Impagination – Layout and Materiality of Writing and Publication

Interdisciplinary Approaches from East and West

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Chapter 3
Impagination, Reading, and Interpretation in Early Chinese Texts

Abstract: This chapter explores the forms of pagination that developed in the early Chinese tradition. It traces these developments from the fourth century BC (when the primary material used for textual production was bamboo) through the first several centuries of the common era (when paper became the primary material). It argues that the forms of pagination that emerged during this period were related to changing understandings of text, interpretation, commentary and the authorities of the author and the commentator.

Keywords: Early China, textual production, commentarial traditions

In his autobiography, FENG Youlan, the major twentieth century Chinese philosopher, mentions the incredible impact that HU Shih's writings had on his generation. Hu was one of the major figures during the May Fourth movement, focused on shifting China into a self-proclaimed "modern" way of thinking. Feng notes in particular the importance of Hu's *Outline History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy*, published in 1919:

> In China's feudal society, a philosopher's thought, whether or not there was anything new to it, was for the most part expressed in the form of commentaries on the classics, and the texts of the classics were featured in large characters at the top of the page. But in his book HU Shi's [HU Shih] words were the main text. They were printed in large characters going all the way to the top of the page, while his quotations of ancient authors were indented and in smaller characters. Obviously the writings of the feudal period gave emphasis to the ancients, but writings of the May Fourth period gave emphasis to the writer's own ideas. This was a spontaneous reflection of the revolutionary spirit of the May Fourth period.[1]

Hu, in a characteristically modernist format, was presenting his ideas as his own, and the pages of his text were organized accordingly. His own text was written in large characters, with references to ancient authors indented and in small characters. The contrast Feng is drawing here is with earlier writings in China – writings in which authors would present their ideas as merely a commentary to an ancient author who came before. In such cases, the ancient author's text would be in large

1 Feng, Youlan, *The Hall of Three Pines: An Account of My Life*, translated by Denis C. Mair (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), p. 224. My thanks to Bryan van Norden for pointing me to this passage.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110698756-004

characters, and the later writer's text would be in smaller characters – subordinated, in Feng's estimation, to the ancient figure before him.

But it is important to note that the ancient author was not really given full priority in earlier forms of pagination either. Indeed, a typical page of writings from a recognized great ancient writer would often include a brief phrase by the author, followed by an array of different commentarial readings of that phrase. The commentaries would be so extensive that often only one or two phrases of the ancient author would appear on a given page; the rest of the page would simply be commentaries. It is true, as Feng notes, that the ancient author's text would be in large characters, while the commentators' would be in smaller characters. But it is also true that one would only read the ancient author's text through the commentaries, and these, even if in smaller characters, dominated the page. Indeed, the figure deemed by the editor to be the main commentator would have characters smaller than the main author, but sub-commentaries to the main commentary would be in yet smaller characters. So one would read a phrase by the main author only through several layers of ranked commentaries and sub-commentaries.

In a typical example, the large characters on a page might be a line of a poem from the *Book of Poetry*, or a phrase from the *Book of Documents*. The rest of the page would be devoted to the commentaries and sub-commentaries. One would only read that line or phrase through the commentaries, and these dominate the page. To return to Feng's observation: it is not simply that the pagination's primary emphasis was reversed with Hu's text, with the modern author's words being given priority and the early author's being restricted to a block quotation. It is also the case that even the sentences of the early author would never, in earlier forms of pagination, be strung together. The commentaries and sub-commentaries, even though in smaller characters, would often go on for sentences; the primary author's text would rarely be longer than a few characters. One would usually have to turn at least one page to even get to the next line or phrase of the primary text. See, for example, Figure 3.1.

This paper will be devoted to explicating how this form of pagination came to be dominant in classical Chinese texts. I will utilize paleographic materials to discuss the development of this form of pagination, as well as the changing understandings of text and commentary that underlay them.

Authors and Texts

Let's begin with those early authors to whom, according to Feng, later commentators had to subordinate themselves. It is important to note that they themselves were, in a sense, commentators. The early literary tradition in China consisted of fragments of

焉豈必盡仁 詩云赫赫
師尹民具爾瞻甫刑曰一人有慶兆民賴之
大雅曰成王之孚下土之式
子
曰上好仁則下之爲仁爭先人故長民者章
志貞教尊仁以子愛百姓民致行己以説其
上矣 詩云有梏德
行四國順之 子曰王言
如絲其出如綸王言如綸其出如綍
928

Figure 3.1: Primary text and commentary for the *Record of the Rites* (*Liji zhushu* 禮記注疏, commentaries by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達).

earlier materials – stories, phrases, lines of poetry.[2] These fragments were not associated – or at least not associated consistently – with particular authors. There were instead a stock set of figures from the past – sages, rulers, ministers, heroes. The stock figures would be variously placed within the stories, and phrases would be variously attributed to the stock figures. The art of telling these stories, attributing these phrases, and quoting or alluding to poetic lines, was based precisely on the variations.

2 For discussions of the quoting lines of poetry in particular, see the excellent discussions by Martin Kern, "Methodological Reflections on the Analysis of Textual Variants and the Modes of Manuscript Production in Early China." *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 4 (2002): 143–81; Kern "Early Chinese Literature, Beginning through Western Han," in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature: Volume 1, To 1375*, edited by Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–115. On the circulation of stories, see the excellent discussions by Dirk Meyer, "'Shu' Traditions and Text Recomposition: A Re-evaluation of 'Jin teng' and 'Zhou Wuwang you ji,'" in *Origins of Chinese Political Philosophy*, edited by Martin Kern and Dirk Meyer, Leiden: Brill, 2017), 224–248; Meyer, "The Art of Narrative and the Rhetoric of Persuasion in the 'Jinteng' (Metal Bound Casket) from the Tsinghua Collection of Manuscripts," *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 68.4 (2014): 937–968; Sarah Allan, "On *Shu* 書 (Documents) and the origin of the *Shang shu* 尚書 (*Ancient Documents*) in light of recently discovered bamboo slip manuscripts," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (October 2012) 75.3: 547–557.

Since the stock phrases, figures, and lines were well known, the meaning was developed through attributing a statement to one figure as opposed to another, often in opposition to earlier, different attributions.[3] Meaning was further developed through juxtapositions of different fragments – story cycles juxtaposed with each other, lines of poetry quoted in surprising places.

The degree to which this was the case is clear by the figure who will later come to be seen as one of the greatest sages: Confucius. Confucius was portrayed as a master of working with these earlier materials. He would come to be seen as the figure who organized the poetic materials into the *Book of Poetry* and who organized a key series of stories into the *Book of Documents*. He was, in short, a commentator.

The explosion of paleographic materials during the past decades is providing us a glimpse of the way arguments were circulating, as well as the implications of the way Confucius would be portrayed. The recently discovered Tsinghua materials, for example, include stories of key figures related to the early Zhou – figures like King Cheng and the Duke of Zhou.[4] All are variations of stories that would later be assembled in the *Book of Documents*. The selection of a series of these variations into the *Book of Documents*, therefore, represents a decision by an editor to assemble certain variations, with certain emphases, instead of others. And, when reading it, the focus is accordingly less on the stories themselves and more on the editor who chose the particular variations and assembled them into a particular order.

So why is all of this going on?

The Origins of Practices

To help orient ourselves in the worlds under discussion here, and to introduce some of the terminology of the time, let us turn to an argument from another paleographic text from the fourth century BCE text, the *Xing zi ming chu*.[5] The text opens with a description of humans in the world:

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3 For an analysis of stories of innovation and the various figures – such as Huangdi and Chiyou – placed in different roles within the stories, see Puett, *Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 92–140. For an overview of this mode of writing, see Puett, "Text and Commentary: The Early Tradition," in *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature*, edited by Wiebke Denecke, Wai-Yee Li, and Xiaofei Tian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 112–122.

4 Qinghua daxue Chutu wenxian yanjiu yu baohu zhongxin 清華大学出土文献研究与保护中心, ed. Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian 清華大學藏戰國竹簡（壹）. (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju 2010).

5 The *Xing zi ming chu* is one of the texts from the Guodian 郭店tomb. The tomb itself dates to around 300 BCE, so the text presumably belongs to the late fourth century BCE. For a discussion of the Guodian find itself, see Hubei sheng Jingmen shi bowuguaan 湖北省荊門市博物館, "Jingmen Guodian yi hao chumu," 荊門郭店一號楚墓 Wenwu 文物 (1997) 7: 35–48. An enormous outpouring of scholarship has developed concerning the Guodian materials. The following are some of the

> In general, although humans possess nature (*xing*), their mind is without a fixed purpose. It depends on things and only then becomes active; it depends on pleasures and only then is moved; it depends on repeated study and only then becomes fixed.[6]

Without a fixed purpose, humans will simply be moved passively by the things they encounter. The word I translate here as "things" (*wu* 物) can include people, objects, and circumstances. Only through repeated study can humans obtain such a fixed purpose.

The nature of humans – and the basis for our being moved by things we encounter – is that we possess the *qi* of emotional qualities such as joy, anger, sorrow, and sadness. The things we encounter call forth these forms of *qi*:

> The *qi* of joy, anger, sorrow, and sadness are given by nature (*xing*). When it comes to their being manifested on the outside, it is because things have called them forth. Nature (*xing*) comes from the decree (*ming*), and the decree is handed down from Heaven.[7]

The ways that things with their different natures respond to each other constitute their disposition (*qing* 情). The movement that ensues from these responses is called the way (*dao* 道):

> The way (*dao*) begins in dispositions (*qing*) and dispositions are born from nature.[8]

The fact that humans have the *qi* of anger is part of their nature; the fact that such anger becomes manifested in particular circumstances is part of the disposition of humans.

The movements that emerge from such dispositions, however, are, as already made clear in the opening lines, rarely based on good responses. The goal, therefore, is to move from these inherent dispositional responses toward responding properly to situations. The text defines acting properly as propriety (*yi* 儀):

> At the beginning one is close to inherent dispositions, and at the end one is close to propriety.[9]

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most helpful: Guo Yi郭沂, *Guodian zhujian yu xian Qin xueshu sixiang* 郭店楚簡與先秦學術思想 (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chuban she, 2001); Dirk Meyer, "Texts, Textual Communities, and Meaning: The Genius Loci of the Warring States Chu Tomb Guodian One." *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* 63.4 (2009): 827–56; Edward Slingerland, "The Problem of Moral Spontaneity in the Guodian Corpus," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 7.3 (Fall 2008): 237–256; Attilio Andreini, "The Meaning of *Qing* in Texts from Guodian Tomb No. 1," in *Love, Hatred, and Other Passions: Questions and Themes on Emotions in Chinese Civilization*, edited by Paolo Santangelo and Donatella Guida (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 149–65; Scott Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian: A Study and Complete Translation, Vols. 1 and 2* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 2012).

6 *Xing zi ming chu*, strip 1, *Guodian chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1998), 179.

7 *Xing zi ming chu*, strips 2–3, *Guodian chumu zhujian*, 179.

8 *Xing zi ming chu*, strip 3, *Guodian chumu zhujian*, 179.

9 *Xing zi ming chu*, strip 3, *Guodian chumu zhujian*, 179.

This ability to move from spontaneous dispositional responsiveness to a proper form of response is, for the text, uniquely human:

> As for the Way's four techniques, only the human way can be way-ed [i.e., only the human way involves a fixed purpose]. As for the other three techniques, one is moved and that is all.[10]

The text then explains how this proper responsiveness can be attained. The focus is on the development of the practices that will allow a proper training to occur. These practices are the poems, the stories that would become the documents, the rites, and music:

> As for the poems, documents, rites, and music, their first expression was generated among humans. With the poems, there were activities and they put them into practice. With the documents there were activities and they spoke of them. With the rites and music, there were activities and they raised them.[11]

Each of these traditions emerged out of previous sets of activities. Particular activities occurred – particular responses to particular situations. These were then deemed significant, and were repeated. Some became lines of poetry that would be repeated; some became stories that would be re-told; some became actions and musical performances that would be raised up and re-performed. The result was the development of these four traditions.

And only then were the traditions organized by the sages (or possibly just "the sage," i.e., Confucius):

> The sages compared their categories and arranged them, analyzed their order and appended admonishments to them, embodied their propriety and put them in order, patterned their dispositions and both expressed and internalized them. As such, they were brought back for use in education. Education is the means by which one generates virtue within. The rites arise from the dispositions.[12]

The sages organized these four traditions into the Poems, Documents, Rites, and Music – into a curriculum that the latter-born can use to move from their inherent dispositional responsiveness to a proper response. The training achieved through these traditions refines the responses of the educated, allowing them to act with a fixed purpose.

The argument being developed here in the *Xing zi ming chu* is, of course, just one argument among many – one variation of these sets of terms, images, and juxtapositions from the time. But it is a telling one.

The claim is not that a set of sages undertook a set of exemplary actions that then became normative. The claim on the contrary is that a set of actions occurred

10 *Xing zi ming chu*, strips 14–15, *Guodian chumu zhujian*, 179.
11 *Xing zi ming chu*, strips 15–16, *Guodian chumu zhujian*, 179.
12 *Xing zi ming chu*, strips 16–18, *Guodian chumu zhujian*, 179.

in the past that later figures came to see as worth repeating. The initial set of actions may have been undertaken by exemplary figures, or they may have occurred out of a set of responses that, for whatever reason, later figures came to find valuable for repetition. The value, moreover, is that repeating these earlier statements and actions allowed the later practitioner to refine his responses to situations. The argument is not, in other words, that the lines of a poem are themselves exemplary; it is that later usage of them provides the practitioner a way to become trained.

The sages came still later. After these traditions had developed, the sages then organized them into a curriculum. The sages here are ex post facto, building upon the earlier utilizations of these activities.

In short, the value lies not in the original actions but in each successive utilization of them.

Textual Evidence

The *Xing zi ming chu* provides a way to understand the textual evidence mentioned above. The pedagogy underlying such textual production is aimed at training practitioners to sense situations well and respond effectively – moving, as the *Xing zi ming chu* puts it – from dispositional responses to proper responses. Ultimately, the goal is to be able to alter situations by the use of these earlier materials. One will quote a line of poetry not because the line itself is normative but because the line has certain associations that, when alluded to a certain situation, will bring out a particular response. Moreover, by quoting that line in a slightly counter-intuitive way, one will bring out a slightly different response that can alter the situation. Similarly, telling a story in a slightly different way from another way the story is told will bring out responses as well – responses that also can shift a situation if done effectively.

Much of this, of course, will be oral: practitioners being trained to sense situations and refer to lines of poetry or allude to versions of stories to alter that situation. But texts allow one to go further still. In texts, one can weave together these different versions, paired with various lines of poetry. And one can juxtapose different versions in different ways. This, of course, is what the *Xing zi ming chu* sees the sages as having done. They took this body of material, which had developed various associations through generations of successive usages, and organized it and juxtaposed it in particular ways.

As Tobias Zürn has argued, a good way to think of early literary culture in China is as an act of weaving.[13] Along with quoting lines of poetry in counter-intuitive ways and telling surprising variations of stories, one could also juxtapose these stories and

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13 Tobias Zürn, "Writing as Weaving: Intertextuality and the Huainanzi's Self-Fashioning as an Embodiment of the Way," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2016.

poems in surprising ways. A line from a love poem, for example, could be juxtaposed with a story cycle concerning a minister and a ruler to make a point about a certain dispositional response in a complex situation. Texts therefore consisted of endlessly weaving various earlier stories and phrases together in different ways.[14]

The fact that the medium of the time was bamboo helped to make this possible. With bamboo strips, it is easy to re-order the strips, juxtapose strands in new ways, and weave together materials in a new way.[15] For an example of bamboo strips from the Guodian tomb, see Figure 3.2.

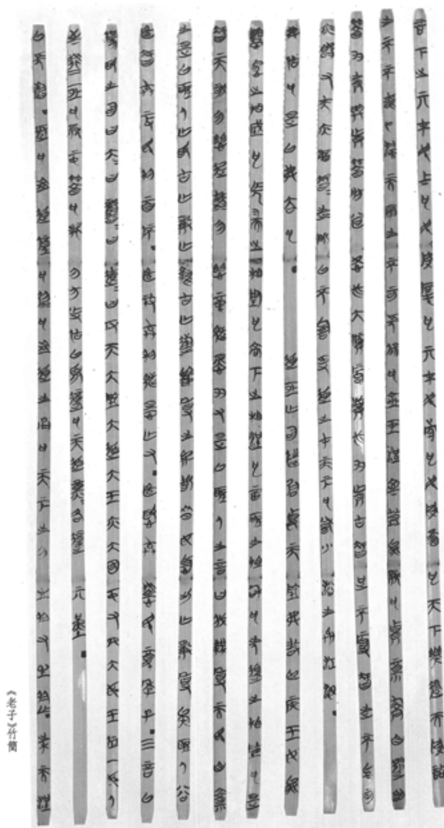

Figure 3.2: Bamboo slips from the *Laozi A* text from the Guodian tomb.

14 For an outstanding discussion of the development of the early Chinese textual tradition, see Heng Du, "The Author's Two Bodies: Paratext in Early Chinese Textual Culture," Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2018.

15 See Dirk Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo: Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

It is helpful therefore to think of the underlying elements of the early Chinese textual corpus as consisting of these stories, anecdotes, and poetic lines. The focus is then how to weave the elements together to make new arguments, how to contextualize the elements in different ways, how to interpret the elements differently through different juxtapositions and contextualizations.

Even the counter-examples to these practices help to make the point. The *Laozi* is a text that seems to reject all that we have mentioned so far. It does not refer to a single poem or story from the tradition, and it does not refer to a single stock figure. It is on the contrary written as a timeless piece of wisdom. And yet the *Laozi* itself comes to us in different forms and in different juxtapositions. The versions that appear in the Guodian tomb mentioned above have arranged the chapters in completely different orders than appear in our other extant versions. They are also set apart as three separate texts, and one of the texts is paired with the cosmogonic text *Taiyi sheng shui*. Even a text that rejects the traditions we have been discussing is placed within the same culture of re-working and re-weaving.

Texts and Commentaries

In this world of juxtapositions and re-workings, however, one still does not have commentaries in the sense that Feng was thinking. The pagination consists of single lines of graphs running down a bamboo slip; the focus is the interweaving of phrases and allusions within these lines, as well as how the strips are arranged. But commentaries of the form that Feng was concerned with appear in the next stage of the development of the early Chinese textual corpus. The traditions we have been discussing were organized during the Western Han dynasty into the Five Classics: the *Book of Poetry* and the *Book of Documents*, as well as the *Record of the Rites*, the *Book of Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The *Xing zi ming chu* referred to the sages or sage organizing the Poetry, Documents, Rites, and Music. By the end of the Western Han, however, the editor was clearly defined: Confucius was explicitly designated as the editor and compiler of the classics. Although this certainly created an authoritative version of the materials in question, it hardly ended the larger pedagogical practice. On the contrary, the focus simply shifted to offering differing and often counter-intuitive interpretations and contextualizations of the texts ordered by Confucius. And much of the work of these counter-intuitive interpretations fell to commentators.

The commentators were not able to do what was so common in Warring States textual culture: quoting lines in counter-intuitive ways and weaving these with different versions of stories. On the contrary, they were committed to working with the poetry and stories as organized by Confucius. But the goal of re-working the material continued. The move thus shifted to one of providing differing and counter-intuitive readings of the material through the act of commenting upon it.

A clear example of this can be seen in the different commentaries on the *Book of Poetry*. The lines are set within full poems, which are in turn organized in a defined order. But the different commentators would ascribe the poems as having been written in different contexts. A particular love poem, for example, would be ascribed to a particular period in the Western Zhou dynasty and involve the relations of a king and a minister. It is not that the commentator could not see that the love poem was a love poem: as before, the concern is not with the actual meaning of the original poem but rather with a successful re-utilization of it. In the case at hand, the emotions ascribed to the lovers in a poem are re-interpreted into the context of the fraught relations between ruler and minister. The counter-intuitive juxtaposition thus occurs not in the re-weaving of different materials but rather in the surprising interpretation and contextualization offered to the materials already organized.

Just as any re-organization and surprising juxtaposition in the Warring States period would inevitably inspire a different organization and juxtaposition, so would each commentator's interpretation inspire a different one as well. Hence the growth of radically different commentaries and commentarial strategies over the subsequent several centuries.[16]

This radical growth in turn spawned the desire to re-organize the commentaries, just as the earlier juxtapositions had spawned the desire to organize the classics themselves. One of the most significant such attempts was reached in the early Tang dynasty, with the imperially sponsored publication of the "The Correct Meaning of the Five Classics" (*Wujing zhengyi* 五經正義).[17] Organized by KONG Yingda (574–648), the goal was to sort through the enormous body of commentaries to the five classics that had grown up over the previous several centuries and to organize them properly into primary commentaries and sub-commentaries, with the commentaries deemed improper to be left out.

For an example of this, let us turn to Figure 3.3, which consists of two pages from the "Correct Meaning of the Mao Songs" (*Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義) – i.e., the *Book of Songs*, as interpreted through the Mao commentary and subsequent sub-commentaries

16 John B. Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991); Rudolf G. Wagner, *The Craft of a Chinese Commentator: Wang Bi on the Laozi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000). Cai Zong-qi, *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity, and Rhetoric in Wenxin diaolong* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Cai Zong-qi, *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties* (Hawaii: University of Honolulu, 2004); Ming Dong Gu, *Chinese Theories of Reading And Writing: A Route to Hermeneutics And Open Poetics* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006); Puett, "Sages, Gods, and History: Commentarial Strategies in Chinese Late Antiquity," Antiquorum Philosophia 3 (2009): 71–87; Puett, "Manifesting Sagely Knowledge: Commentarial Practice in Chinese Late Antiquity," in *The Rhetoric of Hiddenness in Traditional Chinese Culture*, edited by Paula M. Varsano (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 303–331.

17 For an excellent background to the project, see David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

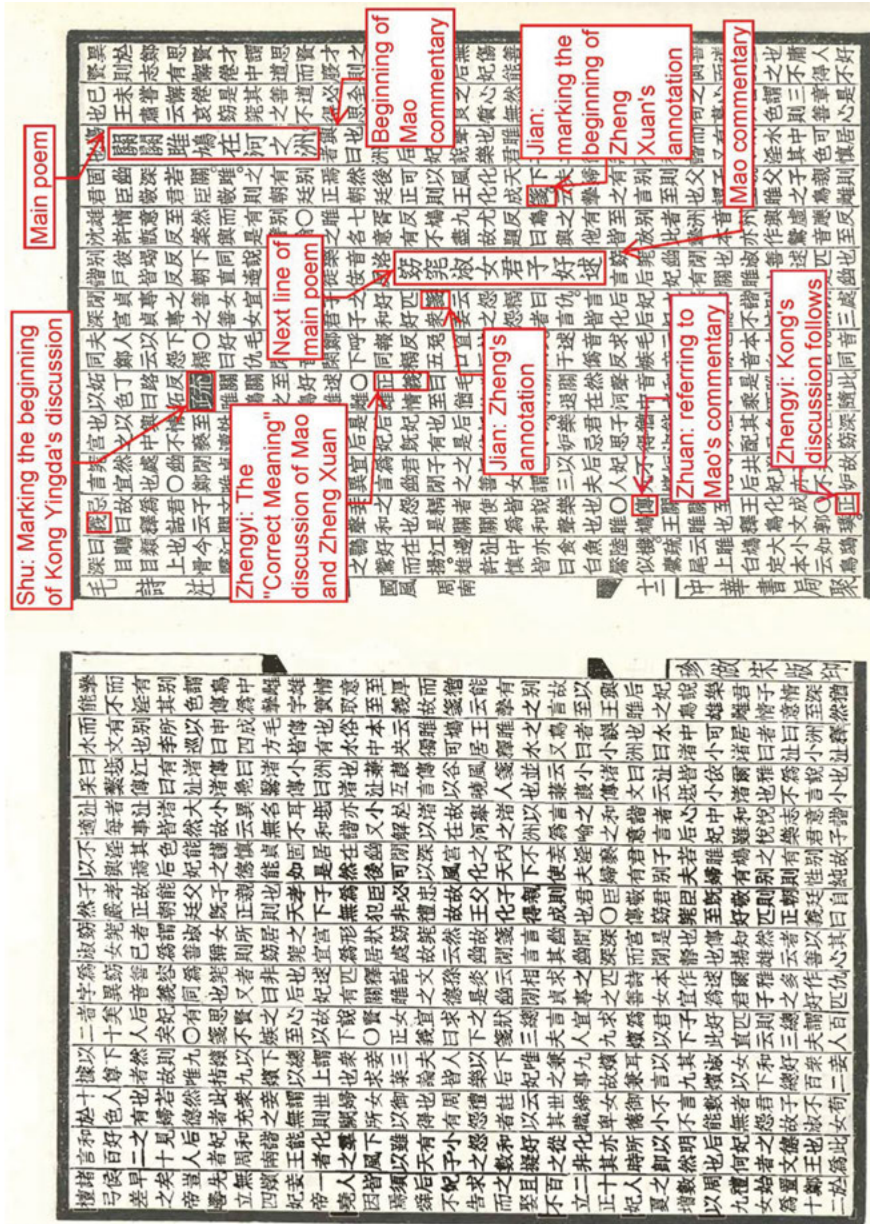

Figure 3.3: Two pages from the *Correct Meaning of the Mao Songs* (*Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義).

to the Mao commentary, and organized by Kong and the other editors of the Tang "Correct Meaning" movement. The two pages deal with the opening of the first poem in the *Book of Songs*: the "Fishhawk" or "Guan ju" 關雎. Since Confucius was credited with having edited and arranged the *Book of Songs*, the first poem was deemed extremely important in the commentarial tradition.

The poem would appear to deal with the longing of a prince for a maiden, as well as the subsequent courtship. The twentieth century English translator Arthur Waley (1889–1966), who rejected the commentarial traditions and sought to recover an "original" sense of the song as a love poem, translated it as follows:

"Fair, fair," cry the ospreys
On the island in the river.
Lovely is this noble lady,
Fit bride for our lord.

In patches grows the water mallow:
To left and right one must seek it.
Shy was this noble lady;
Day and night he sought her.

Sought her and could not get her;
Day and night he grieved.
Long thoughts, oh, long unhappy thoughts,
Now on his back, now tossing on to his side.

In patches grow the water mallow;
To left and right one must gather it.
Shy is this noble lady;
With great zither and little we hearten her.

In patches grow the water mallow;
To left and right one must choose it.
Shy is this noble lady;
With bells and drums we will gladden her.[18]

The Mao commentary on the contrary reads the text as a poem of praise for the consort of King Wen, who received the mandate to begin the Zhou dynasty in the eleventh century BCE.[19] In Figure 3.3, the large characters that occur in the third column are the

18 Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs; translated from the Chinese* (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1937), 5–6.

19 For an excellent discussion of these and other commentarial readings of the "Guan ju" poem, see Pauline R. Yu, "Allegory, Allegoresis, and The Classic of Poetry," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43.2 (Dec., 1983): 377–412. For an analysis of interpretations of the poem prior to the Mao commentary, see Jeffrey Riegel, "Eros, Introversion, and the Beginnings of Shijing Commentary," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.1 (1997): 143–177.

first lines of the poem: "*Guan*, *guan* cry the fishhawks, at the island of the river" 關關雎鳩在河之洲. The small characters immediately underneath the large characters are the Mao commentary. The commentary reads the "*guan*" as referring to the ospreys calling to each other, as they are properly separated. It then goes on to say that the consort of the king is likewise properly separated from the king, and that this separation maintains the order of the court and thus allows the king's transforming influence to be completed. This is immediately followed by the annotations (*jian* 箋) of ZHENG Xuan (127–200) to the Mao commentary. Three columns later, we move to the next line of the poem in large characters (translated as the Mao commentary reads them): "The secluded and modest lady, a good mate for the lord" 窈窕淑女君子好逑. We then again turn to the Mao commentary in smaller characters, followed by the Zheng Xuan annotations. This in turn is followed by Kong Yingda's explanations (*shu* 疏), marked in a large character three columns later. Zheng Xuan reads the lady as referring not to King Wen's consort but rather to the ladies of the court. Kong Yingda then discusses these and other differences for the remainder of the page, as well as the entire next page. (The reader can note the various layers easily enough: *zhuan* 傳 refers to the Mao commentary, *jian* 箋 refers to Zheng Xuan's annotations, and *zhengyi* 正義 refers to the "correct meaning" that should be arrived at after considering the various interpretations.) This second page in Figure 3.3 thus consists *entirely* of commentary. Only on the following page does one move on the next line of the poem.

Impagination

Let us return to the statements by Feng. Feng was concerned that the earlier pagination represented a subordination of the later thinkers to the earlier ones. But to some extent this misses the point of the earlier pagination. The focus in the earlier pagination was precisely on the interpretations – often counter-intuitive – of the earlier phrases. The commentaries were later and lesser than the organizer (Confucius), but they were also the only source of access to the earlier material. As we have seen, it was common for a page to consist almost entirely of commentaries, with at most one or two lines of the earlier phrase or poetic line appearing. Indeed, pages would frequently consist entirely of commentaries – one might have to turn several pages to get to the next line of primary text. So when did this change?

In the twelfth century, ZHU Xi attempted perhaps the most radical re-thinking of the commentarial approach in Chinese history.[20] Unlike the earlier forms of

20 Peter K. Bol, *"This Culture of Ours": Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1994); Daniel K. Gardner, *Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsueh: Neo-Confucian Reflection on the Confucian Canon* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 1986).

commentaries, which in essence required that the text be read through the differing interpretations of the layers of commentators, Zhu hoped on the contrary for the reader to read the primary texts themselves, rejecting the enormous body of interpretive commentary that had grown up since then. This, of course, required Zhu to write commentaries himself, but the nature of commentary changed dramatically in his hands. For Zhu, a love poem from the *Book of Poetry* should simply be read as a love poem, instead of being read through the lens of endless replacements of the poem into different historical contexts and different historical speakers, with the attendant re-interpretations that such re-placements entailed. Such a desire for the reader to have direct, unmediated access to the texts themselves also required Zhu to rewrite the texts, since they were not initially organized to be read in this way, outside of the re-interpretations that animated them.

Although Zhu was still writing commentaries, this began the shift toward the mode of reading and impagination to which Feng was referring. Feng was moved by Hu's direct statement of his own ideas, appealing directly to a reader, instead of writing in the form of a commentary to earlier authors. But the same mode of reading that Feng was envisaging was the mode of reading Zhu was advocating as well: a reader who would have direct, unmediated access to a text, and who would accordingly be moved by it directly. The impagination that so inspired Feng finds its equivalent in the modern editions of a love poem from the *Book of Poetry*, that will print the poem as a poem, in full and with no commentaries, translated in a way that makes it easily understandable to a modern reader. Any editorial notes that might be included are restricted to basic information that may be necessary for the reader to be able to read the poem directly. These notes are intentionally relegated to the background – in footnotes, endnotes, or, in Chinese, side notes. The focus is on a poem that can be read by the reader directly, with no mediation.

Conclusion

The twentieth century, which saw the emergence of the form of pagination that so excited Feng, as well as the pagination of earlier texts, written directly, with no commentarial mediation, witnessed as well the emergence of a wide array of hermeneutic theories. Interestingly, however, so many of these hermeneutic theories, despite their radical diversity, took as a starting point the idea of a reader reading a text in front of him. Such a notion of reading, with its attendant ideal of a reader being moved directly and sincerely by the text in front of him has a history. In Europe, it is a mode of reading very much associated with Renaissance humanism and, later, Protestantism, and in China it is associated with Zhu and the emergence

of Neo-Confucianism.[21] The author speaks directly to the reader, and the reader is moved directly by the text.

The types of pages we see earlier in Chinese history, based as they are upon endless commentaries and sub-commentaries, emerge out of a very different mode of reading and interpreting. The paleographic evidence we are finding from early China give us a sense of the development of this mode of reading – a mode in which the underlying elements of the corpus consisted of a set of stories, anecdotes, and poetic lines that were endlessly altered and juxtaposed to make new arguments. Out of this later emerged the commentarial tradition, which continued much of the same work, but now focused on contextualizing the elements in different ways, interpreting the elements differently through these contextualizations.

From the point of view of claims to direct access – from a Zhu to a Feng, such commentaries are nothing but a mediation between reader and writer – mediations that, for a Zhu, obscure the true teachings of the great sages whose ideas the reader should be able to access directly, and for a Feng force a writer to disguise his ideas as simply explanations to a great sage of the past. For more recent readers of the *Book of Poetry*, such commentaries represent an embarrassing inability to simply read a straightforward love poem as a love poem.

But all such readings miss the goals and strategies that underlay reading, writing, and interpreting in the Chinese tradition before the twelfth century. The pagination that one sees in these texts, with a few large characters followed by pages of commentaries and sub-commentaries, is a telling reflection of a mode of interpretation that has long been obscured by the focus on sincerity and unmediated access in more recent times.

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21 See, for example, the excellent discussion by Christopher Celenza in his *Petrarch: Everywhere a Wanderer* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017). My thanks to the volume editors for pointing this volume out to me.

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