

CHAPTER 1

The Intellectual World of Early Sichuan



The region occupied by present-day Sichuan Province in southwest China has long been viewed with a certain degree of ambivalence by traditional Chinese historians, with most writing from the perspective of the north. Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92 CE) "Geographic Treatise" in his *Han shu* 漢書 [*Han History*] presents the earliest synoptic view of the region. Drawing descriptions from the canon, he writes:

Previously, the Yellow Thearch (Huangdi 黃帝) made boats and carriages, but because of the rushing waters [people] could not pass. So he set out in all directions throughout the subcelestial realm, organizing the myriad districts, drawing boundaries and separating provinces, resulting in one-hundred *li* states and myriad districts. This is what the *Changes* refers to as "The Former King established the myriad states and gave them to his kinsmen to be their various sovereigns."¹ The *Documents* says, "He harmonized the myriad states."² This refers to [the Yellow Thearch's actions]. Yao 堯 encountered a great flood which encircled mountains and drove against the cliffs. The subcelestial realm was cut off and divided into twelve provinces. [Yao] sent Yu 禹 to control [the flood]. The waters and the earth were leveled and he organized nine provinces and arranged five domains, piled earth and made a sacrifice. Thus it is said, "Yu disposed the lands. Going along the mountains, he cut down the trees. He determined the high mountains and great rivers."³

Here, Ban Gu offers a Genesis-like account of the origins of Chinese administrative geography, crediting the legendary sage-kings of high antiquity with the division of the subcelestial realm (*tianxia* 天下; literally, "all under heaven") into districts, domains, and provinces. Among the administrative territories said to have been organized by the sage-king Yao was Liang 梁 Province, located south of Mount Hua (Hua shan 華山) in the upper reaches of the Yangzi River basin.⁴ Physically cut off from the Chinese heartland of the Yellow River basin by mountain ranges and rivers, the region developed

early civilizations distant from those of the Central Plains, and, even after coming under the control of later northern polities, maintained a high level of independent regional identity.

The heart of ancient Liang Province consists of the Chengdu Plain, a high-elevation basin ringed by rugged mountains and well watered by numerous rivers. This simple fact of geography plays an important part in the history of the region, isolating it from the traditional centers of imperial power and providing would-be rebels with a secure base. From the vantage point of the Central Plains looking to the southwest, one must traverse the Qinling 秦嶺 mountains in southern Shaanxi, cross the Han River 漢水 valley, then pass through the narrow Jian'ge 劍閣 (“Sword-gallery”) Pass in the Daba 大巴 mountains further to the south to enter into the flat and fertile Chengdu Plain. This plain is bounded by the Daxue 大雪 mountain range to the west, and several lesser parallel ranges running north of the Yangzi River basin from southwest to northeast, and finally the larger Dalei 大隗 mountains south of the Yangzi. A multitude of waterways flow into the basin from the north and west, most conjoining with the Yangzi. The Yangzi runs eastward, passing through a series of tight gorges as it leaves the basin at Mount Wu (Wu shan 巫山) and enters the moist lands of the former state of Chu 楚 (present-day Hubei Province). The climate in the basin is mild and the area enjoys a long growing season.

The produce of the Chengdu Plain is frequently noted in the early sources. The *Shang shu* 尚書 [*Hallowed Documents*] describes the region's soil as “bluish black” and of third (or lowest) class quality, and notes its revenues also of the third (or lowest) class. Continuing, the *Documents* enumerates tribute items conveyed to King Yu's capital in the Central Plains by the region's “felt-wearing” (i.e., non-Sinicized or barbarian) inhabitants as “gold, iron, silver, steel, arrow-head stones, musical stones, black bears, brown and white bears, foxes and wild cats.”⁵ This account survives as the earliest description of the Chengdu Plain, with its general characterization of the region as having an abundance of natural resources. By the third century CE, the region's agricultural bounty led to its designation as “Heaven's Storehouse” (*tianfu zhi guo* 天府之國), a Chinese “land of milk and honey.”⁶ Later, Chang Qu's 常璩 (ca. 291–ca. 361 CE) *Huayang guo zhi* 華陽國志 [*Records of the States South of Mount Hua*] provided detailed descriptions of each commandery and district within the region, including their agricultural products and output, climate, and dispositions of the local population. From these gazetteer entries, the impression of a rich and bountiful land emerged,⁷ yet, despite this favorable characterization, an equally negative view of the region as “uncivilized” remained in force for centuries to come.⁸

Though the Chengdu Plain played an important role in the political affairs of the early empire,⁹ it was largely viewed as a provincial backwater by scholars and officials from the north. Ban Gu's assessment of the region in his “Geographic Treatise” is particularly harsh. It reads:

Ba 巴, Shu, and Guanghan 廣漢 commanderies were originally [populated by] the Southern Yi 南夷 [barbarian tribes]. After [these areas] were annexed by Qin, they were made commanderies. The land is fertile and beautiful, possessing rivers to water the wilds and a bounty of mountain forests, bamboo and trees, vegetables, and edible fruit. To the south they purchase young slaves of Dian 滇 and Bo 爨; to the west it is near the horses and yaks of Qiong 邛 and Zuo 苴. The people eat rice and fish, and have no worry about famine years. Since the common folk do not suffer hardships, they are easy-going and profligate, weak and mean.¹⁰

The land's bountiful resources, according to Ban Gu, led to character flaws among its people, who while not specifically identified as local minority groups, are portrayed as uncivilized. While Ban Gu's prejudices against the south may be somewhat extreme, the fact remains that despite over three hundred years of Central Plains (Qin and Han) influence in the area, many outsiders were still unconvinced that the region was an equally cultured part of the empire.

“CIVILIZING” THE SOUTHWEST: INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY IN THE FORMER HAN

Ban Gu's characterization of the early Chengdu Plain as intellectually backward serves as the backdrop for a tale of remarkable change in the intellectual climate of the region. The *Han History* biography of Wen Weng 文翁 (fl. c. 140 BCE) contained in the section devoted to the lives and actions of virtuous officials portrays the Central Plains native as a precocious young man sent to govern the backwater Shu commandery during the early years of the Han,¹¹ and lauds the transformation he effected on the area and its people.¹² Ban Gu describes Wen Weng as “kind and caring, and fond of transformation through learning,” and “desiring to guide and advance” the backward population of his new domain. To this end, the tradition holds, Wen Weng selected ten or so talented low-level officers from the commandery and prefecture and sent them to the Han capital at Chang'an to receive training from the erudits at the national academy. The benevolence of this action is further emphasized by Ban Gu's assertion that Wen Weng personally purchased bolts of Shu brocade and book knives—each regarded as the finest in the empire—to cover the cost of educating these young men at the capital.¹³ When their training was complete, the Shu scholars returned home where Wen Weng employed them in local offices. Additionally, Wen Weng established an academy in Chengdu for the purpose of training functionaries for positions at the commandery and prefecture levels. The more talented students at the academy were placed in local offices, while the less talented were granted honorary posts. Because of the status attached to studying at the academy, and perhaps also due to the waiver on corvée labor service granted to students, local families fought to place their sons in the Chengdu academy, often sending large sums of cash to

beseech Wen Weng. Ban Gu's narrative offers the following positive evaluation of the results of these activities:

From this great transformation, scholars from Shu at the [Han] capital were compared to those of Qi 齊 and Lu 魯.¹⁴ During the time of Emperor Wu 武 (r. 140–86 BCE), an edict ordered all of the commanderies and states under heaven to establish academies. This was begun by Wen Weng. . . . To the present day, the people of Ba and Shu are fond of cultural refinement. This is a result of Wen Weng's transformation.¹⁵

In his "Geographic Treatise," however, Ban Gu's assessment of Wen Weng's results is rather different. Here Ban Gu writes, "[Wen Weng] taught the people how to recite texts, laws, and ordinances, but they were not yet able to believe truly in morality and used their fondness for writing to satirize and ridicule, though they honored and admired power and authority."¹⁶ The net result of their education, Ban Gu argues, was cosmetic: the people of Shu had taken on the external trappings of scholarship, but had failed to internalize the moral teachings of their education. This particular judgment on the enterprise of Wen Weng sustains Ban's portrayal of the southwest as "uncivilized," while the glowing review found among the biographies of virtuous officials supports Wen Weng's inclusion among the ranks of Central Plains worthies.

The biography of Wen Weng contained in the *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* makes few claims as positive or negative as Ban Gu's accounts of Wen's life. Nevertheless, it does offer a few additional details on the career of this outsider who made his mark on the Chengdu Plain. Chang Qu notes Wen Weng's accomplishments in the area of water conservancy—the construction of a new irrigation channel that opened up some 25,000 new acres of farmland for cultivation. The account of Wen's activities in local scholarship echoes that of Ban Gu, noting Wen's sponsorship of students to Chang'an, along with the additional information that, on their return, some were given posts as teachers at the Chengdu academy.¹⁷ The *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* also provides a brief history of Wen's academy through the Later Han period, noting specific buildings on the campus, its destruction and renovation, administrative history, and location.¹⁸

While certain basic elements of the tradition of Wen Weng are undoubtedly factual, the life of this young commandery administrator has clearly been embellished, transforming Wen into a culture hero, or, more literally, the bearer of Central Plains culture to the backward southwest.¹⁹ The attributions of Wen's benevolent motives, the elevation of the region's scholarship from non-existent to rivaling the established seats of classical learning, and the subsequent devotion of the people of the area to their intellectual messiah are all tropes that further drive the tradition.

It is relatively easy, however, to debunk portions of the Wen Weng mythology. Recently, scholars have argued against several aspects of the tradition,

including the belief that the famous Han writer Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 BCE) was among those sent by Wen Weng to Chang'an for training,²⁰ the claim that Wen's academy led to an imperial edict ordering all commanderies and states to establish similar schools,²¹ and the tradition that Wen Weng himself had illustrations of Confucius and his disciples placed on the walls of the academy.²² By stripping away these layers of embellishment from the basic narrative, we are left with a simple tale of an administrator who established a mechanism for training local men to meet his needs in the commandery bureaucracy. Yet, it is the glow of the tradition of Wen Weng that continues to form the basis of the intellectual history of the Chengdu Plain.²³

Even disregarding the claims that Wen Weng single-handedly transformed the Chengdu Plain from an intellectual backwater to a thriving center for classical studies, the region did produce several notable figures during the Former (or Western) Han period. From the activities of the region's most noted scholars we can see a microcosm of intellectual trends during the period, as well as observe the development of distinct regional academic styles. Among these intellectual trends were the composition of encyclopedic yet didactic rhapsodies (*fu* 賦), divination, and syncretic interpretations of canonical texts—both orthodox and otherwise.

During the Former Han, several Chengdu Plain intellectuals received imperial recognition, often for their literary accomplishments, but this recognition rarely came with any substantial rank or office. The earliest of these Chengdu intellectuals to appear on the national stage, Sima Xiangru, established himself first on the basis of his literary talents, and later was given charge over a military-diplomatic affair in the region.²⁴ Sima Xiangru was a native of Chengdu, and as a youth was said to have been fond of both reading and swordplay. Because of the high status of his family, he was appointed as a gentleman²⁵ under Emperor Jing 景 of Han (r. 156–141 BCE), and later made martial regular mounted attendant.²⁶ This post, however, was not to Sima's liking. Sima Qian's account attributes Sima Xiangru's dissatisfaction with his post to the fact that Emperor Jing was not fond of rhapsodies. While serving at the court of Emperor Jing, the Filial King of Liang (Liang Xiao wang 梁孝王) Liu Wu 劉武 visited the capital. Among his entourage were several noted rhapsodes and scholars. Claiming illness, Sima Xiangru resigned his post at the imperial court and attached himself to the court of Liu Wu where he quickly gained favor for his skills in composing rhapsodies. Upon Liu Wu's death in 144 BCE, Sima Xiangru returned to Shu where, though unemployed, he enjoyed the generous treatment bestowed on him by the local elites anxious to make the acquaintance of a local who had served at the imperial court. It was during this time that Sima Xiangru became involved with the young widowed daughter of the powerful Zhuo 卓 clan.²⁷ Later, when one of his rhapsodies was brought to the attention of Emperor Wu, Sima Xiangru was recalled to the imperial court where his literary skills again earned him the low-ranking post of gentleman.²⁸ During the reign of Emperor Wu, Sima Xiangru was also appointed general

gentleman of the palace²⁹ and sent to lead troops into the western fringes of Yi Province as part of the Han effort to expand imperial control to the lands beyond the Chengdu Plain. In addition to leading military campaigns in the region, Sima Xiangru was later called upon by the court to negotiate an end to the costly marches in Yi Province. By appeasing the local elites and ensuring their cooperation in the peacemaking mission, Sima Xiangru contributed to the pacification of the southwest.³⁰ His mere presence at court earned Sima Xiangru the adulation of the regional elites, including the father-in-law who had previously disowned his daughter over her marriage to Sima, and allowed him to live a luxurious life in retirement.³¹

Sima Xiangru's summons to the imperial court on the basis of his literary abilities may have contributed to the inspiration of other Chengdu Plain intellectuals to compose rhapsodies.³² But the case of Sima Xiangru's being recognized by the imperial court for his literary abilities without reaching high office reflects the hierarchy of intellectuals of the age, with rhapsodes being regarded as lowly jesters or entertainers.³³ Moreover, his experiences underscore Ban Gu's negative assessment of the intellectual scene on the Chengdu Plain during the Former Han: "[Wen Weng] taught the people how to recite texts, laws, and ordinances, but they were not yet able to believe truly in morality, and used their fondness for writing to satirize and ridicule, though they honored and admired power and authority."³⁴

Near the end of the Former Han period, the intellectual trends on the Chengdu Plain shifted from the composition of rhapsodies toward a new type of syncretic classical scholarship, argued by some to have laid the foundation for the later Mystery Learning movement. Moreover, while the recognition of Sima Xiangru's literary abilities by the imperial court served to solidify his reputation as one of the most esteemed intellectuals of Former Han Sichuan, others established their fame closer to home.

Zhuang Zun 莊遵, appellative Junping 君平 (ca. late first century BCE), was a Chengdu native and regarded as a scholar of broad learning.³⁵ According to the *Han History*, Zhuang supported himself as a fortune-teller in the Chengdu market, and after earning enough money to meet his daily needs, he closed shop and taught the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* to his students. Zhuang Zun assessed his career as follows:

Divining fortunes is my vocation, but it can also help people. When it is a matter of things evil or incorrect, then I say what would be profitable or harmful according to the tortoise or milfoil. I advise sons according to filiality, younger brothers according to deference, and subjects according to loyalty. According to their individual circumstances, I lead them toward good, and over half do as I say.³⁶

Thus, the reclusive Zhuang was able to be a positive influence while avoiding the dangers of public political activity, repeatedly refusing to accept office at various levels of government.

Zhuang Zun's intellectual interests lie primarily in the mystic texts of the early Chinese tradition, particularly the *Changes*, the *Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi*. The *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* goes so far as to describe Zhuang as "a master of Daoist texts."³⁷ Despite his characterization as a "Daoist," Zhuang Zun appears to have possessed a phenomenal breadth of knowledge. Ban Gu notes, "He was broadly read and there was nothing he did not completely understand."³⁸ A late-second-century Chengdu Plain scholar, Li Quan 李權 (d. ca. 188–93 CE),³⁹ compared Zhuang to Confucius, saying: "Confucius and Junping gathered a multitude of books and thereby completed the *Spring and Autumn* and *Gist of the Veritable Classic of the Way and Its Potency*. Thus, as it is the merging of the rivers that makes the sea great, it is vast knowledge that makes the gentleman great."⁴⁰ A few additional details on Zhuang Zun's life and scholarship can be found in comments made by Zhuang's most noted pupil, Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), who in a letter to Liu Xin 劉歆 (53 BCE–23 CE) discussed his master's love for exegesis, mastery of various historical texts, and linguistic expertise.⁴¹

Zhuang Zun's wide-ranging interests and expertise appear to have been passed on to his student Yang Xiong, who was, without question, the most impressive intellectual to emerge from the Chengdu Plain during the Former Han. In Yang's works we can see the synthesis and expansion of the region's earlier intellectual traditions. According to the *Han History*, Yang was a native of Chengdu whose ancestors were related to the Zhou ruling house and had gradually moved up the Yangzi until reaching Mount Min (Min shan 岷山) northwest of Chengdu.⁴² As a youth, Yang studied in Chengdu with Zhuang Zun, and later remained in Chengdu, away from the spotlight of national politics until his middle years, when his rhapsodies came to the attention of Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 33–7 BCE). Yang, as a youth, had admired the literary stylings of Sima Xiangru and made conscious efforts to imitate them. Though he later rejected the genre for its didactic failures, Yang Xiong is still regarded as one of the leading practitioners of the rhapsody in Chinese literary history.⁴³

Yang Xiong's interests and talents, however, went well beyond a single literary genre. In fact, Yang's enduring fame is based in no small measure on the breadth of his knowledge in a variety of fields. Ban Gu notes that Yang "was broadly read and there was nothing that he had not seen."⁴⁴ This breadth is manifest in a statement in the *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* that reads:

Because of the classics, none was greater than the *Changes*, [Yang Xiong] composed *Xuan* 玄 [Mystery]; of the teachings, none was greater than the *Analects*, so he composed *Fayan* 法言 [Model Sayings];⁴⁵ of the histories, none was better than *Cangjie* 蒼頡 [Treasury of Explanations], so he compiled *Xunzuan* 訓纂 [Explanations on the Fascicles]; of the admonishments, none was more beautiful than *Yu zhen* 虞箴 [Admonitions of Yu], so he

composed *Zhouzhen* 州箴 [*Admonitions on the Provinces*]; of the rhapsodies, none was greater than “*Lisao*” 離騷 [“Encountering Sorrow”], so he refuted and expanded on Qu Yuan; of the canonical texts, none was as correct as *Erya* 爾雅 [*Approaching the Refined*], so he compiled *Fangyan* 方言 [*Regional Sayings*].⁴⁶

In the realm of classical studies and philosophy, Yang Xiong’s *Taixuan* 太玄 [*Supreme Mystery*] (often abbreviated as *Xuan* [Mystery]), stands as a complement to its model, the *Changes*, and as an expression of late Former Han syncretic thought.⁴⁷ The text “embodied in sensuous language and tightly articulated structure an ideal scheme of cyclic change in the realms of heaven, earth, and man.”⁴⁸ As Nylan and Sivin point out, the source of the “sensuous language” and mystical images in the *Mystery* was generally the *Laozi*, while the canon of Confucianism provided Yang with cosmic and moral wisdom to accompany the images.⁴⁹ Thus, Yang combined the orthodoxy of the canon with the mystical images and language from the philosophy of Daoism and created a systemic text by which to support and explicate the *Changes*.⁵⁰

The influence of Yang Xiong’s *Mystery* and its syncretic classicism cannot be overstated. Later scholars such as Huan Tan 桓譚 (ca. 43 BCE–28 CE), Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139 CE), Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166 CE), and Song Zhong 宋衷 (second–third century CE) each expanded on Yang’s holistic interpretation of the canon and early mystic texts.⁵¹ In particular, Song Zhong’s academy at Jingzhou 荊州 trained a significant number of late Han and Three States period intellectuals in methods broader than the narrow classical orthodoxy of the day.⁵² These thinkers, in turn, established *Mystery Learning* as the hallmark intellectual trend of early medieval China.

Thus, in addition to his talents in composing rhapsodies, Yang Xiong established himself as one of the great polymaths of the Former Han. In his works, one can see the fulfillment of the earlier intellectual traditions of the southwest: rhapsodies, classical studies, and mystical Daoist philosophy—all with a slightly syncretic bent.

It was on this basis that Ban Gu was led to conclude his overview of intellectual life in the Former Han Chengdu Plain with the following judgment:

When Sima Xiangru made his foray into officialdom among the lords of the capital and became renowned to the age for his exquisite literary language, his fellow townsmen longed to follow in his footsteps. Later, there were the likes of Wang Bao, Yan Zun, and Yang Xiong, whose writings were the best in the subcelestial realm. This was from Wen Weng’s guiding their instruction and [Sima] Xiangru’s serving as a model.⁵³

Moving from the Former Han to the Later Han, these Chengdu Plain intellectual traditions were largely retained, and as we will see below, developed a distinctly regional flavor.

OBSERVING THE STARS:
INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY IN THE LATER HAN

While literary ability opened doors to minor political office at the Former Han imperial court for several Sichuan intellectuals, new general intellectual and political trends led to changes in the intellectual traditions across the empire, including the southwest. Two interrelated trends merit mention: changing views of canonical studies and the rise of political prophesy.

Recent scholarship has greatly challenged long-standing views of the intellectual milieu of the Han. The traditional impressions of Han scholarship, propagated by literature on classical studies compiled by eminent nineteenth- and twentieth-century Chinese scholars, offer a portrait of an intellectual world formed around master–student lineages transmitting individual canonical texts. Academic debates during the Han, these traditional views hold, were centered around the authenticity of two sets of canonical texts, the so-called Old Texts (*guwen* 古文) and New Texts (*jinwen* 今文).⁵⁴ Re-examinations of the evidence, however, cast considerable doubts on these venerable views. First, the notion of “schools of thought” (*jia* 家) appears to be a later construction—established in Fan Ye’s *Later Han History*, compiled in the fourth century.⁵⁵ Furthermore, evidence shows that while both Old and New texts existed during the Han, academic discourse centered around proper interpretation of the canon and official patronage rather than textual authenticity.⁵⁶ What was ultimately important to the state, which had established an imperial academy in 124 BCE, was the ability of classicists to provide “adornment to the rigors of the law with literary discourse.”⁵⁷ In other words, utility of scholarship appears to have been more important than orthodoxy in the Han.

Another intellectual trend of the later Han period exemplified this notion of scholarship in the service of the state: the rise of prophetic-apocryphal (*chenwei* 讖緯) texts and the political prophesy associated with these writings.⁵⁸ Though technically two separate forms of discourse, *chen*—literally “subtle words”—and *wei* (“weft” texts) came to be viewed as a single type of political object, one that through the interpretation of various coded communications lent or denied legitimacy to early medieval dynastic enterprises.⁵⁹ The ability to interpret Heaven’s signs as manifest in the prophetic-apocryphal texts and in other forms such as celestial observations was regarded as esoteric and secret, and the transmission of this knowledge and skill was common but regulated within tight master–student lineages. Moreover, the political implications of the mantic and prophetic arts were not lost on rulers or challengers to the throne. Individuals possessing the ability to read the will of Heaven were regularly summoned to court—invitations that were received with mixed degrees of enthusiasm. On the other hand, at least nine official bans on prophetic-apocryphal learning were issued from the third through seventh centuries.⁶⁰ The regular appointment of mantic

artists and the prohibition of their works indicates the ambivalence of early medieval rulers who possessed both a need for and fear of the products of this intellectual activity.

The intersection of canonical studies and mantic arts played a significant role in the lives of intellectuals from Later Han Sichuan. With the establishment of the imperial academy and orthodox interpretative traditions of canonical texts in the early Han, demonstrating intellectual genealogies became critical in ensuring fame for the master and legitimacy for the student. Additionally, the state bestowed positions on members of authorized intellectual lineages, accompanied by positive reputations and financial benefits.⁶¹ This situation is reflected in the treatment of intellectuals in the biographies contained in histories compiled during the late Han and throughout the early medieval period. In the cases of intellectuals from the Chengdu Plain, the *Records of the Three States*, *Records of the States South of Mount Hua*, and the *Later Han History* present individuals as members of scholarly lineages, noting the lineage founder and enumerating his disciples and their official successes. The case of the most prominent intellectual lineage of the Chengdu Plain illustrates both the range of scholarly activity, as well as the direct line of teachings inherited by Qiao Zhou.

The Yang 楊 clan of Guanghan 廣漢 commandery⁶² and their disciples traced their intellectual roots to studies in the canon, but their reputation was based largely on their ability to predict political events on the basis of celestial observations and other forms of prophesy.⁶³ Biographical information from various historical texts enables the construction of an intellectual family tree spanning ten generations with thirty-six named scholars and mention of thousands of anonymous students (see Figure 1.1). Although the lineage began with what appear to be teachings transmitted solely within the Yang clan, outside teachers and students were soon introduced. Moreover, the teachings of this lineage quickly expanded beyond a single canonical text, eventually including materials far outside the bounds of orthodox scholarship. In keeping with the intellectual trend toward politically practical scholarship, the teachings of the Yang lineage centered on the prediction of political events, and, as such, members of the lineage regularly attracted the attention of powerful political figures.

Surviving information on the earliest members of the lineage illustrates this expansion of intellectual activity from canonical to esoteric, and from familial to communal. The purported founder of the intellectual lineage, Yang Zhongxu 仲續, was a native of Hedong 河東 commandery⁶⁴ and a specialist in the *Xiahou Tradition* on the *Hallowed Documents*.⁶⁵ He became fascinated with the customs and people of Yi Province and, as a result, moved his family to the town of Xindu 新都 in Guanghan commandery where he “cultivated canonical studies” and transmitted the *Xiahou Tradition* on the *Documents*.⁶⁶ Significantly, no further mention of this interpretative tradition of a canonical text is found in the accounts of the lives of subsequent members of

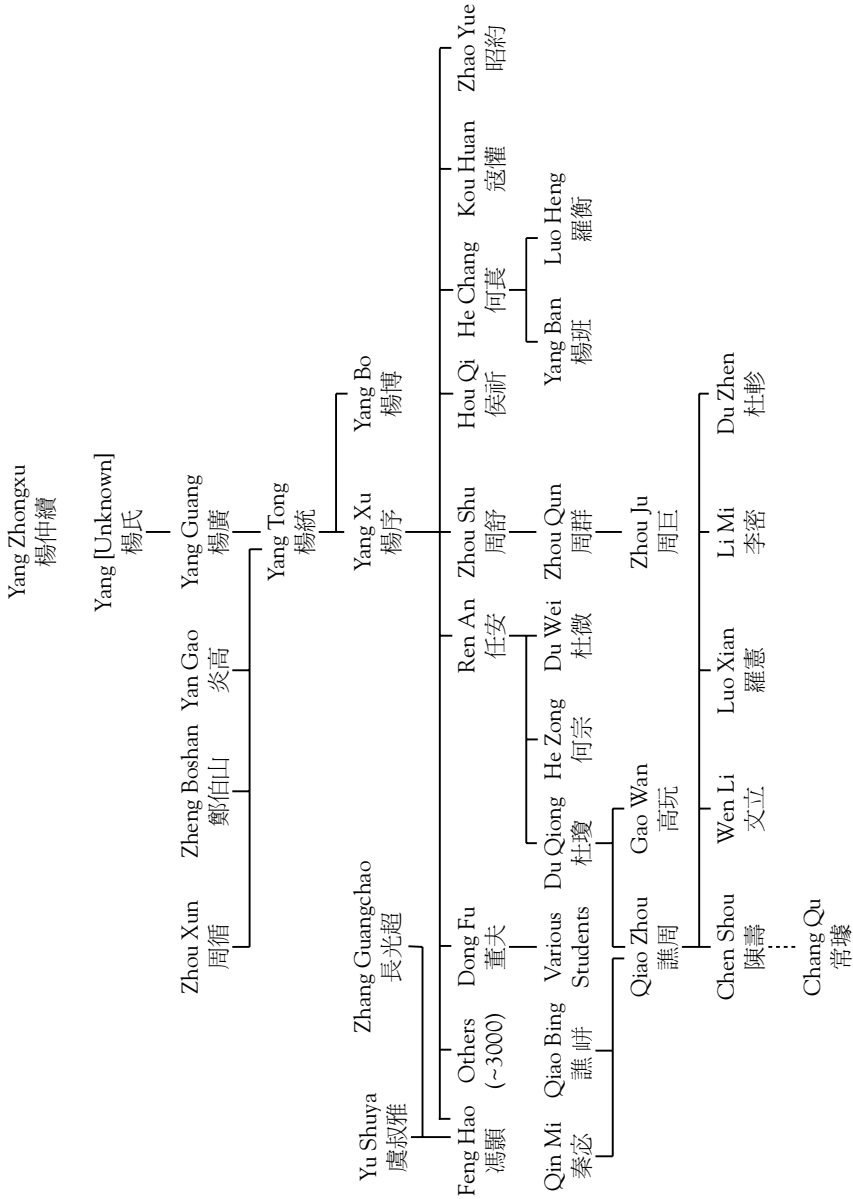


Figure 1.1 Intellectual Lineage of the Yang Family of Guanghan Commandery

this scholarly lineage. Rather, the content of the intellectual tradition turns toward the esoteric. For example, Yang Zhongxu's grandson, Yang Guang 廣, appellative Chunqing 春卿, was noted for his skills in charts and prophetic learning (*tuchen xue* 圖讖學). As a result, Yang Guang was pressed into the service of Gongsun Shu's 公孫述 (d. 36 CE)⁶⁷ regime in Chengdu, and when Han forces pacified the region, Yang Guang summoned his son Yang Tong 統 and gave him charge over the family's teachings, saying, "Inside my coarse bookbag are secret records passed down by our ancestors. They are of use to the House of Han. [I would that] you study them."⁶⁸ Yang Guang then killed himself. Yang Tong, reportedly moved by his father's dying admonition, and after observing the proper period of mourning, left his family to study with three local masters: Zhou Xun 周循 of Qianwei 犍為 commandery, Zheng Boshan 鄭伯山, and Yan Gao 炎高, also known as the Master of Hua District (Huali xiansheng 華里先生).⁶⁹ The *Later Han History* claims that Yang Tong studied the "methods of the ancestors" (*xianfa* 先法) with Zhou Xun and the *He tu* 河圖 [River Charts] and *Luo shu* 洛書 [Luo Documents]⁷⁰ with Zheng Boshan, while the *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* notes Yan Gao's admonition to Yang Tong to master the [esoteric] charts and documents in order to serve the Han imperial family.⁷¹ Though not explicitly stated in the history, we may presume that the materials passed to Yang Tong by his father and the curriculum studied with Zhou Xun, Zheng Boshan, and Yan Gao were all related to political prophesy and prognostication.⁷²

The resumé of Yang Tong's political activity supports this assumption. Yang was appointed to office during the Yongping 永平 period (58–76 CE), during which time he compiled two volumes of commentary and explanations on the Yang family teachings and submitted them to the throne.⁷³ The practical application of the Yang intellectual traditions can be seen in an anecdote recorded in the *Later Han History*. It notes that during the Jianchu 建初 period (76–84 CE), the province experienced a serious drought. Yang Tong, serving as prefect of Pengcheng 彭城 district, was said to have divined the heavens and dispelled *yin* and *yang*, causing rain to fall on his district. When word of his feat reached the commandery administrator, Yang was summoned to relieve the drought in the commandery as well. The history testifies, "Thereupon, the rains fell."⁷⁴ Later, Yang Tong was frequently consulted regarding omens, portents, natural anomalies, and so on, presumably in his various official posts at the imperial court.⁷⁵

Yang Tong's vocation was continued by his younger son Yang Xu 楊序⁷⁶—knowledge that also led to political appointments. An anecdote in the *Later Han History* illustrates Yang Xu's mastery of the arts of divination at an early age. In Yongchu 3 (110 CE), Venus passed through the stars of the Dipper and the Han capital at Luoyang was inundated by floodwaters. Yang Tong was serving as a palace attendant at that time and was summoned by the court for consultation on these anomalies. Claiming that his eyes and ears were not clear due to age, Yang Tong recommended his son Yang Xu as one able

to explain the portents. Hearing this, the Empress Dowager Deng 鄧太后 sent an attendant to question the younger Yang on the matter. Yang Xu explained, "Many of the princes are in the capital. Their appearance [there] is not normal. They should immediately leave and return to their own states." The empress dowager heeded Yang Xu's counsel and the planet disappeared from the Dipper and the waters at the capital receded as predicted. As a result, Yang Xu was appointed as palace attendant.⁷⁷ He was later summoned by the empress dowager to speak on charts and prophesies, but claiming a lack of skill in this area, retired to Qianwei. While living in retirement, he was repeatedly summoned by local and imperial officials to take up office, but all these summons were refused.

During the time of Emperor Shun 順 (r. 126–145 CE), Yang Xu again became somewhat active in court matters. In 128 CE, Yang traveled as far as Chang'an, but, because of illness, was unable to report to the court at Luoyang, though he submitted a memorial prophesying of numerous natural disasters and political problems. The *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* neatly summarizes these matters as follows:

He submitted a memorial saying the western regions including Jing, Yang, and Jiao provinces would have military uprisings, the people would suffer from pestilence, Luoyang would have a great flood, the palace would burn, the [heads of the] bureaus would be dismissed, and close kinsmen would plot treason. All of these came to pass.⁷⁸

The *Later Han History* adds, "Each time there was a calamity or anomaly, Yang Xu immediately submitted a method for dispelling [the trouble] and saving [them from the disaster]. But the eunuchs had taken over the government and his words were not trusted."⁷⁹ When the general-in-chief Liang Ji 梁冀 (d. 159 CE)⁸⁰ seized power as regent for the Emperors Chong 沖 (r. 145–146 CE), Zhi 質 (r. 146–147 CE), and Huan 桓 (r. 147–168 CE), Yang Xu resigned his post at the capital and returned to Yi Province. Here, Yang Xu was said to have cultivated the "arts of the Yellow Thearch and Laozi" and taught over three thousand students.⁸¹ During these later years, Yang Xu ignored repeated summons from Empress Dowager Liang 梁太后, the sister of Liang Ji. Upon his death at the age of eighty-two, he was given the posthumous title of Father of Patterns (Wenfu 文父)⁸² by Emperor Huan, and his students erected a shrine and offered biannual sacrifices.⁸³

In many respects, Yang Xu exemplifies the early Yang family intellectual tradition. He was instructed in the esoteric family teachings by his father and he employed his knowledge in the service of the Han, as per the instructions of his late grandfather. Yang Xu's ability to interpret the political meanings of omens and portents led to political appointments, but perhaps recognizing the danger that such knowledge also carried, he often chose to remain aloof from matters at the capital. The later years of his life were spent transmitting his family's teachings to others.

The students of Yang Xu were said to have numbered over three thousand, but of these masses, only the names of several have survived. The *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* notes:

His disciples Zhao Yue 昭約, [appellative] Jiezai 節宰 of Luo 雒 [prefecture]; Kou Huan 寇權, [appellative] Wenyi 文儀 of Mianzhu; He Chang 何萇, [appellative] Youzheng 幼正 of Shu; Hou Qi 侯祈, [appellative] Shengbo 升伯; Zhou Shu, [appellative] Shubo of Ba; and Ren An 任安 and Dong Fu 董扶 were all summoned and recommended for office, and their reputations spread throughout their generation.⁸⁴

The final three names on this list, Zhou Shu, Ren An, and Dong Fu, were widely regarded as the most brilliant of Yang Xu's pupils, and each occupied important positions as heads of major branches of the Yang family intellectual lineage.

The branch headed by Zhou Shu 周舒 of Langzhong 閬中 in Baxi commandery, though shorter than those headed by Ren An and Dong Fu, played a significant role in the political affairs of the Chengdu Plain during the late Han and Three States period. Little is known of Zhou Shu's life other than a brief introduction in the *Records of the Three States* biography of his son, Zhou Qun 群,⁸⁵ which confirms Zhou's study with Yang Xu and places Zhou with Dong Fu and Ren An as the most regarded of Yang's students. An ardent recluse, Zhou Shu was frequently appointed to official posts, but rejected all of these summons. His reputation stems from his interpretation of a famous prophecy from the *Chunqiu chen* 春秋讖 [*Prophesies of the Spring and Autumn*]⁸⁶ that said, "That which succeeds Han is lofty and faces the path" (*dai Han zhe, dang tu gao* 代漢者當塗高). Zhou Shu explained this riddle as meaning that Wei would follow the Han—an interpretation of the prophecy that was widely disseminated and accepted.⁸⁷

The lives of Yang Xu's two most revered students, Dong Fu and Ren An, are closely linked, and their influence on later generations of Sichuan scholars perpetuated the Yang family traditions through the chaos surrounding the fall of the Han and the establishment of the state of Shu-Han in Chengdu during the early third century. Both men were natives of Mianzhu prefecture in Guanghan commandery and each was repeatedly recommended by the local bureau of merit, resulting in their traveling to Luoyang where they studied the canon at the imperial academy. As per the tendency toward broad learning, both Dong Fu and Ren An were said to have studied several canonical texts, but each specialized in one interpretative tradition: Dong Fu mastered the Ouyang tradition on the *Hallowed Documents* and Ren An was trained in the Meng tradition on the *Changes*.⁸⁸ The biographies of Dong Fu and Ren An also mention their study of "charts and prophecies" from Yang Xu in Guanghan, and that these traditions were passed on to their own students.⁸⁹ As a result of their training, both orthodox and esoteric, Dong Fu and Ren An were highly sought after by both local and imperial-level political powers.

Both men repeatedly shunned these appointments to office, each expressing a preference for remaining in Guanghan and teaching private students.

Dong Fu, however, appears to have been enticed to become an active participant in the imperial bureaucracy at some point. Moreover, his training in the mantic arts resulted in his resignation of the post and a significant shift in the power structure in the province. According to the *Later Han History*, while serving as a palace attendant under Emperor Ling 靈 (r. 168–190 CE), Dong Fu perceived the coming fall of the Han dynasty and reported his prophesy to the then-grand master of ceremony Liu Yan 劉焉 (d. 194 CE), saying, “The capital will soon be in disorder. In the astral sectors corresponding to Yi Province, there is the pneuma (*qi* 氣) of a Son of Heaven.”⁹⁰ Liu Yan believed Dong Fu’s prophesy and immediately requested a transfer to serve as shepherd of Yi Province, secretly hoping to make good on the prediction himself. Dong Fu likewise requested a transfer out of the capital and back to the Chengdu Plain. The transfer requests were granted and both men headed to the southwest. When Emperor Ling died the following year (190 CE), Dong Fu resigned his post in Chengdu and retired for good, devoting his energies to teaching an unknown number of students. He died in Guanghan at the age of eighty-two. The *Later Han History* concludes its biography of Dong Fu with a statement asserting the validity of Dong Fu’s famous prophesy, stating, “Later, Liu Bei claimed the title of Son of Heaven in Shu, just as [Dong] Fu had said.”⁹¹

The biographical materials on Ren An, while scant on details, illustrate the scholar’s reluctance to participate in political matters and testify to his intellectual reputation. The *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* notes that Ren An refused to report to any of the various political appointments offered by the local and imperial governments, even rejecting official carriages sent to fetch him to office.⁹² Despite eschewing an official career, Ren An nevertheless established a reputation as a virtuous scholar. There are no extant records of his teachings and we have only the praises passed down by admirers to testify to Ren’s accomplishments. Ren was regarded by many as the finest of Yang Xu’s disciples and principal heir to Yang Xu’s traditions. According to Fan Ye, the people of Ren’s time said of him, “If you want to know [Yang Xu] Zhongheng, then ask Ren An.”⁹³ Perhaps the greatest compliment to Ren’s abilities is recorded in his biography in Huangfu Mi’s 皇甫謐 (215–282 CE) *Gao shi zhuan* 高士傳 [*Biographies of High-Minded Gentlemen*] that proclaimed him as “Confucius Ren” (Ren Kongzi 任孔子).⁹⁴ Though lacking details about Ren An’s intellectual activity, the sources note that his reputation led to “students overflowing from his gate.”⁹⁵

The intellectual lineage founded by the Yang clan of Guanghan embodied the world of the mind in late Han Sichuan, as well as played significant roles in the political history of the region. In intellectual terms, the lineage developed from a family enterprise with a curriculum of a canonical text as well as a body of esoteric teachings, to one dominated by the skills of prophesy

based on celestial observation by a larger community of intellectuals bound by a common knowledge of the relationship between the cosmos and the political world. Although some traditional and modern scholars have sought to emphasize the lineage's links to a Former Han model of canonical scholarship (i.e., one canonical text transmitted by one master to a student or students),⁹⁶ the Yang tradition demonstrates the late Han trend toward broad learning. In the biographies of members of the Yang lineage, we see individuals seeking multiple teachers for the transmission of various categories of knowledge (i.e., charts [*tu* 圖], prophecies [*chen* 讖], celestial patterns [*tianwen* 天文], secret records [*miji* 秘記], methods of the ancestors [*xianfa* 先法], and arts [*shu* 術]). In this regard, the Yang family tradition is consistent with Later Han intellectual trends. But the heart of the tradition, the ability to observe the heavens and interpret these meanings on the basis of secret teachings, though not unique to Sichuan, formed the core of this regional tradition to the significant exclusion of more orthodox classical studies.⁹⁷

In political terms, the activities of members of the Yang intellectual lineage were closely related to the growing belief in and reliance on prophecies during the Han. These scholars were regularly called on by the state to interpret natural anomalies, and they ably and accurately interpreted the signs and offered solutions to the crises. This fact illustrates the practical nature of the Yang scholarly tradition, as well as the demand by the state for individuals possessing such skills. However, these skills also posed risks to those holding them, resulting in a number of these scholars choosing lives of reclusion and political detachment. The reclusive tendencies seen in some scholars trained in the Yang tradition also reflect the rise of the rhetoric of reclusion in the late Han and period of disunion that followed.⁹⁸ This search for seclusion from the turbid world led several of the Yang lineage scholars to the texts and practices of the Way of the Yellow Thearch and Laozi, noted in their biographies by the shorthand "Huang-Lao" 黃老.⁹⁹ Yet for many of these Chengdu Plain intellectuals, we find evidence of their observation of and commentary on the political world and its link to their world of the mind of the late Han. The traditions of these gentlemen continued into the Three States period.

A THREE STATES "FOREST OF CLASSICISTS": INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY IN SHU-HAN

In the face of a long-standing popular perception of Shu-Han as a state lacking in scholarship, Chen Shou offers a divergent view of scholarly activity on the Chengdu Plain during the third century. The forty-second fascicle of his *Records of the Three States*, though not explicitly labeled as such, appears to be modeled on the *The Grand Scribe's Records* and *Han History's* "Biographies of the Forest of Classicists" (*rulin zhuan* 儒林傳)¹⁰⁰ fascicles in its presentation of Shu-Han scholars, with notation of both intellectual activity and political involvement. Chen Shou presents dedicated biographies of ten intellectuals,

plus brief notes on several lesser figures, organizing the chapter around three groups of interrelated figures. These subgroupings of biographies within the chapter serve to illustrate several important themes of Chen's account of Shu-Han intellectual life: the continuation of the Yang family intellectual traditions, the tensions between local and outside intellectual traditions, and the relationship between scholars and the state. Notably missing are accounts of Zhuge Liang and Qin Mi, popularly believed to have been Shu-Han's most brilliant (or, in some views, only) scholars, whose political activities are treated elsewhere in the *Records of the Three States*.¹⁰¹

Chen Shou's "Forest of Classicists" fascicle opens with the lives of three latter-day members of the Yang intellectual lineage and their activities under the state of Shu-Han. These three biographies illustrate the continuation of the Yang traditions of celestial observation, prophesy, and political ambivalence into the Shu-Han period.

The first individual treated by Chen Shou, Du Wei 杜微, appellative Guofu 國甫, of Fu 涪 prefecture was a student of Ren An. Although Chen Shou makes no mention of Du Wei's intellectual activity, he notes that Du followed his teacher's example of political disengagement by repeatedly refusing to accept appointments proffered by Zhuge Liang. When the chancellor Zhuge Liang personally visited Du's home to persuade him to take office, Du claimed to be deaf, and the entire "conversation" was conducted in writing. In the end, it appears that Du Wei accepted a post, then later resigned on grounds of illness and age.¹⁰²

Next, Chen Shou presents an account of Zhou Qun, the son of Zhou Shu, offering considerably more detail in regards to Zhou Qun's intellectual activity and its political implications. Zhou Qun, while following in his father's vocation, deviated from Zhou Shu's reclusive path by playing an active role in regional politics. His biography notes, "When Zhou Qun was young, he received instruction from [Zhou] Shu, focusing his mind on the enterprise of predicting."¹⁰³ To this brief statement, Chen Shou adds significant detail, illuminating the methods of the Yang tradition. Zhou Qun was said to have constructed an observational platform in the courtyard of the family estate. Here, he posted servants day and night to watch the heavens for anomalies. When a pneuma was spotted, a report was immediately sent to Zhou Qun, who would then personally mount the tower to observe the phenomenon for himself. According to Chen Shou, "Whenever there were pneumatic omens, he saw them all. For this reason, many of his predictions were accurate."¹⁰⁴

Several other early historical sources corroborate Chen Shou's assertion. Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451 CE), citing Sima Biao's 司馬彪 (240–315 CE) *Xu Han shu* 續漢書 [*Continued Han History*], notes the fulfillment of Zhou Qun's political prophesies. The first natural anomaly, noted in Jian'an 7 (203 CE), involved the case of a man who changed into a woman in Yuexi 越巂 commandery.¹⁰⁵ Zhou Qun's explanation of this event was that it was an omen of the changing of the dynasty. As predicted, Emperor Xian of Han abdicated to

Wei in Jian'an 25 (221 CE).¹⁰⁶ In the second case, a shooting star was observed leaving the Quail Tail (*chunwei* 鶉尾) in the astral sector corresponding to Jing province in 207 CE.¹⁰⁷ Zhou's interpretation of this astronomical event was that the shepherd of Jing Province, Liu Biao 劉表 (144–208 CE), would soon die and the territory of Jing would be lost. Liu Biao died the following year (208 CE), and Cao Cao's troops claimed the province. In 212 CE, another shooting star was observed, this time in the constellation known as the Five Marquises (*wu zhuhou* 五諸侯).¹⁰⁸ This anomaly was read to mean that those who held territory in the west would soon lose their holdings. As predicted, in 214 CE Liu Zhang 劉璋 (d. 219 CE) lost Yi Province, Han Sui 韓遂 lost Liang Province, and Song Jian 宋建 lost Baohan 枹罕, while in 215 CE, Zhang Lu 張魯 (d. early third century CE) lost Hanzhong.¹⁰⁹

Because of his skill, Zhou Qun was appointed to various official posts under Liu Zhang and, later, Liu Bei.¹¹⁰ In this capacity, Zhou Qun was consulted by Liu Bei regarding a plan to attack Cao Cao at Hanzhong.¹¹¹ Zhou's reply to Liu Bei's query was, "You will obtain the territory, but not the people. If you send out the lieutenant generals, you will certainly not prevail. You must guard with caution!"¹¹² Chen Shou follows this brief note with the account of Zhang Yu 張裕, whose skills in prognostication were said to be greater than those of Zhou Qun.¹¹³ Zhang Yu also advised Liu Bei against a campaign in Hanzhong. Liu Bei ignored both Zhou Qun and Zhang Yu and sent his troops to Hanzhong, where he was successful in obtaining the land, but his military commanders were all killed in this battle, just as Zhou Qun had predicted.¹¹⁴ The texts are silent as to why Zhou Qun and Zhang Yu were consulted on this matter of military strategy, but presumably celestial signs were involved.¹¹⁵

Following this presentation of Zhou Qun's life, Chen Shou offers a similarly detailed account of another of Ren An's students, Du Qiong, appellation Boyu 伯瑜 of Chengdu. Chen Shou claims that Du Qiong "thoroughly mastered Ren An's art,"¹¹⁶ while the *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* notes that Du excelled in the study of canonical texts, apocryphal texts, and the [mantic] arts.¹¹⁷ Du Qiong was politically active in the region, holding office under the provincial administrations of both Liu Zhang and Liu Bei, and later serving in Liu Bei's state of Shu-Han in a variety of positions, some with direct access to the ruler.¹¹⁸

Chen Shou's biography of Du Qiong places great emphasis on Du's personality and character. Chen writes, "As a person, he was quiet and of few words, keeping himself behind closed doors and not concerning himself with the affairs of the world."¹¹⁹ Echoing Chen Shou's evaluation, Chang Qu's encomium on Du reads, "The Grand Master of Ceremonies, pure and removed. Remote and distant, abstruse and deep."¹²⁰ Later, Chang also notes, "[Du] was quiet and valued his privacy, and was regarded as the purest of the students [of Ren An]."¹²¹ From these statements, we may suppose that although Du Qiong accepted positions in the government, he was not considered an active

participant in court politics. As a result of his reputation as a pure scholar, Du Qiong was highly esteemed by many of the most powerful figures in the state of Shu-Han, including the generals Jiang Wan 蔣琬 (d. 246 CE),¹²² Fei Yi 費禕 (d. 253 CE),¹²³ and others.¹²⁴

Following the notice of Du Qiong's death in 250 CE, Chen Shou appends the customary bibliography of this scholar's works, then comments that Du did not transmit his teachings to his sons, and "there was none to carry on his inner teachings (*neixue* 內學)."¹²⁵ This is an odd statement, for the *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* contains a brief biography of Gao Wan 高玩, appellative Bozhen 伯珍, of Jianguyuan who was said to have been a student of Du Qiong.¹²⁶ This account of Gao Wan notes, "As a youth, he received instruction from the grand master of ceremonies Du Qiong, and his [mastery of] the mantic arts was subtle and marvelous. He was broadly learned, yet plain and simple. While young, his reputation was comparable to that of [Li] Mi, and their official positions were equal."¹²⁷ Chen Shou and Li Mi were both students under Qiao Zhou, and Chen Shou would have certainly been aware of Gao and his study with Du Qiong. Since the *Records of the States South of Mount Hua* account specifically mentions Gao's mastery of the "arts" of Du Qiong—presumably the arts of prophesy and divination—Chen Shou's statement is baffling. Ignoring Gao Wan, Chen Shou devotes the remainder of the biography to illustrating the influence of Du Qiong's teachings on Qiao Zhou.¹²⁸

By opening his "Forest of Classicist" fascicle with this group of intellectuals, Chen Shou demonstrates the continuity of the Yang family traditions into the Shu-Han era, as well as illustrates the continued political interest in these skills. Moreover, Chen Shou subtly asserts the primacy of this, his own, intellectual tradition through the contrasting account of outsiders and outside scholarship in Shu-Han that follows.

The second cluster of biographies in Chen Shou's "Forest of Classicists" fascicle relates the activities of six scholars who introduced outside scholarship to Chengdu and illustrates the general intellectual milieu of the Shu-Han capital. Four of the figures treated in this section were Central Plains intellectuals who, for various reasons, found themselves in Chengdu. The remaining two individuals were natives of the Chengdu Plain who were trained in the intellectual traditions of Jing Province. Chen Shou's presentation of the activities of these men in Chengdu, while often humorous, depicts a rather low state of intellectual affairs in the early years of the state. He notes:

After the Former Sovereign [Liu Bei] stabilized Shu, the region had been in chaos for dozens of years and scholarly activity was in decline. [The Former Sovereign] thus ordered canonical texts be collected and the academies be put back in good order. [Xu] Ci 許慈 and [Hu] Qian 胡潛 were named as erudits, and along with Meng Guang 孟光, Lai Min 來敏, and others, collated old texts. Because things were at an early stage of development, there were many divergent ideas.¹²⁹

Chen's depictions of these scholars support his overall characterization of the age.

Introducing Xu Ci, appellative Rendu 仁篤, Chen Shou offers a basic resumé of Xu's background and intellectual aptitude. Originally from Nanyang 南陽,¹³⁰ Xu Ci studied under Liu Xi 劉熙¹³¹ and excelled in the scholarship of Master Zheng [Xuan], mastering the *Changes*, the *Hallowed Documents*, the *Three Ritual Texts*, the *Mao Odes*, and the *Analects*. Chen Shou notes that Xu Ci entered the Chengdu Plain with Xu Jing 許靖 (150–222 CE)¹³² during the Jian'an period via Jiaozhou.¹³³ A vague resumé is provided for Xu Ci's counterpart, Hu Qian. Hu was a native of Wei commandery, and Chen Shou frankly states, "We do not know what he was doing in Yi Province."¹³⁴ Chen Shou describes Hu Qian's scholarship as "not especially deep," but notes his strong memory in matters of sacrificial and mourning ritual.¹³⁵

Following this matter-of-fact introduction to these two outside scholars, Chen Shou presents an anecdote illustrating their character and contributions to the intellectual world of Shu-Han. According to Chen Shou, both men were conceited and bickered constantly. In their official duties as collators of texts, they were said to have withheld documents from one another and even came to physical blows. Liu Bei was reported to have been so disturbed by their petty behavior that he ordered actors to mock the two scholars at a large court gathering. Chen Shou's account of this event is both amusing and telling. It reads, "At first, [the actors] disputed the meanings of words, but by the end [of the skit] they were thrusting at each other with swords and spears."¹³⁶ In this manner, Chen Shou illustrates both the pettiness of some scholars at the Shu-Han court and Liu Bei's concern over the current poor state of academic affairs. Pei Songzhi's *Commentary* includes a brief comment by the Jin historian Sun Sheng 孫盛 (ca. 302–375 CE),¹³⁷ who endorses Chen Shou's appraisal of the two men and the general intellectual atmosphere at the Shu-Han capital, saying, "Shu lacked cultured gentleman, and for that reason [Xu] Ci, [Hu] Qian, and the others were employed."¹³⁸

In Chen Shou's presentation of the cases of two other outside scholars at the Shu-Han court, he continues to focus on personality and character over intellectual contributions. First, Chen introduces Meng Guang, a native of Luoyang who fled to the Chengdu Plain around the time Dong Zhuo 董卓 (d. 192 CE) moved the capital to Chang'an (ca. 190 CE). Meng Guang was said to have been widely read, to have possessed expertise in historical texts, with a special fondness for the Gongyang interpretation of the *Spring and Autumn* annals and a strong disdain for the interpretation of Zuo Qiuming 左丘明. Meng received numerous low-level appointments in Liu Bei's provincial administration, as well as under the Shu-Han imperial venture, but reportedly grew increasingly frustrated over the court's refusal to act on his suggestions, strengthening his perception that the Liu clan was not particularly interested in scholarship. As a result, he often openly criticized his superiors, leading to his dismissal from office. He died at the age of ninety-one, reportedly a bitter man.

In similar fashion, Chen Shou presents the case of Lai Min, appellative Jingda 敬達, a native of Yiyang 義陽 in Xinye 新野 prefecture.¹³⁹ Lai Min was related to Liu Zhang by marriage, and entered the Chengdu Plain with his sister and her husband (a kinsman of Liu Zhang) during Liu Zhang's tenure as inspector of Yi Province. An avid collector of books, Lai Min was fond of Zuo Qiuming's interpretation of the *Spring and Autumn* and skilled in archaic graphs. Following Liu Bei's takeover of the province, Lai Min was named as colonel for direction of education and put in charge of provincial education matters. Chen Shou notes that Lai Min's outspoken nature resulted in frequent dismissals from his posts. One anecdote quotes Lai Min questioning a group of high-ranking officials, saying, "What merit do you new people have that warrant you taking my glory? Everyone hates me! Why?!" Chen Shou then comments, "Lai Min was old and crazy, and thus he made such utterances."¹⁴⁰ Perhaps not surprisingly, Meng Guang took a liking to Lai Min, and "considered him to be somewhat better" than the other scholars at court. Chen Shou's account of Meng Guang and Lai Min depicts these scholars as bright but arrogant, and adds to his already somewhat negative view of outside scholars in Chengdu.

The final two scholars treated in this grouping of biographies within the "Forest of Classicists" fascicle were both natives of the Chengdu Plain who were educated in the canonical studies tradition concentrated at Liu Biao's academy at Jingzhou. The eldest of these two figures, Yin Mo 尹默, appellative Siqian 思潛, was a native of Fu prefecture in Zitong commandery. According to Chen Shou's account, Yin Mo felt that the scholars of Yi Province "were not broadly learned," and hence journeyed to Jingzhou to study "ancient learning" (*gu xue* 古學).¹⁴¹ In Jingzhou, he studied various canonical texts and their associated "chapter and verse" commentaries, as well as historical texts with Sima Decao 司馬德操 and Song Zhong.¹⁴² It appears that Yin Mo may have been acquainted with Liu Bei during his time in Jing, for shortly after Liu Bei took control of Yi Province in 211 CE, he named Yin as attendant for encouragement of education. Later, in the fifth month of Zhangwu 章武 1 (221 CE), Liu Bei named his son Liu Shan as heir and appointed Yin Mo as coachman of the heir's household, in which capacity Yin Mo tutored Liu Shan in *Master Zuo's Traditions*. Yin Mo later served in a variety of low-ranking consulting posts within the palace.

Like Yin Mo, Li Zhuan 李譔 (d. ca. 258–263 CE), appellative Qinzhong 欽仲, was a native of Fu prefecture and educated in the academic traditions of the Jing academy. In this case, however, Li Zhuan's training in the Jing traditions came secondhand, by way of his father, Li Ren 李仁, who had been a classmate of Yin Mo's at the Jing academy, and through Yin Mo. Chen Shou describes Li Zhuan as well-read and broadly learned, with expertise in not only the classical learning of Jing, but also in art, prognostication, divination, medicinal herbs, archery, and engineering. On the basis of these skills, Li Zhuan was given posts in the imperial academy and in the office of the

masters of writing. Like his teacher Yin Mo, Li Zhuan was appointed as a coachman and palace attendant in the service of the heir apparent, in this instance, Liu Xuan 劉璿 (224–264 CE).¹⁴³ Although the heir apparent was fond of Li Zhuan, Chen Shou reports that Li's frail physique and his "love of jokes" made him unsuitable for important positions.¹⁴⁴ In terms of his intellectual activity, Li Zhuan wrote commentaries in several Old Text canonical works, including the *Changes*, *Documents*, *Mao Odes*, *Three Ritual Texts*, and *Master Zuo's Traditions*. Significantly, Li also prepared a commentary on Yang Xiong's *Supreme Mystery*, a Chengdu Plain text that was highly esteemed at the Jing provincial academy. The biographies of these nine intellectual figures of Shu-Han, constituting the opening third of Chen Shou's "Forest of Classicists" fascicle, illustrate the two distinct camps of intellectual activity in Shu-Han and offer a glimpse of the differing relationships these groups of scholars had with the state.

Following these accounts, Chen Shou offers a lengthy biography of his mentor Qiao Zhou. Since Qiao Zhou's life and works will be discussed in greater detail later, here I will simply outline Chen Shou's treatment of Qiao in the context of the "Forest of Classicists" fascicle. Having already introduced Qiao Zhou as a student of Du Qiong and thus an heir to the Yang family intellectual traditions earlier in the fascicle, here Chen Shou focuses his attention on Qiao's political activity. Qiao Zhou is presented as a teacher, a low-ranking courtier, and, later in life, as a critic of state policy. These political roles are all illustrated with lengthy citations of Qiao's political writings. These include his memorial to Liu Shan opposing the ruler's frivolous excursions, an embellished account of a debate at court over military policy, and two memorials advocating the surrender of Shu-Han. Despite Qiao's position as a member of the Yang intellectual tradition, Chen Shou only offers one small piece of evidence to illustrate his teacher's aptitude in prophesy—a prediction of Qiao's own coming death. A brief notice of Qiao Zhou's sons and a short listing of Qiao's major works conclude the biography.

The final figure treated in the fascicle, Xi Zheng 郤正, appellation Lingxian 令先, was the grandson of the late Han inspector of Yi Province, Xi Jian 儉, who was killed during the uprising of the "Yellow Turban" bandit Ma Xiang 馬相.¹⁴⁵ Following the death of Xi Jian, the family remained in Yi Province where Xi Zheng was born. Xi Zheng's father surrendered to Wei and his mother remarried while Zheng was a youth. As a result, Xi Zheng was independent at an early age. Chen Shou notes his scholarly aptitude and willingness to endure poverty for the sake of learning. In particular, Xi Zheng was fond of the rhapsodies of early Han Sichuan intellectuals like Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong, as well as other literary works by people of Yi Province. On the basis of his literary talents, Xi Zheng served in various posts under Shu-Han, including office of imperial library clerk, chief clerk, gentleman, and finally as prefect. However, Xi Zheng never advanced beyond these minor posts. Chen Shou attributes this to Xi Zheng's relationship with the eunuch

Huang Hao 黃皓¹⁴⁶ who “neither loved nor despised” Xi. Thus, “[Xi Zheng’s] official rank never exceeded that of six-hundred bushels, but he avoided misfortune.”¹⁴⁷ In an expression of his frustration at not being promoted, Xi Zheng composed a hypothetical discourse (*shelun* 設論) entitled “Shi ji” 釋讖 [“Dispelling Ridicule”].¹⁴⁸ The lengthy essay, reproduced in full by Chen Shou, features Xi Zheng’s “reply” to an anonymous interlocutor who mocks Xi Zheng for his low official position. In it, Xi Zheng states that his failure to advance “after nine evaluations” is a necessity of the times (i.e., the ruler’s need to allocate resources for the benefit of the common people rather than to enrich court officials), and that those who have advanced in rank are truly superior in ability. The statement, of course, should not be taken at face value. The humble self-deprecating tone is clearly a critique of the corruption and favoritism at the Huang Hao-dominated court.

Following the lengthy quotation of Xi Zheng’s “Dispelling Ridicule,” Chen Shou notes Xi Zheng’s role in the surrender of Liu Shan and Shu-Han. After accepting the recommendation to surrender, Liu Shan ordered Xi Zheng to compose the document. After the surrender, Liu Shan and his family were relocated to Luoyang, and only Xi Zheng and one other official accompanied the deposed ruler. According to Chen Shou’s account, Xi Zheng abandoned his wife and sons to follow the Later Sovereign to his new benefice. While in Luoyang, Liu Shan frequently relied on Xi Zheng’s advice in matters of ritual and propriety. As Xi Zheng neared death, he was honored with an edict appointing him to a post in Yi Province. The edict reads, “[Xi] Zheng was previously in Chengdu. When [Shu-Han] fell, he held to propriety and did not abandon loyalty. He has been employed and exhausted his heart in service. He has obtained the results of ordered principles. Let [Xi] Zheng be made grand administrator of Baxi.”¹⁴⁹ He died shortly thereafter in 278 CE. Chen Shou’s inclusion of the edict proclaiming Xi Zheng’s loyalty echoes his treatment of Qiao Zhou, arguing that loyalty to the person of the ruler was of higher virtue than loyalty to the political entity of Shu-Han.

Chen Shou’s final appraisal of the individuals treated in the fascicle echoes the themes illustrated in the biographies. It reads:

Du Wei cultivated his body in reclusive solitude and did not throw himself into affairs of the world, approaching the ideals set by [Bo] Yi and the Hoary-heads. Zhou Qun divined the minutia of the heavens; Du Qiong delved deeply into the esoteric. Both lived sincerely. Xu [Ci], Meng [Guang], Lai [Min], and Li [Zhuan] possessed broad experience and were well-known. Yin Mo’s essence was in the *Zuo Tradition*; although his potent vocation was not well-known. Truly, all were learned gentlemen of the age. Qiao Zhou’s words and principles were deep and penetrating. He was a great scholar of his generation, possessing the principle of Dong [Zhongshu] and Yang [Xiong]. Xi Zheng’s writings were brilliant, possessing the air of Zhang [Heng] and Cai [Yong]. Add to this his actions and here you have a Gentleman. These two

masters' affairs in the Jin dynasty were few, while their affairs in Shu were many. For this reason, I have included them in this chapter.¹⁵⁰

In the life of Du Wei, the virtue of reclusion is extolled, while the link between moral character and the intellectual traditions of prophesy are honored in the treatment of Zhou Qun and Du Qiong. Chen Shou's remarks on the outsider-scholars in Chengdu (Xu Ci, Meng Guang, Lai Min, and Li Zhuan) are vague and reflect his lesser opinion of these individuals, though he does call them, along with Yi Mo, "learned gentlemen of the age." Chen Shou's greatest praise is reserved for Qiao Zhou and Xi Zheng who illustrate the principle of scholarship in the service of the state (i.e., loyalty).

As a whole, the forty-second fascicle of the *Records of the Three States* stands as a vivid snapshot of the intellectual world at the court of Shu-Han. In it, Chen Shou recounts his own intellectual tradition (i.e., the Yang clan of Guanghan) through Qiao Zhou, and illustrates the condition of intellectual affairs at court, especially Liu Bei's efforts to restore academic institutions. In fact, the overarching theme of the fascicle is that of the relationship between scholars and the state. Local scholar-prophets served the state through their interpretations of Heaven's will manifest through omens, portents, and human speech, while outside academics filled the bureaucratic offices of Liu Bei's imperial enterprise. Chen Shou's contrasting accounts of these two groups of intellectuals is striking. The local scholars openly expressed reservations about serving the state, preferring reclusion over public office. The outsiders, on the other hand, bickered over their status. In the lives of Qiao Zhou and Xi Zheng, Chen Shou presents his vision of an ideal intellectual: talented, engaged, and loyal. In particular, the political and moral aspects of these two scholars' lives take the fore in Chen's biographies, while their specific academic achievements are mentioned only briefly. In this fascicle, Chen Shou illustrates the triumph of scholars like Qiao Zhou and Xi Zheng in a general climate of intellectual decline.