained the text within a certain time and space. Under this view, the Chuci lost its claim to transhistorical truth and became an embodiment of human experiences specifically in the south. That said, the south as a double-edged sword shows that it does matter. It matters for how the poems were interpreted and evaluated.
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